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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 16, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 16, 1999

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 four petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

[*English*]

Pursuant to the order of reference on Tuesday, May 5, 1998, our committee has considered Bill C-27, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act. Our committee has agreed to report it with amendment.

* * *

PETITIONS

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition to the House with 245 signatures from British Columbia.

The petitioners are calling upon parliament to take immediate steps (a) to provide a significant contribution toward homeowners affected by the residential construction crisis (b) to ensure that the

cost of all qualified repairs are deductible from income retroactively and in the future (c) to repeal and refund all GST on qualified repairs and (d) to permit registered retirement savings plan or RRSP funds to be used to undertake qualified repairs without penalty and to permit previously withdrawn RRSP funds used to pay repair specialist assessments to be income tax rebated.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of Canadians including from my own riding of Mississauga South on the subject of human rights.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that violations of human rights continue to be rampant around the world in countries such as Indonesia.

The petitioners also acknowledge that Canada is internationally recognized as the champion of internationally recognized human rights. The petitioners therefore call upon parliament to continue to condemn human rights violations and to seek to bring to justice those responsible for such abuses.

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions this morning. The first petition is signed by hundreds of residents of my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas and elsewhere in British Columbia.

It notes that a commission of inquiry into the quality of condominium construction in B.C. has concluded that condominium owners and residents are the victims of a systemic failure to provide quality accommodation and as a result tens of thousands of residents are suffering financially, emotionally, medically and domestically.

Therefore the petitioners urge parliament to provide a significant contribution toward homeowners affected by the residential construction crisis to ensure that the cost of all qualified repairs are deductible from income retroactively and in the future, to repeal and refund all GST on qualified repairs, and finally to permit RRSP funds to be used to undertake qualified repairs without penalty and to permit previously withdrawn RRSP funds used to pay repair specialist assessments to be income tax rebated.

Today on budget day I hope the minister heeds that call.

Routine Proceedings

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is signed by residents of a number of municipalities in British Columbia including Burnaby.

It draws to the attention of the House the fact that the multilateral agreement on investment or MAI will disproportionately expand and entrench unprecedented rights to transnational corporations and foreign investors at the expense of the Canadian government's ability basically to make decisions about our own future.

It calls on parliament to consider the enormous implications to Canada by the signing of the MAI, to put it to open debate in the House and to place it for a national referendum for the people of Canada to decide.

• (1010)

APEC INQUIRY

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by approximately 270 people from my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo.

The petitioners ask the House to fund all groups, including students involved in the RCMP public complaints commission investigation into the actions of the RCMP at the 1997 APEC summit, and not to engage and create activities at the expense of national and international human rights. They call for a full judicial inquiry.

MARRIAGES

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by approximately 300 Canadians from the communities of Picton, Navan, Limoges, Fort Elgin, Owen Sound, Scarborough, Guelph, Aurora, London, Brampton and Kleinburg, Ontario, as well as Kentville and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

They pray that parliament enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Prohibited Degrees Act and the Interpretation Act, so as to define in statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female.

* * *

[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. 132 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 132—**Mr. John Cummins:**

With reference to the side effects experienced by those taking the anti-malarial drug mefloquine (Lariam): (a) provide a detailed update on the clinical study of mefloquine (Lariam) announced by the Department of National Defence in 1997, including trial design, subject inclusion/exclusion criteria, numbers of study subjects recruited to date and participating centres; (b) have reviews been undertaken of the side effects experienced by the Australian, British and Dutch forces, if so what were the results and recommendations, and what steps have been undertaken to implement these recommendations; (c) with regard to the mefloquine (Lariam) used for the prophylaxis of Canadian troops deployed to Somalia, what was the nature of the Department of Health's Health Protection Branch investigations in October 1997 into the failure of the manufacturer to properly supervise and ensure compliance with the Lariam safety monitoring study and the failure of the Department of National Defence to comply with its obligations under the safety monitoring study; (d) with regard to the mefloquine (Lariam) used for the prophylaxis of Canadian troops deployed to Somalia, what was the outcome of the Department of Health's Health Protection Branch investigations in October 1997 into the failure of the manufacturer to properly supervise and ensure compliance with the Lariam safety monitoring study and the failure of the Department of National Defence to comply with its obligations under the safety monitoring study; (e) what is the date of the insert in the mefloquine (Lariam) package used in Canada today; (f) what is the date of the product monograph for mefloquine (Lariam) used in Canada today; (g) have reviews been undertaken of the insert in the mefloquine (Lariam) package and the prescribing information used in Australia, if so what were the results and recommendations of the reviews, and what steps have been taken to implement the recommendations; (h) have reviews been undertaken of the insert in the mefloquine (Lariam) package and the prescribing information used in the United Kingdom, if so what were the results and recommendations of the reviews, and what steps have been taken to implement the recommendations; (i) have reviews been undertaken as regards the differences in the timing and content of the Canadian product monograph approved by the Department of Health Health Protection Branch as compared with Australian and British product monograph equivalents, if so what were the results and recommendations of the reviews, and what steps have been undertaken to implement these recommendations; and (j) what was the source of the mefloquine (Lariam) supplies used for the prophylaxis of Canadian troops deployed to Somalia?

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I am informed by the departments of health and national defence as follows:

a) A Department of National Defence (DND) specific research study to determine whether there are any objectively measurable neuro-psychological effects associated with mefloquine was approved by the Medical Services Research Board in 1995. The study design is a double blinded, randomized, placebo controlled trial. The suggested sample size requires 280 persons per active and placebo group.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Age over 18 years;
2. Expected deployment to an area requiring mefloquine (chloroquine resistant area); and
3. Informed, voluntary consent to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Prior use of mefloquine, with or without an adverse drug reaction;
2. Pre-existing medical disorders, including: seizure disorder, vertigo, neuro-psychiatric disease or cardiac conduction defect;
3. Pregnancy, or the likelihood of pregnancy during the study

period and for three months following the study period; and

4. Any allergy to the study medications.

Due to the unavailability of a suitable number of Canadian forces (CF) participants (CF personnel since 1995 not having been deployed in sufficient numbers to a region where the use of mefloquine is required), no subjects have been recruited and participating centres have not been confirmed.

b) Yes, reviews indicate that the experience of the Australian, British and Dutch forces with mefloquine is similar to the Canadian forces experience. The common experience has demonstrated that mefloquine is a very effective prophylaxis against malaria and has few significant side effects, although minor side effects are common. As a result of the reviews, the Australian, British and Dutch forces continue to use mefloquine where appropriate and monitor personnel for side effects.

c) Health Canada did not undertake any formal investigations in October 1997. In October 1994, there were media reports of claims of involvement of Lariam in several incidents in Somalia. Health Canada took immediate and repeated action by requesting the manufacturer to provide all information and adverse drug reaction reports as required under the safety monitoring study (SMS) on the possible use by DND of SMS supplies of Lariam in Canadian forces deployed to Somalia.

d) In October 1994, when Health Canada became aware that Lariam had been administered to Canadian armed forces deployed to Somalia, the department requested from the sponsor an accounting of all the supplies provided to Canadian armed forces personnel by DND, and a listing of adverse drug reactions observed during the course of the use of the drug under the auspices of the SMS. DND indicated to the manufacturer that it was their belief that Lariam issued in Somalia was purchased separately from the SMS. Health Canada concluded that the manufacturer had conducted the trial as per the agreed upon protocol and had responded to the inquiries in a timely manner.

e) The date of the insert in the Lariam (mefloquine) package is December 12, 1997.

f) The date on the most recent product monograph which also contains an information to the consumer section is December 12, 1997.

g) Health Canada has not undertaken a formal review of the insert in the Lariam (mefloquine) package and the prescribing information used in Australia. However, prescribing information from various countries (Australia, UK, US as well as the Roche International Standard Prescribing Information) when provided by the manufacturer and when examined has been found to be similar to the Canadian labelling information.

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h) Health Canada has not undertaken a formal review of the insert in the Lariam (mefloquine) package and the prescribing information used in the United Kingdom. However, prescribing information from various countries (Australia, UK, US as well as the Roche International Standard Prescribing Information) when provided by the manufacturer and subsequently examined, has been found to be similar to the Canadian labelling information.

i) Health Canada has not undertaken a formal review of the differences in timing and content of the Canadian product monograph as compared with the Australian and British product monograph equivalents. Approval for marketing of a product in Canada and the content of the product monograph is based on the data submitted to Health Canada at the time of filing of the submission by the manufacturer. The filing dates as well as the data in support of the new drug submission may or may not be similar to that submitted to other regulatory organizations.

j) Hoffman LaRoche.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Adams: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the bill was last before the House the hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette had the floor. He has six minutes remaining in his allotted time.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to resume the debate. As I was saying earlier in debate, I would like to frame my comments in the setting of the following phrase, that the immigration system is broken and the minister is either unwilling or unable to fix it. I make that comment based on the fact that the minister has now been the minister for three years and has done very little in terms of substantive changes to the system.

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I would like to read a little from the report of the legislative review group which the minister commissioned last. In the document it made the comment that one of the flaws in Canadian politics is the difficulty in dealing with subjects such as immigration—

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Reform Party continues to refer to this as the Immigration act. I would like to remind the member from the Reform Party that Bill C-63 is the Citizenship Act. Members of that party have continually referred to it as the Immigration Act.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member has made his point, but I am not sure it is a point of order.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, as I was stating, in my opinion the immigration system is broken. The minister is either unwilling or unable to fix it. The fact that the minister has brought forward the bill as her first substantive piece of legislation is evidence of that.

I would like to state again as I was stating before I was interrupted by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—he might notice that word on the end of the minister's portfolio—that one of the flaws in Canadian politics is the difficulty in dealing with subjects such as immigration as if to raise the issue itself is tantamount to questioning its beliefs. The place of immigrants or the value of a certain category of immigrants in this kind of unspoken censorship has been a chronic problem for both journalists and politicians.

We firmly believe that the government must account for the way the objectives of immigration programs are being met. This is in accordance with the rules that allow the true exercise of the democratic rights of Canadian citizens. Only then can we restore the public's faith in the management of immigration programs. At the same time we will restore the confidence of those who implement these programs and, in the end, of all those who elect to settle in Canada.

I make that comment because quite often what happens is that members of the government throw names at members of the opposition who would point out problems with the system.

• (1015)

We do point out problems with the system because there are problems with the system. We point out those problems so that the system we would hope would be fixed by those who are in power and have the ability to do so.

We make these comments because we believe in immigration, we believe it is a positive force in this country and because the government is derelict in its responsibility to take care of glaring errors.

I will continue to raise those issues—

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of relevancy. The member is not addressing the substance of Bill C-63. Bill C-63 is about citizenship. We do not need members of the opposition getting up and slandering immigrants to this country.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette is coming to discuss the bill before the House. I think he knows his remarks must be relevant to the bill. I think the parliamentary secretary has made a point and I am sure the hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette will make his remarks relevant to the bill before the House.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, again, I frame these comments on the point that if the parliamentary secretary does not realize that citizenship and immigration are interlinked, I submit that points out a very difficult problem for that individual sitting as a member of the government. I am quite shocked that he does not see the relevance of that comment.

If he would like to direct the debate and send over some speaking notes for members of the opposition so we could say exactly what he wants us to say, that is fine, send them over and we will consider them. In the meantime, I will continue to make the same point. I would like to point out something that the member said which goes to the point of what he sees as priorities and what we see as priorities. We would like to see the system of immigration addressed.

The parliamentary secretary in committee, when these issues were brought up, said: "It is imperative that we not overly focus on the question of criminality in immigration. Too much time has been spent on it. I think we have studied the criminality question enough at the present time. We should be getting on to some other very important issues".

I say that because there are a lot of important issues and that is one I have raised in committee and in the House. There is a problem happening in Vancouver with an abuse of the immigration system. Individuals who will eventually become citizens of this country, should they choose that course, will be governed by the precepts of this bill that the parliamentary secretary keeps objecting to. I make that comment to the parliamentary secretary in the hope that he will see the relevance of that.

Canadians see the relevance. They see that the system is broken. They see that the government is sitting on its hands and not taking action on some of the very important things that need to happen. The Honduran situation in Vancouver is one of them. The parliamentary secretary has the gall to say—

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we are dealing with Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship. Reform has time and time again not talked about this bill but instead goes off and talk about some other issues related to

immigration, not to citizenship. That debate is going to come to this House at some point in time and then the members opposite can address the issue. Right now they are irrelevant. They are not addressing the citizenship act before this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you direct the member of the opposition to speak about the citizenship act. Otherwise he should not speak at all.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette is about to make his remarks about the bill. I invite him to do so at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, for the third time I will try. I hope the parliamentary secretary is listening this time because he certainly has not been listening to anything that has been said so far.

I will mention something one more time. Perhaps I will slow down a bit for the parliamentary secretary so he can understand that the minister is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. That is the whole realm of the minister's responsibility. She has brought in a bill having to do with citizenship and the citizenship act. I know the members opposite continue to heckle because they do not want to listen to substantive changes. They do not want to listen to positive changes. There is a force of negativity coming from the government side. Rather than listening to positive ideas and suggestions of how to fix the system, how to improve this bill and how to improve the immigration system itself, the government wants to shout down opposition.

• (1020)

It does not want to listen to ideas being brought forward by Canadians, by lots of people, by one of the minister's own consultants, Dr. Don DeVoretz of Simon Fraser University, whom the minister consults with regularly and who points out some of the problems not only with this bill but with the immigration system as well.

I had hoped that the government would be willing to listen to some of these suggestions. Obviously that does not seem to be happening so far today. I can only hope that the government's manners improve a bit today and that it has the opportunity to listen, because there are lots of people calling for changes to a system that is broken and hoping that the minister will take action to address these problems.

In this bill I do not see a lot of substantive changes. I thank you for listening, Mr. Speaker. You have been very attentive. I wish I could say the same for the government members.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague who has tried on two occasions to address the issue if he could maybe point

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out for the benefit of the government members who do not seem to see a connection between immigration and citizenship and perhaps very succinctly explain to them how the relationship is there between immigration and Canadian citizenship.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

As I was trying to say earlier in my speech, of course citizenship and the act of immigration are intricately linked.

Individuals who come to our country through the immigration system are the individuals who end up becoming citizens of this country. That is how Canada was built. Canada was built on the positive force of immigration, people coming from other countries to settle here and build this great country.

I am a bit surprised that members of the government do not see that link. They are linked in such a way that I do not think it needs explaining, but obviously it does to the members of the government.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we are dealing with Bill C-63 we are dealing with an act of citizenship.

I might point out for the member opposite that it deals with all Canadian citizens and there are 28 million plus Canadian citizens in this country.

I personally and on behalf of the government take great exception to having opposition members stand in their place day after day attacking immigrants and attacking refugees. They say that they are only dealing with a small percentage. But the fact of the matter is if one is to examine everything the Reform Party has said about immigrants and refugees, it is making links to criminality.

I came to this country as a refugee. There are many refugees in this country who became citizens. I tell the members of the Reform Party that you will not get support from new Canadians when you continuously attack and smear them.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know the member would like to get excited about this, but I notice he is not addressing the Chair when he is speaking. I just ask that he settle down and keep things cool and address the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. House leader has a point. The parliamentary secretary I am sure will address his remarks to the Chair and not to other members of the House.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, not only do they attack refugees and attack immigrants, they attack aboriginal people on a continuous basis in the House.

How does the member opposite—

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• (1025)

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have to suggest that this person is totally off topic. He is not making any relevant comments to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The parliamentary secretary does appear to be asking a question or making a comment in relation to the previous speech. I know he is about to ask a question which I assume will have some relevance to the speech.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, they seem kind of touchy on that side and I can understand it, being a party that is compassionately challenged.

Mr. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the parliamentary secretary said we attacked aboriginal people. I would like an apology from the parliamentary secretary. He is talking about my family. Please withdraw that comment.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has made his point but I am not sure he has a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, to wrap it up and pose the question, how can the official opposition exhibit the kind of intolerance it has toward aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees, and expect to promote good citizenship in this country when it is forever slandering those people?

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of rhetoric coming from the parliamentary secretary and I think that is obvious to all in the House and I hope obvious to all watching today.

Let me ask the parliamentary secretary a question to see if he would agree with one of his own members of the government, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam who made the following statement. He uses this rhetoric about the Reform Party being against immigration which is completely untrue. He knows it and he is continuing this rhetoric. I will quote directly what a member of the Liberal government said: “I happen to believe that by deporting refugee claimants convicted of dealing drugs we would be taking a major step forward in the fight against the illegal sale of drugs. They should be deported immediately with no review or appeal allowed to drag things out”.

That is a member of the government making that comment and I cannot believe it. That is extremism. That is an unbelievable comment coming from a member of the government. The members have the gall to stand in their places and throw stones here when all we are pointing out is that the system needs to be changed. The problems that are so glaring need to be addressed and the members of the government are unwilling and unable to do it. All they can do is throw stones and be negative where we will be a positive force. We will make the positive changes that are needed to fix the

problems with the system. That is what we are here for. We are here for positiveness, not for the negativity we hear from the government side.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will point out a couple of things and then I will ask a question.

I am an immigrant. I immigrated to Canada in 1968. I guess the parliamentary secretary thinks I would stand up and slander myself. He says we slander immigrants, which I totally object to.

A good deal of our caucus consists of immigrants and they are valuable and good Canadians. There was a quote from the country I come from that I was reminded of recently and I will pass it on to this parliamentary secretary.

The person said remember that we have two ears and one mouth and only one of them was meant to close. I hope that some of these people, particularly the parliamentary secretary, will remember that when he is sitting and supposed to be listening to speeches. He will have his turn to talk, I am sure.

I express to the member that we went through quite a lengthy process when I came to Canada in 1968 with regard to obtaining our citizenship. I thought it was valuable. I thought it was worthwhile and it is something that should be done. It is something that has ceased being done to the extent that it was in 1968. I thought it was great the way they did it in the years we arrived. Now they have become very loose and very different which has not been positive for this country.

• (1030)

Does the member feel we need to strengthen the qualifications for citizenship in comparison to what they used to be? Does he believe there should not be any screening at all? The parliamentary secretary seems to believe that if we do screen, we are slandering these people. I would like the member's comments on that.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, citizenship is a positive force in our country and we know that. The minister is bringing forward a bill and I was pointing out that I thought she should have some other priorities over and above this bill.

The member talked about being an immigrant himself, as many of our caucus members are. We know that being a citizen is a privilege in this country. Individuals who work toward citizenship do so with the intention of making a positive contribution to this country, and we appreciate that. That is what Canada was built on.

I point out once again that it is the members of the official opposition who are pointing out problems with the system that need to be fixed and members opposite seem to think that is a problem. They do not even listen to their own minister's panel which says that this kind of unspoken censorship has been a chronic problem for both journalists and politicians. If somebody

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makes a comment that we should improve the system, then that person must be against immigration, but nothing could be further from the truth. We are for immigration and that is why we ask that these problems be addressed.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will address the comments made by the members of the opposition in the last few minutes. Nowhere in this debate in which the members of the official opposition have participated have they mentioned anything about the Citizenship Act. The reason behind this debate is to make suggestions to the minister responsible regarding the bill before us now. Nowhere have I heard any creative or constructive suggestions regarding this bill. I remind the Canadian public that those members are talking about immigration and not about citizenship. My own remarks will touch directly on the subject.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to have the opportunity today to participate in the debate on Bill C-63 introduced by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This is a bill I support fully, for a number of reasons.

[*English*]

Canadian society and its values have changed since the citizenship law of 1977. Canadians have changed. They now have friends and neighbours of various origins. More than ever they do business all over the planet. They adopt children from overseas and they travel more often than ever before.

[*Translation*]

With all these social changes, the distinction between citizens and immigrants has now often become synonymous with the distinction between existing citizens and potential citizens.

The wording of the new legislation on citizenship reflects what each of us feels increasingly in our identity as Canadians. By touching on political identity, this legislation reflects Canadians.

This legislation is the people of Canada. It is itself a citizenship act, because it does more than simply create legal Canadian citizenship, that is official citizenship for legal purposes. It also draws on Canadian citizenship, everyday citizenship as reflected in the love we feel for our country, the specific way we are Canadians.

[*English*]

I would like to emphasize two important aspects of Bill C-63. First, it corresponds to our modern way of understanding citizenship. Second, it recognizes the increased importance we give to the sentiment of belonging.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Traditionally, the Canadian concept of citizenship was better defined as the law of the soil rather than the law of the blood. Since the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946, a child born of Mexican parents, for example, automatically became a Canadian citizen at birth if he was born on Canadian soil.

Even then, Canada was innovative. Our country was beginning to distance itself from narrow nationalism based on the law of the blood, which had twice brought disaster to Europe.

Our citizenship supports our values, which lead to the law of the soil, and in turn, based on acceptance and collective construction, support citizenship. Our citizenship is thus a constitutional identity rather than an organic, a tribal or even a mystic one.

[*English*]

This logic brings us to consider adopted children who, when this bill becomes law, will no longer be differentiated from natural born children. This is one of the important changes proposed by Bill C-63. Our government recognizes the importance of adoption for the family. And in fact for family members this will probably be one of the most critical events in their life.

An immigrant who becomes a citizen enjoys the same rights as any other Canadian, but in return, he or she has an obligation to respect the values and standards that make these rights possible. These exclusive rights we must not forget are actually acquired privileges and such privileges do not come free of charge to anyone.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-63 introduces a modified oath that places greater emphasis on the defence of Canadian civic and democratic values, rather than merely seeking to create a formal attachment to an abstract Canada.

Canada represents a particular set of values, experiences and feelings for each of us. The suggested oath briefly summarizes the rights and responsibilities inherent in our citizenship and identity as Canadians.

Canada is proud of its democratic principles and these principles apply to all residents. Non-Canadian landed immigrants have the same rights as Canadians, with one exception: they may not take part in the political aspects of democracy in this country.

Other than that, a landed immigrant may enjoy all aspects of life in Canada and the accompanying economic and social rights.

[*English*]

Later on if immigrants decide to really get involved in building our country, they will have to show that they are willing to do this

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in full knowledge of the requirements and responsibilities expected of citizens. They will have to ask explicitly for the privilege of citizenship and show that they understand all the implications of this new status.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to look at the second aspect of the citizenship bill, the key role a feeling of belonging plays in national unity.

[*English*]

We are all aware that the rules of trade have changed a great deal. Economic borders have become more permeable. International organizations and agreements such as NAFTA, APEC and WTO have codified laws and informal agreements that manage, encourage and facilitate transnational trade. Because trade is increasingly carried out across borders, business men and women travel much more often than they have ever done.

[*Translation*]

The government therefore understands the constraints faced by businessmen and women and recognizes the economic contribution they make.

Under the present legislation, three years of residence in Canada are required during the four years preceding an application for citizenship. However, in response to this new economic reality, Bill C-63 will allow a landed immigrant to reside in Canada for three years during a five-year period in order to qualify for citizenship.

• (1040)

We must not lose sight of the fact that citizenship is the cornerstone of political participation, a participation which is not fully possible for someone who has not had the opportunity to assimilate the country's values.

Thanks to Bill C-63, however, we will now require physical presence by the immigrant, and "cut-rate" citizenship will no longer be available.

[*English*]

I would now like to address the most important topic, the loss or the denial of citizenship for reasons of serious crimes.

Our government through Bill C-63 has shown that Canadians are not naive. Because citizenship is such an important notion, utmost vigilance is required. Immigrants who have come to Canada by the use of fraud and who come here to take advantage of the Canadian way of life through a false declaration will find the door closed to them.

[*Translation*]

Moreover, persons guilty of serious crimes or deemed to be a threat to national security will continue to be unwelcome. Bill C-63 enables us to tighten up this important means of rejection still further in order to protect Canadians properly.

In the same vein, the mechanisms for cancelling citizenship provided in Bill C-63 make it possible to do away with potential fraud or error by revoking the citizenship of persons who ought not to have been granted it.

This does not in any way mean that we will treat old and new citizens differently by threatening new citizens with a punishment inapplicable to old ones, namely loss of their citizenship. All citizens are equal; this is an inviolable principle.

No, this is an acknowledgment that, since the conditions necessary for recognition of citizenship have not been met by certain persons, it will be as if citizenship had never been granted to them.

Canada wants good honest citizens who are able to integrate. Someone who has committed fraud in this connection has, quite obviously, never met the prerequisites of the law. What is more, the serious crimes he has committed may rightly be interpreted as constituting a danger for all Canadians.

In addition, in certain cases citizenship will no longer be as readily passed from generation to generation as in the past.

[*English*]

In a family who has lived abroad for two generations, the third generation could now lose their citizenship at age 28. Let us use as an example a Canadian couple who today seeks a residence in another country. Their children will remain Canadian citizens throughout their entire lives. However, their grandchildren will have to come back and live in Canada for at least four years in the five years preceding their request to remain Canadian citizens and this before their 28th birthday.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I would like to add that Bill C-63 proposes legislation that is better suited to the Canada of today, while still retaining the historical, cultural and linguistic elements that have shaped the identity of our country, and continue to do so. They will even be enhanced and enriched by the contributions of new arrivals from all of the world's regions and all of the world's cultures.

Whether refugees or immigrants who have come to Canada to rejoin family members, to invest or to make new lives for themselves, these newcomers will understand, thanks to this new process of naturalization, that they are becoming members of a big family that owes them much but—and it is vital to keep this in mind—to whom they owe just as much.

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[English]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member very carefully. I have reviewed Bill C-63 thoroughly and have found that the minister has drafted her own wording on the citizenship oath in the bill. The minister herself has attempted to give a definition of family or family relations.

● (1045)

She has completely ignored what Canadians are saying. She has not consulted members of parliament. There was no debate on those issues in the House. She has completely ignored the recommendations of the citizenship and immigration committee, which is dominated by Liberals, on the subject of citizenship given by birth.

I have noticed in the bill that the minister has garnished more and more power around herself rather than use a democratic process and listen to Canadians from coast to coast to coast and have the involvement of members of parliament, the elected officials in the House.

Since the minister has garnished more support around her and is making decisions behind closed doors without oversight by parliament, I would like to find out, if this is not Liberal arrogance, what it is.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely surprised by what the member of the official opposition has just said. He said that the minister has ignored Canadians. It seems to me that it is quite the opposite. The minister has travelled from coast to coast to coast. We all know that she travelled across Canada last year, met with hundreds of Canadians and asked for public consultation from coast to coast to coast. She has done this in my own riding and throughout my home province of Quebec and other provinces. That is one aspect.

The second aspect is that the intention of debate is to consult members not only of her caucus but of the other caucuses, the official opposition and the other opposition parties. This is exact reason we have parliamentary debate. It is Canadian tradition to debate a bill at second reading so I do not understand the comments of the hon. member across the floor.

We are talking about citizenship by birth. This particular bill continues the Canadian tradition of saying that children who are born on Canadian soil automatically become Canadian citizens. This is a longstanding tradition as I explained in the speech I just made. We want to continue this most important Canadian tradition.

I would like to ask a question of the hon. member who I know is a Canadian that was not born here but was born elsewhere. I cannot understand how people who have come here, who have been

received into our Canadian family, can make comments which mean they would like to close the immigration door once they are on Canadian soil. This is totally unacceptable.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Laval West a question.

When she talks of national cohesion in Canada, does she know what provision there is in the spirit of the law for Quebec and the people of Quebec, especially? In Quebec, we must remember, 83% of the people do not speak the language of the majority of Canadians. So, I would ask my colleague what provision is made for this fact.

In the spirit of the Canadian arrangement, does this mean that newcomers arriving in Quebec find, although there is an obvious specificity, that this is not taken into account? Does this mean that, in the spirit of the legislation, the existence of Quebecers as a people is denied, that Quebec is considered not only a province but a province just like all the others? I would like to hear her response. deaf

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear the question from the hon. member of the opposition.

● (1050)

First of all, there is a legal agreement between Quebec and the Canadian government with respect to immigration and refugees. The Government of Quebec has a large say in the criteria for accepting immigrants into Quebec.

I would remind the member that the Government of Quebec already enjoys considerable autonomy in this regard.

Furthermore, the Government of Quebec has criteria such as knowledge of the French language and the culture of Quebec that it uses in screening immigrants wishing to come to Quebec. That is one point.

The second is that, under this agreement, the Government of Quebec receives a large sum of money from the federal government, giving it complete control over all the budgets for integrating immigrants into Quebec society. By integrating, I mean learning the French language and the culture of Quebec.

The Government of Quebec receives the money from the federal government and allocates it for the provision of courses in the French language and the culture of Quebec. Immigrants to Quebec are therefore able to learn the province's language and culture and be as fully integrated as possible into Quebec society.

[English]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made some racist comments. She said that since I was not born in

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Canada why was I trying to stop immigration. That is not true. I have frequently been accused of this by members opposite. They say that my party or myself is trying to stop immigration. That is complete nonsense and out of order.

On the other hand, the Liberals are bragging about what good they are allegedly doing for immigrants but then are doing the opposite to what they are saying. When they came to office in 1993 new immigrants were paying a \$425 fee. Now new immigrants are paying a \$1,500 fee. The extra \$900 goes to general revenue to balance the budget. It does not go to ESL.

My point is that \$1,500 is about 15 days of average wages in Canada, in the U.K, in Australia or in New Zealand, but \$1,500 is 15 months wages in countries in Africa, in India, in Pakistan, in Sri Lanka and in Bangladesh. If this is not a racist policy, what is it? Is this not hampering people who come from those countries where it takes 15 more months to earn the money to pay the fee?

Before the hon. member makes those comments, could she justify this \$1,500 head tax to fund Canada's revenue which on the other hand discourages people who come from those countries? How does she justify this? How can she brag about how well her party is doing when it is doing the opposite of that?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I take great exception to the charge of racism. My record speaks for itself. I have worked practically all my life with people from various backgrounds, no matter where they come from and no matter what colour they are. I take great exception to this charge.

We must not close our eyes to the fact that we may be born elsewhere. It is not an insult to be born elsewhere. It is a fact of life.

Once again the comments of the hon. member of the official opposition are on subjects that are absolutely not part of the debate. When he first rose this morning he said that we were not having a debate about the citizenship question, so I challenged the member to speak on the question of citizenship. Why does he want to go back to immigration? We know there is a link between the two, but we also know that in the near future we will have a debate on immigration in the House.

• (1055)

I ask members of the official opposition and of all other opposition parties to debate the bill before us which deals with citizenship. We will come to immigration in due time.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate at the beginning that I will be splitting my 20 minutes with the hon. member for Vancouver East.

I am pleased to be able to speak to the bill today. I know that the member from Winnipeg Centre, our critic in this area, has already expressed the views and some of the concerns of our party on some aspects of bill, for instance with respect to the language requirements, et cetera.

I would like to pick up on the debate that has been going on in the House about citizenship and immigration because they are inextricably linked. I do not think we can talk about one without talking about the other.

The points of order being expressed by the government are themselves out of order and show just how sensitive the government is. It is funny for me, as was said earlier by a colleague, to listen to the Liberal Party accuse other parties of being anti-immigration when it is the party that brought in the \$1,500 head tax and refused, against all advice to the contrary, to change that head tax. Any self-righteousness on the part of Liberals in this respect is quite out of order.

I also think it was quite out of order, and I say out of order politically, not procedurally, for the member to suggest that people who are immigrants to this country somehow should not be critical of particular aspects of the immigration policy.

It is partly what is wrong with debate about immigration in this country and, for that matter, about a lot of the other debates we have in this place. When people want to criticize a particular aspect of something, their motives are impugned and they are painted with a broad brush in some negative way. It is high time that people were able to express concerns about particular aspects of the refugee and immigration system in this country and not be accused of racism and of being anti-immigrant.

We clearly see that the government can do this. The member who just spoke from the government side expressed concerns about criminals getting into the country and sent a warning to them. When she does that it is okay, but when others are concerned about that it is somehow not okay. That is part of the problem. I too am concerned about what is happening to Canadian citizenship like so many other members of parliament.

I have people come into my constituency office. They have very painful tales to tell about members of their families who have been left in other countries of the world and cannot come to Canada because of various technicalities in the Immigration Act. There are daughters who turned 19 before they came or who married not knowing that it would harm their chances. There are families whose family circles are broken. They have daughters and sons or sisters and brothers in other countries who are the last remaining members of their families in the country of origin. It makes perfect sense to me that they should be able to reunite with their families, and they cannot do it.

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This is where I want to talk about citizenship. Yet if they have enough money they can get into this country any time they like. I have an ad which appeared in the *Latin Trade Magazine*. This *Latin Trade Magazine* is published out of Miami, Florida. It caters to an elite business readership of approximately 86,000, over 40,000 from Latin American and Caribbean countries and 40,000 from the U.S. It is distributed on many Latin American airline routes. It is distributed by the American chambers of commerce, world trade centres and other trade organizations through Latin America and can be found at upscale hotel chains.

What do these ads say? They say “Guaranteed immigration to Canada”—just wait for the punch line—“with the purchase of a fleet rent a car franchise, a total investment of \$50,000 Canadian/ approximately \$30,000 U.S. you are guaranteed”—and guaranteed is underlined—“immigration to Canada, even with a criminal record”.

• (1100)

I am sorry if being concerned about this makes me a racist but I do not think it does. I am concerned that there can be ads in these kinds of magazines saying “You put enough money down on the table and you can get into this country no matter who you are”. It is a problem I have had with the investor immigrant program for a long time. It has cheapened the notion of Canadian citizenship, that people can buy their way into this country.

I find this ad particularly offensive and it is why I entered into the debate today. It says “For information write 5950 Bathurst Street, Suite 1009, Toronto, Ontario”, and it gives a fax number, et cetera. This is precisely one of the things that is wrong with our immigration policy. I do not think Canadian citizenship is something that should be able to be bought.

We all should be concerned about any aspects of our immigration and refugee policy, particularly our immigration policy, which if it is not functioning properly does allow people who are undesirable to become Canadian citizens. I do not see anything wrong with being concerned about that. I think a lot of my constituents are concerned about it.

I make this point to the government. The government has said there is action on immigration coming and it is somehow inappropriate for us to talk about immigration in the context of this Citizenship Act. I do not think it is. I think it is an opportunity for us to express some of the concerns that our constituents have. Certainly the constituent who brought this ad to me was very, very concerned that Canadian citizenship should be for sale in this particular way.

I just wanted to register my opposition to this particular notion of Canadian citizenship as something that can be bought and sold in the marketplace like any other commodity. I do not believe that

being a Canadian is a commodity. I do not think it is something that can be bought. There are a lot of people out there who want to be reunited with their families who should be given first consideration instead of people who can put \$50,000 Canadian down for buying some kind of fleet of rent a cars.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to hear reasoned debate from my colleague. I want to thank him for taking the opportunity to point out many of the same points that were pointed out earlier. I was glad that the government was actually listening instead of heckling. I hope that the message is getting through.

When there is a problem with the system it is our job as opposition members to point out the problems to the government so that it will take action to address the problems. That is exactly what my colleague was pointing out.

I want to ask my colleague this question. He talked about citizenship of convenience and people buying their way into the country. I want to make him aware of a comment made by a CIC official. This is a person who works within the immigration department who says that he believes that part of the business entrepreneur category of citizenship is a way for people to buy their way into the country.

Mr. Coolen noted that this program “assists and promotes citizenship of convenience fraud, promotes abuse in national and provincial social programs and in my opinion is a national disgrace”. Later the same person working for immigration said “The program has never been audited since its inception in 1978. Any claims of investment or job creation are suspect and not reliable due to faulty methods of collection and the lack of any quality control”.

This is another example of an abuse of the system. I would not mind hearing my colleague’s comments on this example of fraud as one which he mentioned earlier.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I did not use the term citizenship of convenience when I spoke. Wherever citizenship is being used as a convenience or as a strategy or as an option, I think that is something we should be concerned about. I was addressing the fact that people seem to be able to buy their way into the country and it is advertised blatantly that this is able to be done. That is what I was expressing concern about.

The problem with this is not that it is fraud. The problem is it seems that it is perfectly legal. We are not talking about fraud here; we are talking about what is admissible in the current system. There may be all kinds of problems with fraud but that is another matter altogether. That is not what I was addressing. I am addressing the way the system actually works when it is working according to the rules. That is what disturbs me.

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• (1105)

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my friend opposite, one must first apply in the investor program. One of the criteria for the investor program is that one also has to be ready to invest \$250,000 into Canada, not \$50,000, but \$250,000.

My friend tells me there are consultants that create misimpressions about what the policy is about. I do not disagree with him. That is one of the reasons we have to review the act, which we will do after we deal with the Citizenship Act. The matter of consultants is one area we have to pay particular attention to because all too often there are consultants who prey upon people wanting to go to another country. We as a government have to guard against that.

Is the member against the legitimate use of the investor program to come into the country and is he against the entrepreneurial designation as well?

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I do not take any comfort from the fact that it is not \$50,000 but is \$250,000. In some ways depending on how we look at it, this only makes it worse. It is still a problem. We are not making a distinction here between a high priced brothel and a lower priced activity. It is all the same. I think when we put a price on our citizenship, we are prostituting the notion of Canadian citizenship and I do not like it in whatever form it takes.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having this opportunity to speak to second reading of Bill C-63.

Representing the riding of Vancouver East has been a real privilege. One of the real characteristics and part of what makes my community unique is the fact that it has long been in the history of Vancouver a place where new Canadians have sought to come, to make their home and put down roots, for families to raise their children and to contribute to Vancouver, British Columbia and to Canada.

I have had interaction and discussions with people in my riding and organizations like Success, the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Chinese Benevolent Association, Mosaic, and the Filipino Association.

Whenever the government comes forward with discussion papers, and we have had the immigration and refugee legislative review, but whenever we have citizenship reviews there is always a lot of concern. People in my community understand that very often the issues of citizenship and immigration get cast about and thrown about in terms of the prevailing political winds of the day.

In my community citizenship and immigration have been absolutely integral in the development of the diversity and uniqueness

of east Vancouver. I think of my riding and the groups that are represented from Asia, south Asia, the Philippines, Europe, from all over the world and every part of the globe. It makes this community very special. It contributes to the richness of what we have. Vancouver is a great city because it is built on this wealth of diversity and cultural experience which provide a very strong economic base, a very strong cultural base and a very strong multilingual base. That is something people are very proud of.

I have attended a number of citizenship ceremonies and I know how proud people are to become Canadian citizens. I know what it means to them and I know what it means to me. I remember becoming a Canadian citizen. I remember that day as a young person and how it felt to become a citizen of a new country.

• (1110)

Within that context I am glad to have the opportunity to speak on this bill because the changes in this bill will have an impact on what we do in the future in terms of citizenship. From discussions I have had in my own community I know people are very concerned that the provisions in this bill will send out the message that Canada is not the welcoming place we read about and hear about from government material, from the Liberal red book and so on. The Liberal Party in government is not even meeting its own immigration and citizenship targets as outlined in the Liberals' red book. They fall far short of that.

Many MPs have probably had a similar experience with the system and what we have to deal with and what people have to go through in terms of the incredible bureaucracy. It is amazing when I deal with individual cases and find out the experiences people have had.

One problem is that the system is very often suspicious of people. The amount of red tape and bureaucracy involved in having a case sorted out and getting something through requires an incredible amount of dedication and resources and often a financial commitment. That contradicts other messages which are sent out by the government that Canada welcomes new immigrants and welcomes people to become citizens. These are issues we have to be very concerned about in the legislation and policy changes that come forward by the government.

There has been a lot of concern about the language requirements. It is easy to fall into the trap that we should get into major testing and that new immigrants should be fluent in one of the official languages. I know from what takes place in my local community and from the contributions made by my constituents that language is not necessarily the issue upon which we can determine whether or not someone is part of a community and is contributing.

I think of the history of Vancouver East and neighbourhoods like Strathcona, Chinatown, or Grandview Woodlands where Italians settled. Many of the people who came to those communities were not proficient in either English or French and they still made an

incredible contribution. They created jobs. They created new businesses. They provided the cultural diversity which blossomed within the city.

The focus on the language requirement, and what many perceive to be a tightening of that requirement is causing very deep concern within the community. Government members, particularly those who represent ridings in which there is high cultural diversity, should be aware of this. The signals being sent out concern a lot of people.

As we go through these changes, and there are more to come, we have been told continually by the government that there have been mega consultations. The feedback I get from my riding is that there is very strong concern about where this legislation and other proposals in the works are leading to.

My colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona pointed out that there is also a lot of concern about the head tax that still exists and the fact that it is very discriminatory. There is still a lot of concern about citizenship being based on the ability to pay rather than on making sure our citizenship policy is based on welcoming all kinds of people from different economic and social classes. These are matters of serious concern. What we want to do today is say to the government that this requires a serious review to make sure that the message that goes out is that Canada is a welcoming place, a place which does not place onerous requirements on people and say “you have to fit into this box in terms of language or in terms of money or where you come from, or we’ll make sure that depending on where you apply to come in, you may or may not get through because there so much discretion in the system”.

● (1115)

Those of the kinds of things we want to get away from. We want to get back to what I believe is a very strong historical role for Canada, that this country was built on new citizenship and built on the contribution of many different kinds of people. That is what has made this country great. It is something I am very proud of in east Vancouver.

I express those concerns to the government members, to the Liberal Party, and say we have to proceed very cautiously in this direction. People understand that the future of Canada in terms of what kind of people come here, what kind of rules we have hangs in the balance. I have no doubt that members have heard those concerns expressed but we want to make sure that those concerns are acted on and that Canada’s policies for citizenship are welcoming, open and fair.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John’s East, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make a few comments on this bill today. Immigration is a very important area of concern. It is an area in which all of us as

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Canadians have a stake. Hopefully we can look at the policies of the immigration department and conclude that they have over the years served our country well. I think by and large the policies have served us well for a number of years. Now it is time to update the act so that these policies can move us into the new millennium reflecting the concerns of prospective immigrants and Canadians generally.

One point I would like to make deals with confirming that all children born in Canada, except the children of foreign diplomats, will automatically become Canadian citizens.

I want to point out to the minister of immigration that perhaps this ignores the problem of someone entering Canada, making a refugee claim, having a child while in Canada and then having the refugee claim refused. What do we do with the child if the parent has to be deported? Can we force the parent to leave knowing that the infant Canadian citizen will either be abandoned here or should such an infant accompany the parent even if the parent is returning to an undesirable part of the world?

These are difficult questions. No doubt the courts or our United Nations obligations will tell us the answers in due course.

The new act treats children adopted abroad much the same as children born here. I understand the minister’s desire not to put an undue stigma on adopted children, but Canadians should understand as well that the change removes the requirement that children adopted abroad have the normal medical and other checks required of an immigrant.

My question here to the minister of immigration is are Canadians generally aware of that change and would they support it if they were fully aware of it.

The new citizenship act requires that to be eligible to become a citizen one has to reside physically here for three years. Now it allows one five years to accumulate these three years of actual residence. That is something that we can all support, given the highly mobile workforce we are into today in this global economy.

● (1120)

I think we can all accept that. However, I sincerely hope there are bureaucratic mechanisms to check on the facts of residency. Simply having a mailing address here in Canada is not enough and that has been the case in some instances in the past. People would apply for citizenship in Canada and simply have a mailing address here.

I have no problem with requiring that a citizenship applicant as opposed to a new refugee for example be required to speak English or French, or have some working knowledge of English or French, and some knowledge of Canada generally.

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We need standardized testing or other mechanisms to ensure that such knowledge and language skills are indeed real and not simply something that will be seen on an application form.

I am pleased that so-called citizenship judges are being removed from the decision making loop. Decisions on citizenship should be made by professional civil servants who have training and who have experience in the field.

I am sure all of us as MPs deal with immigration cases almost on a daily basis. My experience as an MP dealing with actual cases that come across my desk is that there are often inconsistencies in treatment from one officer to another. Firm guidelines for decision making are required so that there is a high likelihood that a decision made on an individual in the Vancouver office is consistent with the decision made on an individual in the Toronto office. I am sure that in committee we have heard complaints associated with that concern in the past.

As for the replacement of judges with commissioners, I am wondering, and I think a lot of people would wonder, if these people are really needed. Is it just another avenue for government to make patronage appointments? If there is a public role to be performed in promoting the value of Canadian citizenship I suggest that the minister co-ordinate these efforts with the heritage minister as was pointed out by a member of the official opposition a couple of weeks ago.

Section 43 of the act makes provision for making regulations on a host of issues. I have concerns about the widespread use of regulations. Since regulations are made internally they can be changed internally and not necessarily debated here in the House of Commons or not necessarily be made available to the media for full and open scrutiny.

Regarding the oath of citizenship, I have no problems with swearing allegiance to the Queen since Canada is still a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. We all have to swear an oath to take our place here in the House of Commons. As for the other parts of the oath there should be more public consultation as to the wording of it. There is no problem with the public being involved as long as the constitutional bases are covered and indeed it would be beneficial to have some kind of public consultation or debate on the value of Canadian citizenship generally. It would be beneficial for all of us here in the House of Commons and also for all Canadians to hear from time to time the value of being a Canadian.

All the new laws in the world will not improve the citizenship application and approval process if the proper systems are not put in place. Many of the problems with the current system come from the many inconsistencies in policy application and the lack of financial resources to do the proper jobs. The laws are no good if they are unworkable or if they are totally unenforceable. What is

needed first and foremost is the political will to do a good job and the personnel and funds to carry it out.

• (1125)

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for St. John's East. It is refreshing to have somebody stand and talk to the specifics of the act.

The member agrees with getting rid of citizenship court judges but he wonders about the need for citizenship commissioners. One of the problems we have in this country is that Canadians do not know enough about our history, which is an incredible history, and that we are not promoting Canadian citizenship the way we should be.

The issues the member raised regarding the language requirements will be a topic of debate in committee and we will get to committee as soon as we pass second reading in the House. After we deal with this act we will be returning with other acts.

The member raised a good question as it relates granting citizenship status. To the Reform Party I say it really is enlightening to have a pan-Canadian party, as the Conservative Party is, instead of a regional party, which the Reform Party is, stand in the House and seriously debate the substance of the bill.

The member raised the concern about granting citizenship to people born in this country. He raised the issue that it could be a child of a refugee. He is concerned about the implications. We are not aware of this being abused. Is the member aware of some situation where it has been abused? If so we would like to know about it.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I am not aware of any particular instance where that clause has been abused. One of the responsibilities we have as members is to look for possible loopholes in the act. In going over the act I find that to be a loophole that ignored the problem of someone entering Canada, making a refugee claim, having the child and then the refugee claim being refused. What happens in that instance? What do we do with the child if the parent has to be deported? That is a reasonable concern. Can we force the parent to leave knowing that the infant Canadian citizen is here and could be abandoned? Or do we simply force the parent to take the child back to wherever the refugee came from, knowing it might be an undesirable part of the world?

It is a concern. It should be raised in the House of Commons. The minister should address the concern and bring an answer back to the House.

• (1130)

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address Bill C-63. I want to concentrate on several

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issues within it. I will be splitting my time. The member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast will follow me, and all subsequent members from the Reform Party will be splitting their time.

It is necessary to look at the whole citizenship issue in terms of the quality and quantity of citizens in Canada. We first have to ask ourselves what comes first, the citizen or the immigrant. As all of us know the answer is that the immigration system comes first and it dictates the quality of citizens in Canada.

Further to that I think quality of life in Canada is dependent upon the quality of all citizens regardless of their place of origin. As we go along in the evolution of this country we have to keep that in mind. For the six Liberals who are sitting in the House today, not very many listening to their own bill, we will try to make clear to them what the issues are.

Earlier one of our colleagues, the House leader of the NDP, discussed the issue of an advertisement in the *Latin Trade Magazine*. As a matter of fact I raised this issue some time ago but I just want to further elaborate on it because I feel the same way as he does. The very fact that ads like this are in magazines in other countries does not bode well for this country.

The image is that one can get into Canada regardless of one's status in one's own country. In fact that is quite true. The ad states a person is guaranteed immigration to Canada with the purchase of a fleet rent a car franchise for a total investment of \$50,000. It says in the ad that a person is guaranteed immigration to Canada even with a criminal record.

One has to wonder what possesses people in Canada to advertise this in other countries. A while back I had a little talk with this company and I can assure members that what is in here is in fact true. In fact this company takes money from individuals, even if they are criminals; buys some cars and I am sure pockets a good deal of the change; and marks up the value of those cars enough to justify the individual coming into this country. It has closed its doors since we raised this issue or at least its phone calls have been relocated somewhere.

When asked whether or not a person from another country with a criminal record could buy into it, the answer was: "You can get into Canada with criminal records. In fact, if you go from this particular country to Russia and then to Europe, you could probably squeeze into Canada that way and through this sponsorship program".

I pursued it a lot further than that. The police actually investigated the company. The file was forwarded to the Department of Justice for a decision on whether to lay a charge. Of course the Department of Justice did not lay a charge because it thought there were the usual legal industry technicalities to get away with it

under the Immigration Act. It said it could not push it because the Immigration Act was so flexible.

I read the Immigration Act which basically states that in the Immigration Act or in the enforcement of its policies a person with a criminal record in whatever country is precluded from applying to immigrate to Canada.

• (1135)

It also happens there are indications that this particular company is connected to the Russian Mafia. Is this a surprise in the House of Commons? Wrong. The Liberal government knows about the ads. The Liberal government knows how this is working. Yet the Liberal government allows it to continue. When government brings an act into the House, a citizenship act, knowing full well that ultimately those individuals will become Canadian citizens, exactly what does it think those individuals will be doing? Will they become ministers or engineers in Canada? What does it think the citizenship will be after they arrive?

It goes to show that on the surface bills like this one look great. Basically it is platitudes to the rest of us because there is much more wrong with the system today than citizenship. I have attended lots of citizenship ceremonies since I have been an MP. I have attended lots of deportation hearings of criminals. I have been an intervener in those hearings. Yet the government fights harder and harder and spends more money for criminals to stay here than it does for law-abiding citizens who immigrate to this country to stay here.

I would like to tell the House about some of the individuals I have dealt with. When I have been dealing with these individuals I have wondered why the government is hell bent on keeping these individuals in Canada, knowing full well that ultimately they will become citizens. For the five Liberals in the House, I would really like to get my message across.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford knows that it is improper to make reference to the presence or absence of members in the House, particularly the absence.

I have made speeches before too, and I know there is an argument to be made that in referring to the number of members here you are actually referring to the presence of members and not the absence. I have found myself in difficulty in doing that in the past and I know the hon. member would want to comply with the rules in every respect and set an example for all members of his party. After all, he is the House leader and therefore he would want to comply with the rules in every respect. I think he knows it is perhaps not quite in accordance with the standing orders to refer to the number of members who are here, with the suggestion that there is a bunch who is not.

Members have other responsibilities. He knows that. Perhaps he could resume his remarks without those kinds of references.

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Mr. Randy White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I kind of thought the House leader of the official opposition had some kind of special privilege in the House to identify there were not that many around on the other side to listen to the fact that Bill C-63 was supposed to be an important bill.

Getting back to the difficulties I am having with this contradiction of the Liberals, so to speak, on one side we are funding through government dollars, through legal aid, to keep criminals in the country, as well as allowing advertising inviting criminals to the country. On the other side they are saying that they are opening up the legislation for citizenship.

We only have to listen to a few stories like the 80-plus Honduran gang in Vancouver that has been openly selling drugs to our kids on the street. Not too long ago the police in Vancouver arrested these thugs and yet not one of them has been deported. They will very likely be staying in this country and will ultimately become citizens.

• (1140)

We have cases upon cases of individuals who are basically undesirable in our country wreaking havoc among our citizenry, selling drugs and whatnot. Yet the Liberals are hell bent on determining that we should improve the system of citizenship to make sure some of these people stay. That is wrong.

The Citizenship Act provides now for immigrants to come into the country and be citizens. We are happy for that, but the front end take of the immigration system is flawed. The patronage appointment system to the refugee board and the immigration board is flawed. I know members opposite do not want to hear this but it is flawed. I have been through that more than anybody in the House.

I wonder why, for instance, the refugee system is currently entertaining an application from an American. Why is it that we are entertaining a refugee application from an American? I tried to be an intervener in that process and was cut off. The individual applicant basically said "It is a matter of my privacy and you cannot come in". Now I have to fight that, get on the inside and find out what the problem is.

A fellow by the name of Montenegro, a Honduran drug dealer with numerous trafficking charges, has claimed refugee status. Why? To beat a deportation certificate. I applied to attend the refugee hearing but as soon as the refugee board got my application as an intervener it gave him a hearing because it did not want the spotlight on this individual. I told the board to make its decision and let me know what it did with him. The board said "No, that is privacy and we will not tell you what we did with him". I happen to know that individual is still in the country and will ultimately perhaps become a citizen.

What is this citizenship legislation that so few Liberals want to listen to? The front end of our citizenship program in this country has to be immigration and the immigration system cannot be flawed. My message to the Liberals is to concentrate on what has to be changed, and that is a very flawed immigration-refugee system.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I point out to the hon. member that when people who are here on refugee status get charged they are presumed to be innocent until they are convicted.

If the member is telling the House that as soon as a charge is laid we should then consider the individual guilty, I wish he would stand in his place and say so because due process applies to everybody in Canada. Mr. Sekora—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary knows he will have to use the proper constituency name. I am sure he is referring to the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. I hope that is what he meant.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, that is certainly what I meant.

That member said if someone is convicted, not charged but convicted. I think it is important for the Reform Party to understand the difference because it really determines the kind of country we are living in.

There are countries in the world, on the planet, where once one is charged one is deemed to be guilty. Maybe that is what the Reform Party wants, but certainly the government does not want that and most Canadians do not want that. The member referred to the Hondurans who are charged before the courts. I can assure the member that once a person is convicted that is very much taken into account as to whether that person is allowed to stay in this country. I would venture to say that people who are convicted of drug offences will not find themselves granted citizenship.

• (1145)

Furthermore, if the member were to examine that he would notice that in cases where people are applying for citizenship and they are facing a criminal charge or if they are on probation, then they will not get citizenship during that period of time. I think it is important for the member to let Canadians know that yes, we are very much concerned about making sure people who come to this country and acquire their citizenship are going to be contributing to this country, instead of focusing continually on the small percentage of people who cause us problems.

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Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, if this member ever came to my community he would find out that this is not such a small problem. The fact is these Hondurans are on film. They have been selling drugs to our kids in Vancouver. They have every opportunity and will very likely stay in this country because this deportation system does not work.

The fact is there was a fellow in my riding, until I had him removed to Laos, Boungan Inthavong, who got his refugee status while in prison. It was given to him to block his deportation after he had beaten a 17-year old to death with a bat in my community.

I can cite dozens of examples like this. The problem is this government has no clue whatsoever of how serious the problem is. Individuals in this country convicted of crimes very seldom are deported because this government has a policy of spending taxpayer money to defend them at the same time it is spending taxpayer money to deport them. It is the only government in the world that fights itself and loses.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in this debate today. It was interesting to listen to the parliamentary secretary talk about what is happening in this area. The citizenship bill was brought to the minister by this House four and a half years ago. We have had to wait four and a half years for legislation that is not going to solve the problem of when people come to Canada until they become citizens of Canada.

It is amazing to me to listen to the parliamentary secretary talk about the Reform Party. I also heard the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, a parliamentary secretary, and also the member for Laval West talk about the Reform Party and our position on immigration and how we do not like immigrants, how we do not want immigrants in this country, and he is nodding his head. It is a bunch of nonsense.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary, when he has some time instead of sitting there in his political way looking at these partisan issues, to sit down and talk to the member for Edmonton—Strathcona in my party, talk to a man who was a refugee, an immigrant to this country who is now a citizen and a member of parliament; talk to the member for Dauphin—Swan River who came to this country and is not only a citizen of this country now but is also a member of parliament; talk to the member for Surrey Central who came to this country as a refugee, an immigrant, and became a citizen of this country and was elected to the Parliament of Canada; talk to the member for Calgary East who came to this country as a refugee, an immigrant, and is now a member of parliament.

If the hon. member wants to talk about citizenship, he should talk to the Reform Party. We are out there listening to people. We have members elected by Canadians who know what immigration is all about.

The parliamentary secretary can smile about that but we are here to improve the country for Canadians. We like immigrants. We know Canada is built on immigrants. That is why we have the largest number of immigrants elected in this party right here in this parliament than any other party. The member can check those numbers out and find out I am correct. We are talking ratios of our party to any party in this House. We have more than all the other opposition parties combined. We have done that because our party does go out and talk to the immigrants of this country. We have talked to the people who are building Canada. We are very proud of what we are doing and of what we are doing in this House.

• (1150)

This government wants to talk about citizenship. It has taken four and a half years. Government members have talked about penalties for bureaucratic delays. When I read that section of the bill it made me smile. The current act allows an individual whose application for permanent residence is approved to count each full day of residency in Canada from the date they put their application in. That makes sense. You are living here, you are an immigrant to Canada, you are applying to become a citizen.

What does the government do in this bill? Bill C-63 removes that provision so applicants will now be penalized for the system's bureaucratic delays even when the delays are through no fault of the applicant. What does that mean? I cannot believe any responsible person elected to this House would allow this section to be in the bill. It obviously could not have been read by the minister, the parliamentary secretary or anybody else on that side of the House. This is a bureaucratic insert in the bill. I say that because bureaucrats like delays.

Let us look at the immigration department when it comes to delays. Let us look at the L.A. office. A person from Hong Kong applied through the L.A. office because they had been turned down in Hong Kong. This party brought it to the attention of the House. This party forced the government into having an investigation of that application through the L.A. office. It was party that got a person appointed to go down there to have a look at it. The person came back with a report saying that it was all a big mistake, there was no criminality but just a big mistake. He should never have been approved there. Somebody forgot to punch it in the computer to find out he had been refused. He is now sitting in Canada. He is one of the biggest crooks in the world and he is still in Canada, still in British Columbia. He will probably get some citizenship somewhere along the line because we will not have the guts to deport him.

That is what this bill is about, bureaucratic delays. We do not need those bureaucratic delays. It was this party that brought to the attention of the government that up to \$200,000 went missing in the L.A. office. That was well over a year ago and we have yet to hear what has happened to that \$200,000. We know the RCMP was

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investigating. We know the police in L.A. were investigating. We know somebody has taken off with the money but where is it? We do not know and the bureaucrats do not want us to know because they are afraid it might embarrass this government.

Yet what do we have in this bill? A section that says bureaucratic delays are taken away from your time when you are applying to become a citizen. That does not sound to me like a party that wants to create citizens in Canada. It wants to delay your citizenship. That is in this bill. It is not a very good section of the bill. It is really rather embarrassing.

There are a lot of other very upsetting areas of this bill. The most upsetting part of all is that we have not really got to the major parts of what is wrong with this whole department. Here we have a minister who takes four and a half years after a parliamentary committee makes a recommendation to make changes in citizenship and other areas, and what do we have? We have a bill on citizenship with loads of holes and loads of faults, one of which I just mentioned.

Where are the bills on the refugee issue? Where are the bills on the criminality? All we have seen from this minister in the last year and a half is two big press conferences, big thick books full of things she is going to do, and then she changes her mind.

Where is the scanning process to make sure these illegal refugees do not get in this country? That is an issue everybody in the committee agreed on, even the Liberals who sat on that side, yet it will not even be in the legislation according to the minister's latest press release. She is not looking at that problem because it does not suit her needs or her plans. This minister has sat on her seat for four and a half years with no legislation for immigration. We have a citizenship bill that is full of holes but it is not the major problem.

Last year's auditor general's report talked about 20,000 people being ordered deported from this country. How many have been deported? Four thousand. When we asked the department where the other 16,000 were, it was not quite sure. They probably reapplied to get their citizenship. We want to talk about this bill. Where are those people today? Probably still roaming Canada somewhere although the department says that some of them may have crossed the border and gone somewhere else. I doubt that very much. It seems there is more crossing the border to come into Canada than going the other way. That includes what my colleague, the House leader, talked about with the Hondurans in British Columbia. The member smiles on the other side and asks if they have been convicted yet. Yes, a lot of them have been convicted.

I was in Vancouver with a bunch of Vancouver police and some RCMP immigration officers.

• (1155)

We were looking down to the east side of Vancouver where a lot of people come when they arrive in Canada while waiting to apply

for citizenship. We were talking to a young 17 year old fellow from Honduras. He produced his papers for us. This young man had been in the country nine days. He was wearing quite nice clothes. The policeman said "You're mumbling. You have something in your mouth. Spit it out." So he spit out \$1,700 worth of crack cocaine. This man was 17 years old from Honduras and has been in downtown Vancouver for nine days. They just kicked him in the pants and told him to disappear.

I asked the Vancouver police why they did not arrest him. As members know, in British Columbia the police cannot lay charges. Charges have to be laid by a crown prosecutor. Crown prosecutors in British Columbia with a socialist government have told the police they do not want so many people in jail so eliminate some of the problems they have. It is not worthwhile to arrest this fellow. These are the words of the Vancouver police. They are frustrated over this whole issue.

I then turned to the RCMP officers and said why not at least get his name and his landed immigrant or refugee file number. The police cannot do that because he has not been convicted. This is the magic word from the parliamentary secretary. Has he been convicted yet?

What kind of society do we live in where we have to have a conviction? I was there. I saw the man spit the crack cocaine out. It is an illegal substance. We know he is peddling or using it. He should have been taken in. At least we should be telling the refugee officials this guy is in the drug business and should be sent back to Honduras right now.

We should be rounding these people up, putting them on an airplane and sending them right back to Honduras. It is not a bad place to be. Certainly Canada is better but there is process people must apply through to come to this country.

I mentioned people in my party who came here as refugees and immigrants. Talk to the member for North Vancouver. He came here as an immigrant and applied. The member for Wild Rose came here as an immigrant and applied through the system. What is wrong with the system?

What is wrong with the system is sections of Bill C-63 that talk about allowing the bureaucrats to use the days of their delay to delay the right of somebody to become a citizen in this country. I want these immigrants to become citizens of Canada. We should be encouraging it. The bureaucrats of this bill will be able to take three, four, five, six years to allow people who are legitimate refugees to become citizens of this great country.

We are as concerned as anybody regarding this situation of immigration and citizenship. But this bill should not have been the first bill in this House. The minister should get the other legislation

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here that all Canadians want. I hope we can get this section changed in committee.

No immigrant in this country should have their citizenship delayed because some bureaucrat wants to sit on it for another 30 or 60 days. It should not be a penalty for them. We should penalize the bureaucrats and give the immigrant a double day bonus for every day the bureaucrats delay him or her. This bill is wrong and we will oppose it.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about what I deduce he believes are instant citizens. In other words, once a person comes to this country that is the automatic acceptance of their commitment to our country.

I know the process is established to ensure that the person living here becomes familiar with our customs, our culture and our history. I think that is very important and they can actually prove they have taken the time and made the effort to learn who we are as a people before they declare their citizenship.

I was surprised at the member's cavalier attitude that once someone is landed in this country we should suddenly grant them citizenship. Is that the thrust of the member's argument?

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, it is not a cavalier attitude. We have a process and we agree with that process. A person has to be here for a certain period of time and study this country.

I ask the member to read this bill, because I am sure he is sincere, and the section concerning the legal amount of time to become a citizen. I am sure the member, like I, would like every immigrant who comes to this country to become a citizen of Canada so they can vote and participate in what is going on.

But right now this bill says after the period of time the person has been here, puts their application in, the days they have been here after that do not count. They should count for the amount of time they have been here. This allows the bureaucrats any delays they want. They can delay citizenship as long as they want with no penalties to the bureaucrats at all. I think that is wrong and I think the member would agree it is wrong.

• (1200)

Bureaucrats should not have that kind of control. Bureaucratic delays should not be counted against anyone. I think everybody in this House would want it. Anybody who comes to this country usually wants to become a citizen. We should do what we can to encourage them. I agree there are the three years they are here which used to be five years. That is the time in which they

assimilate into the community and learn the Canadian ways. I would hope we would encourage people.

I remember speaking with David Lam, who was lieutenant governor of British Columbia when I was speaker of the British Columbia legislature. He asked me to an ethnic dinner. He made a speech about people not living with their own people when they came to Canada. He advised Italians not to live in little Italy, and Chinese not to live in Chinatown but to live in the community. This was not me speaking. It was David Lam, an immigrant to Canada who rose to the highest post possible in our province as lieutenant governor. He was one of the greatest lieutenant governors we ever had.

He talked about studying the citizenship papers. He advised listeners to get their Canadian citizenship and become part of the community. I believe deeply in that. We should be encouraging people. We do not do enough of that. This is not partisan politics now. No matter what party is in power we should be encouraging everybody who comes here as an immigrant to get those papers, study hard and become a Canadian, part of the Canadian mosaic.

We spend more damned time on multiculturalism when we should be spending it on Canadianism.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has spent a great deal of time in politics. He is very wise in the area of looking at a system and seeing the problems and then looking for solutions that would make the system better. I too had the opportunity to go to Vancouver and witness the kinds of things he mentioned.

I know the parliamentary secretary and the government do not really want to hear today about the problems with the system. That has been shown in their attitudes here today. I would not mind hearing from my colleague what it is that he believes the minister should be focusing on rather than this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, I have already mentioned the one fault with the bill. There is another issue which I am sure my colleague from Burnaby will be speaking on. It is where the minister will have the power to redefine the family in this bill before the Parliament of Canada decides who should be redefining the family. Those are two issues of the bill which are of concern to me.

The main issue in this whole area is that the minister should be looking at the refugee problem and how it is happening. How are people getting across our border every day just by using the word refugee, while legitimate people from other parts of the world who want to come to Canada through the normal process are held back?

I know the parliamentary secretary can go on and on but as the auditor general said, 20,000 people were ordered deported last year and only 4,000 were deported. The same thing happens every year.

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There are a lot of serious problems. This bill is not touching one one-hundredth of one per cent of the problems with immigration.

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will split my time with the MP for Durham.

I am pleased to discuss Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

Citizenship is an issue that is very important to me, both personally and as a member of parliament. As an immigrant myself, I chose Canada as my country where I would live, work, raise a family and serve the community. As the member of parliament for Vancouver Kingsway, I represent one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse ridings in the country. I represent constituents who immigrated to Canada from countries around the globe, individuals from Italy, Portugal, Korea, Japan, India, China and many others.

I understand well how important it is that Canada has citizenship legislation that is up to date. We must clearly reflect contemporary Canadian values. Bill C-63 aims to modernize Canada's citizenship legislation.

• (1205)

Before 1947 when the first Canadian Citizenship Act was implemented, people born in Canada were considered to be British subjects. Of course the concept of citizenship has evolved over time. On the eve of the new century the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has tabled the citizenship of Canada act. I would like to explain some of the changes the bill outlines.

At the present time all children born in Canada are granted citizenship regardless of the immigration or citizenship status of their parents. Bill C-63 does not propose a change to this policy.

Citizenship is also granted to children born outside the country to Canadian parents. The implementation of this legislation would mean Canadian children born abroad would be required to meet residency requirements by the age of 28 in order to maintain their citizenship. This proposed requirement reflects the importance that Canadians attach to having strong ties to Canada as a condition of citizenship.

As well, the act would end discrimination against Canadian parents who adopt a child overseas. With the proposed changes, adopted children would be granted citizenship without having to go through the immigration process.

Bill C-63 would also make changes to residency requirements for immigrants. The legislation proposes that individuals applying for citizenship would live in Canada for at least three of the five years. These residency requirements ensure that prospective

Canadians become familiar with life in Canada and demonstrate their commitment to our country.

The legislation would also increase the chances for family reunification. We understand that need and respect the wishes of the Canadian family. It is important to have the family united in this land.

The bill also makes changes to the roles and the responsibilities of citizenship judges. Their title would be changed to citizenship commissioner. Their responsibilities would involve conducting ceremonies, advising the minister upon request and promoting citizenship. The new rules would guard against the abuse of powers or other offences committed in the context of duty.

The bill also proposes changes to the oath sworn by new Canadians when they obtain their citizenship. New citizens would swear allegiance to Canada and loyalty to Canada's head of state, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. New Canadians would commit to respect Canada's laws, rights and freedoms. The new oath will demonstrate attachment and commitment to Canada.

Canada depends on the commitment of people from diverse backgrounds to build a future together based on the sharing of such Canadian values as democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law.

As an immigrant I am proud to be a Canadian and I am proud to be the member of parliament for Vancouver Kingsway.

• (1210)

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that the official opposition was concerned about the numbers of government members in the House for this debate. I was wondering about the arithmetic but I stand corrected, I thought there was no opposition member where in fact there is one.

It gives me great pleasure to enter this debate on Bill C-63, an act to amend our Citizenship Act. I understand that the Citizenship Act has not been amended since 1947.

It is an interesting day to have this debate because yesterday was flag day to honour the 34th birthday of our great flag. It was my privilege to be part of a number of celebrations that occurred in my riding yesterday. It is something I have been promoting. When this first came about, only one school in my riding celebrated it and now about 10 schools are celebrating flag day. Hopefully some day it will be a national holiday and a national event for Canadians to celebrate another part of their heritage.

Canada is a young country in the family of nations. At the same time we are continuing to evolve and build our traditions. A number of issues come out when I look at one aspect of the bill, clause 34 which deals with the oath of citizenship.

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When I was first elected I went to a lot of citizenship ceremonies. Sadly there are not as many in my riding now because the judge system has changed. It was a tremendous event. Young and old people came to this country not because they were forced to but through selection. They wanted to come here for a very important reason. They wanted to leave possibly a poorer lifestyle to come and share in our lifestyle, our culture and our traditions. They wanted very much to be part of this country.

Those were great celebrations. There were people from all over the world who had spent five years in this country and had taken the time to study our history, our traditions and our culture. It was such an important day in their lives to swear allegiance to this country and to take their position along with the rest of us, having no less rights and freedoms than anyone else in this country. For anyone who has attended those ceremonies, it cannot help but be an uplifting experience to see what a great country this is. I sometimes think one of the problems is that not enough Canadians go overseas to really appreciate what a great country Canada is.

When I look at the oath of citizenship I see three themes. Strangely enough, I have studied the oaths in other countries and the themes are somewhat similar.

The first deals with respect for our democratic traditions. Canadians have developed their own unique traditions. We have certainly borrowed from other countries in the past. Notably the British common law system and also the French civil law system are a part of our culture. We have developed on that footing to evolve our own democratic traditions and ideals which has taken us over 100 years to do. What is important is that we have done that within Canada, Canadians dealing with each other, making compromises with each other and trying to understand each other and evolving their political traditions.

Another theme seems to be rights and freedoms. Those same people I talked about who came to this country very much understand what it is like to have rights and freedoms. They may possibly have come from countries that did not have those rights and freedoms. Canadians developed their own charter of rights and freedoms. In this place and in other legislatures in this country we have developed a whole body of rights and freedoms which we commonly respect.

The other theme seems essentially to be a respect for our laws. In other words we swear an oath saying we believe that even if the laws of the country are not just, we agree to abide by them and try to work within the political system to change them. However, at first blush we accept the laws of our country and we will respect them.

• (1215)

I have studied this issue of oath because it interested me. In Carswell's Canadian Law Dictionary the definition is the basic

purpose of an oath is to bind the consciousness of the witness. In other words, the conscience of the person who is taking this oath tells him that he must respect the rights and freedoms of these people. Canadians respect their laws and respect their democratic values. This is a very powerful statement of people.

What I am alluding to is that section 34 does not quite address what I think is an important aspect. That is Canadians have developed all the functions of a legal framework. There have been Canadians who have taken some of those traditions, evolved them and made them into something unique.

As we face the next millennium which is months away it seems appropriate that Canadians stand up and make their statement that their oath of allegiance is to Canada. It partially says that but it goes a little further. My colleague who just spoke specifically mentioned the oath.

After the last election I made a certain point to go beyond the so-called oath of the House of Commons. It is important because it is more significant than the traditional oath. I said that I do solemnly affirm my true allegiance to Canada in conformity with the Constitution of Canada. Something to this effect is a more appropriate oath for Canadians.

Some people will mention the monarchy. I am not opposed. I am not an anti-monarchist. I am pro-Canadian. It is time for Canadians to stand up and have an allegiance to their country which does not involve the head of state of another country, that of Great Britain.

What I suggest to the government is that we propose some sort of amendment to this legislation that will recognize that the oath of citizenship is to Canada only and to no other country. It has always seemed absurd to me when I listen to some of these people taking this oath of citizenship. Some of them did come from the United Kingdom. I know what was going through their minds. What they often asked me was what had they done. They thought they were coming to a new country. They wanted to share in our culture and traditions but they had to swear their allegiance to the monarch they left. They did not understand what we were doing as a country. I had to agree with them.

This is not anti-anything. A lot of people get involved in the emotions of all this. Nobody can steal our tradition as a people. We have had a linkage of history with the British commonwealth as we have with France. I am not talking about doing away with it. Canada can continue to be part of the British commonwealth. But as a small token of the realization that we are going into the 21st century we should as a minimum change this oath so it clearly swears allegiance solely to Canada, Canada's democratic traditions that Canadians have developed of themselves, Canada's rights and freedoms that we have developed by ourselves and those traditions that talk about our loyalty to our laws and upholding the laws of Canada that we evolved and developed.

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• (1220)

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian citizenship is worthy of protection. Our citizenship is very highly regarded internationally. I feel that Canadians expect and feel that this government has a duty to protect Canadian citizenship and what it means worldwide.

The citizenship and immigration committee reviewed this issue back in 1994. It sent recommendations to the government four and a half years ago. All I can say is this is typical of the inertia of this department and of its ministry. At this rate we can expect badly needed changes to the Immigration Act in the 22nd century.

The big question is if after four and a half years this is it, this is the best the minister can come up with?

I had the opportunity of representing the official opposition as a critic for the immigration portfolio. I can remember sitting at committees where they were dominated by the Liberal government. The citizenship and immigration committee four and a half years ago was also dominated by the Liberal government. Yet it had the courage to recommend to the minister of the day that the laws that grant Canadian citizenship to any child born in Canada should be amended. This minister chose to ignore that recommendation.

I would like to examine why it is a concern to Canadians. There are only two western democracies that automatically grant citizenship to every child born in their country, the United States of America and Canada. In the United States of America it is because of the 14th amendment to the American Constitution which was proposed by Congress in June 1866 in the aftermath of the civil war. It was to ensure that the freed slaves in the south were not denied their rights by state legislatures. The 14th amendment states: "All persons born or naturalised in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the United States and the state within where they reside".

However, because of this constitutional amendment the Americans are faced with a situation today where pregnant Mexican women sit on the south shore of the Rio Grande until they go into labour. Then they cross the river and they have children in the United States and are therefore United States citizens.

Earlier this morning we had Liberals talk about the long tradition in Canada of granting citizenship to children born in Canada. This long tradition started in 1977, not quite so long ago. This change has led to foreigners specifically coming to Canada to give birth so that their children will automatically have Canadian citizenship.

In 1995 there were 500 births to foreign women in British Columbia alone. That was more than 1% of the births in British Columbia.

In the city of Richmond almost 30% of births at the Richmond hospital were to foreigners. Despite the fact that these newborn babies spend only one or two weeks in Canada before they depart for their homeland, they possess an irrevocable right of entry into Canada.

There has not been any great problem with this to date because the eldest of these children would only be 22 years old. But who is to say what problems might arise in the future? Some of these returning Canadians might be members of organized crime. They might be terrorists, they might gang members and Canada will not be able to deny them entry because they will be Canadian citizens. What if some of these individuals have significant health problems? They will not be denied entry. They will have full access to our health care system because they are Canadian citizens.

• (1225)

Regardless of the potential problems that will undoubtedly arise over the next few years, the reality is there are thousands of individuals around the world who are Canadian citizens but whose only attachment to this country was the first two weeks of their lives.

In the true Reform tradition I sought out the opinions of my constituents two and a half years ago. I asked should children born in Canada to parents who are neither Canadian citizens nor landed immigrants automatically be considered Canadian citizens. I received 3,685 responses. Only 341 people said yes. That was only 9.25% of the respondents who felt that children born in Canada should automatically be Canadian citizens if their parents were not landed immigrants or Canadians.

If this is how Canadians and certainly my constituents feel why is the minister leaving that clause alone? Why is she not amending it as was recommended by the immigration and citizenship committee that reviewed it four and a half years ago?

The second issue this raises is adoption outside Canada. There is a clause in this new citizenship bill that will make it easier for Canadian parents to gain Canadian citizenship for a child adopted abroad.

It is interesting because this bill cautions that adoption must create a genuine parent-child relationship and cannot have been intended to circumvent Canadian immigration or citizenship law. But during my time as a member of parliament my office has dealt with two cases where an adopted child has subsequently tried to sponsor their natural parents to Canada.

I suggest to the minister that if she sincerely wants to prevent a circumvention of the immigration laws by adoptees, then she must amend the immigration law that prevents adopted children from sponsoring their natural parents.

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I would like to share the contents of an e-mail with the House. This is where a Canadian married a Romanian girl in Romania. I received this e-mail in December 1998. This individual returned to Canada in March 1998 and has been trying to get his wife to Canada ever since. On July 1, 1998 his daughter was born in Romania. Canadian immigration told him that Melissa, the daughter, was a Canadian and could accompany his wife or come to Canada earlier if desired. The daughter could come before the wife.

Two weeks ago his wife finally received her clearance to immigrate to Canada but was told that Melissa could not leave until it could be proven that she was the daughter of a Canadian. He was told that once his papers were filed it would be another six month process.

It is ironic to me and to Canadians that here is a child born to a Canadian who cannot come to Canada with its mother and yet we are encouraging people to adopt children, who are going to become Canadian just like that, without being landed immigrants first.

I suggest the process we have before this amendment in the citizenship act is the appropriate one. The adopted child comes to Canada as a landed immigrant and citizenship follows thereafter.

Before I close I would like to bring up the business of citizenship judges. I am very concerned that this government continues the process of patronage appointments in the position of commissioners. We had an excellent citizenship judge, Mrs. Pam Glass, who served her people well in British Columbia and was removed because she had one flaw. She was not a federal Liberal. Although she was competent and doing her job extremely well, the government has chosen to replace her with a political appointed person. The citizenship act falls far short of what Canada needs in terms of protecting the citizenship we hold proudly.

• (1230)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Was it the intention of the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley to split her time?

Ms. Val Meredith: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it unfortunate that the tone of the debate from the other side of the House is less than generous.

The question asked was what if those immigrants were experts in a specialized field and we did not have a great number of them in Canada. What if they were great humanitarians? What if they were outstanding citizens? What if they were healthy people with no anticipated health problems? Even if they were, our society has many people with the same problems.

We are an accepting democratic nation. Why do we always have to look at it from an angle of negativity? Why do we set a negative premise?

Let us look at the aboriginal history of Canada. What if the aboriginal people of this country were not as accepting, understanding, trusting and sharing with regard to the in-migration of people from other countries? Then what would we have? What would we have had? If we had a closed door policy on immigration, would Canada be what it is today?

Why are we not more generous, more understanding and more accepting? Why are we not working together on this policy?

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. member across the way that Canada could not be more generous if it tried. It lets in people with criminal records. It lets people who are known terrorists in the international scene. It is more generous than it should be.

My comments were about newly born children. I may be missing something, but I do not think a one or two week old child can be a professional or a business person. We are talking about children who were born and whose parents came to this country simply to give birth. They are not Canadian. They are not landed citizens. We are talking about people who plan holidays so that their children will be Canadian citizens.

The government can continue to turn its eye from the reality of the situation, but Canadians demand that it protects the integrity of Canadian citizenship. If it fails to do that, it will be letting down Canadians who proudly hold citizenship, either those who were born here or new immigrants who take on citizenship.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last parliament the hon. member and I were members of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship for two years. We did not agree too many times then and I do not agree with her now.

My question is on the points she did not mention like the citizenship oath. Does the hon. member agree with changing the words in the oath? In discussions we had in 1994 she did not agree with the changes. Now we have the changes but she has not said anything. Does she agree with the changes or not?

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, there is no question I disagree with the government. Like one of his colleagues, I believe the citizenship oath of this country should also include a pledge of loyalty to Canada and to respect the laws and institutions of Canada.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley. If somebody's parents come from two different countries and have been here for two and a half to five

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years and are still waiting for citizenship, what country should their children be national citizens of?

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, it is quite accepted internationally that children have the citizenship of their parents and that when the parents make application for Canadian citizenship they include their children in that application.

• (1235)

What happens in this country often is that the parents assume their children automatically are covered under their citizenship application. The children find out when they are adults and want a passport or something that their parents had not made that application for them. They find out they are not Canadian citizens when they thought they were.

We owe it to the children in Canada whose parents were not born here and are now Canadian citizens to make sure they understand that they need to check to make sure they are Canadian citizens and not just expect it was done for them by their parents.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak today to Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

I am also one of the members of the Reform Party who are immigrants to Canada. I was not born in this country. I came as a child and at that time was unable to obtain Canadian citizenship until I reached my age of majority, as it was called. I remember one of the first things I did when I turned 21 was to apply to become a Canadian citizen. I took a great deal of pride in attending the ceremony in citizenship court and taking a very heartfelt oath of allegiance. I felt very proud of my status as a Canadian citizen. I am a Canadian by choice.

I married a man who was also an immigrant to Canada and a refugee from eastern Europe, as one might tell by my name. As a refugee and immigrant my husband Tom also took enormous pride in being a citizen of this country. As well, my sister married an immigrant from Nigeria.

The whole area of citizenship and immigration is one that is very near and dear to my family, to me personally and to me as a representative of Canada and Canadians and a representative of many immigrants to Canada from my riding of Calgary—Nose Hill.

My records show that over half of the case work that comes into my constituency office is related to the area of citizenship and immigration. I say to the parliamentary secretary opposite that the citizenship and immigration system is not working in the best interest of immigrants and of many new Canadians.

The bill is a bit like an analogy where the minister has inherited a vehicle which is very unreliable. It does not serve the people who hope to ride in it and be transported by it. It is a danger to them in some cases.

What does the minister do? The minister decides to fill up the windshield wiper fluid container. That is about what the bill does. We have a system which people in the House have pointed out to the government is not working. It is full of very unfair, unworkable, even dangerous provisions, lapses and anomalies. Yet the minister has chosen to bring in a bill that just does a bit of cosmetic change.

Members of the House are trying to point out to the government in a responsible and thoughtful way that there are many areas of our immigration and citizenship system which need substantive addressing. The government is well aware of this. Its own committee dominated by its own members made it clear in the past to the minister and to the government that substantial change and improvement were needed.

Yet the best the government can do is a shoddy attack on people who thoughtfully point out there needs to be a better service for Canadians, and particularly new Canadians, in the system of immigration and citizenship that is presently in place.

• (1240)

The government was elected in 1993. It was to make an overhaul of our social system and of our immigration and citizenship act. When any change is contemplated there is a study, a commission or committee set up to advise the government looking at the issues and advise the government as to changes that should be made. In fact that was done.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration was asked by the minister to advise the government on how the system should be overhauled. The committee did its work. We must bear in mind that the committee was made up of a majority of government members. The recommendations from the committee were not just from the opposition but from government members. They released a very thoughtful report. It was called "Canadian Citizenship: A Sense of Belonging".

The committee did its work with commendable timeliness. The government was elected in October 1993 and in June 1994 the committee released its report, having made some months of thoughtful study.

I ask the House to calculate the amount of time from June 1994 to the present, February 1999. I am sure even the parliamentary secretary will acknowledge the truth of my assertion that it took nearly five years for the minister to put any legislation before the House. It was five years, not from the time the government said it would make some needed improvements to the whole immigration and citizenship act, but from the time the study and recommendations were completed.

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What do we find in the bill? The bottom line is that the bill does not address almost all the recommendations of its own Liberal dominated committee. I do not know where that work, that study, that consultation with Canadians and that examination of the issues went. I do not know what good it did. I do not know that the hours of thoughtful, earnest and sincere work by government and opposition members on this matter were of any use because most of what was in the report has simply been ignored. The bill goes its own way and refuses to address many of the issues raised by the committee.

It neglects some of the critical areas that need attention and alters other recommendations in a negative way. The government and the minister have much to answer for in ignoring the recommendations of members of the House on these important points and issues.

The bill fails to fix some of the mechanical difficulties and some of the safety issues of the immigration and citizenship vehicle and stops at filling up the windshield wiper container. That is about all the bill does.

Under clauses 31 and 32 of the bill the duties of current citizenship judges will be handed over to Citizenship and Immigration Canada departmental officials. The citizenship judges with whom I have had the privilege of being associated in the city of Calgary, and particularly Judge Ann Wilson, had nothing but the deepest respect in the immigrant and ethnic communities of our city. Judge Ann Wilson, who worked tirelessly to cultivate good relations and communications with groups that represented and were representative of new Canadians, had a heart of welcome and of good will for new Canadians.

● (1245)

It was a pleasure to attend her citizenship ceremonies where she presided. This tangible link between the minister, the minister's department and new Canadians will now be severed. However, the Liberals, although they got rid of the citizenship judges they did not appoint, want to have the ability to reward their good and faithful supporters so they have set up citizenship commissioners. We are not quite sure what the commissioners are going to do. We understand they are going to promote active citizenship in the community, whatever that means.

A very good institution has been done away with under this bill substituting other patronage appointments under the Liberals. Again, what is being served other than Liberal political priorities?

I hope the committee will be asking some very tough questions of the minister and the departmental officials about this bill when it comes before it. I could make a number of other criticisms about the bill. Unfortunately 10 minutes goes very quickly.

The committee study should point out some of the obvious flaws of this bill. I hope to speak to it again at third reading.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. member that I came over in the same class as her husband in 1957.

The member mentioned that we do not have any legislation before us. We have this legislation before us and we are looking forward to getting it into committee to debate the various points and issues and then to bring it back to the House. Furthermore, once the committee discharges its duty in relationship to this bill, it will be engaging in a revision of the Immigration Act which will result in a bill being brought before the House.

I wanted to put that on the record to let members know that as soon as this bill clears the House a committee is waiting to study it clause by clause and call witnesses.

The member questioned why we were changing the citizenship judges to citizenship commissioners. Basically the courts have expressed a level of discomfort with having citizenship judges being called such since they are not graduates of law. It was therefore deemed that commissioners would be much more appropriate. However, that will be open to debate once it gets to committee.

The member also wanted to know what the functions would be of a citizenship commissioner. The function of a citizenship commissioner, as the government now envisions it, will be to very actively throughout the country promote Canadian citizenship. Clearly one task that should be embraced by all members of the House is to promote Canadian citizenship.

Let us get this bill to committee and we can get working on it clause by clause and then look forward to doing the revision of the Immigration Act.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's explanation of this whole change from citizenship judges to citizenship commissioners. If it is simply a name change why were the citizenship judges like Judge Ann Wilson who were so well regarded, well known, well respect and effective in the communities turfed out the door so that new appointments could be made by Liberals?

I do not think anyone has a problem with a name change, although we could quibble about whether it is really necessary, but when we take effective and knowledgeable people out of the community and out of their positions under the guise of a name change then there is a legitimate question being raised.

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• (1250)

I urge the parliamentary secretary to think about whether this change is about a name change or whether it is about a politically motivated change. That is the way I see it.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary just made a big point about getting this to the committee and making sure the committee had the appropriate interaction.

I wonder whether we could ask the member from Nose Hill to please clarify for us why she thinks the government members decided not to act on the special committee that dealt with citizenship and immigration. Does she think or believe that in the new consultations on this act there will be any different reaction to the suggestions that might be made than was the case in the past?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Kelowna makes a good point. The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has already studied this problem. It forwarded a report in June 1994 which was ignored by the minister. It does seem a little amusing that the parliamentary secretary is so eager to have this matter brought back before the very same committee which his minister has already ignored.

From my experience as a member of five plus years in the House very little substantive change or real thoughtful debate and amendment does take place at committees. It is one of the frustrations I have with the way the House works. I think that all members of committees could make a real contribution to improving legislation. I urge the parliamentary secretary to ensure that, for a change, as the committee studies this bill this does happen.

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

I begin by congratulating the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on this initiative in her ongoing commitment to improving legislation for which she is responsible.

In 1968 I left behind my homeland and my family in a small village in Croatia in search of a better life. I found that life in Canada. I found a job. I met my wife with whom I have four wonderful children. Today I sit in the House of Commons representing the people of Cambridge, Kitchener, Ayr and North Dumfries.

I still remember that day in Waterloo, September 12, 1973, the day I received my Canadian citizenship. It was one of the proudest days of my life. From that moment on I joined the Canadian family. I became eligible to vote. I became eligible to stand for elected office. I became eligible to carry the most respected passport in the world.

Almost 26 years after becoming a Canadian citizen I often find myself at citizenship ceremonies in my capacity as a member of parliament. I can tell the House that welcoming new Canadians into our Canadian family is a part of my job which I enjoy. It is the look of pride and commitment on the faces of my constituents that reminds me of my swearing-in ceremony.

I took and continue to take my responsibilities as a Canadian citizen very seriously. I got involved in my community, I joined a political party, I ran for office and I always obeyed the laws of this country. I know the people I meet at citizenship ceremonies in Cambridge and Kitchener will take their responsibilities as seriously as I have taken mine.

• (1255)

We have a bill before us today that represents the first major reform with respect to citizenship in more than 20 years. The most significant amendment, in my opinion, is one that changes the oaths of citizenship to better reflect Canadian values and express clearer loyalty to Canada.

The most important element of the new oath is that it puts loyalty and allegiance to Canada above everything else. The oath also contains the promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to defend our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfill our duties and obligations as Canadian citizens. These words have greater meaning to new Canadians on whom the original oath to the Queen is often lost and is somewhat confused.

Bill C-63 proposes several other significant improvements to existing legislation. It gives citizenship at birth to all persons born in Canada except the children of foreign diplomats and it gives children born abroad to Canadian parents automatic Canadian citizenship. Second generation children born abroad will also receive citizenship at birth but will lose it if by age 28 they have not resided in Canada. Third generation children born abroad will no longer have any claim to Canadian citizenship. Children adopted abroad can no longer be treated as immigrants and will not have to meet medical or permanent residency requirements before being granted citizenship.

There are also changes to the residency requirements for citizenship. Now a prospective citizen will require at least three years of physical presence within Canada in the five years before applying for citizenship. I think that is the right way to go.

Those who obtain citizenship through the use of false identity or who withhold information about criminal activities abroad could lose their citizenship as a result of new ministerial powers contained in this legislation. The minister also refuses to grant Canadian citizenship where granting would offend ordinary Canadians. I firmly support these two amendments.

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Everyone who comes to Canada as I did over 30 years ago must realize that citizenship in this country is not something that you automatically get after living here for a few years. Citizenship must be earned. To earn it one must obey the laws of Canada, respect Canada and contribute to Canadian society in a positive way.

If someone comes here and lies about who they are or what they did before they got here and then disrespect our laws, they do not deserve to become citizens. In fact, one has to question whether they should be allowed to remain in Canada at all.

Some members know I introduced a private member's bill several years ago which would speed up the deportation of non-citizens convicted of serious crimes in Canada. I introduced the bill in response to two tragic murders in the Toronto area, Georgina Leimonis, a young woman who was murdered at a Just Desserts cafe, and Metro Toronto police constable Todd Baylis. The accused murderers in both of these cases were non-citizens who had lived in Canada for some time and had lengthy criminal records.

• (1300)

People like them should not be allowed to stay in Canada. They should serve time for their crimes and then put on a plane out of here. We do not want them in Canada, nor should we ever consider giving them the privilege of Canadian citizenship. That is why I applaud this initiative which would allow the minister to refuse citizenship to anyone who is less than deserving.

With reference to my bill on deportation, Bill C-321, it was in committee when parliament was dissolved for the 1997 election and has yet to be drawn this session. I do have faith it will become law. The minister and her staff have been extremely supportive of this initiative and I expect that the necessary changes will be made in the near future.

Unlike many of you, I was not born in Canada. I chose Canada. I chose to become a Canadian citizen. I have lived in other countries and I have travelled to many countries. I can tell the House that the United Nation is right, Canada is the best country in the world in which to live.

Many Canadians who have not seen other parts of the world take for granted how truly lucky we are to live in this country. But those Canadians who are fortunate enough to travel abroad or who have come from another land know that Canadian citizenship and a Canadian passport give us instant respect at a border crossing or customs checkpoint and particularly with average people around the world.

Everyone we meet abroad loves Canadians. They all have friends or relatives who have moved here and all hope to visit some day. They recognize that although we speak the same language as our

American neighbours, we are different. Our country is a mosaic and not a melting pot. When one becomes a citizen of Canada, one is not asked to give up one's roots, language, culture or history. One can still keep them and preserve them and share them with the rest of us. One is simply asked to embrace the language and history of the new country and to obey its laws. This is a very small price to pay for the privilege of being able to say "I am a Canadian".

I chose this country. I am proud of this country. I am proud to serve this country and I would encourage all new Canadians to embrace the best country in the world.

In closing I leave the House with a few words from Judge Robert Somerville, the citizenship judge for Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. By the way, he is not a Liberal and I do not care what party or colours he follows, he is a very good citizenship judge. In speaking to new Canadians he said "We have achieved a way of life and standards of living that are rare in the world. The honour and dignity of Canadian citizenship are yours. Please treasure it and be proud of it".

• (1305)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the member for his strong feelings about this country and his citizenship privilege which I likewise received 30 years ago and can share that with him. I have a couple of comments and then a couple of questions for the member.

One thing he did say was he appreciated the minister's ongoing efforts to deal with citizenship and immigration. I would like to remind the member that this is the first piece of legislation I have seen since she has been minister which has been a long time so I do not think it is very ongoing. We need to speed up the process in the immigration and refugee areas.

I compliment the member for his private member's bill. He can count on my support once it is drawn. We are certainly thinking alike on that.

I wonder if the member is aware of the fact that there have been 20,000 deportation orders issued in Canada and there have actually been 4,000 deported, which means there are about 16,000 people who have not been deported. I wonder how the member feels about that and what should happen.

On his birthright statement, the member feels that any child born in Canada should have the privilege of becoming a citizen of the country. I would not debate that a great deal. In the case of a refugee claimant who may have given birth to a child here and the refugee claim is denied, then what should happen to the Canadian citizen, namely the child? What should we do? Does he not see something missing in this bill to deal with that?

Based on what I am getting on the changes of no longer having citizenship judges but having commissioners of citizenship, and

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judges already being released, I would hope that he would fight hard for the judge whom he believes so strongly in. I think the judge's job is very short lived if this bill passes. I think the citizenship judge will be gone and replaced with some patronage appointment.

I would like the hon. member's comments, please.

Mr. Janko Perić: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his future support of my private member's bill.

We are talking about citizenship. We are not talking about immigration. I am aware that there is a large number of refugees, people who should be deported. That is exactly what I am recommending in my private member's bill, to streamline the process and deport and save Canadian taxpayers money. I am aware that the hon. member knows that the Canadian Police Association supports this idea and I hope he will support it whenever that bill comes forward.

It would be much easier if there were only two countries on this planet, Canada and the rest of world. Then we would not have the question of whether the child born in Canada has the right to receive Canadian citizenship automatically. As the hon. member knows, we are a member of the United Nations and we have signed that declaration, that we do not recognize stateless people.

On citizenship judges, Judge Somerville is in his second term. He was appointed by a previous government. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and other area MPs including myself recommended Judge Somerville for reappointment. As I said in my speech, we did not ask Judge Somerville what colours he follows. We are aware that he was a member of the Conservative Party, but that does not bother me. He is a good citizenship judge. That is what is important. What are we going to call them? Are we going to call them judges or commissioners? In my opinion that is not too important. For me it is important that he is a good person who is doing an excellent job.

• (1310)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I too want to commend the hon. member who just spoke on his passion for Canada and on his allegiance to Canada. I am glad he chose Canada. I am one of those who was born in Canada. I am always proud to think that there are people from other countries who have chosen to come to Canada to live and become citizens of this great and wonderful land. It makes me feel good and proud that others would choose to live in this country.

If it does not make any difference what is in a name, why bother changing it? If it is okay to be a judge and if it is okay to be a commissioner and they are now judges, why bother to change it? If

it does not make any difference to him, why change it? Obviously somebody thinks it makes a difference or they would not be bothering to make the change. The change is only there in order to achieve something that somebody thinks is worthwhile. If it really is not important, then the legislation is unimportant and therefore we should not treat it with any kind of respect.

I am sure there is a fundamental error here in the judgment and the logic being used that it does not matter what they are called. If it did not matter, it would not be here. Could the member please explain that?

Mr. Janko Perić: Mr. Speaker, personally I have no problems with calling them judges or commissioners. The hon. member will have an opportunity to join the committee and to table an amendment on that issue. If the majority of committee members support it, the amendment will be accepted.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I have another comment following the member's reply to my colleague.

I am not sure how many committees this member has sat on. I have been on many committees. I have seen what comes in the front door and I have seen what goes out the back door. It is usually the same thing. There is very little in the way of changes.

The member has so much confidence in the committee I would like him to explain something to me. Four or five years ago the committee submitted a very comprehensive report. The committee did extensive work in getting public input and presented an excellent report on citizenship and what should be done. Liberal members contributed a great deal to the report. Where is that piece of work by the committee? It has disappeared. It has not been brought forward. There is no reflection of it in this bill whatsoever.

Committees on the Hill are not very functional. They do not accomplish a great deal because the attitude of the ministers is that they can do it better than committees. It is obvious that is what is happening. What happened to that good report which I know the member is aware of? Where is it at?

Mr. Janko Perić: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is aware that we have a process to follow. He will have the opportunity to participate in the citizenship and immigration committee. The committee could be as effective as the members are effective. The committee could be as progressive as the members are progressive. The member knows as well as I that we amend many bills clause by clause at the committee level.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to discuss Bill C-63 for the simple reason that nothing has ever given me more pleasure in an official capacity

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than to go down to citizenship court and shake the hands and congratulate people who have just received Canadian citizenship.

• (1315)

Part of my life and part of my studies have been dealing with citizenship in itself. I come from a part of Canada, a part of Saskatchewan, that enjoyed the benefits of massive citizenship and immigration, as the two are inseparable, from the spilling over from the Dakotas. At that time Canada adopted for itself, almost word for word, the American homestead act and these people moved to Canada and became citizens.

I have visitors here visiting me in Ottawa whose grandparents, if we go back far enough, came from France across the peninsula, the thumb, as they call it in Michigan, on into part of Saskatchewan. The remarkable thing about all this citizenship is when one goes through that great era, the last best west, I served as a justice for 25 years and I do not remember one single case of any of these gallant people ever becoming involved with the law or criminal activity.

I am also very proud to stand here and say that I have three adopted part Chinese sisters. If one takes their heritage and go back, they too were proud of their Canadian citizenship.

Speaking of particular roles of citizenship, in my lifetime I was always involved before I came to this institution in working with people. I have, up until the last few years, never once heard in the rural areas of my province of those people who came to this country and took citizenship, as the Chinese did, in any town that I worked, and there were a good many of them, ever becoming involved in a defamation of Canadians or their new country.

Maybe we should look at the past and ask ourselves what we were doing right then. We are not proud of our record in some cases of what we did to immigrants from Ukraine. By the way, the Ukrainian people are still the second largest ethnic group in Saskatchewan. We are not proud of what we did in World War I when we deprived them of citizenship and pushed them way up in Alberta and let them lose their land and virtually starve to death. We are not proud of that but it happened.

We are also not proud of what we did to the Chinese when they came here to get their citizenship. They worked on the railways and got less than average pay. When one died on the railway they just pushed him into the grade and covered him up. There was not even a decent burial.

Citizenship has to mean more than what it has meant in the last 25 years in Canada. We cannot be proud, as my hon. colleagues have mentioned, that at any one time we can have 16,000 to 20,000 illegal immigrants in Canada and the fact is that about 80% of them will stay here. Surrounding this court of citizenship, Canadians know what it is like. Canadians see it as a massive corruptive unit. Let us hope that this changes for good.

What steps will we look back at to see how we brought hardworking people to this country who contributed greatly to this country?

Today when I know of people I have assisted coming in 35 years ago and I try to get some of their family in, I get such reports as "Don't bother going to your MP. There is a good Liberal lawyer and he will pull the strings a lot faster". This is a fact and a terrible thing but it happens.

Last week when I was home I was confronted by individuals who asked me how I was getting along with this case. They told me they had word that if they went to see a certain lawyer downtown he could speed the thing up.

• (1320)

Are we going to take legislation like this and, pardon the pun, liberalize it to that extent? I do not have too many immigrants coming. They are all leaving now. What happened here? What happens when we face a situation in this country where the majority of the people who are apprehended and with charges were illegal immigrants? Many of those people are still here. I believe we ought to exercise more care.

If Bill C-63 does just what I hope it will, then we will be going back to the golden era of the last best west days when we brought in people who had no criminal records. They had the ability to survive and work. They were welcomed in Canada and they made outstanding citizens. In the immigration and citizenship record in Canada, while I know many to come in have been fine people, we have opened the gates and many of those people are still here and will not be deported. While we do that we are denying at least 10 people I know who are hardworking, dedicated people, relatives here, and I am having one heck of a job getting them into Canada. Let us hope this bill changes that.

Above all, if we are to have a deep meaning for the oath, which the hon. gentleman talked about, things have to change in this department from the past five years.

How does this bill reverse the terrible records of this department in the last 25 years? What steps are being taken now to prevent illegal immigrants coming to this country? What steps are being taken to speed up the deportation of these people? These are the questions which Canadians want an answer to and I do not see the bill answering those questions. I wish I did but I do not.

We need to bring back some sanity to the immigration and citizenship portfolio. We need to truly look at bringing people to Canada who brought the same honour and glory of the last best west. These people are still with us. Some of the ancestors of these people sit in the House but we never had to deport one of that area that I remember. I wish I could say the same thing for the past 10, 15 or 25 years.

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Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind my friend opposite that we are dealing with Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

The member talks about what we are going to be working on as soon as we deal with the issue of the immigration act. If we are interested in getting there quickly I suggest we get this bill into committee.

I think it is important for us when we talk about immigration to keep things in perspective. The vast majority of people who come to this country as immigrants and refugees are law-abiding. That is the history of this country.

We came here as immigrants. There were native people, the French, the United Empire Loyalists and people from all corners of the planet.

• (1325)

It is important that we keep that in mind. Yes, there is some criminality. We have to do what we can to make sure we deal with that as effectively as possible.

The member mentioned some of the terrible wrongs that have been done in this country to different ethnic groups. He mentioned the Ukrainians and the Chinese. There is a long history of that. So many people who have come to this country have found it difficult and at times have been discriminated against. Given that fact we ended up having a country that is very generous and is a beacon of civility in a world too often torn by ethnic unrest and wars.

As a bit of history for the hon. member, if he looks into the history of immigration to this country, at one point to make sure there were enough people in New France, Quebec, to increase the population, the king sent over his daughters, les filles du roi. Those people were not the most outstanding characters who came from France. To make sure these people were married off and that they would help populate New France, the governor—

Mr. John Williams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was wondering whether this was a speech or is the member on questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is on questions and comments. I know he will either be bringing his comments to a close or asking a question very shortly.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, this is referring to what the member said. It is a commentary on what he said. It is important to look at history. Some of it is quite humorous.

There is no question that the member would have to agree me that the vast majority of people who come to this country, notwithstanding that some will be a problem and we have to do

everything we can to get them out, as refugees and immigrants go on to make a great contribution to the life of our country.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I will agree with the point that those people who come here for a purpose of establishing themselves make good Canadian citizens. The hon. gentleman knows my area of complaint. Canadians from coast to coast have pushed that complaint before this government.

I want to make one correction. It seems to me that immigration leads to citizenship. We are bringing in a new citizenship act when we should be bringing in the controls and everything else surrounding immigration and then go to the citizenship act. I am sure the government has a purpose in doing so but you do not sow your field in the spring before you have properly cultivated it. It seems like we should be dealing with immigration.

I am proud of those people I have worked with. I am proud to have worked with immigrants for years. I am proud to have their children within my educational institution. But we have a new responsibility to make sure those people who are coming to Canada do not fall into the 16,000 to 20,000 people we have in Canada now, and I do not know how many before that, who are still here but should be deported.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could stand today and not have to speak on blatant patronage. Unfortunately Bill C-63 contains blatant patronage.

Under clauses 31 and 32 the duties of the current citizenship judges will be handed over to Citizenship and Immigration Canada officials. The commissioners who will be replacing these judges will have only ceremonial responsibilities and the responsibility to “promote active citizenship in the community”, thus making this position completely irrelevant for any purpose other than a reward. When this legislation is passed the current judges will immediately be reclassified as commissioners, maintaining the same salaries, benefits, et cetera, until their contracts expire. The minister stated in her December 7 press conference that the salary for commissioners would be lower than that for judges, but she had no numbers to offer. Nor did she elaborate on how many commissioners she would be appointing.

• (1330)

We question the necessity of the duties that will be performed by them versus the undefined qualifications required of them. The problem is elevated by the fact that these commissioners will be advising the minister on methods of evaluation for potential citizens when there will be no formal evaluation for the commissioners to pass. The legislation does not state how this advice to the minister would be accomplished.

After the 1993 election—this is another case of a broken promise—the former minister vowed that the positions of citizen-

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ship judges would be eliminated and that no more appointments would be made. What we have now is a public relations job. A short lived promise indeed, a short lived Liberal campaign promise, but then that is not the only one we have ever run across.

We have a case of clear, blatant patronage. We have a case of vote brokering with our immigration and refugee boards. That is one of the major problems we have with the bill, but I will talk about a few more. We have a broken system and the minister is unable and unwilling to fix it. We have no substantive changes in this regard.

Blatant Liberal patronage continues to happen under Bill C-63 as happened previously. We have not seen any major changes in that regard. The government is not listening to its own members, people in the government caucus who have problems with the legislation and want to see some of these changes. It is not paying any attention or heed to them. Nor is it paying attention or heed to the citizens of the country who have problems with the bill.

We have heard today that people want to see vigilance. They think that vigilance is required with regard to some of these issues. They recognize that currently we have fraud in the system, that there is a lack of consultation and that there has not been public consultation with regard to the administration of the oath or the formation of the oath. We have a behind closed doors process with no parliamentary oversight.

I am sorry, but the whole thing smells of Liberal arrogance. We have Liberal dominated immigration and refugee boards. Like I say, we go back to this issue of patronage appointments. Whether immigration apparatchiks are called commissioners or citizenship judges the are still Liberal apparatchiks. There is no difference. We can change the name but a Liberal apparatchik smells the same. What it boils down to is clear vote brokering.

We have mention in the bill with regard to language requirements, that they speak one of the official languages, either French or English. Yet we have no form of testing for it. Will we allow people to simply mark down on a form whether or not they feel they are competent in either of these languages but not have any proper form of testing it?

One of my colleagues in the House today referred an ad that ran in a trade publication. I will read it because I think it is important for the folks back home to hear what it had to say. It ran in a publication called the *Latin Trade Magazine* and this is the way it read:

Guaranteed immigration to Canada. With the purchase of a fleet rent a car franchise, total investment of \$50,000 Canadian *approximately \$30,000 U.S.*, you are guaranteed immigration to Canada even with a criminal record.

The word guaranteed was underlined. It provided an address and a phone number to get a hold of somebody in Toronto.

This is not the only example of this type of thing. We heard of numerous examples of these types of ads being run in foreign publications. What type of representation does such an advertisement make of Canadians abroad or when there are Canadians serving as immigration consultants who try to swizzle money off people overseas? They advertise Canada as one of the countries with one of the most lax refugee requirements in the world. They go ahead and abuse the process such that even criminals are being advertised to go ahead and immigrate into Canada. What message does that send out to other immigrants? It is terrible.

• (1335)

The bill has a lot of other unsavoury aspects to it. One question we have to raise is with regard to those who will be seeking refugee status. If they bear a child while they are in Canada, what happens to that child? If the parent is to be deported, what is the status of the child? This whole issue of citizenship at birth is something we have to examine carefully because it has long range complications or implications.

The quality of immigrants determines the quality of citizenship in the country. If we advertise for criminals overseas and tarnish our image that way, we can only expect that to have a reflection on Canadian society as a whole. As a matter of fact, we have so many loopholes right now that other countries are used with their systems to filter or wash people who were criminals so they can wind up in Canada eventually. That is a lax system and we have serious problems with it.

We have a Liberal administration that spends money to keep criminals in Canada rather than to assist citizens with legal aid. I remember the case of Charles Ng that happened in Calgary, somebody who gained entrance into Canada. He was well known and convicted in the United States for all his heinous crimes. Yet the Liberal government spent good taxpayer money to keep him in Canada for years and dragged the process on with bureaucratic delays. When Canadians of sane mind see something like that and know how hard they have to work for their tax dollars, they are infuriated.

It is not as though the government has not had time to look at these things and to make appropriate changes. It has had four and a half years and yet we have not seen a real substantive solution to this issue. We have bureaucratic insertions in the bill and bureaucratic delays that are part and parcel and included in the legislation. Instead of penalizing the bureaucrats we are penalizing the applicants to the process. There is something warped about that and something only a bureaucrat could enjoy.

After four and a half years where are the bills on refugees and where are the bills on criminality and the problems with the system? We have not seen anything.

The auditor general reports that we have 20,000 people to be deported. Yet the records only demonstrate that 4,000 have

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actually been deported. Pretty simple math tells us that 16,000 people in the country are circumventing the system, of which 80% will probably go on to continue to stay here and become citizens. Talk about image tarnishing. That is a travesty. There are Liberal lawyers who are pulling the strings and making money off the system. The whole thing smells.

I know my time is coming to a close so I will include a few more facts for the folks at home. We had a high of 400,870 immigrants in 1913 and the low was in 1942 with 7,576. We are known because of some of these laxities as being the world's most accepting country for immigrants and refugees. We have all these issues with the criminality being advertised and everything else.

We want something that reduces the amount of discretion currently in the hands of immigration and visa officers but also encourages potential immigrants to prepare themselves better.

All I can say on citizenship at birth is that Australia requires at least one parent to be an Australian citizen or permanent resident for the child to qualify. It is something we should consider as well.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate today. I guess I am a bit embarrassed on behalf of the House at some of the things that have been said today.

• (1340)

It is very easy to pick a case and to characterize all cases as having the same characteristics. It is very easy to throw numbers around and suggest that somehow a greater number of people are engaged in a certain activity than in fact would be the case.

As an example, the member used the auditor general's report and the issue of some 20,000 applicants whose status appeals have been denied and who are to leave. I understand from the member that only 4,000 have left, which means there are 16,000 yet to be accounted for. I wonder if the member would not also agree that of that number it is very likely a substantial portion of those people are no longer in the country. In fact, they have probably left simply because of that.

I find the member's explanation astounding. I want him to explain it to the House as I think it is very important. He said those 16,000 people are in fact still here and that 80% of them will go on to become Canadian citizens. They cannot have it both ways. If they have made application under due process and have been denied, I wonder if the member could explain to me exactly how 80% of them will then go on to become Canadian citizens.

Mr. Rob Anders: Mr. Speaker, if the member does not understand that there are laxities and problems with the system, I guess

that is the Liberal member's own choosing. We all know there are problems with the system. There are 16,000 people unaccounted for. We have no exit controls and no way of knowing.

The member says he does not have any problems with the system or he asks how we can go ahead and account for this and not play a numbers game. I will throw another number at him if he is not sick of numbers yet. In 1994 of the 230,000 immigrants entering the country only 14% were selected using the points system.

The points system as people may be aware—and I will just go over it quickly—evaluates incoming immigrants on education, job training, experience, occupation, arranged employment, age, knowledge of one of the official languages, whether or not they have relatives in Canada and whether or not they are self-employed. All these characteristics are used. Of the 230,000 we allowed into Canada in 1994 only 14% actually had anything to do with the point system.

If we want to talk about numbers, I could point to the 14% of 230,000 or the 16,000 people that are unaccounted for that should have been deported and tell the member that we have a numbers problem. If he does not believe it, he can read them for himself.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is being somewhat irresponsible when he says there are 16,000 illegals in the country who have been ordered deported and that 80% of them will become citizens. That just does not wash.

How can the member say that about 16,000 people who probably are not in the country? We do not have exit controls, but the fact of the matter is that if people are deported they will not be approved as citizens. For the member to say that is totally wrong. Furthermore, to have him say that Liberal lawyers are getting around the system is slanderous.

Mr. Rob Anders: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member about outrage. Members across the way are challenging that maybe these 16,000 deportees, or should be deportees, are not on Canadian soil. Yet I have members in my own caucus who have gone on tours with police in the city of Vancouver where we all know—and we saw it on TV with our own eyes—about problems with Honduran gangs distributing drugs. He saw with his own eyes a fellow spit out \$1,700 of crack cocaine from his mouth and he did not get charged. He did not get convicted. He did not get deported. That is not even on the record books. The ones we are talking about on the record books are the 20,000 who should have been deported and had an actual determination made. That fellow who spit out the \$1,700 worth of crack cocaine from his mouth into a police officer's hand did not even get on the records.

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• (1345)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr Speaker, we have before us a bill entitled “an act respecting Canadian citizenship”. The first statement inside is “This enactment replaces the existing Citizenship Act”. That means we have before us an act that we should first of all be discussing and debating in principle. We should be dealing almost exclusively with the principles that are involved in legislation of this type. This creates probably the most significant function of a Canadian citizen, of a Canadian person, than anything else they can possibly do.

I am a Canadian. I am a Canadian citizen. We should be able to say that with pride. We should be able to say with our hands on our hearts “I am a Canadian”. There should be no question that the number one concern here is that I am a proud Canadian. We are proud of our country.

I remember so clearly being at an international conference in Dallas, Texas. Twenty-five thousand people assembled in an arena. Not a single person in that arena was not singing the national anthem. Their hands were clasped over their hearts and they were singing with pride.

In Canada I have witnessed Canadians singing the Canadian national anthem with caps on their heads, slouching with their hands in their pockets with absolutely no respect for the national anthem. We should be proud to be Canadian.

I was born here. My grandfather was an immigrant to Canada. He chose to come here. I am so happy that he did. It is because of his citizenship in Canada that I today am a Canadian citizen.

What concerns me so very much is that the hon. minister chose to ignore certain things that have happened in her discussions across Canada. She was told across Canada that what we need to have are people who are citizens, who are born of those people who are Canadian citizens. What was her reply? The minister stated that she made no changes in this proposed act because there was no research done on how big a problem the citizenship at birth issue really is.

This is not a statement of principle. This is a statement of numbers. In other words, it does not matter whether it is a matter of principle whether one is a Canadian citizen, it is simply a matter of how many numbers are involved.

That seems to me to be the typical Liberal interpretation of legislation. Test the winds to see how many people say a particular thing and then the Liberals will do it; whether it is right or whether it is wrong has absolutely nothing to do with the issue at hand. I decry that kind of statement.

I will now move on to another part of this legislation which I think is rather significant. Clause 6 states that an individual shall be granted Canadian citizenship if they have a command of one of the

Canadian languages. I will now ask a whole series of questions. I want to draw rather heavily, in fact in detail from a presentation that was made to the committee as it travelled across Canada by the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce.

These are the issues the chamber was concerned about. Who will be doing the standardized language testing? Will it be the federal government? Where will the testing take place? Is it a part of the acceptance criteria and does it have to be done in the country of origin? Will this be a major expense and undertaking?

It is important to note that there is a big difference between learning English in a country of origin and learning English in the Canadian context in Canada. There are tremendous cultural differences with respect to language use. Immigrants learn so much about Canadian society, language use and meaning through the first English as a second language classes they attend.

• (1350)

The chamber contends that as we understand it there is currently no universal valid test of English abroad. Who is going to do the language testing overseas? This will cause an even greater backlog than there is now. We assume there will be additional fees associated with taking these tests and that is okay with them. Does the language proficiency being proposed include labour readiness?

It appears as though the motivation behind the language recommendations is to discontinue support for any type of language training funding and to implement additional fees on top of the existing fee structure. That training would be totally payable by the immigrants. It is interesting that Canada will train Canadians in either official language but it is not considering investing in the training of immigrants in either official language.

In many aspects of this report it appears that Canada is purporting to put higher demands on immigrants economically and socially than what it expects of its own people.

We need to be very careful to put in place the kind of testing and validity that will give credence and acceptability to this clause.

Clause 34 is a single sentence: “The form of the oath of citizenship is set out in the schedule”. Is the oath of citizenship so unimportant that it can be relegated to a schedule of the act or is it as in the earlier part where the minister shall grant citizenship if the person pledges allegiance according to the oath? The minister on her own volition has proposed the following oath:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to defend our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

The significance here is in what is left out of the current oath that is asked of persons who wish to take Canadian citizenship. What is left out of the present oath are the words “heirs and successors”. It should be allegiance to the Queen followed by heirs and succes-

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sors. That has been eliminated in the proposed oath. Why has that been eliminated? I can only speculate but the question in my mind is, is this the beginning of an effort on the part of the Government of Canada to eliminate the role of the Queen of Canada? It looks like that sort of thing could be happening here very subtly and very surreptitiously.

The oath adds a couple of very interesting phrases. It adds the phrase "respect our country's rights and freedoms". I would like to ask the minister and all members opposite what exactly are the rights and freedoms of a country? And who grants those rights and freedoms? Do the citizens grant the rights and freedoms to the country? Does the country grant those rights and freedoms to itself? Does some other country grant those rights and freedoms to another country? Does the United Nations do it? Does the World Court do it? Who grants these rights and freedoms to the country?

The second phrase is "to defend our democratic values". I am unalterably in favour of the values we hold as a democratic society. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you as a Reformer and a member of the official opposition based on one thing, that we work from the grassroots up and not from the top down. That is what we need to do. The defence of my values is the defence we want to do as individuals and as a country. It is absolutely imperative that it be there but this is done on an individual basis. I must do that and I myself pledge to do that.

If that oath is as important as I believe it is, it should not be relegated to the schedule in the back of the act. It should be part and parcel of clause 34 in the act so everybody knows exactly what they stand for. I am a Canadian, I am a citizen of Canada, I am proud of it and I want everybody else to know that.

• (1355)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his intervention. The member has presented his views and the views of Canadians very clearly without resorting to anything else other than the facts. It is very important that all members take that point of view. I respect the member for that.

The member also knows that some statements have been made in this debate. I would like to ask the member whether he agrees with the statement that was made in the House by another member that Canada is advertising for criminals with regard to immigration. Would he support that statement?

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I have just been handed an ad: "Guaranteed immigration to Canada with the purchase of a Fleet rent a car franchise. Total investment of \$50,000 Canadian, approximately \$30,000 U.S.". "You are guaranteed"—underlined—"immigration to Canada, even with a criminal record. For information write 5950 Bathurst Street, Suite 1009, Toronto,

Ontario, fax at Toronto, Canada (416) 667-1467". I do not know who put that ad in the paper but I know the ad exists.

An hon. member: Was that the Government of Canada?

Mr. Werner Schmidt: I do not know. I am not accusing anybody of doing it. I know there is an official ad.

The point is that I do not want to advertise that sort of thing. I also do not want to guarantee citizenship in Canada to anyone other than someone who is prepared to accept the oath that I mentioned earlier. We do not want people from a criminal element. We do not want that in our society. We do not want to advertise for them to come to Canada.

The Speaker: I see that it is almost two o'clock. The hon. member still has three minutes of questions and comments. If he wishes to handle them, he will have the floor at three o'clock for questions and comments. In his absence of course I will go to the next speaker who is from his party and they have agreed to split the time.

We will now go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is budget day 1999.

For more than 12 years parents have called for fair treatment. Treat parents equitably and stop rewarding just institutional day-care choices, leaving parents who choose other options out in the cold. Thousands of families were represented on Parliament Hill during the prebudget debate by the newly formed Family Tax Coalition.

These families carried the message one more time but louder than ever before. They called out again to give an equitable, refundable tax credit to all parents and let them determine the arrangements which best meet the needs of their families. The Reform Party agrees.

The Liberals continue to tell parents that parental or extended family care has no value. This is wrong. Canadian families, through the Family Tax Coalition, are tired of being ignored. This time the government must respond or it will pay the price.

* * *

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish all members of parliament a happy new year. Today is the first day of the year of the rabbit in the lunar calendar. There are many events across Canada to celebrate the new year.

There are city parades, community celebrations and family gatherings organized coast to coast. Children receive red envelopes with gifts or candy.

It is also an auspicious day for the Minister of Finance to announce the federal budget. The year of the rabbit will bring prosperity, happiness and peace for all Canadians.

This Tuesday I am co-hosting with the Chinese federation of 21 Ottawa community organizations the very first celebration of the Chinese New Year on Parliament Hill.

Xin nian kuai le. Happy new year.

* * *

EAST COAST MUSIC AWARDS

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the winners from Sunday night's 11th edition of the East Coast Music Awards.

• (1400)

The gala awards show held in St. John's, Newfoundland honoured all artists from Atlantic Canada in 19 different musical categories, including jazz, country, pop rock, music in both English and French.

Bruce Guthro brought home five awards, making him Sunday night's biggest winner.

An event like the East Coast Music Awards is very significant in that it gives artists in the music industry an opportunity to showcase their talent and to be rewarded for their efforts. The music industry on the east coast is vibrant and in constant expansion.

Atlantic Canada region's music can be heard from coast to coast and abroad and adds riches to the wide range of Canadian talent. I would like my colleagues in the House to congratulate all those artists, the winners and the nominees who took part in this great music event.

* * *

LITERACY

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Freedom to Read Week and tomorrow is Literacy Action Day.

Books, newspapers and magazines are instruments of freedom. That is why I urge all Canadians to celebrate Freedom to Read Week and Literacy Action Day.

This year Freedom to Read Week will be celebrated in libraries, bookstores and schools in Peterborough and across Canada in a variety of ways. Libraries create displays of books that have been

censored or challenged over the years. Schools feature classroom discussions on censorship.

The freedom of expression committee believes that freedom to read is essential to the democratic way of life and essential to the democratic process. To be able to read one has to be literate. Literacy Action Day sponsors include Frontier College, the Movement for Canadian Literacy and ABC Canada. The slogan of one of its sponsors is each one teach one.

The efforts of these groups to promote literacy and reading are particularly timely this year because of the government's efforts to protect our publishers—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

* * *

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the solicitor general has now approved funding for counsel for those complainants appearing before the RCMP public complaints commission who were directly involved in confrontations with police at the APEC leaders meeting held at the University of British Columbia in November 1997. This follows a request by new commission head Ted Hughes based on unique elements in the APEC hearing as they had developed.

The minister's decision was made after receiving representations from several government MPs. It is an exercise in good faith and good constitutionalism.

* * *

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today people of Chinese descent all over the world are celebrating the year of the rabbit, Chinese New Year.

Canadians of Chinese descent work in their communities across the country in finance, in the professions of law, medicine, dentistry and teaching, in engineering and high technology, various small, medium and large business ventures, in government and even politics. Wherever they are in Canada, Canadians of Chinese descent are making significant contributions, creating jobs, participating in their communities and improving overall standards of living.

To all Canadians I wish happiness and prosperity for this, the year of the rabbit.

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[Translation]

1949 ASBESTOS STRIKE

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, midnight February 14, 1949 marked the start of the asbestos strike

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in the Eastern Townships. This event, now 50 years behind us, had a significant social, political and religious impact on Quebec.

The asbestos strike marked a total change in mindset. From then on, major companies and government would have to respect workers' rights. This struggle for the recognition of Quebec workers was a difficult and complex one, for the Duplessis government wanted to force the unions to their knees.

Nevertheless, the outcome of this strike in Quebec was a transformation of labour relations in the workplace and an enhanced public awareness of the importance of trade unions in an industrial society.

* * *

WATER

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the experts who met last week under UN auspices, nearly one billion people will be threatened with a water crisis if emergency measures are not adopted by all countries, both rich and poor.

There is no doubt that this alert needs to be taken seriously. The verdict is a direct and harsh one: by the year 2025, 970 million people could be facing a serious shortage of water. What is more, according to the same experts, up to one-third of humanity is liable to experience problems. The scientific community also acknowledges these problems, so it is vital for all governments to remain vigilant and to act as promptly as possible in order to avoid this crisis, which is becoming a constantly greater source of concern.

Why not deal with the matter immediately, instead of waiting for a full-blown crisis?

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

NUNAVUT

Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was an exciting day for the people of Nunavut and a significant moment in Canada's history.

The residents voted in their first Nunavut territorial election. The election took place on February 15 so that Nunavut will have an elected government in place when the territory is formally created April 1.

According to the chief electoral officer, voter turnout was 88%, extremely high. This reflects the commitment that the people have in shaping a government that is responsive to their wishes and reflective of their culture and traditions.

This election is a very special moment not just for the 19 winners and voters but for all Canadians. Very few countries in the world

are able to create new governments in a democratic and peaceful fashion. Canada is one of those countries and we all have reason to be proud.

I congratulate the residents and all the candidates who played a part in this historic event. This day marks the beginning of a new chapter in our nation's history.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during the second world war 26 Canadian airmen were slated for execution at Buchenwald concentration camp.

This past December the Minister of Veterans Affairs responded with a mere \$1,098 and stated "I am delighted to be able to close the chapter on this longstanding issue".

Today Mr. Arthur Kinnis, spokesman for the survivors, has requested I return his cheque. Across Canada virtually all remaining Buchenwald detainees are doing the same.

Nearly 50 years ago these men fought against Nazi tyranny.

Australia and New Zealand have paid their Buchenwald survivors over \$10,000 each. Now Canada offers just over \$1,000 to the 14 remaining survivors. This is shameful. This is an insult.

I urge the minister to revisit this matter immediately and settle Canada's debt to the brave men of Buchenwald. It would be a disgrace to allow these men to die without the recognition they truly deserve.

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[Translation]

PYROCYCLING OF BARK

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to call the House's attention to the opening of a pilot plant in Jonquière using a new industrial process called Pyrocycling to recycle bark.

This is a very promising initiative, both for the jobs it creates and for the use it makes of the large quantities of waste bark available in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region.

This new industrial process will use heat to decompose bark into oils, charcoal, gas and water. The oils will be used in the particle board and plywood industry, while the charcoal will serve as a raw material in the metallurgical and mineral industry.

But that is not all. The plant will also demonstrate a new concept for producing electricity that will enhance Quebec's role in the renewable energy sector.

We wish these innovative folks good luck and every success in the future.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our veterans went off to war to defend our rights, and it is because of the sacrifices they made that we have our freedom today.

November 11 is not the only day on which we commemorate these sacrifices. Another important custom allows veterans to wear their ceremonial dress at church funerals.

A recent directive prevented veterans from continuing to observe this custom in certain churches in southeastern New Brunswick. Many years ago, veterans took up arms to defend their strong belief in the freedom of our country.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of the president of the Richibucto Legion, Henri Pietraszko, and to congratulate all the veterans and their families.

I also wish to thank Mgr. Ernest Léger for the understanding he has shown these veterans. Clearly, this is a custom they hold very dear.

Once again, congratulations, and a vote of thanks to Mgr. Léger.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present some facts about employment insurance in Newfoundland and Labrador in response to comments by the hon. member for Burin—St. George's earlier this month.

The hon. member vastly underestimated both the contributions and the benefits to the people of this great province. The member stated that EI contributions this year would total \$107 million. The member must have overlooked employer contributions which would bring the grand total of premiums to some \$257 million.

• (1410)

The hon. member was even more in error concerning the level of EI expenditures. His estimate of \$75 million for the year compares with actual benefit payments of \$666 million to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in 1998. Fishing benefits alone totalled more than \$84 million in this province. Those are the real facts.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

NUNAVUT

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Nunavut held its first general election yesterday. The new legislative assembly has now been formed and will take up its duties on April 1.

The Bloc Québécois wishes Nunavut's MLAs and future premier a productive and successful term in office.

A monumental task has been accomplished, but much still remains to be done. We are familiar with the legendary initiative and fighting spirit of the Inuit who have, for thousands of years, successfully braved a harsh climate and vast distances.

There is no doubt that Nunavut's Inuit will take up with pride and dignity the wonderful challenge of governing themselves. The Bloc Québécois will be celebrating right along with them on April 1.

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[English]

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Chinese New Year, the year of the rabbit.

As we celebrate this momentous occasion on the Chinese calendar, I should note that on Saturday the Right Hon. Joe Clark and I joined with 2,200 members of the Chinese Canadian community in Toronto to support the dragon ball 1999, a benefit for the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care.

This event was yet the latest example of the invaluable contributions made by Canadians of Chinese origin to our national way of life.

Despite having encountered obstacles of racism and discrimination in the past, Chinese Canadians nonetheless comprise one of the most loyal, dedicated group of citizens in this country.

In my riding of Markham I know firsthand the positive impact brought about by the Chinese Canadian community.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada I would like to wish all Canadians of Chinese origin much luck, prosperity and success in family and business.

Gung hai fay choy. Happy new year.

* * *

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Perth—Middlesex is the home of the world famous Stratford

Oral Questions

Festival. As many members of the House can attest, the festival is live theatre at its absolute best.

I invite all parliamentarians, indeed all Canadians, to visit the 47th edition of the Stratford Festival.

Come and enjoy the magic of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, sing along with *West Side Story* or risk your mortal soul with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The festival has these and many other plays to delight and enchant theatre buffs.

I will soon be sending Stratford Festival programs to offices on Parliament Hill. All Canadians can get information on the festival by visiting its website or calling 1-800-567-1600.

I hope to see everyone at this year's Stratford Festival.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the budget will be handed down today shortly after 4 o'clock.

There is a reason why the budget is handed down after 4 p.m. and that is because Canadian stock markets close at 4 o'clock. Historically it was felt that if the budget was handed down before 4 p.m. certain individuals or corporations could gain a commercial advantage as a result of advance information that would be contained in the budget.

Last night CBC news reported as fact some items that might be in the budget later this afternoon. In today's print media several newspapers, including the *Sun* and the *Globe and Mail*, are reporting as fact items which are to appear in today's budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to review this matter to determine whether the privileges of members of parliament have been breached and also to ensure that ordinary Canadians are not disadvantaged by—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Delta—South Richmond.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last September the auditor general advised the government to more carefully estimate the value of lands and resources being transferred under treaty.

His caution is especially relevant with regard to the Nisga'a treaty, where a study I commissioned by a respected economist and former member of the House, Robin Richardson, found the cost of the treaty to be \$1.3 billion, almost three times the value placed on it by this government.

• (1415)

In undervaluing the lands and resources, the federal government burdens British Columbia with three-quarters of the cost of the treaty. That is a downloading of \$652 million of federal costs on to the taxpayers of British Columbia.

There is no denying the inaccuracy of the government numbers. They now admit to underestimating third party compensation. They admit to placing no value on mineral resources, water resources, fishery and wildlife resources in the treaty area. The list goes on.

The Nisga'a deal is not a good deal when you do the numbers. The deal is a good deal only for the Minister of Finance because this government—

The Speaker: We will now go to oral questions.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, judging by the news apparently yesterday was budget day. But it has done nothing to stop the Liberal Americanization of Canadian health care.

Because of Liberal cuts thousands of Canadians have to go to the States to buy treatment—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton North.

Miss Deborah Grey: Mr. Speaker, I guess the truth hurts, the Liberal Americanization of the Canadian health care system. Two hundred thousand more Canadians had to stay home. They could not afford to fly south. They are the people in waiting lines here. That is the Liberal legacy.

Can the Prime Minister guarantee today that no more babies, no more cancer patients, no more MRI patients will be forced to go to the United States to buy treatment?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we said in August that we want to have a budget addressing the problem of health. I met with the premiers two weeks ago to discuss that. In exactly one hour and 58 minutes we will have the answer when the Minister of Finance reads his budget.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is this, and it sounded from the government benches that they know it. The Liberals are the sponsors of two tier health care. It is under their watch that governments have cut spending drastically. People are suffering right across the country because of government cutbacks for years.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Miss Deborah Grey: Mr. Speaker, I will say it again. This government is the sponsor of a two tier health care system and the proof is watching the news every single night. This government has slashed funding to the provinces which are responsible for health care year after year.

Can the Prime Minister guarantee today that no more Canadians will have to fly to the States to buy medical treatment?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is helping provincial governments financially to operate the health care system. The managing of the health care system on a daily basis is done by provincial governments. We work in collaboration with them. That is why we had a very good meeting two weeks ago. Members will see in one hour and 56 minutes what the government intends to do for health care in the budget.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is not much surprise because the whole budget has been leaked to the national press. We already know what is in it.

It is knowledge, it is common fact that this government has forced Canadians to go on the longest waiting lines in history, that health care has been slashed in funding to the provinces. The Prime Minister can say he brought them here to Ottawa last week to be good to them but everyone in Canada knows the facts.

How can \$2 billion in health care spending this year undo the damage that \$16 billion in Liberal cuts have caused?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the figures the member is using are not true at all. We have been obliged to cut everybody to make sure we have a balanced budget. For the last two years we have had a balanced budget. That is why Canadians and provincial governments pay much less for the interest rates on their debts, because we have balanced the books. That is why the Canadian people are quite happy to have a government with a very open process for budget discussion. It has been going on for six months and—

• (1420)

The Speaker: I would ask you, my colleagues, to be very judicious in the choice of words that we use, words like “not true at all”.

The hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell you why he has a balanced budget. It is because

he has cut \$16 billion out of health care since 1993. There have been \$16 billion in health care cuts and he has raised taxes to hardworking Canadian by over \$1,800 each since 1993.

This budget today is not a health care budget. It is not a budget for hardworking Canadians. It is a budget for the finance minister and his greedy tax collectors. That is what this budget is for. He has gutted health care. He is sitting on a large surplus. Why is he raising taxes again this year? Why?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 1.6 million Canadians have found new jobs in the last five years. Of course these Canadians are very happy to pay more taxes to the government rather than to be unemployed. Of course we have more revenues because we have had growth in the last five years and unemployment went down—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): I think he is finished, Mr. Speaker. He can only go so far with big whoppers. He should work at Burger King.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to go directly to his question.

Mr. Dick Harris: Mr. Speaker, considering that the government has raised taxes by \$1,800 per taxpayer in this country, why is it raising taxes again in 1999, in today's budget? Why is the government doing it again? What is the reason?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in an hour and 53 minutes we will know exactly what the tax cuts are. But the opposition should know already that in December we reduced taxes when we reduced the EI premiums by more than \$1 billion.

Hopefully, but I do not know absolutely, there will be a very good budget again. What will happen is the budget will be a success and the great meeting of this weekend will be another flop for the Reform.

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[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Gilles Ducespe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the coming days, the Minister of Finance will be making a grand tour of the country touting the merits and the generosity of the government. He is being generous with our money.

Oral Questions

I would like to know whether the Minister of Human Resources Development will go along with him on his tour to explain to Canadians and Quebecers that the unemployed pay for the Minister of Finance's generosity.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not have the pleasure of accompanying my colleague the Minister of Finance, because I myself will be promoting the budget, which looks very interesting for all Canadians and certainly for Quebecers too.

The initial figures I have seen are very relevant to the concerns of Canadians. This is true as well for Quebecers, who are very concerned about health care. I think there will be good news for Bernard Landry.

We will see what the Minister of Finance does this afternoon, but I think we will have a balanced budget. There are a lot of good measures for workers, to help them return to the labour market.

• (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Human Resources Development realize that the more the Minister of Finance boasts today about being generous, the more stingy the Minister of Human Resources Development will have to be with the unemployed, because one funds the other, and he is the Minister of Finance's cash cow in the name of the unemployed?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the leader of the Bloc Quebecois is somewhat nervous. Even the CBC yesterday was saying that the Government of Quebec and minister Landry could meet their objective of zero deficit with some of this afternoon's announcements. That must upset the Bloc Quebecois a bit.

What I can say is that we are strict managers, that we have implemented an employment insurance reform that is intended to help workers remain in the labour market and the unemployed to return to it. That is a good balance and sound management.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development already has the 1998 employment insurance program performance report in his hands.

We have been waiting for him to make up his mind to table that report since last December.

What is the minister's explanation for not having made his report public, if it is not that his buddy in Finance did not want to see it released before today's budget?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the report will be tabled as required by law within the first 30 days of the 1999 session.

Perhaps it will finally enable us to have an intelligent debate with the Bloc Quebecois instead of constantly having to settle for anecdotes and elements of no particular interest.

I trust that this report will also enable us to examine the great job creation figures for January, as 87,000 jobs were created in Canada in January alone, 44,000 of them for young people.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by hiding this report on the problems with employment insurance, is the Minister of Human Resources Development not acting in complicity with the Minister of Finance, he who is pillaging the employment insurance fund, instead of fulfilling his duty to defend the unemployed?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure the House that our government is working extremely hard to ensure that there is as little unemployment as possible in Canada. In so doing, we are fulfilling our duty as a government to create a sound economy.

I can assure you that the employment insurance system has been there for the large majority of unemployed persons who have been working in recent months. We have work force integration programs, a youth employment strategy to help young people to get into the work force instead of being unemployed.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The President of the Treasury Board is once again a compulsive fund raider. After taking some billions of dollars from the unemployment insurance account, the Liberal government now wants to seize a \$30 billion surplus from the public service, armed forces and the RCMP pension funds.

I am giving the minister a chance to speak directly to the 358,000 public sector workers and tell them why he is taking \$30 billion from their future pension benefits. Why is he doing that?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite glad to give the explanation which by the way is accepted by the actuaries, by the accountants, by the lawyers, by the auditor

general. It is very clear that the government guarantees the outcome to its civil servants. The outcome is that they will be paid a pension once they retire, and we continue to guarantee these benefits.

The deficits and the surpluses which are in the accounts are created by accountants. They do not belong there and in fact have to go back to the taxpayers who paid for them in the first place.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of taxation employees spent the day at home with full pay while table two blue collar workers walked the picket line from coast to coast.

Last night in Halifax over 400 employees stated that the economic discrimination policy known as regional rates of pay is the number one issue. Instead of avoiding the workers and prolonging the strike, will the minister commit today to sit down at the bargaining table and once and for all negotiate the issue of regional rates of pay?

• (1430)

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have negotiated at table two. We have negotiated terms that are equivalent to the terms accepted by 80% of civil servants.

I think Canadians will make their own judgment about the tactics of the blue collar workers. Up until now these workers have always accepted the fact that a member of parliament is paid differently if he sits in Fredericton than if he sits in Ottawa, in the same way plumbers and electricians have provincial rates that apply because of local market conditions. These regional rates will continue.

* * *

APEC INQUIRY

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the solicitor general bowed to public pressure and the urgings of Justice Hughes to finally pay the legal fees of the student complainants at the APEC inquiry. Although the government lawyers outnumber those of the students by 25 to 2, at least after 12 days the solicitor general finally read the writing on the wall. Delay and deny have become trademarks of the Liberal government.

Will the solicitor general now indicate just how much the government is willing to spend to ensure fairness? If he is not willing to so indicate, will he tell us when he will?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, the payment will be fair and reasonable. It will be done between my office and the public complaints commission.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the government will claim that it has transformed the APEC inquiry into a transparent truth seeking process. However, with the greatest respect to Justice Hughes, a full judicial inquiry would best accomplish this. The chair has stated that he will go where the evidence leads, perhaps to 24 Sussex. He wishes to make it a true and open process.

The question that remains is simple. Will the Prime Minister agree to testify under oath to his actions at the APEC summit?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague is well aware that the public complaints commission is an independent body. For me to indicate who would or would not appear would be totally inappropriate. I do not intend to do that.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as has been pointed out, the solicitor general finally did that. That makes the situation fair. The question is will it be meaningful. It will be meaningful only if the Prime Minister turns up. He said in this House that everyone in his office and everyone in his government was going to be available for the APEC inquiry. Does that everyone include the Prime Minister?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, the public complaints commission is an independent body. Would my hon. colleague and all members let the public complaints commission do its job.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we get one step forward and two steps back. We get the funding but then we revert to what the former solicitor general used to say.

I remind the Prime Minister that it was he who said in this House that everyone from his office and government were going to be available. He says those words in this House but he sends Ivan Whitehall, his lawyer, to Vancouver to make sure he does not have to go. Why? What are we supposed to believe, the Prime Minister's words or his actions?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has indicated, he and his ministers will co-operate fully with the public complaints commission. What I would ask my hon. colleague to please do is to let the public complaints commission do what it is to do.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to our questions, the Minister of Human Resources Development accused the Bloc Québécois of taking a backward step in their desire to protect the unemployed against his incessant attacks.

I would ask the minister whether he considers criticizing someone who plunders the employment insurance fund and uses the money for purposes other than that for which it was intended means taking a backward step?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been no misappropriation. Everything is in the books very clearly. The Auditor General of Canada made a decision in 1990, which we respect. We comply with the law, there is no problem in that regard.

• (1435)

However, when I say the Bloc Québécois wants to take us a step backward, it is because they simply want to keep people unemployed, because they want the unemployed to remain so as long as possible. They do not even take umbrage at the fact that, in January 1999, we created 87,000 jobs in Canada while Quebec lost 1,500.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by cutting benefits to women, is it not the minister who is taking a step backwards and returning the protection afforded women to 1970s levels?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. By implementing a program based on hours, we have in fact liberated women who were prisoners of the 15-hour trap because they only worked part time and could not accumulate 15 hours.

We also provided a family income supplement specifically for the greater benefit of low-income women, which is now a part of our employment insurance reform.

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[English]

APEC INQUIRY

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government has finally agreed that the RCMP Public Complaints Commission is an independent body by agreeing to fund all participants in that hearing.

Mr. Hughes has also proven his independence by asking and demanding that these people get their funding.

Will the government now guarantee that whomever Mr. Hughes asks to appear before that inquiry will appear at that inquiry from the government, including the Prime Minister?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a number of times, the public complaints commission is an independent body. I wish my hon. colleagues would let the public complaints commission do what it is in place to do.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking this government to let the public complaints commission do what it wants to do for the last six months.

It has finally agreed to fund everyone in that hearing. It is the government that has to listen to this independent inquiry.

Will the government just give us an answer, yes or no? Will it agree that whomever Mr. Hughes requests to appear will appear at that hearing, including the Prime Minister?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated many times in this House, the commission is an independent body that has a job to do. All I would ask my hon. colleague to do is, please, let the public complaints commission do the job it is in place to do.

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[Translation]

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' PENSION FUND

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not content to pocket the huge surpluses in the EI fund, the federal government now wants to get its hands on its employees' pension funds.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell us why he is now preparing to raid his own employees' pension plans, after dipping into the pockets of unemployed workers?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pension fund is a legislated fund. It is important that my hon. colleague understand this.

The government guarantees that public servants will receive their pension whatever the state of the economy.

When pensions were indexed, it cost the government close to an extra \$10 billion, a bill it footed alone. The government did this because what it guarantees are pensions and it is therefore clear—and once again, this is borne out by lawyers, actuaries, the auditor general, and every other authority—that the surplus in the fund belongs to the government.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the President of the Treasury Board not agree that the employer's contributions to the pension fund are part of employees' overall remuneration and therefore do not belong to him?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I think it is very clear. It is a legislated fund, with the government guaranteeing to pay pensions.

• (1440)

Employees pay a set proportion. It was 7.5%. The government paid any deficits that arose and any additional amounts in the fund therefore belong to taxpayers.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government has come into power it has cut over \$7 billion from the defence budget. We see the results. Today all the Sea Kings were grounded again and are unable to fly. The minister has known about this for some time.

My question is for the defence minister. Time has run out. When are you going to replace the aging Sea King helicopters?

The Speaker: Order, please. Please address the questions always through the Chair.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from a party that in the election campaign wanted to cut another \$1 billion from defence.

What the government has done is invested in new search and rescue helicopters. It has invested in new submarines and life extension programs for the CF-18s. It has bought new armoured personnel carriers. This is to make sure that our troops have the tools they need to do the job.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister were to look at Reform's proposal we wanted to include \$1 billion in the defence budget and they have cut it.

Our pilots are taking undue risks flying old equipment. They only do it out a sense of duty to the country, which is more than what I can say for the minister of defence.

When will our pilots, their crews and their families get new helicopters?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been told many times that we are developing a procurement strategy with respect to the replacement of the Sea King helicopters. We are in the final stages of doing that.

The government is very anxious to make sure that our troops have the tools they need to do the job and that they are able to have safe equipment to operate.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have lost count of the number of cases of harassment of visitors from France and we know the propensity of some customs officials to treat those passing through customs arrogantly.

My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Beyond the figures showing that, in statistical terms, everything appears normal, is the minister not concerned about the ever increasing number of cases of harassment and the misuse of the discretionary powers of her officials?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are no cases of harassment. Immigration officers at both Dorval and Mirabel comply with the Immigration Act, and everyone arriving in this country must have permission to enter it. This is why the officers conduct their checks, which are perfectly normal under the circumstances.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Poor social conditions, lack of housing and high unemployment rates are at the root of what plagues northern communities, especially those in the Eastern Arctic.

What is the minister doing to ensure that these Canadians have access to shelter and the basic services they need to create a brighter future?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night Canadians witnessed history in the making as the people of the Eastern Arctic elected the 19 men and women who, come April 1, will represent the first parliament of Nunavut.

As my colleague points out, their challenges will be many. They will fight to bring government and the decisions of government closer to the people of the Eastern Arctic. That will include ensuring the stabilization of economic development opportunities that currently exist in the Eastern Arctic and forging new relationships with Canadians who live in the south and those in circumpolar nations around the world.

Oral Questions

• (1445)

KOSOVO

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is planning an end run around parliament over the decision to send Canadian troops to Kosovo.

Apparently he does not think Canadians should be consulted and does not intend to hold a full parliamentary debate on the matter. This is a slap in the face to democracy and an insult to Canadians.

Will the minister commit to a full parliamentary debate before sending troops to Kosovo.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that this afternoon at 3.15 is a meeting of House leaders at which this very item is on the agenda, and he has known it since last week.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the truth is the government does not intend to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Red Deer has the floor.

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, the government does not intend to tell us about the plan until after the fact. It does not want to debate the plan in the House.

The Minister of National Defence gave parliament the salute in classic Trudeau style yesterday when he said that he did not think it was necessary to hold a full parliamentary debate over the deployment of troops to Kosovo.

Canada is not a dictatorship. There should be an open and frank discussion about it before the decision is made. I ask again—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I never said such nonsense at all.

I talked about parliamentary consultation when we are going to deploy troops. If we are going to deploy troops it is something we would continue to want to do.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, official navy plans reveal that the Minister of National Defence submerged the real costs of acquiring four British Upholder submarines.

Now additional costs have resurfaced totalling at least \$1.27 billion. If we add that to the listed price, the submarines will cost Canadians over \$2 billion. Canadians are forced to budget in their own lives but the minister evidently cannot find his own periscope.

When will the minister provide the House with an accurate accounting of the price of this purchase?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last questioner and this questioner has one thing in common. People believe things they read in the newspapers which are not necessarily the case. In this case it is not true. The \$750 million figure we gave is the correct figure.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The United Nations development program reported last year that the world's 225 wealthiest people have a combined wealth that is equal to the annual income of half the population of the world, the poorest half, and the gap is growing.

Instead of wasting money on submarines and a new star wars missile defence system, will the minister support the call of the Jubilee 2000 Campaign to cancel the outstanding bilateral debt owed to Canada by the 50 poorest nations of the world and will he increase our foreign aid significantly?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to date, the government has written off over \$1 billion for the poorest countries, and the government will continue to do so for them.

We have also set aside \$145 million for countries like those in Latin America so they may buy food or equipment in the area of the environment. This is another way to help the poorest countries.

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development speaks of co-operation and consultation in Indian affairs but actually works in secrecy.

It is obvious in the media coverage of the case of the proposed Caldwell Indian reserve near Blenheim, Ontario, that she has not even consulted with the local Liberal MP. It has also been

Oral Questions

suggested that the minister is negotiating this contentious reserve with a chief who was not democratically elected.

Could the minister tell the House if Chief Johnson has stood for election within the last two years?

• (1450)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are making good on a claim that was presented to us beginning back in 1973. This refers to the 1790 treaty where many first nations in southwestern Ontario ceded a vast tract of land to the crown in return for reserve lands and money.

The government has committed itself to settling outstanding claims and we will do that.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that the minister has chosen not to answer the question. Ministers who do not follow their own guidelines are usually wiser not to admit that in the House of Commons.

My next question will be simpler. There was no consultation with local agricultural groups and no consultation with the local municipal council. Why is the minister willing to further alienate these groups by forcing a reserve with a non-contiguous land base in an agricultural area that depends upon co-operation between its farmers?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say that I have been down to Chatham—Kent. I have met with these agricultural groups. I have talked with them about their legitimate concerns.

In fact, over the course of the next three months we will continue to work with them to explain the importance of settling this claim and the method by which we hope we can all do so.

* * *

[Translation]

AQUACULTURE

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State responsible for Agriculture and Agri-Food and for Fisheries and Oceans.

Could he tell us about the latest developments in aquaculture?

Hon. Gilbert Normand (Secretary of State (Agriculture and Agri-Food)(Fisheries and Oceans), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we promised in the 1997 elections, on December 18 we hired an aquaculture commissioner, in the person of Yves Bastien.

He was selected in a competition involving 172 applications. He will have an operating budget of \$2 million annually to help the

aquaculture industry develop in harmony with the environment and grow in this country of Canada.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is now the middle of February, less than two weeks away from the deadline for employers to file T-4s with Revenue Canada.

Due to a strike at a warehouse in Vancouver, T-4s, the northern residents deduction and other tax forms are unavailable to British Columbia businesses.

My question is for the revenue minister. Last year a filing extension was given to the victims of the ice storm. Will he extend the same courtesy to western Canadians who have been adversely affected through no fault of their own by this work stoppage?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

There has been a disruption in the T-4 slips. As a result, this morning we announced alternatives where employers could use the website to take the form that is on there and send that in. In addition, they can also send in 1998 on a normal piece of paper.

We have given two alternatives to our employers. Certainly, if we need to take further action, we will take that under serious consideration.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here we are on the eve of a budget whose redistributed surpluses will come in large part from the employment insurance surplus.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Does the minister understand that employment insurance can no longer be a tax on employment disproportionate to the benefits provided and that he must return to contributors the plan they pay for?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Mercier will have to wait another hour and 22 minutes for her answer.

I too am impatient to discover what vital investments the Minister of Finance will announce in human resources across the country.

Oral Questions

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dozens of community groups in Vancouver have come together to form the Vancouver Community Safety Coalition to work on community based crime prevention initiatives. They are seeking support from the community mobilization program. Many people are also very concerned about the rise in home invasions.

What is the justice minister's government doing to support this community initiative and what response has she given to recent letters from B.C.'s attorney general to keep people safe in their homes?

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order, please. I am very close to the member and I had a hard time hearing her.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member may know, we are working very closely with a coalition of community groups to deal with a number of the problems facing the city of Vancouver, and in particular on Vancouver east side. In fact we are very hopeful that through partnership and collaboration we will be able to make a joint announcement in relation to some of the challenges there in the very near future.

The hon. member then asked a second question in relation to home invasions. Last week I had the opportunity to talk to my colleague, the Attorney General of B.C., Ujjal Dosanjh, who informed me he was writing to me with options that he would suggest for amendment to the code and I informed him—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, as we speak there is a news conference taking place in Shearwater regarding ignition problems with our 35 year old Sea Kings. There have been seven engine failures in a month, six on start-up and one on taxi. This is the same engine of the ill-fated Labrador.

How long will Sea King crews be stuck with this unreliable, aging aircraft before the government puts lives before budget dollars and orders new maritime helicopters?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear on a number of occasions that we will not allow any aircraft to fly unless it is safe to fly. To the Canadian forces and to the government the safety of our air crews is of the utmost importance.

In this case there have been start-up problems with the engines when they start them on the ground. That matter has been identified and it is in fact being rectified. Meanwhile, as I indicated earlier, we continue in the final stages of our procurement strategy for replacement helicopters.

* * *

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

The recent storm in the Toronto area demonstrated that snow can make for difficult and unsafe driving conditions. What is our government doing to make winter driving safer?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not just a concern to people in the greater Toronto area but to all Canadians, given the fact that this is a winter country.

On February 1, I was pleased to approve a new and comprehensive standard for snow tires that has been developed by Transport Canada in consultation with the North American tire manufacturing industry.

This standard will ensure that Canadian consumers can identify and purchase tires designed to provide a higher level of traction in Canadian winters. This shows how the government in particular is concerned about road safety.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, recently the mayor of Toronto fell ill and had to go to the emergency department.

Mr. John Cannis: He's full of shit.

Mr. John Nunziata: He called ahead. A bed was reserved for him. Specialists were called in from home to treat him. In short, he was given preferential treatment.

If a professional athlete needs health care, he is able to jump the health care queue—

Mr. John Cannis: You're a liar.

The Speaker: Order, please. I direct myself directly to the member for Scarborough Centre. Did you use the word liar? I would like you to withdraw it.

Mr. John Cannis: I am sorry. I take it back.

The Speaker: We are going to hear the question from the member for York South—Weston.

Mr. John Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, in short, the mayor of Toronto was given preferential treatment according to the hospital. If a

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professional athlete falls ill he or she is given preferential treatment.

• (1500)

What does the government intend to do to ensure that there is not one health care system for the rich and famous in Canada and another health care system, an inferior system, for ordinary Canadians?

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the principles of the Canada Health Act are clear. The government has stated very clearly our support for Canadian style medicare and our opposition to an American style system as the Reform Party would have.

Further, in the budget that will be announced within the hour the member opposite will see our commitment to health care in Canada.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of my brother Speaker, Mr. Toomas Savi, President of the Parliament of the Republic of Estonia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

PARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I know you keep a close tie on the House with regard to parliamentary language and you have already asked the member for Scarborough Centre to withdraw his words calling the mayor of Toronto a liar.

But I think all members in the House heard him say the mayor of Toronto was full of shit. It is appropriate that the member for Scarborough Centre withdraw those words as well.

The Speaker: To say the least, this was a rather loud question period and I know we are anticipating the budget. We have the House leader for the Reform Party saying that a member used words which are unparliamentary. He has asked me to ask the hon. member for Scarborough Centre about this. Did the hon. member use the terms that the hon. House leader referred to in his submission?

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you asked me on a point of order to withdraw the words, and I did.

Let me clarify. It was not in reference to the hon. member for York South—Weston. It was more so to the articles in the newspaper following—

• (1505)

The Speaker: That matter is behind us. I address myself to the hon. member. Did the hon. member in the course of question period use the words that the House leader of the Reform Party said he used? And if he did, will he please withdraw them.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, as I did earlier.

The Speaker: We have settled this matter.

Sometimes in question period the microphones are open close by and that all comes through the system. I ask you, my colleagues, during question period while a member is putting a question or another member is answering or attempting to answer a question, please pay attention. I would hope that tomorrow we will keep these things in mind so that we can carry out our responsibilities as members of parliament.

The hon. member for Scarborough Centre wishes to seek the floor. If the hon. member is going to refer to the two issues which I have just accepted his withdrawal on, I would ask him to cease and desist. If it is another point I will hear it.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, my reference was not to the hon. member for York South—Weston—

The Speaker: Order, please. I consider this matter closed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, and act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to committee.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard lots of rhetoric today about how good Bill C-63 will be. I am a Canadian by choice. I was 23 when I decided I wanted to come to Canada, be a Canadian and enjoy what this country had to offer and hoping in some small way I could make a contribution back to this great country.

I am concerned about Canadian citizenship and the things we hold dear about our country. They have started to get watered down.

• (1510)

I think of some bills that have been before this parliament recently. In the last parliament, for example, Bill C-49 dealt with the amendments to quite a large number of boards and committees, largely government appointed. We sometimes refer to them as patronage appointees. I picked one dealing with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which is the guardian of our culture in many ways, subsidized by the Canadian taxpayer to \$700 million or \$800 million a year.

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One would think that this protector of Canadian culture would be a truly Canadian institution. However, section 38(1) of Bill C-49 states:

A person is not eligible to be appointed or to continue as a director if the person is not a Canadian citizen—or a permanent resident within the meaning of the Immigration Act.

Permanent resident were the words that were added.

I talked about this bastion of Canadian culture. Now we find that one does not have to be a Canadian citizen to sit on the board of CBC. In this parliament, because that bill died on the order paper, Bill C-44, section 38(1) dealing with the CBC now reads that directors of the corporation are deemed to be employees for the purposes of the pension plan and makes no reference whatsoever to Canadian citizenship, lack thereof or qualifications thereof. I presume we could now have foreigners sitting on the board of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation trying to determine what is Canadian culture and how to develop Canadian culture. It is this type of attitude from the government that tends to debase the concept of Canadian citizenship.

I also want to take up the point that the auditor general raised last year and which the public accounts committee dealt with, the problem of immigration and refugees coming into this country. In response to the auditor general's report at the committee meeting on February 5, 1998 Ms. Janice Cochrane, deputy minister of citizenship and immigration, made the following statement to the public accounts committee:

The auditor general's report identified some important areas where the refugee determination system is not performing up to our expectations. The report questioned the efficiency of the current system. It raised concerns about the level of communication between CIC and the refugee board. It also expressed some doubts about our ability to remove individuals who do not belong in this country.

I do welcome these observations. They are consistent with some of the conclusions that we ourselves have reached at CIC.

Those were the words of the deputy minister of citizenship and immigration when the auditor general pointed out that their policies and procedures were much less than perfect. Hopefully they are now doing something about it but at that time they were not.

I also quote from the auditor general's opening statement to the committee meeting on February 5, 1998 dealing with the removal of illegal refugees and immigrants:

The issue of removals also warrants particular attention. At the end of our audit, the department was able to confirm the departure of only 4,300 of the 19,900 persons who were to have left the country. In short, the process does not grant protection quickly to those who genuinely need it. Furthermore, it does not discourage those who do not require or deserve Canada's protection from claiming refugee status.

Furthermore, we noted that no one in the federal government monitors the overall progress of the claims.

We have heard today how we are dealing with citizenship and not immigration and refugees. However, the point I want to make, again referring back to the auditor general's report of December 1997, paragraph 25.41, is he talks about the huge backlog of 26,000 refugee claims. He points out in paragraph 25.44 that 60% of the people who arrive on our shores claiming refugee status have no documentation of any kind.

• (1515)

I am sure every member in the House knows that when travelling to Canada people do not get on the plane without having a passport or travel documents. Yet 60% of refugees who come off the plane have no travel documents. There was an admission before the committee that sometimes illegal refugees who have been sponsored by couriers and illegal organizations have a passport to get on the plane. A courier is on the plane, picks up the passport and is long gone through customs. They are left with nothing. Now they are here illegally with no documentation. Canadians are being taken for a ride.

Then the whole refugee process kicks into place. It is overburdened. It is not monitored or administered properly. There are backlogs. It takes two and a half years or more to determine that these people are illegal refugees. They are given a deportation order. Then they say that if they are sent back to where they came from, they might get hurt or they might be thrown in prison. An appeal process kicks in and the whole system starts again to determine whether there is a risk in sending them back.

During that time the person gets married, or they have a child. Then they claim they want to stay here under humanitarian grounds. Remember Bill C-63 says that children born in this country are automatically Canadian citizens. Imagine Canada deporting the parents of a Canadian who may be a few months old or one, two or three years old. Absolutely not. They are automatically granted permanent Canadian status on the basis on humanitarian grounds because we took far too long to process the claim.

Clause 10 of Bill C-63 says "The minister may, for the purposes of this act, deem a person who is in Canada and who has resided here for at least 10 years to be or to have become a permanent resident" of the country.

If people want to get into this country by the back door and at the same time have a legal process, they come in and apply for refugee status even though they do not qualify. They work the system and drag it out. They go for the appeal. Then they go for the risk assessment. Then they go for the humanitarian appeal because by this time they have started a family. They wait a few more years and Canadian citizenship is there for the asking. They have totally end-run the entire system.

By virtue of Bill C-63 we are now granting these people automatic entry into Canada. When that gets out we can see a flood

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of people coming into this country, none of whom would qualify under the rules. Yet Bill C-63 grants them Canadian citizenship after 10 years.

This government by its inability to manage the process properly is subverting and debasing the value of Canadian citizenship. I would hope it would take that seriously, stop it and stop it now.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes the assertion that the parents of somebody who was born in this country are allowed to stay in Canada because their child has been given status as a Canadian citizen. That is not the case. The member should know that.

People who are set for deportation will be deported. The fact that their child has Canadian citizenship status does not stop deportation. The child at that point has the choice of going with his or her parents. So far they have gone with the parents.

Citizenship is granted to people born in this country. That is not something new. It has always been the case. I would hope that the hon. member would recognize that.

• (1520)

Mr. John Williams: Mr. Speaker, I find it rather laughable that a two-year old child or a child who is just a baby would have choices that it could intelligently make. Let me quote the auditor general. December 1997, chapter 25, paragraph 129:

Despite the lack of departmental statistics on the number of such claimants, from our analysis we were able to determine that of the 31,200 individuals who applied for refugee status between 1993 and 1997 and had their claims denied, approximately 2,300 were granted permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Most of these individuals were given favourable decisions because they were married to permanent residents or Canadian citizens.

Right there, the auditor general confirmed it to us.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague relates to the burden that is placed upon the system when we end up with refugee claimants who have actually departed from a location with identification and have arrived without it.

We have a strong recommendation that we use digital technology. We all know that with the new digital technology we can take pictures at one end, plug them into a computer and pull them off anywhere in the world. I have done that with things as simple as getting pictures in Ottawa of my son playing hockey in Victoria. I know it works even though I am fairly illiterate technically.

That simple bit of technology added to the immigration and refugee system at all major points of departure for Canada seems to me would reduce the huge burden on the immigration and refugee

system. Would my colleague like to comment on what he knows about that and what the cost might be?

Mr. John Williams: Mr. Speaker, I do not know exactly what the cost would be on that type of system, but let me just tell the hon. member what is going on.

The supreme court has said that as soon as somebody sets foot in this country the charter of rights and freedoms kicks in. Let us not argue with that. That is the case. Therefore, we know that when the illegal refugees, and I am talking about the illegal ones not the ones who have a genuine right to be here, arrive in this country, sometimes on the odd occasion the people from immigration will go right on the plane and inspect the passports before people get off. Apparently that is before the charter kicks in because they have not touched Canadian soil at that point in time.

Yet when questioned they said even though that proved and identified illegal refugees who could be sent right back on the next plane, they did not follow that policy. They were far more willing to allow the people to enter into Canadian customs and allow the charter of rights and freedoms to kick in. This would then give them several years of appeals and lawyers and ongoing opportunities to run up huge costs for the Canadian taxpayer.

During that time if they develop a family in this country, on humanitarian grounds they then qualify for permanent residence. Then according to clause 10 of Bill C-63, after 10 years they are home free, a Canadian citizen with a Canadian passport. They have not qualified under a point system, under a refugee system or any system for that matter and they are in all the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Before we move on in debate, I should inform the House that we are past the five hours of debate with questions and comments. We are now into 10 minutes, no questions or comments. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mississauga South.

Ms. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification. I would just like to know if we are debating the Citizenship Act or the Immigration Act. I am not sure. The opposition seem to be talking about something else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member has a question of relevancy. It is always apropos to raise it. It may cause people to consider whether or not their remarks are germane to the debate at hand. In my opinion the debate so far today has been germane to the bill at hand.

• (1525)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a few comments with regard to Bill C-63, sponsored by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

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The hon. member who just raised a point of order is quite correct. I have followed the debate. I think that the member for St. Albert stated that the bill deals with citizenship, not with immigrants or refugees. In fact, Mr. Speaker, prior to your entering the chair this afternoon it had reverted to a litany of negative rhetoric with regard to immigrants and refugees. It is unfortunate that has happened but it is probably a good thing in the context that it shows Canadians what the fundamental values are of those who are suggesting certain things and making representations. It leads straight to credibility.

Credibility in this place is a more important asset than any other I can think of. When members rise to speak and to present information, their word is on the line. So I want to address a couple of the words that I heard from the Reform Party during the last three or four hours of debate.

One direct allegation was that the Government of Canada was advertising to bring criminal immigrants to Canada. I raised it with regard to a member who was here during the debate and heard the comments and asked that member if he would agree with the statement that had been made. He was given a piece of paper which he read into the record which said to the effect that you can get into Canada if you have a certain amount of money and this is what you do, et cetera.

The statement and the sheet were not prepared by the Government of Canada, by the Parliament of Canada or by any of the agencies of the Government of Canada. It was a flyer which was not attributed to anybody. It just happened to be a flyer which had these words, yet it was presented to the House of Commons as indicating the Government of Canada was advertising for criminals.

The members who presented that information have not been fair with the House by presenting information which is not substantiated by the information they have. If they feel that strongly about it I would certainly ask that they table the document in the House of Commons so that it can be shared by all members of parliament and dealt with. If it is not true, if it is a false document and a false allegation, I do not expect a document to be tabled.

The members of the Reform Party in expressing their values referred often—

Mr. Svend J. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The document to which the hon. member has just referred was from the publication *Latin Trade*. I would seek unanimous consent of the House to table the document as requested by the hon. member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Does the House give its unanimous consent that the document as referred to be tabled?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I have the same document in front of me. It refers to an address on Bathurst Street in Toronto. It is not a government office. It is not the Government of Canada. This happens to be—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, if members do not want to listen, I am going to continue to present the facts as I know them because I think that the credibility of the issue is extremely important.

• (1530)

The document is available to all members. I see all members are reading it now, just to satisfy themselves that in fact all of the representations and allegations that have been made today by the Reform Party with regard to this document have been totally false. They have been incorrect by attributing them to the Government of Canada and it is unfortunate.

From another standpoint, as I mentioned as I began my comments, it is always important to know exactly what the value system and credibility level are of speakers in this place. I think they have accounted for themselves very well. The Canadian people will know exactly the credibility index of the Reform Party.

There were also substantial references to the auditor general's comments regarding 20,000 immigrant applicants who have been denied and were ordered to be deported, that 4,000 of them had been in fact deported and that there were 16,000 yet to be accounted for.

The Reform Party would have us believe that there are 16,000 people roaming around Canada hiding away when in fact it is unquestionably the case that the vast majority of those people really are no longer in the country.

An hon. member: How do you know that?

Mr. Paul Szabo: That is right. Nobody really knows, but people who do not have landed status will not get into the country. They will not wait around until someone decides to invite them to leave. They can do it on their own because they have made an application and it was denied.

I wanted to ask a question of the member earlier when he was talking about illegal immigrants. For the life of me I do not know what an illegal immigrant is. It is a contradiction of terms. It may be an alien who has made application for immigration, but someone who would sneak into the country and is here as an illegal alien I understand. That is not an immigrant or a refugee. A

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refugee as I understand is someone who has come to Canada and sought refugee status and made application.

I raise this issue because when we are sloppy with the terminology and we start talking about illegal immigrants and illegal refugees, when we are not talking about immigrants and refugees in fact, it is a slight against those who have chosen Canada to be their home and those who were successful in achieving landed status but who still consider themselves to be immigrants.

The member for St. Albert was an immigrant. We have to be careful not to slander immigrants and refugees, whether they have been successful or not. We understand that in the vast majority of cases people have come here for very honourable reasons. They are looking for an opportunity. With regard to refugees there is no question. We have a social responsibility to do our share.

To slander them and to somehow characterize all those who come to Canada for immigration purposes as being somehow illegal and all criminals is really unfortunate. I make those comments simply because we have to recognize that they are human beings. If anything, the House should recognize that Canada has always been recognized internationally as being the champion of human rights.

Our process allows for the respecting of those human rights regardless of their status. We have a system in place. It is an honourable system and members should reflect in their comments that by and large the majority of the system is dealing with human rights issues and they should respect human rights.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my fellow members in addressing Bill C-63, but I cannot say I am terribly impressed with what we have to work with in the bill.

It has become typical of the government to spend months and years responding to a report and then drop a band-aid piece of legislation in our laps that it claims to be in great rush to push through. In this case we have a bill that tinkers with some definitions and procedures but completely ignores what really needs to be addressed in this country.

• (1535)

Our immigration system has been in crisis for years. It is in a tailspin. It has been abused by groups and gangs from around the world because they have found they can manipulate our system while legitimate refugees and law-abiding new citizens wait in a bureaucratic limbo to have their cases heard, reheard and deferred for months on end.

Thousands of known criminals walk our streets with impunity after brushing off the most cursory examination at border points while mysterious legions of organized criminals and drug fuelled

gangs set up shop in our cities, apparently beyond the reach of our Canadian securities.

What does the government have to respond to all this? At least these people still have to swear allegiance to the Queen at present, but it should be expanded to include Canada as well. Since we are here to deal with what little the government has to offer by way of a legislative agenda, I will point out where I believe the government has gone off the rails.

If a woman in this country has a baby then we confer upon that child the blessing of citizenship, and that is how it should be. However, if a woman comes here from another country to have a baby we have a bit of a problem. The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration recommended that the child only be considered a citizen if one or both of its parents were a permanent resident or citizen. There should be some leeway for refugee claimants who have been accepted, but the idea is that for Canadian citizenship to mean anything it should be held up to a certain standard.

We should ask people who are coming here to observe our laws and accept our requirements. Simply having a child here, then claiming that it would be unfair to be deported because one is the mother of a Canadian citizen is nothing but twisted logic and an abuse of that child.

What does Bill C-63 say to that? It says in clause 4 that the government is not prepared to lay down the law but apparently to wait for the supreme court to make up the law as it sees fit. We all know where this perverted logic led recently.

Unfortunately where the Liberals do not want the courts to rule they put the authority to interpret into the hands of the minister. In a perfect world we could all assume the minister and all her heirs would rule with a benevolent hand and never let politics or special interests affect her judgment. Of course in a perfect world we would not have people taking advantage of the generous nature of Canadians by trading off their children in this manner.

There are no fewer than 16 paragraphs with a number of subparagraphs describing what the minister might arbitrarily decide behind closed doors about how this act will work. Most are administrative and no doubt there is a sensible rationale for applying them, but I cannot help thinking that the more such clauses we have, the more open ended the law is and the more open it is to abuse or incompetence. We know how difficult it is already for opposition members and their constituents to get satisfaction from a government department after a case has wound its way through the labyrinth it must follow.

There is also a clause in the bill that the minister can delegate her authority. Once again maybe this is necessary to keep this creaky thing rolling along day to day. I do worry, though, that the minister saw fit to include the phrase "without proof of the authenticity of authorization". That is kind of an open ended statement. That

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comes from subclause 44(1). I hope this is not intended to be some sort of escape clause for future screw-ups but it certainly would not be the first time.

The minister has given herself the authority in the bill to decide what the criterion is for people to have an adequate knowledge of our official languages. There is no definition of what adequate is. It surely leaves open an opportunity for some cracker jack immigration lawyer to appeal on those grounds.

We see a clause that says that potential immigrants cannot use a translator to take a language test. This would be a laughable inclusion if it were not so sad that the Liberals never thought of this before.

The minister has given herself the authority to define what constitutes a relationship between a parent and a child for the purpose of determining entitlement to citizenship. We have to wonder why this relationship has to be defined at the door when we are thinking of letting somebody into the country. There is already a reference to adoption outside the country in clause 8, and aside from being the birth parents we are left with a big question of how this authority might be applied.

Maybe subparagraph (i) hints at the many possibilities for relationships the minister may have in mind. She has taken upon herself to define who is a spouse for the purposes of this act. As is its usual practice, we know the Liberal government has left it up to the courts to allow some special interest groups to redefine what constitutes spouse.

We can interpret this subparagraph to be anticipating that court case or, if we are generous, we might say that the minister will simply decide if a couple is married or not. I find that a little hard to swallow. This clause is wide open for the social engineering which many Liberals favour and of which Canadians have repeatedly made clear they are not in favour.

The minister's powers are even more frightening when we move on to grounds for refusing citizenship. Clauses 21 and 22 suggest that the minister can decide arbitrarily what constitutes the public interest and having disqualified someone under this heading can refuse that individual an appeal.

• (1540)

Ironically members opposite build their careers on the insupportable assertion that this party wants to keep immigrants out. That is not the case. However this clause puts incredible power in the hands of the present minister to do that very thing.

The problem is not that the minister may keep criminals out, something they do not seem to be terribly good at now, but that this act does not define what this or any future minister might decide is public interest. Might this one day apply to someone who holds

opinions contrary to some accepted government wisdom? It is not clear here where the guidelines are.

It is likewise with the term national security which appears in clause 11(f). The minister may grant citizenship to someone who has not been convicted of an offence against national security. The problem is that there is no specific category of offence in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act or the Criminal Code here.

There is merit in prohibiting people who constitute a risk to the country or who have demonstrated that they cannot behave according to the laws of this land or any other for that matter, but it is weak legislation that leaves this concept open to interpretation to abuse. It leaves the country open to dictation by the courts, and that is not why our constituents have sent us here.

One of the flaws in Canadian politics is the difficulty in dealing with subjects such as immigration, as if to raise the issue itself were tantamount to questioning its benefits, the place of immigrants or the value of a certain category of immigrants.

This kind of unspoken censorship has been a chronic problem for politicians for years. We firmly believe that the government must account for the way the objectives of immigration programs are being met. This is in accordance with the rules that allow the true exercise of the democratic rights of Canadian citizens.

Only then can we restore the public's faith in the management of immigration programs. At the same time we will restore the confidence of those who implement these programs and in the end all those who elect to settle in this great country.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to share with the House a story that I recently heard on CBC radio as I was driving through British Columbia.

It came on in late afternoon. A doctor was being interviewed by a CBC reporter, a doctor who I believe was working in Vancouver in an emergency ward in a major hospital. She was called into the emergency room to assist a young man who was having severe difficulties. The young man appeared to the doctor to be in good health. That is the way she related the story. However, he was having a great deal of difficulty breathing and she determined immediately that he needed mouth to mouth resuscitation or mouth to mouth assistance in breathing if he were to survive.

She had made some inquiries before going into the emergency room and found out that this fellow was a recent immigrant to Canada from Honduras and had only been in Canada for a very short time. I think it was in the neighbourhood of about six months. Naturally the doctor assumed that being a recent refugee Immigration Canada would have checked his health status and would have found anything that might have been wrong.

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The doctor assumed wrong. Much to her horror she found out that she had made a terrible assumption because, as she later found out, this young refugee who was lying in a hospital emergency room, who looked and appeared to be healthy and who was a recent immigrant to Canada, only having been here a few months, was in fact a fellow who had full blown AIDS and active tuberculosis.

The doctor made a life and death decision and assisted or attempted to assist him with mouth to mouth resuscitation. She found out later the patient was infected with the AIDS virus and tuberculosis. She had herself checked out when she found out what the patient's medical history really was. Thankfully she did not acquire the AIDS virus, but she did test positive for tuberculosis and now she is very concerned she may develop that disease at some time in her life.

I know members opposite think it is funny, but I do not think most Canadians find it funny. Frankly I know the doctor involved did not find it funny at all.

• (1545)

How could it happen that a young fellow recently admitted to Canada as a refugee could be admitted to an emergency room and a doctor treating him not knowing his medical history? How could this individual be in Canada with these very serious diseases that he had obviously had for a long period of time and immigration not even check?

What the doctor discovered and what she related to radio listeners that day was that immigration does not routinely check immigrants for serious diseases as they are accepted into Canada. They do not check immigrants to Canada for contagious diseases. They do not put public safety as a first priority when accepting immigrants into Canada.

There is something very wrong when Canada does not take these kinds of precautions to protect its citizens. Our citizenship and immigration department is so caught up with optics, spin and being political correct that it is willing to jeopardize public safety for the sake of being seen as politically correct. This is apparently the case because I have in my hand an advertisement that was recently found in a foreign publication which I will read verbatim into the record: "Canadian immigration to Canada with the purchase of a Fleet rent a car franchise, total investment of \$50,000 Canadian, approximately \$30,000 U.S. You are guaranteed immigration to Canada even with a criminal record".

This is an ad that was placed in a foreign publication. How can our immigration department be so obviously skewed and so incapable of doing its job that Canadians are recognizing that there is financial opportunities in attempting to entice criminals from other countries to come to Canada and guaranteeing them access to Canada if they have the ticket price to pay the \$50,000 or \$30,000 U.S.?

How can anyone watching the debate feel the government has as its first priority the public safety of Canadians? How can anybody watching this debate believe the government has its priorities in order? Refugees are not screened for serious illness and disease. There are ads to attract criminals into Canada. Canada needs to totally revamp its immigration policy and put as its first priority the health and safety of Canadians. In both these examples we see the government does not have its priorities right and it is not putting the health and safety of Canadians as its first priority.

The next priority the government should have with respect to immigration is to encourage immigrants who are ready, willing and able to make a positive contribution to our economy and to our country. Immigration has always been an extremely valuable and positive force in this country from its inception until now. I can speak with a bit of knowledge on this because I come from a community in northwest British Columbia, Kitimat. Kitimat was largely created during the 1950s when Alcan built a huge aluminum smelter and the community and the country at that time were accepting refugees from all over the world.

We had at that time people from Portugal, Italy, Germany and people from all over the world who came to our community. It was considered a melting pot. It was considered an exemplary community at that time. At that time we had an immigration policy that made sense. We had an immigration policy that looked to potential immigrants in terms of what kind of positive contribution they would be able and willing to make to our country.

Sadly the priorities of government have changed over time. Sadly we have a government that puts as its first—

• (1550)

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not like to interrupt the hon. member on debate. Unfortunately I have been listening for the last little while and I am lost as to the subject matter of the debate. Are we debating the citizenship bill or are we debating the white paper on immigration?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We are debating the immigration bill. During the time I have been in the chair it has been a fairly wide ranging debate. The hon. member for Skeena was addressing an ad, which in my opinion was relevant. I am sure the hon. member for Skeena is cautioned by the intervention by the member for Winnipeg North—St. Paul.

Ms. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say this to you, but you just said we are debating the immigration bill. We are debating the citizenship act which I think would be important to everyone. I do not understand why we are talking about criminals constantly. It seems that is the only thing the opposition is interested in. It is talking about irresponsible companies—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The point by the member for Beaches—East York is very well made and I would ask the hon. member for Skeena to touch on the bill at hand.

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, I am glad I got their attention. The reason we are talking about criminals, for the hon. member's edification, is the fact that we have a government and a policy which invite criminals to come to Canada and become citizens here. We have a government—

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you will find unanimous consent to table the document that has been referred to in the debate today, which will show clearly that this is not a Government of Canada document.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Mississauga South has requested the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that has been referred to by both sides in debate. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, I see that we really are making some progress here this afternoon and I am grateful for that.

The hon. member is quite right. This is not the Government of Canada that is doing the advertising, but it is the Government of Canada that is facilitating this charade. It is the Government of Canada's policy that allows Canadians and others to advertise in foreign publications and say bring us your criminals. You are a bank robber, come to Canada and if you get caught in Canada we have a criminal justice system that will not deal with you anyway. It is a haven for criminals.

I cannot understand why the hon. members do not understand. We are talking about priorities. We are talking about what is in the best interest of Canadians and what is in the best interest of Canada. Certainly when we see an advertisement like this in a foreign publication we are hard pressed to believe that the government's priorities are in the best interest of Canada and Canadians.

We are hard pressed when we hear this terrible story of this doctor working in an emergency ward in Vancouver that the priorities of this government are for the health of Canadians. This doctor was exposed to a serious contagious disease as a result of immigration's failure to screen people coming into this country as immigrants, to screen people coming into this country who desire citizenship here.

It is really disappointing to see that from all the noise on the other side they still do not get it. Canadians are not satisfied with this. They want something better. They want a better set of priorities. They do not want criminals and people who are infected with serious contagious diseases coming into this country and threatening the health and safety of Canadian citizens.

I wish the members on the other side would get it. Obviously they are spending more time talking than listening.

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-63, an act respecting citizenship.

This legislation has been a long time coming. For years Canadians have been waiting for improvements to the citizenship act. As far back as 1987 the government announced plans to bring in needed amendments.

• (1555)

Even when this government was elected in 1993, it announced its intention to overhaul our citizenship laws. It asked for advice from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and its report, "Canadian Citizenship: A Sense of Belonging", was presented to this House in June 1994. This government has now taken almost five years to study and consult some more. What do we have? A few of the key recommendations of the standing committee. We have a bill that fails in many respects.

We all know of the difficulty our courts have with the issue of children born in Canada while their parents are here illegally. Does this legislation put a stop to this abuse by illegal immigrants using this loophole to gain entry to the country? No, it does not. As things stand, we can have terrorists enter this country fighting deportation, perhaps even extradition, and during their time here they can conceive a child. Under section 4(1) of the bill the child acquires citizenship at birth if born in Canada.

Of course there are exceptions to the rule but they are limited to children of foreign diplomats, etc. The exceptions definitely do not cover the children of illegal immigrants, whether refugees or otherwise. This is fundamentally wrong. But just why is it wrong?

It is wrong because it creates a loophole big enough to drive a truck through because the child, when born in Canada, automatically becomes a Canadian citizen. That child has the right to remain in this country. The parents may well be in the country illegally. They may even be highly undesirable. They may even be dangerous criminals or terrorists with dark objectives either within Canada or elsewhere. But when these parents have a child while they are in Canada, they gain an important lever toward their fight to remain here.

Because their child is designated as a Canadian citizen with the right to remain in this country, it is extremely difficult to deport or extradite the parents and thereby deprive the child of those parents. There is usually and quite understandably much public sympathy.

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Instead of addressing this obvious problem in the legislation, the minister has chosen to ignore it and hopes it goes away. It will not go away. The problem will continue to plague our courts and the immigration system. Besides being a complete abdication by this government in its responsibilities, it creates unfairness in and severe criticism of our immigration process. All immigrants become tarnished because some are able to beat the system and gain entry through this loophole.

Some potential and highly desirable applicants for citizenship have to wait in line or perhaps are denied entry because these queue jumpers fill our quotas prematurely. It makes much more sense if we limit citizenship to children born in Canada to lawfully landed immigrants. Those children born to parents of questionable status should take the citizenship of their parents at least until the status of their parents is resolved.

I will now comment on section 6(1)(b) of the legislation. It states that citizenship shall be granted to persons who have been lawfully admitted and have been permanent residents residing in Canada for at least 1,095 days. But there is no legislative scheme to measure how to determine whether the 1,095 requirement has been met.

We are all very aware of various examples whereby immigrants enter the country to set up residence only to almost immediately return to their country of origin. They spend little time here as they have significant interests in their home country. They merely want to obtain Canadian citizenship to gain all of its advantages. They want to reserve their Canadian citizenship in case they eventually wish to take up residence in the country. Once again the legislation fails to address this loophole.

Certain individuals are able to take advantage. The result, once again, is that all immigrants become tarnished by the shenanigans of a few. Once again some immigrants fail to gain entry and citizenship because others are able to jump the queue with little intention of taking up permanent residence in the near future, if at all. Again, this is wrong and the minister has closed her eyes to the problem. She must be held accountable.

In more recent years the courts have been fairly inconsistent over this residency requirement. Some judges held that actual physical presence was not necessary. Applicants only had to show a significant attachment to Canada through bank accounts, investments, club memberships, driving licences, etc. Other judges held much stricter adherence to actual residency in the country. This uncertainty in the law seriously impacted the value and validity of our citizenship process. With respect, the amendments as proposed through Bill C-63 do little to address this concern.

I will speak only briefly to section 31 of the legislation. I note that infamous creature known as the governor in council will continue to appoint citizenship judges and commissioners. The

government wishes to retain positions with which to employ Liberal party members, benefactors and volunteers. They must be paid off through patronage appointments.

The function of a citizenship commissioner is a relatively simple endeavour at a relatively handsome remuneration. Appointments for a period of up to five years are also very attractive. It almost makes me think about becoming a Liberal but in case anyone misheard me, I said almost. I will now move on to section 43 of the bill. Again we see powers of the governor in council. There was once a time that members of parliament made the laws of Canada. We now appear to be moving closer and closer to merely authorizing the governor in council to take over our responsibilities. We are also moving closer and closer to concealing our laws from our citizens.

• (1600)

Have members ever noticed how much easier it is to research our statutes than it is to research the regulations? Statutes are available individually. They are available through the revised statutes. They are available through the Internet, on CD-ROM and they are in most major libraries. They can be tracked all the way through the legislative process to see just how they are developed.

Regulations are another matter. They come out in the *Canada Gazette* and they can come out at almost any time and as many times as the governor in council decides. They may come out without any comment or input from Canadians. There is not the same public disclosure and participation that occurs with legislation developed through parliament.

Let us look at some of the powers that the minister has reserved for the governor in council. In section 43(b) the governor in council can specify who may make an application under this act on behalf of a minor. Surely this could have been set out within the statute. It would likely include the mother, the father and it would likely include the official guardian if the parents were no longer alive or caring for the child and perhaps it would include other family relatives who are acting in place of the parents. Why do we leave it to the governor in council to make up the rules on who may act on behalf of the child?

In subsection 43(i) it will be up to the governor in council to define spouse for the purposes of the act. Can we not define spouse within the legislation? Do we need it done behind closed doors so that the Canadian public does not see just where this government has decided to take our laws?

There are 301 members of parliament with a budget to operate our parliamentary system that is quite staggering. But here we are merely reallocating our legislating powers to the governor in council. No wonder judges across this land are often eager to step into our jurisdiction and do more than just interpret our laws. When

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we continually exhibit our disregard for our mandated responsibility, should we expect anything different?

Section 43(j) leaves it up to the governor in council to define what constitutes a relationship of a parent and a child for the purposes of determining entitlement to citizenship. Once again I have difficulty accepting why we cannot be making this determination in parliament. Why does it have to be reserved for the decision of others and why does it end up becoming law through regulation, which does not attract the same level of public scrutiny, comment and participation?

It is for these reasons that I am unable to support this legislation. We have a citizenship act that has been long overdue for change to rectify many of its inadequacies. This new version of the citizenship act does not do that. It is being sold as being new and improved, but I see little in the way of addressing our present failings. The minister should be sent back to try again, but that will not happen.

Far too often we in this place continue to follow the dictates of the Prime Minister's office and pass legislation that does not address the interests and concerns as raised by our citizens, and that is a shame because as time goes on the voice of the people grows weaker and weaker in this place.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, on February 17, 1999, the House shall not adjourn at 6.30 p.m., but at that time a minister of the crown shall propose a motion:

That this House take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Kosovo and possible changes in peacekeeping activities in the Central African Republic.

That during the debate thereon, each member may speak for no more than twenty minutes, with a ten minute period for questions and comments, provided that two members may split one such time segment as provided in the usual practices of the House and provided that the Chair may receive no dilatory motions, demands for quorum or requests for unanimous consent to propose motions or waive rules and, when no members rise to speak, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1605)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, at the request of the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, I would ask that you seek unanimous consent that the order for consideration of Bill C-226 in the name of the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert be discharged and that the said bill be withdrawn. I understand the member no longer wants to proceed with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)

* * *

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to speak on Bill C-63 until I had the somewhat unfortunate experience of listening to some of the nonsense that is being perpetrated on the Canadian people by speakers particularly in the Reform Party.

I also serve on the citizenship and immigration committee—

Mr. John Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With the greatest of respect to the hon. member, I think you would find it unparliamentary to refer to the submissions made by opposition members as nonsense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): That would certainly be debate and not a point of order.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, even the points of orders seem to be nonsensical. I rest my case in that regard.

As a member of the citizenship and immigration committee, we spent several months in meetings trying to agree on an agenda that we should deal with knowing full well that Bill C-63 was coming before the House. I would add that this is a bill entitled an act respecting Canadian citizenship, not immigration, not criminal activity and not the kind of fraudulent activity members opposite have spoken about. It is about citizenship.

When I sit in this place and listen to the fearmongering and the absolute unadulterated nonsense being spouted by these people it makes my blood boil.

Let me share with this House a couple of facts. First of all, the advertisement the hon. member referred to which stated guaranteed immigration to Canada whether you are a criminal or not was in a Latin trade magazine in Miami. The phone number listed in Toronto is no longer in service. How interesting. It apparently is some kind of scam by someone who is trying to get money perhaps out of Latin Americans or Cubans who are refugees in the United States. Who knows?

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the last three minutes I have been listening to the member talk about fraud and not the citizenship act. I would ask the member to talk about the citizenship act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Surrey Central has a point of order on relevance. We would ask the hon. member for Mississauga West to touch on the bill at hand.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken more about Bill C-63 in about two minutes, having been interrupted twice, than all these people all day today. All they want to talk about is things they can perpetrate as being accurate when they know full well they are not.

I will talk about the bill. This is what the Canadian public should know about this bill on citizenship. It is intended to give citizenship at birth to all persons born in Canada. Is the Reform Party opposed to that? The Reform Party does not want to allow that to happen. This bill gives the minister new authority to annul, cancel, wipe out citizenship in cases where it has been obtained through the use of false identity or where the person was subject to criminal prohibitions under the act. This is exactly the point we hear them pontificating about in some self-righteous manner to try to paint all immigrants as criminals, to try to paint all immigrants as a burden on Canadian society.

• (1610)

That is the Reform mantra. That is what Reformers believe.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am trying to hear the comments of the hon. member. I am having difficulty understanding how his comments relate to Bill C-63. Could he address those comments?

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that all they want to do is stop me from making these points. I am reading right off the summary. It is the summary of the citizenship of Canada act. It is not something I am making up, unlike members opposite who are talking about disease transmission and criminal activity. It is the act.

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The bill sets out new prohibitions and offences and increases penalties, something the Reform Party wants to happen in every facet of life in this country. It strengthens the integrity of the act and addresses more modern issues. That is relevant to the act, unlike the nonsense we have been hearing. It will restrict the transmission of citizenship by derivation of first and second generation children.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Speaker: I think this is a good time to take a break.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 4.12 p.m.)

• (1615)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 4.15 p.m.

The Speaker: Order, please. It being 4.15 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of Ways and Means Proceedings No. 19 concerning the budget presentation.

* * *

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved:

That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on this the first day of the Chinese New Year, I am tabling the budget documents, including notices of ways and means motions, in both official languages. The details of the measures are contained in the documents and I am asking that an order of the day be designated for consideration of these motions.

[*Translation*]

I am also announcing that the government will be introducing bills at the earliest opportunity in order to implement the measures announced in this budget.

[*English*]

Let me begin, on behalf of the government, by expressing our appreciation to the Standing Committee on Finance and to many committees and caucuses for the valuable work they have done in the lead-up to this budget.

Let me also express our gratitude to the great number of Canadians who have come forward to present their views. The sense of civic responsibility they have shown now falls to us to respect, to balance the sound perspectives they have advanced, as we prepare together for a new century.

The Budget

It is an inescapable fact of life that a budget always brings with it its own special vocabulary. We talk in the languages of rates and ratios, of percentages and decimals, of accounting methods and measures.

What all of this obscures is what budgets should be about.

It is to make the lives of Canadians better. It is to improve their standard of living.

It is to build today for a better tomorrow. For budgets are about more than entries in the books of a government; they are chapters in the progress of a people.

[*Translation*]

Canadians have always understood that the turnaround from the excesses, the high indebtedness of the recent past would not be as fast as any of us would like; that the challenges posed by rapid change are substantial, and that the bar set by globalization is very high. Canadians knew, therefore, that a long-term plan was needed.

Five years ago, we put that plan in place. Today, it is working. And thus our responsibility is clear. It is to build on the success of previous years. And with this budget, we are.

This budget demonstrates that the finances of the nation are now in better shape than they have been in a generation, and that further progress lies ahead. It is a budget that acts strongly on the highest priority Canadians have, strengthening their system of health care for today and tomorrow.

It is a budget that continues to equip Canadians to succeed in the 21st century.

And it is a budget that for the first time in many years offers tax relief to every taxpayer and it does so without using borrowed money.

• (1620)

[*English*]

The past year has been one of extraordinary economic uncertainty, a volatility that has demonstrated that no country today can shield itself fully from global turmoil.

However, the past year has proven as well that the steps that Canada has taken to strengthen its finances and its economy are paying off.

There is no doubt we have felt the effect of the storm. As a result of the Asian crisis and its repercussions, our growth slowed from the robust pace of 1997 and early 1998.

Canada's west, particularly our forestry, energy and farming sectors, has suffered.

Yet it must also be recognized that overall the damage has not been as severe as it might have been, as severe as it would have been only a few years ago.

For example, job creation has been very strong. More than 450,000 new jobs were created last year, the large majority full time and in the private sector, exceeding even the impressive pace set the year before. No other G-7 country, not even the United States, has matched our record.

This strong job performance has continued in 1999, with 87,000 jobs created in January alone. This pushed the unemployment rate down to 7.8%, still too high but its lowest level in almost nine years.

Furthermore, job prospects for young people have improved significantly. Over the past 12 months youth employment grew by 10%, over 200,000 jobs, the best performance in over 25 years.

[*Translation*]

This year, in terms of economic growth, both the IMF and OECD expect Canada to be among the top performers of the G-7.

This is not to say there are no risks. Very clearly, there are.

The world is a long way from having the kind of architecture that will prevent or minimize economic crises in the future. We may have a global market. But we do not have a global framework to make it work for people. For Canada, putting this framework in place is a priority.

At home, the priority is also clear. We must equip Canadians to succeed in what remains an insecure world.

[*English*]

As we continue to implement our plan, it is important to reconfirm the principles that underlie it, the values that we seek to sustain and strengthen.

First, the government's deficit may be eliminated but we must never eliminate frugality from government.

There will be no rewind to the reckless spending of other people's money.

We must and we will govern as if every dollar counts because every dollar does.

This budget demonstrates that. Program spending as a percentage of the economy will decline from 12.6% this year to 12% by the year 2000-01, its lowest level in 50 years.

Second, we must never lose sight of the need to be balanced in our approach.

A successful society does not run on one cylinder. We must respond to the reality that success on one front requires action on several.

Third, we must never shy away from the need to make choices. A government with too many priorities is a government that has none.

The Budget

That is why, for example, health care, knowledge and innovation constitute fully three-quarters of the new spending announced in this year's and last year's budgets, the first two in the era of balanced books.

Fourth, we must set aside any notion that acting in isolation is a sign of strength. It is not. In today's world, power lies in partnership. Canadians have the right to expect that their governments will work together.

• (1625)

Therein lies the importance of the social union framework signed by the Prime Minister and the premiers two weeks ago.

Fifth, we must focus on the longer term. Some of the greatest problems of the past arose when governments gave in to short term pressures that threw them off course. If we are not to lose our way, we can never lose sight of the far horizon.

Finally, and most important, we must always be fair. If, at the end of the day, it is said that the books of Canada are better, but the lives of Canadians are not, we will not have succeeded.

The test of good government is not to protect privilege for the few. It is to provide opportunity for the many.

Our country has finally left the era of deficit financing behind.

Last fiscal year, the federal government recorded its first budgetary surplus in over 28 years.

As this fiscal year draws to a close, this March 31, it is clear we will again balance the books or better.

This will mark the first time in almost half a century that the federal government will have recorded two balanced budgets or surpluses, back to back.

Moreover, this budget confirms that we will balance the books or better next fiscal year and let me announce today that we will also balance the books or better in the year 2000-01.

This means four consecutive years of budgets in the black. This is only the third time this has happened since Confederation.

[*Translation*]

Of even greater significance, we will enter the new millennium as a country no longer saddling generations to come with a legacy of ever-increasing debt.

[*English*]

For well over a generation, Canada's debt to GDP ratio rose relentlessly. However, two years ago, as a result of both our action on the deficit and an economy that was growing, it began to fall meaningfully.

Last year, Canada's debt to GDP ratio recorded the largest single improvement in over 40 years, falling from 70.3% to 66.9%.

This year and next year, we expect it will fall still further and by the year 2000-01 our debt ratio will be under 62%.

Looking beyond that, our commitment is to keep it on a steady downward track year after year after year.

Now, all of this may well sound arcane, some statistical addiction of economists, or perhaps even finance ministers, far removed from the day to day concerns of Canadians. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Paul Martin: It certainly is beyond those who do not understand it.

It is Canadians who pay the price when government is forced to spend so much of each tax dollar simply to pay the interest on the national debt that it is unable to respond to their needs.

Three years ago, when the debt to GDP ratio was at its peak, 36 cents out of every revenue dollar, more than one-third, went to debt interest.

• (1630)

This was money Canadians could not use to prepare for the future because their governments were too busy paying for the past.

Last year, with the debt ratio dropping, the portion of each revenue dollar servicing the debt also dropped to 27 cents.

This means the beginning of a new flexibility, a new freedom to strengthen health care, to provide needed tax relief, to fight child poverty, to protect the environment and to invest in a more productive economy.

In short, balancing the books means a new strength to build today for a better tomorrow.

But it means as well that we cannot stop the debt fight now. For there is something deeply wrong when the largest program the federal government has is paying interest on its debt, more than \$41 billion this year alone. To put this in perspective, that is almost twice the size of our next largest expenditure, pensions for Canadian seniors.

Therefore the debt repayment plan that we announced in the last budget will remain in place.

First, we will as we have done again today, present two-year fiscal plans based on prudent economic assumptions.

Second, we will continue to build into our financial plans a contingency reserve, a buffer against the unexpected.

Third, if the contingency reserve is not needed, it will continue to go directly to paying down the debt.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, following this course, not only have Canadians secured a financial victory that is remarkable by domestic standards. They have secured a victory that is remarkable by international standards as well.

The accounting method Canada uses to calculate its debt repayment is considered among the most rigorous in the world.

Many other major economies measure only the debt that is owed to markets.

On that basis, Canada's debt to GDP ratio is around the 52% level.

Last year, we paid down \$9.6 billion in market debt. This year, we expect to pay down a similar amount, for a total of almost \$20 billion in just two years.

We are one of the few countries in the world that is actually paying down its debt.

[English]

So far, so good. But does this mean that all of the challenges are behind us? The answer is clearly no. The deficit may be eliminated but our debt ratio still remains the second highest of the G-7.

Furthermore, the Asian crisis remains with us and events in Brazil highlight the fragility of the world's economic recovery. We are weathering the storm much better than most. However, Canada's economists have cut their growth projections substantially from where they were at this time last year.

Despite these realities, as we prepared this budget, there were those who said we should take the risk that things would turn out vastly better than anticipated, that therefore we should spend more or that we should cut taxes more; in other words that it was time to cease being careful, being cautious with the finances of the nation and that we should now revert to the habits of the past.

Here is our response to those who hold those views.

We have always believed that the odds of reaching our goals must be better than a mere flip of a coin.

The very reason we are still on track to balance the budget or better in each of the next two years, the very reason we are not back into deficit despite a degree of global economic turmoil that literally no one foresaw a little over a year ago, all of this is the result of the cautious approach we have applied to our finances from the very beginning.

[Translation]

Furthermore, our careful approach has also ensured that we have the resources to respond to other unanticipated events, while at the same time safeguarding our financial health.

In 1996 and 1997, it gave us the capacity to provide assistance to those who suffered from the Saguenay and Red River floods. In

1998, it allowed us to respond to the ice storm. This year, it has enabled us to support Canada's farmers who are in difficulty.

To those who believe we can play Russian roulette with the nation's finances, let me simply say no. We will not squander the opportunity Canadians have before them.

• (1635)

[English]

That speaks to our nation's finances. However, it does not by itself speak to our nation's future. Taking care of the needs of our people does not end with taking care of the books. A nation is not a corporation.

Markets do many things and they do them well. But there are many things that markets cannot do.

[Translation]

Markets cannot provide quality health care to all of us when we are sick.

They cannot prevent the gap between rich and poor from becoming an unbridgeable gulf.

[English]

Markets cannot deal with the root causes of homelessness or of violence against women.

Markets deal as they should in services and goods. They do not, however, deal with the common good. Therefore, we must.

We are not here to sit back and simply build up surpluses or pay down debt. Our purpose is not just to build a better bottom line. It is to build a stronger nation.

That is why, among other initiatives, we have provided new money for the youth employment strategy, expanding it by 50%, an initiative that has helped more than 100,000 young people each year gain valuable work experience.

That is why in this budget we are following through on our commitment to implement Gathering Strength, Canada's action plan for and with aboriginal peoples.

That is why in this budget we are devoting new resources to overseas development assistance and why we are taking a leadership role in the international community to deal with the issue of crippling debt in developing countries.

That is why in this budget we are devoting significant new resources for youth justice, replacing the Young Offenders Act, protecting the public from the most violent and introducing new community based programs to help others change their behaviour.

That is why in this budget we are improving the compensation and the benefits of the men and women of the armed forces. Let it be said that the men and women of the armed forces are Canadians who put their lives at risk every single day around the world. They are Canadians who have demonstrated uncommon dedication here

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at home helping their country cope with a series of national disasters.

That is why in this budget we are making the largest, single expenditure we have ever made in any area since taking office: strengthening health care for the future.

Over the decades, Canadians have made a series of defining decisions. They were decisions about much more than some government program. They were decisions about what kind of country we wanted to be. They were the decisions that led to medicare.

Today it falls to us to take the steps necessary to safeguard that great legacy, to sustain and strengthen our health care system now and for the future.

• (1640)

Canadians do not need to be convinced that health care is a priority. They worry about crowded emergency rooms, about understaffed wards, about waiting lists for tests and treatment. They worry about the costs of paying for services and drugs that are not covered.

[Translation]

The short-term pressures and problems in our system must be dealt with.

At the same time, we must plan for the longer term. The Minister of Health has put it very well "What we must strive for is a people-centred system in the truest sense, one that ensures the right care by the right provider at the right time in the right place, at reasonable cost".

That is why the first major investment we made when it was clear that deficit elimination was at hand was to raise the annual cash floor of the Canada health and social transfer, the CHST, from \$11 billion to \$12.5 billion.

[English]

Today with the books balanced we are able to do even more. As the Prime Minister wrote last month in response to a letter from the premiers:

Our collaborative work on a renewed health partnership and on a new social union partnership more generally along with increased health funding, will reassure Canadians that governments are working together to address their health and other social needs.

Today we are announcing a significant increase in transfers to the provinces to support health care and a number of other initiatives which strengthen the federal government's contribution to Canada's health system.

Over the next five years we will invest an additional \$11.5 billion through the Canadian health and social transfer. Two billion dollars in new cash will be received by the provinces in the first

year, continuing into the second. In the third year this will rise to \$2.5 billion and will remain at that higher level for the fourth and the fifth years.

This means that cash transfers under the CHST will increase from the current \$12.5 billion to \$15 billion within three years, by 2001-02. This will bring the health component of the CHST to the level it was before the period of restraint in the mid-1990s.

Furthermore, flexibility will be given to the provinces to determine the timing of when they receive these funding increases over the first three years to enable each province to best determine the particular health needs of their citizens.

• (1645)

The \$11.5 billion in additional cash together with the value of tax transfers which will also grow over this period means that total CHST transfers will reach a new high by the year 2001. Furthermore, while this is a substantial investment it is by no means the end of the story. As our financial flexibility increases in the years ahead, health care will continue to be very much one of the key priorities for further action.

In addition to the new funding that we have just announced we have worked with the provinces and the territories to renew all major fiscal arrangements for five years and to do so on a fairer basis.

[Translation]

We are renewing and strengthening the equalization program.

This program reflects the shared commitment of all Canadians.

It provides provinces that are less well off with the resources they need to provide reasonably comparable public services, including health care, to their people.

That is why equalization was one of the few programs left totally untouched when virtually all other spending was reduced as we grappled with the deficit challenge.

Two weeks ago, legislation was tabled to renew the program with improvements.

Over the next five years, equalization payments are projected to total more than \$50 billion. This is considerably more than the provinces received over the past five years, in fact, \$5 billion more.

Moreover, official estimates at the time of the last budget indicated that we would be providing the provinces with \$8.5 billion in equalization this year.

However, the latest data indicate that payments this year will now total \$10.7 billion, \$2.2 billion more than projected in the 1998 budget.

And next year, equalization payments will be \$600 million higher than projected.

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[English]

In summary, as a result of the increased CHST funding and higher equalization more money will be available for public services, including health care, throughout the country. For example, from now to the end of the next fiscal year, a period of some 13 months, as a result of the increases in the CHST and the higher equalization payments \$4.2 billion in new cash will be made available to the provinces.

The continued vitality of equalization depends on the willingness of Canadians to share Canada's prosperity. This requires that all Canadians be treated fairly and equally. In 1990 the previous government limited the growth in transfers to Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia for social assistance and social services. This has meant on a per capita basis the residents of those provinces have not received as much as residents of other provinces from the CHST.

In 1996 we began to address this disparity. Legislation was passed that would cut the per capita differences in half in four years time. Today we are moving much further and much faster than that. We are announcing the full restoration of equal per capita entitlement for all provinces, and this will be completed in three years.

• (1650)

Let me put today's decisions in context. They are about much more than dollars and cents. They are about a fundamental choice that Canadians have made about the kind of society in which we want to live. What we must always make clear is that the circumstances of the many, not the advantages of the few, will guide our decisions.

For each and every Canadian this means good health must never become captive to good fortune. Our health care system is blind to income so that its eyes can focus on need. It must, and it will remain so. The fact is that in response to the health care challenge some have said that the answer is easy. Some have said eliminate equal access. They have said make wealth status, not health status, the ticket to quality health care. For those who hold those views let me say on behalf of this government, no, not now, not ever.

As the Minister of Health has said, "We spend \$80 billion a year as a country on health care, and it is astonishing how little we know about what we get for that money". Canadians have the right to know how their health dollars are being spent. They have the right to know if the quality of their health system is improving. Furthermore, health care providers need the best information possible if they are to provide high quality care for their patients.

Governments as well need to know what is working, what is not and why.

[Translation]

This budget announces four major initiatives that will significantly improve the health information made available to Canadians.

These initiatives flow from the understanding on health and the social union framework, and will be implemented in a manner consistent with both.

First, we are making an investment that will lead to valuable annual progress reports to the Canadian people. One will provide insight on the health of Canadians. Another will look at the health care system itself, for example, the situation with regard to waiting lists, the most effective treatments available and the best use of resources.

Second, this budget provides funding to build a national health surveillance network.

This network will be able to identify the outbreak of serious illness, from salmonella to flu to tropical diseases, so that preventive measures can be taken to manage and minimize their impact.

Third, the Canada health network is being established on the Internet. Canadians everywhere will have direct access to objective, reliable and up to date health information across the board, from nutrition to breast cancer, Alzheimer's to diabetes.

Fourth, this budget provides funding for an important initiative to apply up to date information technology to the delivery of health services.

For instance, this will include telehealth, which holds extraordinary potential for the ability of doctors and nurses in rural and remote areas to communicate with the best specialists anywhere in the country.

• (1655)

[English]

As I just mentioned, Canadians who live in rural and remote areas face unique problems. Innovations in community based services are being developed across the country in response to their needs. This budget provides \$50 million over the next three years to continue developing with the provinces promising strategies for rural and community health.

Next, we tend to focus, as we must, on care and cure once we are sick. The question is do we focus enough on the other half of the equation, on preventing sickness in the first place. As has been said, health is more than health care.

This budget provides \$287 million over the next three years for several initiatives relating to the prevention of illness.

For example, the Canada prenatal nutrition program works to improve the health of women at risk to ensure that they have

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healthy babies. Pregnancies put at risk by alcohol or drug abuse, family violence or other factors can have serious effects on children's lives.

Today we are announcing a substantial additional funding for this program over the next three years to enable it to reach the majority of women at risk.

Next, a healthy environment with clean water and safe food is critical to our health and well-being. It is recognized that the programs we have in place to deal with toxic substances are far from adequate. This budget provides Environment Canada with the resources it needs to deal with that problem.

It also allocates additional resources to help ensure food safety in Canada.

Finally, diabetes is a chronic health condition facing a great many Canadians, in particular aboriginal peoples among whom it is three times more prevalent. This budget devotes important resources to addressing this serious situation.

In addition, health services for first nations will be upgraded through a separate \$190 million over the next three years.

Research is at the core of a quality health care system.

Better research is about better health for Canadians. It is about our hope that with improved care and treatment, prevention certainly and hopefully a cure, that a mother will overcome the tragedy of breast cancer, that a grandfather will be spared permanent memory loss, and that a son or a daughter will regain nerve functions following a devastating accident or injury.

We must provide Canadians with the best medical research possible for the 21st century, for if we are to improve one of the world's finest health care systems, we must be a world leader in health research as well.

This begins with good research infrastructure. That is why in 1997 we announced the creation of the Canada foundation for innovation, the CFI, whose purpose is to modernize the equipment and facilities necessary to develop and test new ideas.

Already exciting projects supported by the CFI are underway. For example, at the University of Manitoba researchers are working to reduce the 30% rejection for kidney transplants. Researchers at Carleton University and the Kingston General Hospital are co-operating to upgrade MRI machines so that they are able to detect breast cancer earlier than they now can.

In only two years the CFI is becoming an essential building block for health research in Canada. Approximately 45% of the awards granted in 1998 went to health related infrastructure in hospitals and universities. As we will say later in the budget, its funding will be enhanced.

Nurses have borne a great deal of the brunt of the changes in the health care system.

• (1700)

They are working under tremendous stress. There are predictions of a major shortage, yet it is impossible to imagine a quality health care system of the future that does not include a much larger role for nurses in the community, in clinics, in hospitals and in the home.

The Canadian Nurses Association has proposed that we create a \$25 million research fund in order to enhance the leadership role that nurses deserve to play in the health care system of today and tomorrow.

This budget does just that.

Finally, the nature of modern health research has changed dramatically. It now spans a wide variety of disciplines, from genetics to nutrition, from microelectronics to the social and economic determinants of health, each of which can contribute greatly to the other. Based on that reality, over the past year Canada's health research community under the leadership of Dr. Henry Friesen, president of the Medical Research Council, who is in the gallery, has come together to develop an exciting new approach.

They have proposed to create the Canadian institutes of health research.

Through a series of networks the CIHR would bring together the best researchers, regardless of where they live in Canada, specializing in areas such as aging, arthritis, women's health, cancer, heart disease and children's health.

[*Translation*]

The institutes would consist of networks which would draw together scientists across the full spectrum of health research, from basic science to clinical research.

The CIHR would build on Canada's strengths, the dedication of our biomedical researchers, the leading-edge work of our social science researchers, the high quality of our research facilities, the excellence of our national health care system.

It would transform those strengths into an even stronger coherent whole.

[*English*]

Researchers have only been rarely called upon to explore solutions together to national health challenges. Through the CIHR, our health research capacity across various disciplines and specialities will now be linked more productively to the major health issues facing the country.

Furthermore, the CIHR reinforces Canada's capacity to become a world leader in new breakthroughs across the medical spectrum. It would begin to reverse the drain of those who leave to seek greater opportunity elsewhere.

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Finally, rather than relying on imported discoveries Canada would capture new economic benefits, the new jobs that come from bringing such breakthroughs to world markets ourselves.

Therefore we are setting aside \$65 million in the year 2000 to support the launch of the new Canadian institutes of health research, an amount we are prepared to increase to \$175 million the following year.

As well, \$35 million has been provided this year to the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation to support its participation in the CIHR.

In order to provide immediate new support to advanced health research and to bridge the transition, we are also announcing an increase of \$50 million in each of the next three years in the budgets of the three granting councils, the National Research Council and Health Canada.

Together, the increased funding for existing federal research organizations and the money being set aside for the CIHR will effectively make \$225 million of new resources available for the objectives of the CIHR by the year 2001.

• (1705)

In summary, the combination of all the initiatives just announced is to increase the funding for health research by \$550 million over the remainder of this fiscal year and the next three years.

[Translation]

Let me summarize the resources being devoted to health care in this budget.

Over the next five years, the provinces will receive \$11.5 billion in new cash through the CHST for health.

\$6.5 billion of that will be made available over the next three years. During that same period, an additional \$1.4 billion will be invested in health research and other means through which the federal government contributes to Canada's health system.

This means almost \$8 billion in new resources will be spent over the next three years on health care, the largest new investment we have ever made.

The fundamental economic challenge before us is to complete the task of putting in place the framework for a stronger economy, an economy where incomes are growing, where employment continues to increase, where the Canadian standard of living and quality of life are on the rise.

As the Prime Minister has said, and I quote "Implementing a strategy to achieve a higher standard of living for all Canadians always comes back to dealing squarely with the same deeply rooted challenge: enhancing Canada's long-term productivity".

[English]

Greater productivity is about one thing, how to bring our human, natural and financial resources together to produce higher incomes, better jobs and an enhanced quality of life for all Canadians.

The fact is much of our economic challenge can be summarized in two words, knowledge and innovation. These are the new raw materials of the 21st century economy.

They are the key to a country that can race forward when the global seas are calm and ride out the rough weather safely when they are not. Knowledge and innovation are two sides of the same coin, the true hard currency of the future, the sources of sustained growth.

Education is critical, for it equips Canadians with the skills, the aptitude and the attitude to seize the new opportunities the future has to offer.

That is why in this budget we have invested so much in supporting those engaged in post-graduate research. However, what we seek is not simply knowledge for the few but for the many.

That is why in the 1998 budget we launched the Canadian opportunities strategy, a seven part plan to improve access to skills, training and higher education.

Let me simply describe the results of one of those initiatives since its inception one year ago, the Canada education savings grant, a cash contribution from the federal government put directly into registered education savings plans, established to help families save for a child's future.

This program has become a huge success in its first year alone.

In the 25 years since their inception in 1972 through to 1997 there was a \$2.5 billion net accumulation in RESPs. However, in 1998 alone, with the introduction of the Canada education savings grant, the total soared to \$4 billion.

This and the other measures in last year's and this year's budgets are anchored in a very straightforward proposition, that every Canadian who wants to learn should have the opportunity to do so.

• (1710)

But as we work to develop that opportunity, let it also be clear that Canada's challenge begins well before the age of formal schooling. Our children will only seize the opportunities to learn if they are nurtured from the very earliest age to develop a readiness to learn. That is why in previous budgets we bolstered the community action program for children. It is why we are investing in aboriginal head start. It is why, in this budget, we have expanded the prenatal nutrition program and it is why, as we will see later, we are increasing the child tax benefit for low and middle income

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families. Going forward, we must build on these initiatives still further.

[*Translation*]

Earlier, I referred to knowledge and innovation as the flip sides of the same coin. Let us now turn the coin over.

From lab bench to factory floor, from farm to forest, innovation is the engine that creates jobs.

Over the past several years, we have put in place a new framework for innovation, a strategy that we have implemented step by step in each of our budgets.

That strategy has three parts, the creation of knowledge, the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and the application of knowledge, its commercialization, getting ideas out into the market. This budget takes further action in each of those three areas.

[*English*]

In terms of the creation of knowledge, breakthroughs do not just happen. They require a sustained investment.

As mentioned earlier, in 1997 the Canada foundation for innovation was created with an \$800 million investment whose purpose was to fund new and modernized research infrastructure at our universities, colleges, research hospitals and not for profit research institutions.

Through partnerships, the federal investment in the foundation will translate into \$2.5 billion in world class facilities and equipment needed to make world class discoveries, discoveries that will open the door to exciting commercial opportunities and jobs down the road.

Based on its very clear success and the crucial role it is now playing, this budget allocates a further \$200 million to the foundation.

Research and access to knowledge support one another. Therefore, building on the increased funding announced in last year's budget, the government's granting councils and the National Research Council will be provided more than \$120 million in further support, over and above that announced for health research, over the next three years.

Finally, many believe that Canada has the capacity to become even more of a world leader in the field of biotechnology, one of the fastest growing of all new technologies.

This has huge potential applications ranging from agriculture and forestry to manufacturing and medicine. As a result we are committing \$55 million over the next three years to support biotechnology research in science based government departments.

[*Translation*]

In terms of the dissemination of knowledge, we have set a goal of making Canada the most connected nation in the world by next year.

Thanks to SchoolNet, we are on course to see Canada's 16,000 public schools and 3,400 public libraries connected to the Internet by March 31 this year. Up to 10,000 rural and urban communities will be connected through the community access program in two years.

Building on these efforts, and following the advice of a blue ribbon panel announced by the Prime Minister last year, this budget provides \$60 million over the next three years to fund smart communities demonstration projects.

Smart communities use information technology in new and innovative ways to empower their residents, institutions and region as a whole. Our goal is to establish at least one of these projects in each of our provinces, in the North and in an aboriginal community.

• (1715)

In addition, this budget provides \$60 million over five years to build GeoConnections to ensure that Canada stays at the forefront of mapping and its applications.

This initiative has tremendous potential for a whole range of industries and services.

[*English*]

In terms of value added job creation, we must accelerate the furtherance of innovative technologies in all sectors of the economy.

The networks of centres of excellence have been a successful part of this endeavour. They now link more than 900 researchers in 60 universities with over 400 companies across Canada.

In this budget, we are increasing their funding by \$30 million a year, an increase of more than 60%.

[*Translation*]

In 1996 we established technology partnerships Canada to support industry in turning promising ideas into successful products. These investments focus on aerospace, environmental technologies, and enabling technologies such as advanced manufacturing and materials.

Today, we are announcing that the funding for technology Partnerships Canada will be increased by \$50 million per year.

We are also providing \$50 million to the Business Development Bank of Canada to strengthen its ability to lend to small and medium size businesses in knowledge-based export fields

[*English*]

In summary, the measures we have announced today, above and beyond health research, amount to a cumulative total of \$1.8 billion in additional resources over the next three years for knowledge, innovation and support for youth and other employment programs.

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These investments are all directed toward a single overarching goal, and that is to provide Canadians with a more diversified, more innovative economy in which to accomplish their goals.

The fact is, as long as we are too dependent on ideas developed in other countries, our economy will remain unduly dependent on those countries. If we are to have a stronger, more innovative private sector, we must generate more knowledge and demonstrate greater initiative here ourselves.

Ours must be a country that excels in turning ideas into the value added jobs of the future in rural Canada as well as urban Canada, everywhere and in everything we do. Ours must be a country that has excellence as its goal for that will be the route to a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for all Canadians in the 21st century.

Let me now turn to the next part of our plan, reducing taxes, which is also part of our productivity agenda.

Let there be no doubt. We want to reduce taxes as quickly and as broadly as we can.

As begun last year, now that the books are in balance, we will get taxes down. We will do so in every single budget, and we will do so without prejudicing the soundness of our finances or the security of our society.

Our goal and our commitment is to ensure that Canadians keep more of the money they earn. After all, they worked for it. It is theirs.

The principles of our tax policy are clear.

First, our tax system must be fair. Tax reductions must benefit first those who need it most, low and middle income Canadians.

Second, broad based tax relief should focus initially on personal income taxes. That is where the burden is greatest. That is where Canadian taxes are most out of line with other countries.

Finally, because our debt burden is so high, broad based tax relief should not be financed with borrowed money.

• (1720)

We want tax relief to be permanent, not temporary. The worst thing we could do would be to provide structural tax relief one year, only to have to rescind it in the next as a result of the country going back into deficit.

In our last budget, with deficit elimination finally secure, we were able to put in place overall tax relief directed at low and middle income Canadians.

We said then that we would build on those measures in future budgets as resources permitted, that as soon as we could afford it tax reductions would be broadened and deepened. In this budget,

we are following through on that commitment, building on the initiatives taken last year.

[*Translation*]

First, personal tax credits ensure that no tax is paid on a basic amount of income. They make the tax system more fair.

Last year, we increased the amount of income that could be earned before paying one penny of tax by \$500 for singles, and \$1,000 for couples and families.

As a first step, this measure was targeted to benefit low income Canadians. The full amount of the benefit started to be reduced at about \$8,000 of income and was completely gone at \$20,000.

In this budget, effective July 1, 1999, that tax relief is being extended to all taxpayers.

Next, effective July 1, we are increasing the amount of income that Canadians can receive without paying taxes by a further \$175.

As a result of these measures, the amount of income all Canadians can earn tax-free will now be \$675 higher than before the 1998 budget.

This more than offsets the effect of inflation on the basic credits since 1992.

[*English*]

While all taxpayers will benefit from these measures, the largest proportionate benefit will go to low and modest income Canadians.

For example, due to the measures in last year's budget, 400,000 lower income Canadians no longer pay income taxes. The measures just announced will ensure that 200,000 more Canadians will also be removed from the tax rolls.

In 1986, the previous government introduced a 3% general surtax, a tax on tax, in order to help bring the deficit down.

Last year, with the books in balance, we began to eliminate that surtax, starting with taxpayers earning less than \$50,000, and reducing it for those earning between \$50,000 and \$65,000.

This year, we complete the job. As of July 1, the 3% surtax will be eliminated for each and every Canadian taxpayer.

We have spoken about the support we are providing low income Canadians through reducing their taxes, but there are many other ways in which we can provide and are providing assistance to families with children.

Through the creation of the national child benefit system, the federal and provincial governments are embarked on a major co-operative effort to support families and reduce child poverty. The purpose is to ensure that children in this country are always better off when their parents join the workforce.

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In 1997, we announced the first federal contribution to this national endeavour, \$850 million which began flowing last July, increasing financial support to over two million children and their families.

In the 1998 budget, we announced that a further \$850 million would also be allocated, following consultations with the provincial and territorial governments.

• (1725)

These discussions have concluded in agreement. We are announcing, therefore, today that the Canada child tax benefit for low income families will be increased by a further \$350 per child beginning July 1, 1999 and July 1, 2000.

This means, for example, that a family with two children that earns \$20,000 will receive an increased benefit of \$700 for a total of \$3,750 per year.

Taken together, our two previous budgets provided \$1.7 billion for the children of low income families.

Today, building on this effort, we are announcing that a further \$300 million is being allocated to enhance the Canada child tax benefit for modest and middle income families.

As a result, 100,000 more families will become eligible for all or part of the base benefit.

Let me illustrate the impact of the 1998 and 1999 tax measures on typical Canadian families.

Consider the impact on a middle income family, a family of four with two incomes totalling \$50,000.

That family received \$183 in tax relief as a result of the 1998 budget. This budget provides an additional \$373 to that family, \$189 through the increase in the base credits and \$184 in increased Canada child tax benefit payments.

Putting last year's budget and this year's budget together, that means \$546 more for such families, a 15% reduction in their net federal tax, and this does not include consequential reductions in provincial income taxes.

[*Translation*]

Consider as well a one-earner family of four earning \$30,000.

That family received \$145 in tax relief from the 1998 budget.

As a result of today's budget, that family will receive \$353 more—\$169 through the increase in personal credits and \$184 in increased Canada child tax benefit payments.

In fact, when the GST credit is included, this means that as a result of measures in this and the last budget, such families will now pay no net federal income tax whatsoever.

[*English*]

In closing this section, let me summarize the combined impact of the tax measures set out here.

Tax relief of \$16.5 billion will be provided over the next three years, \$7.7 billion of which results from actions in this budget. For the two budgets together, that is tax relief of \$3.9 billion in 1999-2000, \$6 billion in 2000-01 and \$6.6 billion in 2001-02.

Low and modest income families will benefit the most. Compared to the situation before the 1998 budget, 600,000 additional Canadians will now pay no federal income tax.

Finally, all 15 million Canadian taxpayers will receive tax reductions.

In addition, as a result of the reduction in employment insurance premiums announced in December, employers and employees are now paying \$1.1 billion less for employment insurance. Relative to the premium rates that prevailed in 1994, employees and employers are now paying \$3.5 billion less.

The tax measures we have announced today are important and they are fair.

• (1730)

But our action to reduce taxes will not end here.

Let me be clear. As resources become available, the personal income tax burden in Canada will be further reduced. This will occur year after year, each budget building on the progress made before.

[*Translation*]

First, when we came into office, the deficit and debt burden were rising relentlessly. The finances of the nation were out of control. Our response was immediate. We eliminated the deficit. Then, last year, we began to get our debt burden down.

Second, in this budget, we have moved to strengthen the confidence of Canadians in their health care system and we have further strengthened the sinews of an innovative, productive economy.

Third, we lowered taxes. And so, as our financial health has improved, we have moved forward, focusing first on those least able to pay. And in this budget, tax relief has been provided for each and every Canadian taxpayer.

[*English*]

From rising deficits to balanced books. From an increasing debt burden to one that is declining. From years of difficult cuts to an era where needed new investments are being made. From a tax burden that was rising to a time where it is falling. That is the summary of this budget.

Looking ahead, there are two dangers that a responsible government must avoid.

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First, a government that pretends it can be everything to everyone is a government that will do nothing for anyone. Government must focus on those areas where it can really make a difference. That is what we have done and that is what we will continue to do.

The second danger on the other hand is to become fixated on one major issue alone and as a result leave every other pressing problem to fester.

A focus only on new spending to the exclusion of everything else would put us back in the red. A focus on tax reduction alone would leave us unable to respond to the core needs of Canadians. A focus on debt reduction alone might make the books look better, but it would also make everything else look worse.

We can never lose sight of the need to take a balanced approach. For the social and economic needs of our country are not separate. They are not in conflict.

[Translation]

As a new century beckons, we can now say with confidence that a new beginning is truly at hand.

We are freer than we have been for a generation to chart a new course for ourselves.

[English]

In the early days of this century, Sir Wilfrid Laurier spoke of our prospects as a people. He said that the 20th century would belong to Canada. Some since have scoffed at those words pointing to great powers, great empires and great conquests. They have said he was wrong.

Well, Laurier was right. Not according to the cold calculations of might, but because of the quality of our life. Not because of any single value we have pursued but because of the many values we have advanced together. The value of tolerance, of fairness. The value of working together, the peace we enjoy and the openness we show to each other.

Our opportunity today is to see our future as Laurier did, a country that refuses to set limits on what it can do.

There is so much we must continue to build. There is so much that lies ahead to accomplish. There are barriers we must bring down, of circumstance and of privilege, and there are new bridges that we can all cross together.

● (1735)

The story of this century may be over. But the story of Canada is not; it goes on.

It is time to imagine a day when we have fully met the challenge of an aging population, when we have met our obligations to the young and when we have met our responsibility to the environ-

ment. It is time to take the steps now that will take us closer to that destination.

It is time to take on the world and win. Some may say that this is too ambitious. We say that there is no ambition that is too great for this country.

Let there be one thing coming from what this government has done. Let us come together, all of us, and make a pledge of common purpose that we will do everything in our power today so that the generations of tomorrow are able to say not only that Canada belongs to the 21st century, but that the 21st century belongs to Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in about three minutes I will formally move adjournment of the budget debate until tomorrow. Before doing so I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for his speech and also for the improvement in his vocabulary. After much tutoring from the opposition he has finally learned how to say tax relief.

Using the words tax relief and delivering tax relief are two different things. If we cut through all the verbiage and the spin doctoring, if we cut through the shell game that announces modest tax reductions with great fanfare but says nothing about all the other federal taxes that are inexorably taking more money from the pockets of Canadians, if we cut through the inflated announcements about \$11 billion in health care spending but forget to talk about the \$20 billion in health care cuts that have been taken—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Preston Manning: Mr. Speaker, if we do all that, if we say all the things these members do not want to hear, we get to the bottom line and that is that Canadians are paying more and getting less. They are getting less health care and less social services. In a word, this is a pay more, get less budget.

● (1740)

It reminds me of the time in old England when King Richard the Lionhearted was away on a crusade. He left a relative, Prince Jean, in charge of the kingdom.

To quote a rhyme from that period, "He wanted to be known as John the First, but he ended up known as John the Worst". Why? Because with the aid of his henchman, the sheriff of Nottingham, he taxed his people to death. Under his regency the government got richer but the people got poorer. They paid more and got less, until a green clad reformer named Robin Hood created the united alternative, but that is another subject which I will save for another day.

I close by suggesting that King Jean and the sheriff of Nottingham retire to the castle for a night of revelling while Reformers

The Budget

will retire to Sherwood Forest to plot our plans for the next day, and that we return here tomorrow to debate the only real question this budget poses. Why should Canadians pay more and get less?

I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2) the motion is deemed adopted. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

(The House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.)

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