



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, February 17, 1999**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 17, 1999

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

**The Speaker:** As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will led by the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

*[Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem]*

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]*

### NUNAVUT

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday decades of dreams became a reality for the people of Nunavut when they held elections for the first government of Canada's newest territory. In this historic vote, they elected 19 MLAs who will govern this territory being created from the eastern part of Canada's Northwest Territories. This starts on April 1. Throughout Nunavut people gathered to watch the election results as the polls closed in each of the three distinct time zones.

The new legislative assembly is the achievement of Inuit and non-Inuit people working together. It will help Inuit become full partners within Confederation and to take charge of their own destiny. This government, which is representative of the northern population as a whole, will be accountable to the people of Nunavut.

On behalf of Canadians, especially those in London West, my constituency in southern Canada, I extend congratulations to the newly elected MLAs, to those who stood as worthy candidates in the election and to the people of Nunavut. Well done. Welcome.

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### DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Dauphin—Swan River, Manitoba work hard, abide by the laws, and do their best to create communities safe both for the young and the old.

But wheat, cattle, and pork producers, the backbone of Dauphin—Swan River, have fewer and fewer markets to go to. When they sell their produce, they get less and less.

In fact, the one thing they can count on getting more of is more taxes. They pay higher and higher taxes to the federal government and get less and less. They get longer and longer speeches from the finance minister. They get more and more empty rhetoric from the Prime Minister.

It is time for less rhetoric, shorter speeches and tax relief for Dauphin—Swan River.

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*[Translation]*

### CLSC NORMAN-BETHUNE

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently we learned that the Quebec minister of health and social services, Mrs. Pauline Marois, had received a request to change the name of the CLSC serving the Chomedey-Laval district from CLSC Norman-Bethune to CLSC/CHSLD Ruisseau Papineau.

I believe it is imperative that the name Norman-Bethune continue to be associated with the health sector. In January 1929, Norman Bethune came to Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital to study surgery; he was rapidly recognized as an expert and a prominent person in the medical field.

The author of many papers, Norman Bethune realized that the state undoubtedly has jurisdiction over public health and therefore has a crucial role to play in that respect.

In a word, because of Norman Bethune's contribution, reputation and skills, I consider that his name—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

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*[English]*

### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I stand in support of the Liberal government's 1999 budget which will increase prosperity and lead Canadians into a new world economy for a new century.

*S. O. 31*

At the beginning of this century the prosperity of the Canadian economy was of course dependent upon a world economic environment that provided funds for investment and markets for exports.

One hundred years after Sir Wilfrid Laurier was responsible for that profound provident policy, Jean Chrétien's government is continuing to keep—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North—St. Paul.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North—St. Paul, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a sad commentary that the opposition due to partisanship cannot find the courage to applaud, nor the magnanimity to acknowledge, the good news budget '99 brings to all of us.

It builds on the previous five budgets of this government which has shown its sound financial management of the country: eliminating the deficit, balancing the budget and creating the surplus, thanks to the will and hard work of all Canadians.

Now, cash transfers for health to the provinces will increase by \$11.5 billion over the next five years, \$425 million for Manitoba, in addition to \$1.4 billion of direct investment in health research and preventive programs.

Indeed budget '99 is a healthy transfusion to safeguard and strengthen medicare, the crown jewel of Canada's social programs. Its focus on health, in addition to reducing taxes by \$7.7 billion and to investing in the creation, sharing, and application of knowledge speak of our faith as a people that in the finance minister's own words "there is no ambition too great for this country".

Let us salute the government and the Canadian people.

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**LIBERAL TASK FORCE**

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, last Sunday afternoon the member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, who is the chair of the government's western alienation task force, was the guest on a two-hour radio show across Canada.

In the entire two hours there was not one single call of support. And one listener even told the member to get himself a hearing aid because it was clear from his inattention to the callers that he was not listening.

The government does not even listen to the messages it gets from the Liberal Party of B.C. on issues like Nisga'a, criminal refugees and crime control. Why would anyone think for a moment that the western alienation task force is going to take the slightest bit of notice of input from the west?

After all, if the Liberals were serious, they would only have to listen to and act on the input that Reform MPs are giving them every day in the House.

The name of the western alienation task force should be changed to the Liberal alienation task force because it is the Liberals who are the ones who are alienated out west. The voters just do not like them.

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**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate our finance minister and in fact all Canadians for this good news budget and their extraordinary achievement of turning our country's economic fortunes around.

However at this time I want to expand upon the comments made by the leader of the Reform Party and further introduce his cast of characters for the Robin Hood story.

They are the member for Wild Rose as Friar Tuck; the member for Langley—Abbotsford as Little John; the member for Edmonton North as Maid Marian; the member for Medicine Hat as Robin Hood; and lastly, the member for Calgary Southwest as the true Sheriff of Nottingham.

This band of miserable marauders have nothing more to offer than silly anecdotes. Once again Canadians see the Reform members for what they truly are, a bunch of medieval morons so entrenched in the past—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Verdun—Saint Henri.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Henri, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance brought down an economic and social confidence-building budget.

● (1405)

This is a budget for health. It translates into a \$3.5 billion increase in funding for the provinces.

The Canadian government has listened to the people of Canada. That is why the Minister of Finance announced such significant measures to be implemented in the coming years.

This is one of the key points in yesterday's budget. I encourage the people of Canada to peruse it; I am sure they will appreciate the major impacts it will have in the next few years in an area as important as health in Canada.

**THE BUDGET**

**Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the very day the budget was presented, the situation in the emergency rooms of certain hospitals was critical.

The Minister of Finance does not appear to listen to the news before he retires. If he did, he would not spend millions of dollars, when he prepares his budgets, on fattening up the mandarins of Health Canada and ordering empty studies on matters of no concern to him.

This House must realize that, with the hundreds of millions of dollars the federal government will be wasting in duplication and useless programs, such as telecare, the provinces could create hundreds of jobs and make available thousands of beds in emergency rooms so as to help the sick directly.

Let us remind the Minister of Finance that Internet does not attend to fractures, people do. No, the Minister of Finance did not listen to Canadians and Quebecers in this budget. He tried instead to respond to the federal government's obsession with its own visibility.

It is sad to see that this budget marks the start of the ravages to the social union agreement that—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

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[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians can take great pride in our armed forces. They have demonstrated time and again their dedication, bravery and professionalism. It is unsurpassed. What a great disappointment then to read yesterday's budget.

Since the Liberals took power in 1993, the defence department's budget has been slashed by more than \$7 billion. This has had a devastating effect on both operational readiness and morale.

Fixing low morale is not a simple matter of increasing pay levels. Morale is also affected by equipment that personnel must use. Our air force is flying aircraft that is 20 to 45 years old. Our army is driving 30-year old APCs and outdated trucks.

Yesterday's puny budget increase of \$325 million addresses only one side of the morale question, a tiny fraction of what has been cut. This meagre increase is to be devoted to pay and benefits.

*S. O. 31*

[Translation]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, behind the highlights of the budget presented yesterday by the Minister of Finance lies the need to build today for the future.

As in past years, the Liberal government has made a point of saying that Canada must not return to the hell of deficits.

And so the Minister of Finance set out clear principles: maintaining sound financial and economic management; investing in major economic and social priorities that have a profound effect throughout Canada; taking definite steps to reduce the tax burden and improve fairness in the tax system; eliminating the budget deficit and reducing the debt burden to keep Canada's economy on a solid footing.

Quebec will receive \$1.4 billion and \$11 billion, that is 29% of all provincial transfers, despite the fact that it has only 24% of the population.

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[English]

**CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

**Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning millions of Canadians woke up to find their beloved CBC missing.

Over 2,000 technical staff who work at the CBC went on strike for fair pay and decent working conditions. They have rejected the most recent offer of zero, zero and zero.

This Liberal government has cut public funding to the CBC by 25% and we are now seeing the results.

Management at the CBC seems hell-bent on the elimination of regional programming and forcing more and more concessions from dedicated programmers.

It is criminal that those who support better broadcasting have to walk a picket line, while those who seem dedicated to destroy it sit in management, on the CBC board or in the cabinet.

Canadians expect quality programs from the CBC, not reruns. Canadians want fair labour practices from our public broadcaster.

New Democrats and concerned Canadians demand that this government intervene now to get management back to the bargaining table with a meaningful offer so Canadians can once again wake up to the CBC.

*S. O. 31*

• (1410)

## NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

**Mr. Lawrence D. O'Brien (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago today the Parliament of Canada approved the Terms of Union with Newfoundland and Labrador.

Confederation was a hotly debated issue in Newfoundland in 1949. Many felt it would mean a loss of our independence and identity. Today we celebrate the full benefits for both sides of this historic partnership.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are proud to be members of the Canadian family. As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we invite our Canadian brothers and sisters to join us in celebrating Canada from our unique Canadian perspective.

Soiree '99 is a year-long festival of history, folklore, arts and culture. We will also reflect on the strength and diversity of Confederation at the Canada Conference.

As we celebrate this historic milestone of Confederation, I encourage all members and indeed all Canadians to join us this year in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada's youngest province.

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## PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Alliance of Canada employees are having demonstrations on Parliament Hill today.

Last week PSAC employees in my riding held peaceful demonstrations. They are frustrated that the table two negotiations have broken down and they are now on strike. They have not been awarded pay equity with their counterparts in the same trade across the country. They have yet to receive an increase in wages for the past seven years.

The members of table two have been left with no other choice but to strike after over two years of negotiations with the federal government. I must question what this government has been doing in the past two years. Obviously very little.

The table two PSAC members only want fair and just treatment. It is this government's responsibility to negotiate with labour in a fair and equitable manner. Treasury Board must take that responsibility seriously and act now.

I urge Treasury Board to go back to the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith with those members.

[Translation]

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, in New Richmond, people from all walks of life from the Gaspé, Magdalen Islands, Lower St. Lawrence and Acadie regions sent an appeal to the Government of Canada.

People from these regions want to live, not just survive. They are saying to the federal government "Stop impoverishing those of us who live in coastal and forest regions and depend on seasonal work. The spring gap is waiting for us".

These people are demanding that an independent employment insurance fund be established and administered by representatives of the contributors, that the employment insurance program be improved, and that the EI surplus be given back to them.

To this, the Minister of Finance replies contemptuously but shamelessly "You little people from the regions, wait some more. Ottawa still needs to take your employment insurance money to appear to be resolving the crisis in the health care system, to alleviate the plight of high income taxpayers, and to put Quebec in its place".

\* \* \*

[English]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party's mean-spirited attack against environmental law and conservation groups is appalling. These public interest organizations perform valuable services for all Canadians. With limited financial resources, they are at the forefront of research and public education.

Unlike the Reform Party, Canadians recognize that a strong economy and a healthy environment go hand in hand.

Once again the Reform Party has put its support of single special interests ahead of the public interest. Why should these environmental and public interest groups lose their charitable status while the charitable status of right-wing special interest groups such as the Fraser Institute is unchallenged?

The hypocrisy of the Reform Party is evident. They only care about taxpayers' dollars when the views of the organization contradict their own.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Before we begin Oral Question Period, I want to address myself directly to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

*Oral Questions*

It is reported on page 11887 of *Hansard* that the hon. member used the word "liar". I am asking him to withdraw that word, which is unparliamentary.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that word.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[*English*]

### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, at the end of this year, after all this talk of tax relief, Canadians are going to be paying \$42 billion more in taxes than they were when this government took office.

While the economy grows at 2% to 3% per year, the government's revenues are growing at 8%. Never in Canadian history has any government taxed Canadians as much as this government.

My question for the Prime Minister is why, after so much talk of tax relief, are Canadians paying the highest taxes in their entire history?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has more revenues because the economy is performing very well. The government has more revenues because 1.6 million people who had no jobs five years ago are working in Canada. The government has more revenues because there is optimism in the country because we have reduced the deficit from \$42 billion to zero. The government has more revenues because it is the first time that we have had two balanced budgets in 50 years.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, no prime minister in history has taxed Canadians as much as this Prime Minister.

No prime minister in history has cut health care more deeply. For the last four years the accumulated total of health care cuts is over \$20 billion. The budget proposes to put \$11 billion back over five years and health care deteriorates as a result.

How does the Prime Minister intend to explain to Canadians that when they are paying the highest taxes they have ever paid, they are getting less health care than they have ever received?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell the House of Commons that the Reform Party said that the government should immediately restore health care

services by reallocating a minimum of \$2 billion in new health transfers to the provinces.

The problem that we have with the opposition party is that it cannot take yes for an answer.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refers to others because he is really afraid of his own record.

The real result of this government's health care policy is a two-tier health care policy where ordinary Canadians get put on a list 200,000 names long and wealthy Canadians go to the United States.

My question for the Prime Minister is how does it feel to go down in history as the father of two-tier health care?

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

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy with the standing ovation because we are afraid we will lose the leader of the Reform Party next week.

I do not have to go to the United States because I want to go to Alberta. One of the guest speakers for this weekend, the premier of Alberta, Mr. Klein, said on February 17, not a long time ago, "I am pleasantly surprised. I did not think there would be a restoration of health care funding that would be of such significant proportions".

• (1420)

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing the Premier of Alberta is not in favour of. He is not in favour of the provinces having to send all kinds of people south of the border to get all kinds of procedures, preemie babies going from Ontario to the United States to get service because they cannot get it in Canada.

They are not in favour of a young man from Toronto going to Buffalo to get a tumour removed because he could not get it done in Toronto.

That is the type of health care the government is giving. I would like to know how he can justify two tier health care in Canada.

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

**The Speaker:** It is just not going to work if we cannot hear the questions or the answers.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a big party this weekend. Some Tories from Ontario will be there and the leader of the Tory party, the Premier of Ontario, said last night that it was a very good step in the right direction on medicare.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the Premier of Ontario does not favour seeing \$5

*Oral Questions*

billion a year leave Canada and go to the United States for health care every year. That is what is happening under this government.

They cannot get health care because this Prime Minister is the prime minister who put the hell into health care. This Prime Minister is the prime minister who cut \$20 billion out of health care and is proposing to put half of it back and expects people to be grateful. Thank you very little.

Is that the record the Prime Minister is proud of?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Canada are very happy that we have the finances of the nation in good shape. They are very happy that after we have managed to reduce the deficit from \$42 billion to zero, the first big investment we made responded to the wishes of Canadians. We have invested \$2 billion for each of the next two years into the health care. They are quite happy with that.

I understand that the Reform Party, because of this good budget, will have to invite again the group therapist from United States to come and—

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we feared, unemployed workers, who have had their benefits slashed and are being harassed in employment centres, are footing the bill for the measures announced yesterday by the Minister of Finance.

How can the minister be proud of this budget when he knows full well that the government's gains come at the expense of unemployed workers?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since 1986 the Auditor General of Canada has asked us to include the EI account in the government's consolidated revenue fund.

During all the years this fund was in the red, did the members opposite criticize Canadians for contributing to it? Now, there is a surplus. I know surpluses are something the members opposite cannot understand, cannot even imagine.

It is only natural now that all Canadians should benefit from this fund, which is serving them very well.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** The Minister of Finance's sidekick is just as proud as the Minister of Finance, who has an unfortunate habit of dipping into the pockets of unemployed workers. It is a disgrace.

Yesterday, as I left my office, which is not far from the Minister of Finance's office on the 5th floor of the Centre Block, friends of the Minister of Finance were partying and toasting his budget.

Is the minister aware that, while he and his friends were celebrating, unemployed workers were facing the prospect of benefits that were reduced or about to run out at week's end because of the government's EI cuts?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the celebrations were not confined to my office. All of Canada was celebrating the health budget. Canadians were celebrating the fact that the federal government has just put an additional \$11.5 billion into the health system throughout the country.

• (1425)

They are celebrating the fact that equalization payments are going up. They are celebrating the fact that the number of Canadians with jobs has risen by 525,000 over the past year. They are celebrating because things are looking good for Canada. That is what the good cheer is all about.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance decided to unilaterally change the rules for distributing the Canada social transfer, so that Quebec will receive less than 10% of the health care money given to the provinces, while Ontario will get 46%.

Since, in the name of equity, the health care transfer to Quebec will now correspond to its demographic weight, will the Minister of Finance promise to use the same criteria for purchases of goods and services and for regional development, where Quebec faces an annual shortfall of nearly \$3 billion a year.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when we look at transfers to the provinces, we look first at the Canadian transfer for health care and equalization payments.

When we look at the two together, we see that, within four weeks, Quebec will be getting a cheque for \$1.4 billion from the federal government—

**An hon. member:** Zero deficit.

**Hon. Paul Martin:** Exactly, zero deficit, as my colleague said.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** And that is thanks to us.

**Hon. Paul Martin:** Everyone knows that within the next five years, the provinces will be getting \$19.6 billion from the federal government, and that Quebec will be getting—

**The Speaker:** The member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance should say it is thanks to the unemployed and Bernard Landry that he does not just have no deficit.

**An hon. member:** It is true. It is true.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.



*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Instead of trying to knock everyone flat with his empty figures, will the Minister of Finance acknowledge that in the end—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We will hear the question from the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, instead of trying to knock everyone flat with his empty figures, will the Minister of Finance acknowledge that in the end the effect of his budget yesterday is \$33 billion in cumulative cuts to social and health programs and that the amounts announced represent only a fraction, a small fraction, of the cuts established in his 1995 budget?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, empty figures? One point four billion in the next four weeks represents empty figures? Six billion dollars of new money over five years represents empty figures? That counts for nothing?

The math of the Bloc Quebecois is clear now. They understand nothing at all. This is money that will go to create jobs. This is money that will improve health. This is money that will go to help all Quebecers. And it is too bad for the Bloc Quebecois, but Canada works.

[English]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the finance minister. Yesterday Conrad who happens to be a millionaire got \$8,000. John who is single and earns \$40,000 a year got \$115, barely enough to buy his bus passes, and Marika who is homeless got absolutely nothing.

John and Marika want to know why Conrad deserves so much while they deserve so little.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know who Conrad is but perhaps the leader of the NDP would introduce me to her friend.

Perhaps I could quote from Roy who is the leader of the NDP in Saskatchewan. Roy says that the budget is good news. We should call it what it is.

• (1430)

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians wanted a fair budget. They were disappointed.

Florence Sallén of Montreal expresses this disappointment well, and I quote: “Had the minister lowered the GST, it would have been much more to the point, and everyone, without exception, would have benefited”.

The Minister of Finance preferred to help the rich. Why did he decide to not touch the GST and to forget Mr. and Mrs. Average?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I like the idea of quoting Canadians. I might quote the B.C. minister

of health, Penny Priddy, who said “I would give the Minister of Finance a seven, perhaps higher, for the budget”. For her part, B.C. finance minister Joy MacPhail said “It is a good budget”.

[English]

This is welcome news for us. We can now join together and address the problems of the health care system.

The only question is: Why does the NDP in Saskatchewan and the NDP in British Columbia understand what a good budget it is but the NDP here does not.

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, last year Canadians paid the highest taxes in the G-7. Do you know what? After this year’s budget they will still pay the highest taxes in the G-7. Canadians have a negative—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

**Mr. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts, obviously. Members opposite know that Canadians will continue to pay the highest tax in the G-7 because their government continues to refuse to provide the type of meaningful tax relief that Canadians need.

Canadians need this tax relief now, not tomorrow. Due to high payroll taxes and bracket creep Canadians will actually pay more after this budget than they did before.

Why is the minister practising give and take economics: giving Canadians some tax breaks through the front door but taking them due to bracket creep through the back door?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, bracket creep arises out of the lack of indexation, which arises out of measures introduced by the Tory government some time ago.

One of the things I would like to point out to the hon. member is that as a result of the reductions in taxes in yesterday’s budget in fact bracket creep will be more than covered for all Canadians for the next three years.

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister mentioned the origins of deindexing tax brackets. That was a deficit reduction measure similar to the GST, similar to free trade. The minister is not backing away from those—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

• (1435)

**Mr. Scott Brison:** Now that the minister is saying he has eliminated the 3% surtax, another deficit reduction measure, why does he not reindex tax brackets now to ensure that Canadians can actually get a tax break when he forgets to give one?

*Oral Questions*

The fact is that this minister has used the GST, has used free trade and has used the 3% surtax to do what they were intended to do, to pay down the deficit, but the deficit is paid off. Now will the minister give Canadians the real tax—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Colleagues, I appeal to your sense of fairness. We must be able to hear the questions and I am hopeful we can hear the answers.

I do not want to single out any members of parliament, but surely we deserve to be able to hear the questions and the answers. I ask you again, please let the members have a chance to ask their questions and give their answers.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the only way we could be fair is if we did not hear the questions.

As I understand it, the deindexation was introduced as an anti-deficit matter. The deficit at that time was \$24 billion. After they introduced it, it went to \$42 billion. God knows if they had introduced others what would happen.

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when Liberals cut health care by billions of dollars they did it by saying “we had an emergency, the deficit”. They chose to take a money emergency and turn it into a medical emergency. The result is the Manitoba farmer who just had to go to the Mayo Clinic because he could not find a surgeon in his province.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to guarantee, now that he has done this fabulous business of putting money back into medicare, that farmer will not have to go to the U.S. any more?

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the \$3.5 billion that was announced in yesterday's budget is available to the provinces immediately to help them resolve the issues as they wish within their provinces. We want to ensure that people have access to the care and services they need when they need them and where they need them.

The increase in the base of the CHST to \$15 billion by the end of year three will help ensure the sustainability of health services in this country into the next millennium.

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this would all be understandable if we really had a medical emergency. When we started we did not, but the taxman took \$2,000 per taxpayer out on one hand and the health care budget dropped by \$1,500 per taxpayer on the other hand. That does not equate for Canadians.

My question again is for the Prime Minister who sat in his chair and allowed this to happen. Will that farmer from Manitoba not have to go to the U.S. again for his care? That is my question. Yes or no.

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the minister of health said very clearly—and yesterday the finance minister said it clearly—that health care is a priority for this government.

The \$11.5 billion allocated yesterday is the single largest investment that this government has made. That is the answer to the member's question.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while hospital staff is struggling with overcrowded emergency rooms, the federal government is spending tens of millions of dollars on developing statistics, carrying out studies and drafting reports on the performance of provincial health systems.

• (1440)

How can the Minister of Finance justify putting millions of dollars into studies and statistical analyses, and at the same time keeping tabs on the provinces, when emergency rooms are overflowing thanks to him?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the key challenges facing industrialized nations is to have a modern health care system to meet the great challenges ahead in terms of population aging and new technologies.

All levels of government are putting their shoulders to the wheel for advanced research. Should the only modern government, be it federal or provincial, in the world not to make an additional effort in health research be the Government of Canada? Certainly not with this government in place.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister also announced the establishment of a \$25 million fund supposedly designed to remedy the nurses' situation. But the Fédération des infirmières du Québec recently issued a statement to the effect that the fund was far from being an answer to all their problems.

Does the Minister of Finance not consider that the \$25 million would be better spent on emergency services than on paperwork?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to quote sources from Quebec, we will go along with that. One third of all funding for biomedical research from the Medical Research Council of Canada goes to Quebec. I do not think that yesterday's budget will come as bad news to researchers in Quebec, quite the contrary.

[*English*]

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today 200,000 Canadians are still on waiting lines in hospitals. But

*Oral Questions*

if they are wealthy or desperate they could jump the queue and fly down to the United States for treatment. They could pay cash for health care. If that is not two tier, if that is not American style health care, I do not know what is.

I would like ask the father of two tier health care how will this budget guarantee that Canadians will not have to fly south for health care.

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that the priorities and the principles of the Canada Health Act ensure a contract with Canadians that says that when they need health care services it is up to the provinces to deliver those services. The federal government is a partner in funding.

Yesterday we lived up to our commitment by giving the provinces \$3.5 billion immediately and \$11.5 billion over the next five years. We have helped to ensure that the principles of the Canada Health Act will be ensured and secure for the next millennium.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the Canada Health Act. Is she telling Canadians right now that they have equal access to a waiting line? I do not think Canadians would be too impressed about hearing this member rattle on about the Canada Health Act.

This government has stripped billions and billions of dollars out of health care and put a little back in yesterday. The wealthy and the desperate still fly to Minnesota to the Mayo Clinic.

Let me repeat that we are seeing an American health care system. We are seeing a two tier health care system in this country. That goes against the Canada Health Act. That is Liberal health care.

How come Canadians cannot get a hospital bed in our own country?

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the Reform Party opposite, this party stands firmly in support of the principles of the Canada Health Act. That party would scrap the Canada Health Act and lead us down the path to American style medicare. Frankly, it cannot accept good news.

The good news is that the budget yesterday has secured Canadian health care for the future. As a partner with the provinces we have given them the resources they said they need. We gave almost \$30 billion in cash transfers to the provinces in support of Canadian medicare.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance's budget puts the EI surplus at \$4.9 billion in 1999-2000.

According to the chief actuary, however, this surplus will be more like \$6 billion to \$7 billion.

• (1445)

By estimating at only \$4.9 billion the amount he expects to take from the EI fund, is the Minister of Finance giving us to understand that there will indeed be a few improvements made to the EI system in the spring?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the surplus is looking better because many more Canadians now have jobs. It is looking better because the economy has improved and things are going much better. I am very happy with things the way they are.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance confirm the comment made on a radio station this morning by the Secretary of State for Agriculture and Agri-Food that there would be changes to the EI system in the spring?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the EI system was completely reformed two and a half years ago so as to serve Canadians better, with the result that there are far fewer unemployed Canadians today than there were a few years back.

This reform was evaluated and monitored, and I will have the privilege of tabling a report in the House in the coming weeks on our findings.

It is on the basis of these very specific evaluations that we will determine what, if any, improvements are needed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, since this Liberal government has come into power it has slashed \$7.8 billion from the defence budget itself.

Before yesterday's budget, the defence minister said that he needed \$700 million to make ends meet. He got only \$325 million.

If that is the best this defence minister can do, maybe it is time he stood aside.

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as usual, he has it all wrong. The \$325 million is one year but the \$700 million is over a number of years.

What happened yesterday is good news for our troops. It was the first increase the Canadian forces have had in their budget in over a decade. It also ensures that we can implement the quality of life measures in a comprehensive way as was recommended by SCNDVA.

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the defence minister said that he needed \$700 million. He goes to the negotiating table, gets pushed around and comes up with what, less than half of what he needs. That is humiliating at best.

*Oral Questions*

When will the defence minister step aside and let someone else do the job?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it sure would not be the hon. member because he was touting a billion dollar cut in the last election. I would imagine that if the Reform Party would want to honour its commitment it would be cutting it a great deal.

We are investing money in our troops to ensure they get decent pay, decent housing, support for their families and care for the injured.

[Translation]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, during the lock-up prior to the budget, government officials could not tell us whether or not the assistance already provided by Quebec to farmers would be deducted in calculating the amount of federal support.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Can the minister clearly indicate whether his department will deduct the assistance provided by Quebec from the financial support that Ottawa is about to give to farmers?

[English]

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the program that will be put in place and is being put in place by the federal and provincial governments will treat every farmer who triggers the criteria in Canada exactly the same. It will not matter what province they live in.

\* \* \*

**ARMENIAN COMMUNITY**

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The courage and determination of Canada's Armenian community has made an indelible impression on the national fabric of Canada. Following the debate on Motion No. 329 in the House on Monday, what new steps are underway to foster and improve communications along with dialogue with the Armenian community of Canada?

• (1450)

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very important that Canadians recognize the serious tragedy experienced by the Armenian people. To further that I have asked the Canadian Armenian community to meet with me so that we can foster a broad dialogue that will help develop understanding, heal wounds and forward the process of reconciliation among all Canadians about this very serious tragedy that occurred many years ago.

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business called yesterday's budget a disappointment and a missed opportunity.

Small businesses have never worked harder to keep what little they earn after this finance minister is done with them.

This year he increased CPP taxes 73%, he changed the rules to keep \$5 billion in EI funds and has increased user fees to crippling levels.

Why is the finance minister punishing small businesses with a tax hike when it is they, not this government, that create jobs for Canadians?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the government did along with the provinces, despite all the objections of the Reform Party, was to save the Canada pension plan.

In addition, what we brought in in the budget was not only no tax hikes but \$16.5 billion worth of tax reductions over the course of the next three years. These are tax reductions which are primarily directed at the middle class, basically the spine of small business in this country.

We are very proud of this budget. We are very proud of the tax reductions it has in it.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister would not have tax relief in his vocabulary if not for the official opposition. It is because of us working that word over the last few years that the minister has adopted it in his own vocabulary. He takes a lot more time to talk about it, as we saw yesterday. We would actually deliver on it.

Small businesses represent 80% of the jobs created in Canada—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** I ask the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam to please keep his remarks down. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Mr. Speaker, small businesses represent 80% of the jobs created in Canada in spite of this government's high tax policies.

Why is there nothing in this budget for Canada's largest employer and largest taxpayer, small business?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of the tax reductions in terms of the business community will be enjoyed by the small business community.

At the same time, \$50 million has gone in to the federal bank for the purpose of supporting small businesses exporting in the high technology areas. A great deal of the support for research and development is for start-ups which are essentially small businesses.

When we look at the fact that we have eliminated employment insurance premiums for a vast segment of the younger population, when we look at—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg—North Centre.

**HEALTH CARE**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Ontario Premier Mike Harris said that expanding home care is one of his priorities for the new federal health money.

But as members know, in Harris' Ontario corporate health care giants are taking over home care services. American corporations are already siphoning off profits that should go to our public medicare system.

Why will this government not take steps to guarantee that not one penny of the new dollars transferred to the provinces will go to line the pockets of private, for profit corporations?

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member quite rightly identifies that it is the provincial governments that have responsibility for design, management, administration and delivery of health care services in their provinces.

The federal government, as guardians of the Canada Health Act, can ensure that the five principles of medicare are in place: universal access, reasonable access, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration. That is our responsibility. We take it very seriously and we leave the issues of delivery to the provinces.

• (1455)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe this government is not more concerned about American for profit companies winning home care contracts in Ontario.

I cannot believe that this government is not more concerned about the threat to the Victorian Order of Nurses which has served this country well for over 100 years.

I want to know from the government why it is doing nothing and why there was nothing in yesterday's budget to preserve our public health system from this erosion to private, for profit companies.

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member, as a former member of a provincial legislature, would understand well provincial responsibilities in the delivery of health services.

If she has questions such as the one she just posed I suggest she take them to the provincial premier.

This government is concerned with the Canada Health Act and the five principles as I have outlined. We are also important funding partners and we lived up to our obligations yesterday with \$11.5 billion cash, plus tax points, transferred to the provinces.

*Oral Questions*

We have done our part. Now it is—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the social union agreement was signed, along with a document saying that any additional funding for health would be provided in accordance with the current legislation. Yesterday, when the budget speech was delivered, we found out that a third administrative body, a trust, will be set up to manage an amount of \$3.5 billion taken from the current budget to be distributed to the provinces over a three-year period.

My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Was the establishment of that third administrative body discussed with the provinces during the negotiations on social union, yes or no?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that the unexpected good news about the amount of the transfers, including equalization, came as a surprise to everyone and all Canadians should be pleased about this.

As for the trust itself, it will give the provinces greater independence and, so far, all the premiers have reacted very positively to this initiative. Let me say that, for my province in particular, the increase in transfers was totally unexpected. Quebec will be getting one third of the federal transfers.

This may come as a surprise, but it is definitely a very good one.

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is once again throwing a monkey wrench into federal-provincial relations. The minister did not answer the question.

A third administrative body will be created, while the provinces, including Brian's Newfoundland and Lucien's Quebec, will receive less money in the next budget than they currently do. This is the reality.

I am asking the minister whether or not the trust reflects the social union philosophy, and whether or not this government is throwing a monkey wrench into federal-provincial relations.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot resist answering. In fact, the provinces themselves asked us that the money be made available—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** One should recognize that even the premier of Quebec signed the agreement on health.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** Yes, he did sign the letter that led to the agreement.

The provinces asked me to make sure that those which could use the money be able to do so as quickly as possible. This is why we chose to hold the money in trust. The provinces will then be free to use that money as they see fit and as needed over a three-year period.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CULTURE**

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today the cultural industries sectoral advisory group on international trade released a report entitled “Canadian Culture in a Global World: New Strategies for Culture and Trade”.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade tell us how this report would help us and protect our culture in a globalized world discussion?

**Mr. Bob Speller (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm for the hon. member that the Government of Canada does welcome the report of SAGIT.

It provides an overview of the issues facing our cultural industries in the export area. It is also a good starting point for us to do some consultations with Canadians on these issues.

• (1500)

As a result the Minister of International Trade has sent this report to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade as it looks at the upcoming WTO negotiations to try to get the views of Canadians across the country on this very important industry.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, once we clear past all the smoke and mirrors accounting and spin from yesterday’s budget, what do we find? Surprise, surprise. The taxes of Canadians are actually going up and not down as a result of yesterday’s budget. That is because of the minister’s annual payroll tax grab and bracket creep.

I have a very simple question. After all the bafflegab is taken out, why are taxes going up by \$2.2 billion in this budget instead of down?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted at the end of question period to explain to the hon. member what in fact happened in the budget.

I will tell him: \$16.5 billion in tax reduction over a three year period, \$11.5 billion going back into the health care system, and \$1.4 billion going into health research and other kinds of research.

Essentially what the government did was to invest in productivity, was to invest in the health care of Canadians and was to reduce their taxes. I thank the member for the question.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday’s budget contains \$153 million for promoting culture and sports in Canada.

We checked with officials yesterday and were told that no amount had been set aside in this envelope for professional sports.

My question is for the heritage minister. Are we to understand that the government finally abandoned any plans to support professional sports teams, contrary to what was recommended in the Mills report?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with this budget, the Minister of Finance is perpetuating the dependency on employment insurance.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, this budget confirms the Minister of Finance’s continuing dependency on the EI fund. He is using the surplus in the EI fund to fill his coffers and line the pockets of millionaires.

While the minister is paying off his debt on the backs of the unemployed, there is nothing in his budget for those who do not qualify for employment insurance.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. What is the amount of the surplus in the EI fund?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member refers to the budget, he will see that the amount is \$4.9 billion.

However, I am amazed that, on the opposition side, they keep pushing a pitiful and simplistic solution as the best way to help the unemployed, and that is to keep them on EI as much and as long as possible.

We on this side want to give the unemployed hope, a global strategy that will enable them to join the workforce. Unlike members on the other side, we want to give them hope, not dependency.

\* \* \*

[English]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of Indian affairs is obviously uncomfortable with her position on the Caldwell Indian Band, so uncomfortable that she has declared a stay in the proceedings on the Caldwell reserve.

Yesterday she refused to answer the question of whether Chief Larry Johnson was a duly elected chief for that band and whether he has stood for election and is legally the leader of the Caldwell band as defined under the Indian Act.

Today the minister can set the record straight. Is Chief Johnson a duly elected chief for the Caldwell Indian reserve within the last two years?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Chief Johnson was duly elected according to the custom election code of the first nations.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

### PRIVILEGE

#### PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to invoke your judgment and that of those in the House on a matter that I believe infringed on my privilege as a member of parliament and impeded me in dutifully carrying out and fulfilling my obligations as an elected representative of this parliament.

Today, February 17, 1999, members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada set up picket lines at strategic locations of entry to the region of Parliament Hill and at entrances to specific buildings within the Parliament Hill precincts, including and not limited to the Langevin Block, the West Block road entrance, the East Block entrance, and the pedestrian and road access entrances to the Wellington Building.

These pickets, I hereby submit, did impede my responsibility as a member of parliament and my ability to carry out my obligations as a member of parliament in a timely and prescribed fashion.

The particular picket line that impeded my ability to carry out the said function and which contravened my privilege as a member

### Privilege

of parliament was located at the west gates of the West Block where the shuttle buses that carry parliamentarians had to be rerouted to other access entrances far out of the normal routing on Parliament Hill. Not only this, but in my individual case no bus was prepared to run the gauntlet. Thus I had to make my way to conduct my affairs as a parliamentarian by other means.

I submit this is a violation of my privileges and a contravention of the centuries old precedent and parliamentary order and function.

I further submit that other parliamentarians were denied access to the entrance of their parliamentary office buildings in the early hours of this picketing, thus contravening in direct personal fashion the conduct of their affairs and the affairs of their staff.

There is direct and compelling reference to my question of privilege in both Erskine May and Beauchesne's. I hereby submit, Mr. Speaker, these references for your learned judgment and decision.

Beauchesne's fifth edition states that by definition:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies and individuals.

Beauchesne's states at citation 16:

The privileges of Parliament are rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers". They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members; and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

I submit the events of the pickets in question were in direct violation of this right and privilege, exhibited a contempt for the functions of parliamentarians, and were a direct attack on the dignity of this institution.

● (1510)

I also submit my capacity as a member elected to serve my constituents was diminished by these pickets similar to the references as expressed in citation 18 of Beauchesne's.

Erskine May has reference to the access of parliamentarians to carry out their functions and what would contravene and violate this privilege. I submit the following reference. Under "Access to the Houses of Parliament" Erskine May states that to facilitate the attendance of members without interruption, both Houses, at the beginning of each session, give directions in the sessional orders that during the session of parliament the streets leading to the Houses of Parliament be free and open, and that no obstruction shall be permitted to hinder the passage thereto of the lords or members.

*Privilege*

I again submit that the pickets denying my ease of access to parliament are an affront to the centuries old parliamentary privilege as defined by Erskine May.

The president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Mr. Daryl Bean, in full knowledge of these pickets did with contempt violate my privileges and the privileges of others as members of parliament and did with full knowledge contravene the rules of this Chamber and the dignity of this institution. I submit that through the leadership of this union Mr. Bean be held in contempt of this parliament and in contempt of the privileges of individual members and be hereby censured for these actions carried out by his membership.

Mr. Speaker, if you find I have a question of privilege, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

**The Speaker:** Before I hear the hon. House leader for the government, may I ask the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt if his question of privilege is the same as that of the member who just spoke.

**Mr. Jim Pankiw:** Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker, so my comments would be very brief.

**The Speaker:** I will hear you. I now direct myself to the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain. Is your question of privilege the same as that of the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast?

**Mr. Roy Bailey:** Mr. Speaker, I would admit that it is similar but there are some differences in my case.

**The Speaker:** Why I am asking you is that I am going to invite you to speak successively. Does the question of privilege of the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville coincide with this one?

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Mr. Speaker, yes. I just wanted to give a personal illustration.

**The Speaker:** Here is what we will do. I will hear the three members I have just questioned and then I will hear the government House leader.

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this morning a mob of hooligans used physical violence and intimidation to stop me from gaining access to my office. While I do not believe the thugs who assaulted me today are indicative of all members in that union, it is imperative for you to act accordingly to ensure that this type of cowardly behaviour does not occur again.

Mr. Speaker, should you find this to be a prima facie question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I join briefly with my colleagues on this particular point. I arrived at my office around 7 o'clock this morning and was told I

would not be able to enter the office. I went and had a coffee and then came back and explained to them. At that time I was allowed with a security guard to go to the office.

In the function of carrying out my duties, this is the first time in my life I have ever been inhibited or shamed in trying to get to my place of work. My office was four hours without contact with my constituency. I could not carry out my duties because my staff was not allowed to be in my office. As the hon. member mentioned, that is a violation of the rules and precedents of the House.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to end this with a brief quotation from Joseph Maingot. I cannot serve my constituents without my staff and restricting my staff interferes with my work as an MP. My staff are an extension of me.

• (1515)

My constituents and the media tried to contact me for approximately four hours this morning. They could not get through. It was one of the busiest days we have had in our office today, right after the budget as members can imagine. The picketers would not allow my staff to enter. I tried personally to get them. I explained to them what this was all about and how it was important to me. I could not get my staff through. I would be shocked if on one of the busiest days, Mr. Speaker, you did not feel that this was an infringement of my privileges.

I would like to read a quotation from Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, chapter 2, page 13:

If someone improperly interferes with the parliamentary work of a member of parliament—i.e. any of the member's activities that have a connection with a proceeding in parliament—in such a case that is a matter involving parliamentary privilege. An offence against the authority of the House constitutes contempt.

This would clearly include restricting staff to do its work for a member of parliament.

Again, I was unable to go about my work because my staff was denied access to my office. Not allowing my staff to accompany me is a very serious infringement on my privileges.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first let me say how I think these conditions are unfortunate and even unacceptable.

I became aware of the picket around 6.45 a.m. At that time I alerted the House authorities of what I believed was a condition that could cause difficulties and possible questions of privilege from members of parliament.

I do not think there is any doubt that if a member of parliament was assaulted that is unacceptable and is a breach of our privileges, not only the member in question but every one of us. That is the first proposition.

The second is on the issue of the picket itself. The picket, provided it is not on the grounds of Parliament Hill and provided it



is done for information purposes and it respects the law, I think is legal. It has to respect the law in order to do so.

The allegations we have heard from many hon. members is that it was not done in a proper way. That is unacceptable as well.

The third proposition brought to us by another hon. member is that the president of the union maybe in contempt of parliament. I do not know if the Chair would want to rule immediately on that third proposition. I think it should be investigated before the Chair rules on it. I do not know whether the chair of the union personally not only authorized the picket in question but authorized it to be conducted in a manner which may have been illegal. That proposition is a little different from the others.

If I can get back to the original proposition, that members of parliament were assaulted, the 1751 Mason issue outlined in Erskine May makes it very clear that it is unacceptable even for a police officer to stop someone from attending to his duties in parliament. If it is not appropriate for someone who is a police officer to stop us from coming here, it is equally unacceptable for anyone else to try to do it.

I invite the Chair when examining the situation, because it is equally germane to this issue although slightly different, to determine whether the privileges that extend to members of parliament in our attendance here also extend either to the staff of members of parliament or even to the staff of Mr. Speaker. I was also approached earlier this day by a staff member of Mr. Speaker, someone who works for the Commons but not for a member of parliament, who informed me he had considerable difficulty in reaching his place of work to do a very essential task for us in this Chamber. So the Chair, no doubt, would want to look at that as well.

• (1520)

For these reasons, I would ask that the Chair not rule immediately and investigate all the points I have raised, and then come back to the House in order to see whether there is a prima facie case of privilege on all these points. But I am already convinced there is at least such a prima facie case in some of the points that have been raised, in particular the one involving molestation of a member.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too want to report to you what happened to me this morning. I have an office in the Wellington Building as well. When I arrived this morning there was of course a picket line outside the door. I spoke to the picket captain and he said that if I want I can go into the building, they were not inhibiting members of parliament whatsoever in terms of going into the building.

I declined of course to cross the picket line and chatted some more with them. He once again repeated the offer that I could proceed into the building if I wished and once again I declined.

A similar thing happened to many other colleagues of mine, including my colleague from Beauséjour—Petitcodiac. Once again

### *Privilege*

she was made the offer to enter the building if she wanted to in a very polite way. We had no problems whatsoever with the people who were picketing. They were very polite to us and offered access to the building if we wanted to as members of parliament. I think Mr. Speaker should know that while deliberating on the issue.

**Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to lend my voice because I too entered the press club today to do a taping. I spoke to each and every person. They were CBC strikers. However, I had the same experience of no trouble at all. I spoke to them. I in no way mean to say that the Reform members' stories are not how they found them.

But I do think it is fair to say that I did not have any trouble at all. I walked past the Wellington Building. I spoke to all the picketers. In fact, I got in the line and followed them, sort of. I then went in and said goodbye.

I am the parliamentary secretary to labour, so maybe that was okay, I do not know. But I did not have any trouble.

**The Speaker:** What the hon. member has brought up is very serious for us in the House. I am going to make one ruling now and reserve on the other three.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt has said in this House that he was assaulted or touched or pushed. I do not want to put words in the hon. member's mouth, but if that is precise, I would like the hon. member to indicate that to me now.

**Mr. Jim Pankiw:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, all three of those are correct. The hon. member for Wetaskiwin witnessed it.

**The Speaker:** I find a prima facie case of contempt and I will refer that to the appropriate committee.

I will take the advice of the government House leader because I want to look into what the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast has said.

• (1525)

I also want to consider what the member for Yorkton—Melville has said because he is expanding this notion. I also want to consider what has been said by the member for Brandon—Souris.

You have the gist of what I want to do. I will reserve on three of the allegations that were brought forth.

I now invite the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt to move his motion.

**Mr. Jim Pankiw:** Mr. Speaker I would move that the matter of denying members of parliament and their staff access to Parliament Hill and the parliamentary buildings by the public service union on Wednesday, February 17, 1999 be referred to the Standing

*Routine Proceedings*

Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and for the purposes of dealing with similar action by PSAC demonstrators in the immediate future, the Speaker instruct security personnel to take the appropriate action necessary to ensure that members of parliament and their staff have unimpeded access to parliamentary offices at all times.

**The Speaker:** I wonder if the hon. member would limit his statement to what he said before. His motion is much broader than the one I ruled on. I would like him to consider including in his motion that he was indeed assaulted in trying to get into the building where he was to perform his duties. If he will limit it to that at this point until I can consider the other points that have been brought up I would accept that as a motion. Would he consider doing that?

**Mr. Jim Pankiw:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Is it sufficient to say so moved?

**The Speaker:** Yes, it is. That is the easy way to do business around here. In my judgment it is a prima facie case and this will be referred to the appropriate committee and the other three will be held in abeyance until I can get more information.

• (1530)

**Mr. Jim Pankiw:** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the matter of the molestation of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt earlier this day be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

**The Speaker:** Is the House in agreement that this particular issue be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[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 nine petitions.

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS

**Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(6), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 1996-97 report on Canada's participation in regional development banks.

\* \* \*

### PETITIONS

#### GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by 3,330 inhabitants of my riding of Québec.

They are calling on the government to form a parliamentary committee to look specifically at what Canadian parliamentarians can do to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

[English]

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today pursuant to Standing Order 36 to table a petition signed by my constituents of Simcoe—Grey as well as concerned Canadians from all across our country.

These individuals are automotive technicians employed at car dealerships. As a condition of their employment they are required to purchase and maintain several thousand dollars worth of automotive tools. At the present time their professional tool investment and expenditures are not tax deductible, unlike many other professions that require similar expenditures.

These tool purchases do not generate any extra tax credits and therefore the petitioners request that parliament redress this taxation policy, amending the applicable legislation to allow current and future technicians to deduct their investment in automotive repair tools.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to present this 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 human rights abuses continue to be rampant around the world, including countries such as Indonesia.

The petitioners also acknowledge that Canada is internationally recognized as the champion of human rights. Therefore the peti-

*The Budget*

tioners call upon parliament to continue to condemn those countries responsible for human rights abuses and also to seek to bring to justice those responsible for such abuses.

\* \* \*

• (1535)

[Translation]

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I suggest that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**THE BUDGET**

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from February 16 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to begin the debate on the 1999 federal budget.

My colleague, the hon. member for Medicine Hat, as well as other opposition members will focus on various particulars of the budget, in particular the defects for which the government needs to be held accountable of which there are many. We will also be constructive. The opposition will be presenting constructive alternatives in the areas where we feel the budget is deficient, particularly with respect to tax policy.

It is my intent at the beginning to focus on the big picture, that is the financial performance and the service record of the government not just for the last year but since it came to office, and what that

record and what this particular budget mean to Canadians in the future.

As members know, this is the sixth budget that has been presented by the current finance minister. If asked to summarize the net effect of these budgets, not just this one but the cumulative effect of the six budgets, in one sentence it would be this: that under this government, Canadians are paying more and getting less. Canadians are paying more and getting less and despite all the rhetoric, despite all the spin doctors, despite all the public relations that accompanied the budget yesterday, the total tax bill paid by Canadians has increased yet again while health care services and other services have been cut. Under this government Canadians pay more for less.

With respect to paying more, Canadians hear all the glowing references in the budget speech and the public relations that accompany it with respect to the performance of the economy, phrases like "unprecedented progress", "we have strengthened the sinews of our innovative and productive economy", "we have equipped Canadians to succeed". Most of these phrases and words have been tested by public opinion firms. They test the words, find out which words resonate best with the public and those words find their way into budgets. This is not something surprising.

But the rank and file of Canadians will be asking at the end of the day: if everything is so rosy, why do I not have more money in my pocket at the end of the month and why do I not have more money in my bank account? The answer to that question in one word is taxes. Under this government Canadians are paying more taxes than they have ever paid before.

I would like to take a few minutes therefore to elaborate on this one simple phrase "paying more" and to demonstrate from the figures that were tabled by the government yesterday how Canadians are, at the end of the day, paying more. Let me start with personal income tax.

At the end of 1993-94 when this government took office, Canadians were paying \$51.4 billion in personal income tax for the year. At the end of 1999-2000, they will be paying \$75 billion for the year, an increase of \$24 billion or 46%, an increase of \$650 for every Canadian. The bottom line is that Canadians will pay more income tax than they ever have before, 46% more in total than when the government took office. Canadians are now paying the highest personal income tax rates in the The government taxes its citizens more heavily with respect to personal income tax than any other government of the G-7. That has not changed as a result of this budget. The Liberal legacy is Canadians pay more.

• (1540)

Of course, this government is not content just to tax you when you earn. The whole idea is to get you when you are coming and going so the government also taxes people when they spend. We have the figures on the GST consumption tax, a tax the government solemnly promised to remove before it became the government.

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At the end of 1993-94 when this government replaced the Tories, Canadians were paying \$15.7 billion in GST per year. At the end of 1999-2000 Canadians will be paying \$21.6 billion in GST, an increase of \$5.9 billion or 38%. That is an increase of \$156 per Canadian. The bottom line is that Canadians are paying more GST under a government that promised to abolish it than they have ever paid before, 38% more in total than when the government took office. When it comes to consumption taxes, Canadians pay more.

The government plays a shell game with taxes to try to make taxpayers feel better off. It announces with great fanfare certain tax reductions, such as the modest reductions in the employment insurance premiums, and then it says nothing about or even hides increases in other taxes such as the CPP increases that are inexorably taking more dollars from Canadians each year.

There are two ways to cut through the shell game. One is to elaborate on how the shell game is played with respect to particular taxes and particular expenditures. I hope some day the auditor general spends a whole day explaining that kind of shell game to the House. But the simplest way to cut through the shell game is to look at the total federal taxes collected from individuals and total tax revenues. Here the story is the same. Canadians pay more.

If we look at total federal taxes paid by persons, and this includes personal income tax, employment insurance, GST and Canada pension plan, at the end of 1993-94 the total of all federal taxes paid by persons for the year was \$94.3 billion. At the end of 1999-2000 the total of all federal taxes paid by persons will be \$131 billion, an increase of \$36.8 billion or 39%. The bottom line again, and notice the inexorable conclusion that we come to by working through the numbers, is Canadians paying more in total federal personal taxes than they have ever paid before.

**An hon. member:** More Canadians.

**Mr. Preston Manning:** The hon. member says to be Canadian is to pay taxes. That is the Liberal definition.

Finally, if we put all this together and look at the total tax revenue of the federal government, as expected, we get the same story. Canadians paying more.

At the end of 1993-94 when this government took office, total federal revenue was \$107.3 billion. At the end of 1999-2000 the total of federal revenues collected will be \$149.4 billion, an increase of \$42 billion or 39%. In other words, there is an increase in federal revenues collected per taxpayer, and this is the budget that was going to alleviate the taxpayers from the great burden of federal taxation, of \$2,020 or 24%.

This government has become the richest government in Canada's history. The economy can grow by 3%, which ought to be good news for Canadians. But when the federal government's revenues grow by 8% what that tells us is that when there is economic

growth, a disproportionate amount of that growth is not going to the people who produce it, not to the companies that produce it, not to the individuals who produce it, but to the ever present government and its taxation department.

The great record of Liberalism is going to be this for the 20th century: a well to do finance minister and a well to do prime minister running the richest government in the history of Canada, one that is collecting \$409 million per day from the taxpayers of Canada.

I think I have made the case. I could go on, but the case is that Canadians pay more.

• (1545 )

If Canadians were paying more but getting more in terms of better government or better services, perhaps the government would have a leg to stand on or at least be able to explain or defend its record. But the other half of the equation, the other part of the bottom line, is that under this government Canadians are not only paying more but are getting less. In particular, Canadians are getting less in the one area they care about most these days, health care.

Time does not permit me to deal with all areas of government activity in which Canadians are getting less value for their money, the areas in which the productivity of the federal government itself is declining. No one should have any illusions that part of the productivity problem in this country is the declining productivity of government itself, getting less for the taxes that are paid and the cost of government being tacked on to everything we produce and sell in the world market.

I will touch on five areas in which Canadians are getting less. The first is employment insurance, a big bill. According to the chief auditor for this program, the government has been overtaxing Canadians for employment insurance on average by 37% for at least five years and it continues to do so. Yet during the same time benefits have decreased and the government has proposed to return only a fraction of the accumulated surpluses to the employers and the employees who put it up in the first place. In other words, with regard to employment insurance people are paying more and getting less. They are getting less employment insurance. They are not getting the premium refunds they should be getting.

The second area is the Canada pension plan. Under the government's proposals for this plan, a huge area of expenditure and investment, CPP premiums will increase by 41% over the next four years. Notice there is not a word about the CPP in the budget. Yet at the end of the day the most Canadians can expect from this plan even after these increases is a measly \$9,000 a year pension which is less than half the pension a young worker would get if those same funds were placed in an RRSP. With regard to CPP under this government people will pay 41% more and they will get less.

*The Budget*

Third is military spending. Since 1993-94 the government has cut national defence spending. This is the department Liberals love to hate. The defence department is the one they do not mind cutting. They have cut it by over \$2.4 billion per year in absolute terms but the cumulative effect of the cuts is about \$7.8 billion. This has set in motion the downsizing of Canada's military and a deterioration in morale which has significantly reduced our military capability. Now the government is preparing to put about \$175 million per year for three years back into the military but it is not implementing the other reforms necessary to render Canada's military more effective. With respect to defence spending Canadians will still pay more but they will get less.

The fourth area is Indian affairs. According to this budget the government is putting half a billion dollars into Indian affairs but the government has done nothing to ensure that much of the \$4.4 billion it is already putting in is not siphoned off by lawyers, bureaucrats, politicians and consultants in activities that benefit everybody else except the rank and file aboriginal, particularly on reserve. While Canadians pay more we would argue that the rank and file aboriginal on reserve sees less and less of these funds. Canadians pay more but the ones who really need the help get less.

With respect to getting less, let us take a look at the area of health care. This is an area in which Canadians are most conscious of getting less while paying more. This is an area where there has been more spin doctoring, shell gaming and rhetoric than any other, but that cannot hide the ugly truth. When this government took office transfers to other levels of government, the CHST, the Canada assistance plan, the EPF and equalization, amounted to \$27 billion per year. In 1997-98 under this government transfers had decreased to a cumulative total of \$21 billion, a decrease of \$6 billion per year or 22%. The negative effects of this cut in health care transfers are well known to all members of the House. They include the hospital closures, the thousands of doctors, nurses and health care workers leaving the country, the 200,000 Canadians on waiting lists and all the pain, anxiety and anger these figures represent.

• (1550)

Canadians were beginning to refer to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister as the Dr. Kevorkians of Canadian medicare. The government finally felt impelled to do something. So it decided to put \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion per year back into health care.

However, the spin doctors said that was not a very big number, \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion. They said you will not get a headline for a health care budget if you are talking about \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion per year. So they asked if it could be made bigger. Everyone knows what the spin doctors do when they get into something like this, they multiply it by something. So somebody said multiply it by three. Then some genius said no, multiply it by five. When we multiply it by five we would get a big number, up to \$11.5 billion. This is the kind of math that goes on behind the budget.

Lo and behold we have an announcement by the finance minister that the government is going to put \$11.5 billion back into health care. They say over five years very quickly so it does not get divided by five.

If you are to use cumulative numbers for spending increases on health care, you had better use cumulative numbers for the spending cuts on health care and social services to let people know what you are doing. Those numbers do not appear in the budget at all. I am sure the minister had them on a piece of paper and it fell out of the envelope on the way into the department. I am sure he was going to tell us all about them but they were not there.

So we have to do the math. We found that the government's cumulative cuts in the transfers for health and social programs are \$21.4 billion by the end of 1999. Even if we put \$11.5 billion back in there is a spending deficit. Canadians pay more and get less in health care, about \$1,500 less per taxpayer than was spent in 1993-94.

Some hon. members are shaking their heads. They are looking around and talking to each other, saying this is confusing. Let me follow their train of thought. I can read their minds. The hon. members are saying that sometimes we are talking about the Canada health and social transfers and sometimes we are talking about the health transfers. If we say there is confusion, we say who is to blame for that. The government cynically and deliberately created confusion on that point.

When the government was cutting health care transfers it wanted to lump them in with the other social transfers so the health care cuts would be less visible to the public and the government would not get the blame. So when it cuts it mixes it in with something else. All of a sudden, now that it wants to increase it, it wants to make it explicit and visible again so the federal government can get the credit.

The auditor general is not going to be fooled by this kind of shell game and neither are Canadians. As I said earlier, I hope he devotes an entire volume in his next report to the shell game reporting that goes on with respect to the federal budget.

The bottom line of all of this, the unadulterated bottom line, the government's financial management since 1993-94, is Canadians pay \$42 billion more taxes since the government took office, or \$2,020 per taxpayers, and Canadians will get less, in particular \$1,500 less per taxpayer, for health and other services. Pay more, get less is the legacy of the Liberal government in the dying days of the 20th century.

I got into this yesterday but the minister had spoken for an hour and 20 minutes and I could not get into this in any great detail to close off the debate. I want to elaborate on the point that Canada is becoming like old England. When the real king, King Richard the Lionhearted, was away on a crusade, a relative, Prince John, was put in charge. We quoted the little rhyme, "He wanted to be known as John the First but he ended up being known as John the Worst".

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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 and richer—this is historically accurate—and the people got poorer services and poorer, period. In other words, it was a prototype of the Liberal government. Pay more and you get less.

They paid more and got less until a green clad reformer named Robin Hood assembled a group together, sort of a united alternative of Sherwood Forest, and Prince John's evil ways were restrained. However, that is another story I will save for another day.

• (1555)

Perhaps a little more seriously, it is worth noting that a little later Prince John actually did become king and the major landowners, taxpayers and business leaders, the barons and so-called magnates of the realm, staged a taxpayers revolt and made King John, the king of taxers, sign a humiliating document called the Magna Carta in which he promised not to overtax and abuse his subjects.

Finance ministers should take note of what can happen when taxpayers are pushed too far.

This weekend a group of Canadians will be meeting in this city to explore new ways and means of uniting Canadians to reduce the flood of Liberal taxation and the deterioration of health care under this administration. My hope is that convention will eventually result in a Magna Carta for Canadians that will free Canada from the pay more, get less policies of the Liberal government.

To complement that effort, my colleagues in the House will also use this budget debate to propose remedies to the current situation. They will propose ways and means of ending the shell game by making the government's financial accounting more accountable and more believable and transparent. They will propose reforms in health care financing and federal-provincial relations because the two are connected. They were not connected in the budget. They should be connected. The proposed reforms would put health and social service finances on a firmer foundation.

They will propose broad based tax relief greater in scope than anything this government has ever conceived so that in the end Canadians will pay less and get more.

In closing, I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing all the words after the word "that" with the following:

This House rejects the budget statement of the government because it is a continuation of the government's pay more get less policy which has savaged health care and burdened Canadians with high taxes thus undermining the productivity of the Canadian economy; and because this ever increasing high tax policy has

significantly reduced the standard of living of Canadians and left the health care system in tatters.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this sixth budget of the Minister of Finance of Canada is not only disappointing, it is very disappointing.

This morning's *Globe and Mail* was not shy about telling the Minister of Finance that he lacked imagination, that he lacked vision for a minister of finance and that he should make way for someone else with more vision and more compassion who is better able to manage the surpluses.

They also wanted a new minister of finance with greater transparency. In this regard, the Minister of Finance obviously lacked transparency from his first budget to his sixth in terms of releasing the real figures for public finances, for the deficit and for the surpluses.

• (1600)

One would have expected, and this is my first criticism, that those who helped put the federal fiscal house in order, those who contributed to first eliminating the deficit and then accumulating major surpluses in the Minister of Finance's coffers would be rewarded for their efforts.

Given a \$12 billion surplus for the fiscal year ending on March 31, and given an anticipated surplus of \$20 billion for next year—not the surpluses as they appear in the budget documents where, once again, the finance minister's figures are zero and zero, but the real figures which the Bloc Québécois makes a habit of providing and which are accurate to within 5%, which is normal, unlike the finance minister's figures, which are off by 150%—one would have expected middle income families to enjoy meaningful tax reductions. After all, these are the people who have had to pay most of the \$19 billion in new taxes imposed by the Minister of Finance since 1994, not to mention the GST increase, which brought in \$5 billion in revenues.

This year, these middle income families, that is those earning between \$30,000 and \$70,000, will get a ridiculous tax reduction of somewhere between \$150 and \$300.

By contrast, the friends of the Liberal Party, the wealthy, those who have been enjoying preferential treatment from this government since 1993, will get a significant tax reduction.

If one's individual or family income is \$250,000, one will be entitled to a \$3,800 tax reduction this year, compared to between \$150 and \$300 if one earns between \$30,000 and \$70,000. Who is this budget for? Who benefits from it? It is the well to do, even

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though middle income families are the ones that helped the Minister of Finance generate the absolutely huge surpluses that he is hiding shamelessly from Quebecers and Canadians.

We would have expected some consideration would be given the unemployed of this country, because the largest part of the contribution to the improvement of public finances comes from them. The Minister of Finance together with the Minister of Human Resources Development have used the employment insurance fund surplus of \$6 billion annually for the past three years to improve public finances.

With there being significant surpluses, we might have thought some consideration would be given the unemployed. Nothing. Zero. On with the government policy of blithely dipping into the surplus in the employment insurance fund, harassing the unemployed and denying them their right to contest the decisions made at HRDC employment centres across Canada.

So they harass them, after they have already been hit with the scourge of unemployment, in order to create a significant surplus at the end of it all. We might have thought they would review the employment insurance plan so that not just 36% of the unemployed would be covered by it, which means that this plan no longer makes any sense. But there is nothing in this budget to help the country's unemployed.

We might wonder where the Minister of Human Resources Development was, because the Minister of Health and member from Ontario got funding for his department. The Minister of Industry, another member from Ontario, got some of the spending provided in the Minister of Finance's budget. The Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is also from Ontario, got money as well.

Where was the Minister of Human Resources Development, a Quebec minister and a Liberal? Where did he make his representations? What weight does he carry? He seems to be a featherweight, if the budget results are any indication.

The Ontario ministers got all sorts of things for their respective departments. Although Quebec and the rest of Canada agree that the EI fund heist, or surplus as it is called, designed to give the rich a tax break, should be stopped, and although there are country-wide demonstrations, and the Quebec coalition paid us a visit recently, the Minister of Human Resources Development does not have enough heft to ask the Minister of Finance to include humanitarian considerations and compassion in his budget.

• (1605)

With respect to health care, it is clear from this budget that something amazing happened between the time the Prime Minister met with the premiers and the time the budget was drawn up. The Minister of Finance and the government of the member for

Saint-Maurice decided unilaterally to amend the federal transfer payment formula for health, post-secondary education—which is often forgotten—and social assistance.

Unilaterally, they decided that this year they were changing the rules of the game. Now, all of a sudden, federal health transfer payments would be based on population, rather than on the traditional shares.

Where were the Liberal ministers from Quebec? The unilateral change to the funding formula for health, post-secondary education and social assistance, but especially health, has put Quebec at a literal disadvantage. The government has just ensured that federal transfer payments to Quebec for health, post-secondary education and social assistance will decline over the next five years.

On the other hand, while government members from Quebec were asleep at the switch, government members from Ontario lobbied for and obtained transfer payments for Ontario; as a result, starting this year, of the \$2 billion increase in transfer payments for health, almost \$1 billion will go to Ontario, the richest province in Canada. Furthermore, if we look at the regional breakdown, \$400 million will go to British Columbia and \$300 million to Alberta.

It is clear today why the premiers of these three provinces have been staunch supporters of the social union. And when I say staunch, I mean super staunch. Just last night, Mike Harris, the premier of Ontario, signed again, before us, some sort of card—they would rather sign a cheque to charity, since that is how they do things—but Harris preferred to sign the social union agreement again because, as he said, "Ontario stands to gain". It takes some doing.

Every time the finance minister does a good deed, it is to show himself off to advantage, as a minister and a potential candidate for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada, but we are used to that. That is what he did in the maritimes, when he negotiated an agreement to harmonize the GST and the provincial taxes. As a reward for playing his game and making him look good, he gave the three provinces involved nearly \$1 billion in compensation. In Quebec, we are still waiting for our \$2 billion in compensation, because we had harmonized the Quebec sales tax with the GST several years earlier. We are still waiting for the \$2 billion.

He has got us used to that. He gives out what amounts to bribes to compensate ministers or provinces that come on side and promote the government's overly centralizing ideas.

We understand better now why the social union was so strongly supported by the premiers of these provinces. Today they get compensation in the budget. The compensation is \$1 billion for Ontario in Canada social transfer, \$400 million for B.C. and \$300 million for Alberta.

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Where were the government members from Quebec? I am thinking in particular of the Minister of Finance, who is also the member for LaSalle—Émard, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Minister of Human Resources Development and the Minister of Immigration. That counts for something, but they are all featherweights, because, when it comes to Quebec's interests, they have shown with this budget that they have done nothing, that they have been asleep at the switch, to use a popular Quebec expression.

• (1610)

It hurt my ears yesterday and again today to hear these Liberal ministers from Quebec saying that Quebec benefited from equalization: "Hooray for equalization. There is \$1 billion in equalization payment adjustment for Quebec".

That is so sad. It is like saying that we in Quebec are destined to get the short end of the stick. That we should be happy with the social assistance they give us. But Ontario will get everything that promotes economic growth, job creation and wealth. But Quebec should be happy with band-aid solutions. Ontario will get economic growth and job creation. That is the message we have just been given.

And they applaud. The Liberal ministers from Quebec and the private members as well, all members of the Liberal Party of Canada, have just applauded equalization. What does that mean? It means they have just applauded the fact that there are additional equalization payments, when Ontario is enjoying wonderful prosperity, at all levels. We will come to that shortly.

It means that they are applauding the fact that Ontario's economic performance is stronger than Quebec's. That is what it means. It means that they are applauding the increase in Ontario's GDP and the drop in Quebec's. Honestly!

Where were these federal Liberal ministers and members from Quebec when it came time to draw up the budget? Why were they not telling the Minister of Finance that it was perhaps time to right the balance with respect to federal spending on goods and services in Quebec?

Statistics Canada figures in the Public Accounts of Canada show that Quebec loses out on \$2 billion annually. This has long been the case.

Where were the federal Liberal party ministers and members from Quebec when it came to defending the fact that at least our demographic weight could have been taken into account when deciding on federal transfer payments for the procurement of goods and services in Quebec?

The same goes for research and development. And regional development, as well, where we have lost close to \$600 million a year for the last eight years. Where were these defenders of Quebec? They were asleep at the switch. That is where they were. They are supposed to be defending Quebec's interests. They have just applauded equalization payments, but have done nothing to restore equity in the procurement of goods and services, in regional development and in R & D spending in Quebec.

This is what would pave the way for job creation. In Quebec, if the per capita criterion—they are good at selecting the per capita basis—was applied to federal expenditures on goods and services, and investments in research and development as well as regional development, if 24% of these transfers went to Quebec, instead of the current 13% to 19% depending on the item, starting tomorrow, we in Quebec would no longer be receiving equalization payments, we would be paying for the other provinces. That is what would happen if there were any justice in this country. That is the reality.

And caution must be exercised when talking about the \$1 billion in equalization. Everything is relative in life. This amount was paid to Quebec because it was owed to Quebec. Because, in the past three years, a number of parameters in the equalization formula had been underestimated. A strict, politically unbiased and non partisan application of the formula actually sees Quebec receiving an extra \$1 billion in equalization payments.

Since everything is relative, we are getting \$1 billion, but \$6 billion have been cut over the past five years. Over five years, the finance minister has taken \$6 billion away from us. Now he is giving \$1 billion back, And we are expected to applaud, especially since these are equalization payments? Give me a break.

It is like having our apartment broken into and \$6,000 stolen. We catch the thief, who then gives \$1,000 back. Should he get a hug and thanks? How about a bit of common sense, here?

The final point is the social union. This budget contains a number of new initiatives that constitute a direct encroachment on a provincial jurisdiction, namely health. They are describing these intrusions in terms of the social union, the agreement that was signed by all the provinces in Canada, except Quebec.

In his budget speech yesterday, the Minister of Finance mentioned that, under the social union, they would create health police, a supervisory body to monitor hospital emergencies, provincial performance, the number of doctors, general practitioners and specialists required.

• (1615)

There is also an incommensurable number of new initiatives that are total duplication of what the Government of Quebec is doing. We did not agree to the social union, but, as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said, we have just had it stuffed down



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our throat. The government has started the disaster, one of the dreaded catastrophes related to the social union.

There is \$1.4 billion in new initiatives. We did the calculations. At least \$400 million of this is pure loss, as it represents administrative costs. This is \$400 million they might as well have dumped in the garbage, because it will not help relieve the pressure in emergency rooms or help people who are sick and waiting for an operation or something else or improve the system and the health care networks across Canada.

Do you know what this \$400 million means? It means we could have done extraordinary things for the sick. Recently, with only \$20 million, the Quebec minister of health, Ms. Marois, managed to set aside \$3.2 million in incentives for hospitals to manage emergencies more efficiently. With this same \$20 million, she was able to open 830 additional beds, for one month, for those on hospital waiting lists. And, still with this same \$20 million, she hired 900 people for one month to provide direct health care.

Do you know what Quebec could have done with the \$400 million in administration costs that is simply being written off, Mr. Speaker? If our share had been based on our population, that is, one quarter, if we had been given an additional \$100 million for health care, do you know what we could have done with it, Mr. Speaker, given what Ms. Marois had already accomplished with \$20 million? We could have put \$12 million into measures to reduce crowding in emergency rooms. We could have opened an additional 3,320 beds to help the sick, not federal bureaucrats. We could have hired 3,600 health care providers.

If the Minister of Finance had not juggled the surplus figures, he could have delivered everything the leader of the Bloc Québécois, myself as party critic and all members of our party called for during the Quebec tour and during the finance committee's Canada-wide tour.

First, there could have been substantial tax cuts for middle income earners, the very folks who have helped clean up the nation's finances. Second, the provinces could have been given the full amount of the cuts, \$6 billion, to their transfers for health, post-secondary education and social assistance. There could also have been a full review of EI accessibility and benefits.

All that could have been done if we had been given the true picture. But since we were not, everyone remains under the impression that we could not afford it. Actually, we could and still can in the coming year. It is a matter of political will and a matter of transparency as well.

Therefore, I move the following amendment to the amendment:

That the amendment be amended by striking out all the words after the words "Budget statement of the government" and by substituting the following:

"because it does not significantly lower income taxes for middle-class persons; maintains the cuts to the Canada Social Transfer announced in the 1995 budget; imposes on Quebec the Social Union Agreement; penalizes Quebec by unilaterally imposing a new transfer formula for health care; makes new encroachments into the health care field; and uses money confiscated from unemployed persons in order to lower income taxes for more prosperous persons."

We are going to fight this budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot had moved an amendment to the amendment. The Chair will take it under advisement and get back to the House shortly with a ruling.

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised to hear the hon. member make unfounded allegations which are very far from the truth.

• (1620)

For the benefit of the House and of Quebecers, I would like to point out a few things.

First, equalization, which was expressly designed to eliminate regional disparities, will greatly benefit Quebec. For example, over the next five years, Quebec will receive a \$1.4 billion cheque, which it did not even anticipate. This \$1.4 billion given by the federal government to Quebec is almost equal to the province's annual deficit.

Moreover, over the next five years, Quebec will receive 78% or \$566 million of the \$722 million in new funding that comes from technical improvements to the program.

Also, when it comes to total transfers, including the Canada health and social transfer and the equalization program, the figures are impressive.

Over the next 13 months, Quebec will receive \$2 billion, that is 48% of the \$4.2 billion allocated to the provinces. It will also receive \$5.9 billion, or 30% of the \$19.6 billion. Finally, Quebec will get 29% of all transfers, even though it only accounts for 24% of Canada's population.

The hon. member should congratulate the Liberal members from Quebec for their work, along with their colleague, the Minister of Finance, and the Government of Canada. He should applaud them for their good work and for meeting Quebecers' needs.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, if I were a member from Ontario, I would applaud. My colleague is from Ontario, and it is the sure winner.

But if Quebec costs Canada so much, why are you doing everything possible to keep it in this federation? If it costs too much, you could be saving hundreds of millions, maybe billions, from what you say.

I would remind my colleague—we will be more serious—of his remarks. He mentioned 29%. All right, let us say 29% with

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equalization payments, but he is mixing apples and oranges. That makes for a real slop. They do not understand anymore either, and that is why they keep running the same tape each time.

But let us look at the 29%. Does the member know how much of the cuts the Quebec finance minister has had to cope with in five years? He would not know that. Ontario is the winner. It is obsessed with the extraordinary gains it has made with this budget.

In Quebec, however, we have taken 39% of the cuts. That is not bad, when they talk about 29% in equalization payments. Yet we always got hit, when the time came to cut, with 39% of the cut. However, when it is time to distribute, the percentage drops. So, the truth has to come out too.

Promoting jobs and economic growth for Ontario is fine. All the Ontario members are in favour. In Quebec, it would be promoted too if we did not have doormat members asleep at the switch whenever it comes to making a budget that promotes Quebec. I think things would go a little better for Quebeckers and especially for Quebec's unemployed.

**Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, whose riding is very close to New Brunswick.

Does he agree with me that, in the budget, there is absolutely nothing for the unemployed—the finance minister confirmed he had used the surplus accumulated on the backs of the unemployed to reduce the debt and hand out goodies—nothing for the fishing industry, which is in a critical situation, nothing at all for small and medium size businesses and zilch for rural development?

In regions where unemployment is sky high, like my riding, some people stopped receiving EI cheques two weeks ago. The work will not resume before June and they have nothing to live on till then. People in Albert County collected employment insurance benefits for 18 weeks.

• (1625)

That is all they got. They did not get 19 weeks or 22 weeks, just 18, because the Minister of Human Resources Development still considers them to be from the Moncton area, in spite of the fact that they are an hour away from Moncton by car.

At the same time, with this budget, a hockey player earning \$1 million a year will save \$8,000 in tax this year. By comparison, people who earn \$10,000—and there are many in my region who earn as little as \$10,000 a year—will save \$51. And we are supposed to be kissing the finance minister's feet for that today?

Did I miss something in the budget or can my colleague corroborate what I just said?

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Beauséjour—Petitcodiac for her question. I also take this opportunity to congratulate her for hard work in looking after the interests of her constituents, particularly the unemployed in her riding.

The hon. member did not miss anything in this budget. This is indeed what is happening. There is nothing in it for the unemployed, in spite of the fact that only 36% of them qualify for EI benefits even though 100% of them contributed to the fund. There is nothing for the unemployed in this budget.

The government did not think about seasonal workers. It did not think about the so-called spring gap, which is coming soon. It did not think about resource regions. Worse still—and I do not know if the member noticed it in the budget—the government dared to cut \$100 million from regional development.

This country no longer makes any sense. Canadians will have to mobilize against the employment insurance program—it does not make sense anymore—against puppet ministers who no longer have any powers in this cabinet, to get them to listen to reason and to get them to fight for the real interests of Quebeckers and Canadians, the real interests of the unemployed. I invite my dear colleague to join us.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the member's comments he addressed the issue of the CHST adjustments with regard to British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario relieving the ceiling on the per capita payments.

I would like to ask the member whether he has a problem with transfers being made to each province on a per capita basis so that each and every Canadian gets their fair share. Is the member telling Canadians that equal shares for all is not fair?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, I have a problem with a lot of things in this budget. I have a problem with the fact that the employment insurance fund is being used to give the richest members of society tax breaks instead of providing relief for the unemployed.

Those earning \$250,000 get a \$3,800 tax break, while the poorest members of our society, middle income earners in particular, who are helping the nation put its finances in order, get next to no tax relief. I have a problem with that.

I also have a problem with the fact that the provinces have isolated Quebec. I have a big problem with the fact that they sold out, Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta in particular, and signed the social union framework, kowtowing to the Prime Minister and agreeing to all sorts of interference in areas of jurisdiction recog-

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nized as provincial in the Constitution of Canada. I have a big problem with that.

Nor am I too happy about the fact that the Liberal Party members and ministers from Quebec did nothing to restore equity in transfer payments to Quebec and federal procurement of goods and services, or regional development policies, where Quebec has come out the loser in the last eight years. Every year, there is a \$600 million shortfall, \$2 billion in goods and services. And it is even worse with respect to research and development.

I am disgusted with the Liberal members from Quebec for not fighting to get Quebec compensated for harmonizing the GST with the QST. We are talking about \$2 billion. They compensated the maritimes, with more patronage appointments, as they did elsewhere. Quebec is entitled to \$2 billion in compensation for harmonizing the GST and the QST several years earlier. I have a problem with that.

I also have a problem with the fact that, just days after a first ministers meeting where it was agreed to increase health transfers only and to use the time-honoured formula, yesterday the funding formula was unilaterally changed to Quebec's disadvantage. I have a problem with that as well.

Does that answer the member's question?

• (1630)

[English]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity today to participate in the debate on the 1999 budget.

As the government repeated over and over again in the weeks leading up to this budget, this was to be the health budget. This was to be the health budget. It was supposed to be the moment when the government would provide us with the remedy to the health system in crisis, a crisis caused by its policies. But perhaps even more important, this was the moment that the government was to rise and set out a vision for the future of health care in this country.

The best that can be said about the so-called health budget is that at least the federal Liberal government finally acknowledged that it was its policies that were causing the crisis across this country in our health care system.

**An hon. member:** It took a while.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** It took a while, that is for sure, and it took a lot of Canadians suffering and bringing their pain to the attention of this government to finally get the Liberals to admit that their policies had put our health care system on the critical list.

This was not always the case. Four years ago when this government began to hack and slash away at health care funding, the Prime Minister and the finance minister were busy telling Canadians that even with an aging population, even with the

rapidly changing medical technology, even with the escalation in the cost of prescription drugs, somehow we could spend less on health care without any real consequences. Regrettably every Canadian knows today that there were consequences. There were severe consequences.

Now we have to start repairing the damage done by that hacking and slashing by a government with no vision whatsoever for the future of our health care system and no regard for the damage that it was doing to the health care system of today and tomorrow.

As the Liberal government took over \$20 billion out of the money that it was transferring to the provinces, emergency wards were growing more and more crowded. As the federal share of health care funding fell to just 11%, and let us remember that the federal share of health care spending was once 50%, and as the government dragged it down to 11%, the waiting lists grew longer and longer. More sick patients were sent home from hospital before they were ready and without a home care program there to look after their needs.

The Liberals began to blame the provinces. Again this afternoon in question period we saw the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health blame the provinces for the inadequacy of home care. Then of course some of premiers, like Mike Harris, blamed the hospitals. For all I know some of the harried hospital administrators in this country tried to blame the patients for being sick. Blame everybody, blame anybody, but do not accept the responsibility yourself. That has been the federal government's position.

If nothing else can be said about yesterday's budget, this government has finally admitted that it has been a major cause of the health care crisis across this country today. Canadians have been accusing this government of wilful neglect of our health care system, of tearing down health care, and yesterday the finance minister finally pleaded guilty. That is the good news in this budget and we agree with those who say that is welcome news.

I propose that as part of the finance minister's penalty, as part of his penance as my clergy colleague would say, the Minister of Finance should be required to perform some community service. Surely that is a reasonable proposition. Surely he should be required to serve some time. Serve time in an emergency ward. Go and help the families and help the staff cope with the overcrowded waiting rooms his policies have created. Surely that is a reasonable sentence. For the real test of this so-called health budget will take place in the emergency wards, in the surgical wards and the chronic care facilities around this country.

• (1635)

Once the budget day dust settles and Canadians see how health funding figures have been inflated and exaggerated by this government, they will be looking to see if this health budget makes a real difference in the quality of care they and their families actually receive from the health care system. I honestly hope it will

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make a difference. We all hope it will make a difference because Canadians really deserve a break after so many years of such devastating cuts to our health care system.

I fear that the crisis is not over. I think most Canadians know in their hearts that the health care crisis is not over. The Liberal government has let the problems get so bad and it has been so slow to respond to that crisis, so slow to offer the needed injection of money, that I fear it will be a very long time before Canadians will see any really significant improvement in the health care system.

The Liberals have inflated the appearance of the new money by announcing five years of spending in advance. Announcing five years of spending at one time seems like a neat trick on the face of it, but at the end of the day this budget will only get us back to where we were four years ago. That is with no accounting for inflation, no accounting for the continuing escalation in drug costs, no accounting for the increased cost of caring for an aging population or any of the other additional costs associated with new treatments and new medical technologies.

Canadians do not want their health care system going backward. They do not want us being dragged backward and they do not want us just to be stuck in repairing the damage this government has caused. They want some vision for the future. They want some leadership in how we are going to implement a vision for health care in the future.

Canadians are desperate for some action on home care and pharmacare. They know from experience that the practice of medicine is changing and that patients are being sent home from hospitals earlier and earlier after surgery and other treatments. In theory that is a welcome development. We all know some patients are better off at home earlier if—and it is an if that this government seems not to understand or to be willing to take any responsibility for—the home supports are in place to ensure people are safe and on the road to recovery.

Right now the reality is quite different. Today and for some time to come, and this government has provided no assurance that it is not going to continue for a very long time, countless numbers of people, mainly women, daughters, mothers and wives, are pitching in. Another layer of responsibility is being added to their family responsibilities and to their work lives, to bear the burden of providing care in the home for which they are not trained and for which the support is not present.

Early hospital release and outpatient treatment also mean—and this is sometimes lost and apparently this government does not understand—that many more prescription drug costs are passed on to the patient and the patient's family. Before those costs would have been covered as part of the hospital stay. As a result of rushing patients out of hospital and placing them in their own homes, a double burden is being heaped on those families because with very

few exceptions, the costs of those drugs are borne by the out of hospital patients and their families.

• (1640)

Developing a health care system where Canadians all across the country can count on publicly provided home care and where all Canadians have a drug plan must be a top priority for our health care system. The Liberal Party promised home care and prescription pharmacare during the last election. There was no talk then about how this is of no concern to the federal government. “This is not our responsibility; it is the responsibility exclusively of the provinces” is the explanation we heard today when we raised the concerns again about home care.

We would have thought that in a budget which the government itself trumpeted as the health budget, it would have proposed some initiatives on home care and pharmacare. But no, not a hint that the federal government will offer any leadership or any initiatives in these critical areas. It is this absence of forward looking vision that is the budget's biggest disappointment. If the government is not going to take action on home care and on prescription drugs in what the government itself calls the health care budget, then when will the government ever take action on home care and pharmacare?

The second theme of the budget was tax reduction. At the outset the finance minister appeared to strike the right note on tax reform. In his opening statement he said “Most importantly we must always be fair. If at the end of the day the books of the country are better and the lives of Canadians are not, we will not have succeeded”. These are fine words and it is a darn shame that the finance minister did not act on those words when he brought forward his budget.

For a budget supposedly designed to improve the lives of Canadians, the Liberal government gave the biggest breaks of all to those with the biggest incomes. Those are the facts. That is not Liberal spin. That is not opposition rhetoric. Those are the facts of this budget.

*[Translation]*

The Liberal government gave most of the tax breaks to those least in need of them.

*[English]*

With the elimination of the surtax to those earning over \$50,000, the budget delivered over \$1 billion of the \$2.8 billion tax package, or 35%, to 17% of the highest earning taxpayers. I guess that is Liberal tax fairness. What that means is taking advice from the Reform Party to our right; what that means in terms of fairness is that the millionaire gets a tax break of \$8,000 while anyone earning less than \$50,000 does not get one red cent of a tax break in this budget.

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Surely that \$1 billion could have been better and more fairly spent on people who desperately need help in this country: the one million kids living in poverty who will get no help from this budget; the 800,000 unemployed who are no longer eligible to receive unemployment insurance because the government has gutted the unemployment insurance program; the 1,000 workers at Devco who are losing their jobs, their source of income and their pension entitlement after 20 or more years on the job sacrificing, as we were reminded this weekend by a coal miner's wife, their health, their limbs and in too many instances their lives; and the hundreds of thousands of homeless people crowding the streets and relying on food banks and shelters for sustenance.

• (1645)

The child tax benefit was boosted by \$300 million in order to raise the floor at which the benefit is phased out. This change is to be welcomed, but it will only provide very modest additional relief to families with incomes over \$26,000 and about \$184 a year for families between \$40,000 and \$60,000 with two children.

The major problem with this measure, with the federal government's child tax benefit break, is that it fails to do anything for the poorest of poor children, for the poorest of poor families.

Those families on social assistance who have been struggling to get into the paid workforce or who are at home raising their young children without the benefit of the oft promised child care program from the government, another broken promise, will continue to go with no benefits whatsoever from the so-called child tax benefit extension.

Three years ago the finance minister sold this child benefit as the answer to child poverty. Since the unanimous adoption in parliament of former NDP leader Ed Broadbent's motion in 1989 to eliminate child poverty in this country by the year 2000, the number of poor kids in Canada has actually risen by over 500,000. It has not declined but has risen under this government's policy by 500,000. Today one child in five in the country lives in poverty. Over one million of them are in families on social assistance. These children will receive no help whatsoever from the budget. Not a single cent.

How does the Minister of Finance measure this breach of fairness? How does the finance minister explain this breach of fairness? He has balanced his books but the lives of the most destitute of Canadians remain untouched.

The finance minister has provided some general assistance to all taxpayers by raising the basic personal exemption to \$7,131 from \$6,456. This gives about \$124 more to individuals. That is 40 cents a day. The government likes to point out how many people have been taken off the income tax rolls by this measure. However they

will still be forced to pay the GST. They receive no break there at all.

Our priority would have been to implement a 1% reduction in the GST? In that way all Canadians would have benefited and it would not have depended on their earnings level. That surely would have been a fairer way to bring in tax relief and would have been a job generator.

The most eloquent and most telling part of the budget, however, is in its silences. Health care is not the only emergency we face. Indeed, many cities across the country have officially declared homelessness a national emergency. Not in living memory have so many Canadians found themselves living on the street and without adequate shelter.

They understand that homelessness can be a complex problem including poverty, unemployment, mental health, addiction, family breakdown and many other problems, but surely complex problems require extra effort and special attention.

The Liberal government has done exactly the opposite. Faced with this complex problem it has simply walked away from its responsibilities. It is in the process of getting out of any responsibility for social housing at a time when its participation was never more needed.

The Liberal government's approach to homelessness has been to simply walk on the other side of the street.

• (1650)

There are many other evidences of silences in the budget: silence on child care, silence on support for parents, silence on helping young people finance their education or get the training they need, and silence on eliminating wage discrimination and pay inequities. These silences speak volumes about the extent to which the government is out of touch with the lives of ordinary Canadians.

If the government were in tune with the lives and the values of ordinary Canadians, it would not engage in the endless self-congratulations that we have seen in the last 24 hours. It would accept that in a democratic society we have a responsibility to provide for the most vulnerable.

It is clear that the government lacks the sensitivity and the humility to acknowledge that it has failed to provide for the most vulnerable Canadians. That is why we on this side of the House have our work cut out for us.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and then a question. My first comment has to do with the issue of poverty. The member has raised poverty in this speech and other speeches. I congratulate her for it. It is an important issue. Also she correctly pointed out that it was a complex problem for which there is no simple solution.

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She dealt with issues such as mental health, physical disabilities and alcohol and drug abuse addictions. She also mentioned that family breakdown was the single largest contributor to not just child poverty but family poverty in Canada.

My question has to do with health because it was a health budget and the member dealt with that. In view of the fact that pursuant to the Canada Health Act transfers from the federal government are directed specifically to hospitals and doctors and the delivery of services and ancillary areas are clearly and constitutionally the responsibility of the provinces, does she believe that the federal government, notwithstanding the social union accord developed with the agreement of all provinces except Quebec, should have unilaterally proceeded with something to do with pharmacare and home care and ignored provincial jurisdiction?

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, let me say how much I welcome that question. What I fear is that I will not have enough time to deal with the many questions raised. Let me go right to the heart of it.

I noticed the member did not ask the question about what we should have done for poverty. Let me say what they should not have done, and that is ignore it as they did.

Let me go to health care. He raised the question of whether the government should have totally ignored that delivery of health services is provincial, acted unilaterally and shown some leadership on home care and pharmacare programs. I have two responses.

Where were those thoughts when the Liberal Party went all over the country during the last election campaign specifically promising a national program on home care and a national program on pharmacare? The Liberal government acted unilaterally when it did that and it continues to do so.

Tommy Douglas used to say it was a darn shame that we have only put the first two parts of a universal health care system in place: hospital insurance and provision for physician services. We have yet to put the third and perhaps the most important part of the health care system in place. That means expanding what the federal government now includes in its description of universal health care to add to medical services and hospital care a range of other services such as home care and pharmacare that are desperately needed by Canadians.

• (1655)

I do not believe for one minute that any provincial government which cares about its citizens would stand and oppose the federal government showing some leadership and taking some initiative to expand the insurable services under health care. Until we do that we will not have a universal health care system.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first off, I wish to congratulate my New Democratic Party colleague for her great sensitivity to the less fortunate, particularly children.

As I said last week, everyone agreed back in 1989 that we should eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Today, the number of poor children stands at 1.5 million, a 500,000 increase.

What this means is that, since 1993, this government has shown no compassion. This is terrible, when children do not get enough to eat, when they go to school without a lunch, when they do not have proper clothes to wear and are made fun of, and at the same time the taxes of rich Canadians are going down. I call that a scandal, an outright scandal.

I hope the members opposite will agree with the NDP leader that this is a scorched earth policy, and that is exactly what I mean.

I ask my wonderfully sensitive colleague how we are going to get to zero poverty in the near future, if it is possible at all, because I am losing hope. Fortunately, we already have a zero deficit. However, we must get to zero poverty in four or five years.

Zero poverty should be everyone's goal. How can we make them understand? I do not know if they have it in them. How can we get together and make them understand that zero poverty should be everyone's goal?

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague's comments.

[*English*]

It is very true we have witnessed under this government an increase in the incidence of child poverty that has added 500,000 more children to the ranks of poverty in the country. It is a disgrace.

That is why we challenge the government on its sense of priorities. What does it say about the priorities of the government and the finance minister, that they would bring in a measure which gives \$8,000 extra to every millionaire in the country while there is not a single benefit for the one million children in the country who do not have enough food to eat? What does it say about the government's priorities?

It is not that the government does not know what can be done and what must be done to address the problem of poverty. It gutted the unemployment insurance system. Many families are not receiving the income replacement for which they have paid insurance premiums.

The government has so slashed federal transfers to provinces that the social assistance system is no longer working to keep people out of poverty. One of the things about which I will have a lot more to say in the days ahead is that it is absolutely clear, as the

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government congratulates itself on its health budget, that it has no intention of increasing transfers for education and for social welfare over the next five years.

With that so clear, so apparent, so transparent in the budget, there is every reason to be even more fearful about the lot of over one million poor children.

In conclusion, that is why it is time, 10 years later, after all-party endorsement of a resolution to eliminate child poverty within a decade, for us to rededicate ourselves and make the elimination of child poverty the real millennium project for all of Canada.

• (1700)

**Mr. Tony Valeri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the government laying out its priorities on health care. The member is absolutely right. It was health care.

One province has already indicated it will use the money to hire more nurses, to reduce waiting lists for cancer and neonatal services and to expand home care services. We have decided on our priority.

The hon. member hired the former Saskatchewan NDP cabinet minister who said "One cannot live on borrowed money forever. Sometimes it catches up to you. You cannot mortgage your children's future to the point where you can live high. It only leaves them with a debt". Take his advice. Stop saying spend, spend, spend. We laid out our priorities. It is a health budget. The member should stand up and applaud.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, this is not about spend, spend. This is about priorities. The record will show that the priority of this government is to give an \$8,000 benefit to millionaires and not one red cent to one million children in this country who do not have enough food.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Order, please. I wish to inform the House that the amendment to the amendment moved by the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is in order.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are profoundly disappointed with this government's budget. This was summed up best in today's *Globe and Mail* editorial: "Poor marks for the finance minister's budget". It said that he has left the impression of a man more interested in short term political popularity and budget sleight of hand than laying the foundations for a stronger economy in the long run".

This is a very important time for our country. We are entering the 21st century, a time of global opportunity. The decisions and choices we make today as a country can either limit or reduce the

choices we have as Canadians in the next century. We fear that the minister is making the wrong choices.

The Liberal government did not address the fact that Canada currently has the highest personal income taxes of any of the G-7 countries, the highest tax burden of any of the industrialized countries.

The Liberal government did not address the fact that our productivity growth has been the worst in the G-7 over the last two decades. Our incomes, after taxes and inflation, have been declining while our neighbours to the south have enjoyed soaring incomes.

We live in a world with unprecedented change. Globalization and the forces of technology are driving that change.

• (1705)

Governments will be successful in bringing their countries into the new millennium to be full participants in the global economy only if they have the vision and leadership to do so.

Our party believes in the free market system but we also believe that all Canadians deserve an opportunity to participate in that economy. They need access to the levers of the free market economy. Without that we will not have the type of society that Canadians want, a prosperous society, a society where all Canadians have equality of opportunity regardless of where they are from in the country, regardless of the income level or the socioeconomic status of their parents. We want to see all Canadians participate in economic opportunity.

This government really has no meaningful agenda. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have demonstrated no real vision. This is a government on cruise control. It is a caretakership government, a government without real leadership.

This was nowhere more evident than during last summer's dollar debacle when the debate surrounded the dollar and the dollar went to record lows of sub 65 cents. At that time the Prime Minister actually had the economic naivety, I should say audacity perhaps, to say it was good for tourism, implying that somehow the lower dollar could help the Canadian economy, implying that we can devalue our way to prosperity.

The logical corollary of his argument would be that if we reduce the dollar to zero by high taxes and productivity inhibiting policies ultimately we would become the greatest exporting nation in the world.

We all know a country cannot devalue its way to prosperity. To achieve success and prosperity in a global environment requires a country that values productivity, that values its people and their opportunities.

Instead of looking into the next century the Liberals are focused on the next election. The finance minister is focused on the next

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leadership campaign. Canadians deserve better than this. Economic policies are not short term in nature. They require consistency, a long term focus and they require vision.

Last year when the government even had a vague whiff of a surplus what did it do with that? It took \$2.5 billion from Canadians for the millennium scholarship fund, \$2.5 billion out of last year's budget, and stocked it away for the future. It took it from Canadians who needed the economic stimulus, who needed the investment in the economy last year and said they could not have it.

That is clearly unacceptable. Not only does it offend the auditor general but it offends Canadians and it offends good economic policy.

We have seen the results of five years of this government. Those results have been a beleaguered health care system, a health care system that is not there when Canadians need it. The tax burden has grown from \$112 billion in 1993 to over \$150 billion last year under this government.

What we have here is a budget surplus and a leadership deficit. Canadians deserve a full opportunity to succeed. That is the least they deserve. Our leader, the Right Hon. Joe Clark, said recently that sound economic and fiscal policies are the bedrock of any country that wants to function effectively in the modern world and economic growth is the means to achieve all the goals we set for our society.

There are some dire warnings out there about the Canadian economy from organizations like the IMF and the OECD, one of the world's greatest economic think tanks on these types of issues. The OECD, headed by a former Liberal cabinet minister, warned recently that current trends could "lead to a substantial decline in Canada's per capita income relative to the OECD average".

In short, Canada is falling behind our trading partners, behind other countries, and Canadians will pay the price in the future for a government's lack of vision now and the Liberal government's lack of courage in tackling the real problems facing Canadians and the Canadian economy.

Canadians and our party understand the importance of fiscal responsibility. In 1979 Joe Clark introduced the first fiscally responsible budget of a generation, which was defeated for purely partisan purposes. The last P.C. government reduced the deficit to GDP ratio from 9% when it took office to around 5% when it left office.

• (1710)

The real price to reduce the deficit has been paid by Canadians, Canadians who have seen their health care system slashed, Canadians who have seen \$19 billion taken from their health care system, Canadians who have seen taxes rise dramatically from \$114 billion to \$151 billion, EI premiums kept at a ridiculously

high rate and benefits slashed. Only 30% of applicants or those who pay into the system of EI actually qualify when they need it. This is clearly unacceptable.

The Liberals have fought the deficit by charging Canadians more and giving the provinces and Canadians less. They also had some help. The *Economist* said that much of the credit for deficit reduction goes to the passage of time and to successful reforms implemented by the previous government, including free trade, deregulation of financial services, transportation and energy and of course the GST that the Liberals used to be opposed to but now embrace and which the Prime Minister claims on foreign trips to have invented.

Good government will require better choices than this government is making. The previous government gave it the opportunities to make the right choices, because that government had the vision to make the right choices.

In this budget there is no tax relief for Canadians. I think it is very important that point be made clear. What we have is a fiscal shell game and an illusion that there are tax benefits in this budget, but in fact there are not. Cutting taxes and giving more money back to Canadians who have borne the brunt of deficit reduction is not important to this government. Government members feel they have cut the deficit. We see them over there like trained seals during question period applauding their efforts. They feel they cut the deficit. Canadians paid the price for reducing and eliminating the deficit and Canadians deserve a break now.

The Liberals increased the basic personal exemption a little in this budget and they said it will take 200,000 Canadians off the tax rolls. What about the 1.4 million low income Canadians who have been dragged kicking and screaming on to the tax rolls by this government by refusing to reindex tax brackets?

There has been a huge tax grab in the EI fund, \$19 billion this government has taken from workers and employers, workers who need that fund during difficult times, seasonal workers. During a transitional period, during a time of immense change, both economically driven and technologically driven, there are regions of our country where people need help to make that type of change. This government has turned its back on regions of this country, including Atlantic Canada. The message was very clear in the last federal election. I would add that the message will be clear in the next federal election as well.

This government is practising a give and take tax policy where it will give some tax breaks through the front door but then through the refusal to reindex tax brackets will take it through the back door.

Bracket creep is costing Canadians around \$1 billion per year. This government has not addressed that issue. The budget does not address the brain drain issue, the fact that the tax disparity between Canada and the U.S. remains immense. In Canada one reaches top



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marginal tax rate at about \$65,000. In the U.S. it is around \$400,000 Canadian. In Canada the top marginal tax rate, federal and provincial, is about 50%. In the U.S. it is about 40%.

The members opposite will say yes, but things are better here. The fact is things used to be better when we had a decent health care system, when we had a health care system people could rely on. But for the difference in take home pay after taxes, Canadians are discovering they can buy health care in the U.S. when they need it.

The fact is no one in the House or at least in our party advocates a private health care system, because we believe in a single user pay system that works for Canadians and is provided by the government. We believe very strongly in that because all Canadians, regardless of income levels, deserve access to a quality health care system. This government has devastated the health care system and at the same time has continually raised taxes, driving some of our best and brightest south of the border.

• (1715)

The EI premiums are an extraordinarily regressive tax. Payroll taxes are particularly regressive. Someone making \$39,000 per year will pay the same amount of EI premiums as someone making \$300,000 per year. This is the government's idea of a fair tax policy.

In terms of corporate taxes, in June the Mintz report was tabled to the finance committee. It pointed out some of the disparities between business taxes in Canada and business taxes in the U.S. and our other trading partners. It pointed out that one of the biggest impediments we have to economic growth and productivity in Canada is our tax system and particularly our business tax or corporate tax system. There was not a mention of really addressing the fundamental issues of corporate taxation in the budget.

We will continue to lose foreign investment to other countries because the budget has not addressed the fundamental issues. In time we will continue to see substandard job growth in Canada. The government said unemployment has gone down in recent years. It has gone down in the U.S. as well. In the U.S. the unemployment rate is at the lowest point in 20 years. Canada maintains an unemployment rate double that of the U.S. That is clearly unacceptable.

When we talk about lower taxes it is very easy to not really explain how important it is to the lives of average Canadians. We advocate tax reduction for three reasons.

Canadians need a break. Canadians have seen their disposable incomes decline by 9% in recent years. During the same period U.S. disposable incomes increased by 11%. Canadians need jobs and opportunities. In every jurisdiction high taxes kill jobs. In a global environment it is not possible to maintain an artificially high

tax rate. We need to ensure that our tax system is competitive and thus Canadians can be competitive in the global environment.

Job creation has been led by Ontario and Alberta. Why? The governments in Ontario and Alberta have recognized that lower taxes create economic opportunity and jobs. By lowering taxes in Ontario the Harris government has actually taken in more tax revenues. It is imperative that the government learn from some of its more rational provinces in terms of appropriate tax systems.

What was really cynical in this budget is it mentioned the homeless but there was not one single initiative for the homeless. How dare the Minister of Finance mention the homeless but not provide one single initiative to help the homeless.

The budget may talk about poverty, and it is a major issue. One in five Canadian children is living in poverty. We had a debate in the House sponsored by our party on the issue of poverty. Why are children living in poverty? Their parents are living in poverty. We have slashed access to EI benefits for seasonal workers in regions like Atlantic Canada without providing anything in the wake of those draconian slashes. We have maintained artificially high taxes which have inhibited job growth. More Canadians need jobs.

The parents of these children who are living in poverty want to work. They want opportunities to compete and to succeed. The best way to ensure this is to reduce the tax burden on all Canadians to create economic growth and opportunity such that these people can participate in the economy.

In my riding there are many constituents with families living on less than \$10,000 per year.

• (1720)

Members opposite have dismissed poverty as something that really is not there or they have said that we should change the way we measure poverty because the way we currently measure living in poverty in Canada is statistically incorrect. I heard a member of the Reform Party compare poverty in Canada to third world poverty by saying there may be some Canadians who are starving but not many.

In my Canada and our party's Canada it is unacceptable that any Canadian is starving or that any child is living in poverty. The only way we are going to change that is to recognize that we need to attach the hands of Canadians to the levers of economic growth, get this government of high taxes and high regulation out of the way and provide Canadians with the opportunity to compete and succeed.

This was supposed to be the health care budget. The last budget was the education budget. I forgot that for a moment because the results of the last budget, being an education budget, were fairly nebulous. There was a \$2.5 billion millennium scholarship fund taken out of last year's books. Of course it will not benefit any

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Canadian until after the year 2000, even then it will only benefit only 4% of students seeking higher education.

Interestingly enough, the year after the Liberals' education budget, 12,000 graduates have declared bankruptcy. I shudder to think what will happen after the health care budget but it cannot be any worse than what the Liberals have done before.

The minister expects to be commended for an \$11.5 billion reinvestment in health care, which will only bring health care spending up by the year 2004 to the 1995 level. That ignores the \$3 billion yearly growth in the cost of health care due to inflation and an aging population. That would be like thanking an arsonist for burning down your house and then rebuilding a smaller one on the same site eight years later. This is ludicrous.

The way the Liberals are spending on health care, they have cut indiscriminately since 1993 and now they are preparing to spend indiscriminately. Nowhere in the budget was there mention of engaging the volunteer sector to better maximize the health care spending of organizations like the VON which have served Canadians well in the past and will continue to do so in the future with very little help from this government. What is the strategy to address the fundamental issues of pharmacare and home care? What about palliative care with an aging population? Where is the strategy for developing a real program working with the provinces to provide not just a more expensive health care system but a better health care system?

We will be addressing issues in the budget debate over the next several days. This budget has clearly not dealt with some of the fundamental issues in the Canadian economy and health care system. On the economic front this government has not set firm debt reduction targets. Again the government is ducking the real issues.

I remind the Minister of Finance who recently said the economy is clicking on all cylinders that the economy continues to sputter for many Canadians and that we want to see the economy firing on all cylinders. The minister talks about the government's strong fundamentals. John Kenneth Galbraith, Canadian ex-patriot and economist, once said beware of governments that say their fundamentals are strong. That is very appropriate for this government.

Let us look at the fundamentals. We have an unemployment rate twice that of the U.S. We have record high rates of personal bankruptcy, a negative savings rate, the highest personal debt rates ever. The IMF and the OECD are saying cut taxes. Brain drain is taking our best and brightest. The economy is not clicking on all cylinders and we want to see it click on all cylinders for all Canadians.

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to speak but after hearing the outrageous

comments of my friend from Kings—Hants I felt compelled to do so. Transport is my game but I have a night job, trying to look after some of the interests of the government in Canada's largest city. There are 4.6 million people in the greater Toronto area. We are particularly sensitive to the plight of the homeless in that city and in other cities across the country. I take umbrage at my friend for saying there is nothing in this budget to deal with homelessness. He obviously has not read the budget.

I believe this is the first time there has been a specific mention of this plight in any document of a budgetary nature in Canadian history. I think that took great courage on the part of the Minister of Finance. We at the federal level or at any level of government do not want to own this issue.

● (1725 )

This is an issue that has to be dealt with by all levels of government. All Canadians have a stake in dealing with the plight of the homeless across the country.

Let me tell the House what this government has done in the past to deal with this issue. We have the youth employment strategy. We have the RRAP to fix up residential housing. We have made facilities such as armouries available in Toronto and in other cities.

In this budget \$11.5 billion has been allocated for health care. Thirty per cent of the homeless on the streets of cities like Toronto are people who have mental illnesses and who can be institutionalized. It is up to the provinces. It is up to people like Mike Harris, their soul mate, to say we now have the money, the money has come through health from the federal government, we can deal with this issue.

One last point is that the Mulroney government put the cap on the old Canada assistance plan. What that meant to the wealthiest provinces like Alberta, B.C. and Ontario was that they were restricted in the amount of money they spent on social services. We are lifting the cap on the CHST and that means Mike Harris and everybody else can now start to treat the homeless as a priority, as they should.

**Mr. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his gentle and erudite comments.

The minister said the Liberals are sensitive to the issue of the homeless, which was similar to their treatment in the budget documents. It was kind of a warm, touchy feely way to mention the issue.

On behalf of the homeless I want to thank the government for mentioning the homeless in its budget. That is cold comfort to the homeless. There is a role for the federal government to work with the provinces and to work with the municipalities to develop a real strategy to deal with the homeless.

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When I said the government did not address the issue of the homelessness and that it only mentioned it in its budget for political purposes, I was quoting one of the heads of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities who said during an interview last night that it was another level of government that has to deal on the front lines with the homeless.

This is similar to the way the government handles a number of economic issues or social issues. It talks about the homeless but there is no way that the government provides a program to deal with the homeless.

It talks about tax cuts as well. After this budget someone making \$39,000 per year will pay more taxes due to rising payroll taxes. This is a government that likes to talk the talk but it seldom walks the walk on important issues like homelessness.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague from the beautiful province of Nova Scotia is really concerned about the crocodile tears shed by the Minister of Transport and his Liberal colleagues when it comes to homelessness.

If John Cleghorn of the Royal Bank makes \$2 million to \$3 million he gets a \$16,000 tax break. If Al Flood of the CIBC makes \$3 million he gets a \$24,000 tax break. Instead of giving tax breaks to the wealthiest Canadians, would that money not have gone to better use, for example, to compensate for all hepatitis C victims?

I speak not on behalf of or for the member for Saint John, but would that money not have gone to better use for our beloved merchant marines who have been struggling against this government to try to get recognition and compensation for their work? Instead this government in this budget turns around and gives the wealthiest Canadians tax breaks. Would he not agree that is a shame?

**Mr. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

This government is not interested in making the tax system more progressive. It believes quite strongly in a regressive tax policy.

• (1730)

I need not remind the member of the EI tax, the most regressive tax there is. I mentioned earlier that someone making \$39,000 per year will pay the same amount of EI premiums as somebody making \$300,000 per year. That is fundamentally unfair.

I would advocate tax reform in Canada that would build a fairer tax system. I would also advocate a flatter tax system. However the most pernicious, offensive and regressive taxes in Canada right now are our payroll taxes and EI premiums which are excessively

high because the government is using them to pad its books and make its bottom line look better.

It is important to recognize that while the government is in the black, Canadians, particularly low income Canadians, are in the red.

**Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Kings—Hants used what he thought was a clever turn of phrase when he complained about a budget surplus and a leadership deficit. I submit that when that party was in power there was a \$42 billion budget deficit and a leadership surplus that the Canadian public dealt with by firing every member of that party but two in 1993.

Would the member not agree that when 36 cents of every tax dollar collected goes into paying off a \$560 billion deficit created by that party, it is contributing more to creating homelessness because the government of the day did not have the money as a result of the overspending of that party when it was in power?

**Mr. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. He has been spending too much time asking softball questions of ministers opposite, because that is a softball question.

The fact is that he speaks with some level of authority about building deficits. As a Liberal he understands that fully, because under Liberal governments our deficit in Canada grew from zero to \$38 billion by the time the previous Conservative government took office in 1984, which was 9% of our GDP. The Conservative government reduced that from 9% to about 5% of GDP by the time it left office. Not only did it start deficit reduction. It also implemented the policies which made it possible for this government to eliminate the deficit.

I would love for the hon. member to explain to the House where he stood on free trade, where he stood on the GST, and where he stood on deregulation of financial services, transportation and energy. Where did he stand on these policies? He probably did not stand anywhere except in opposition to them.

The fact is that he is absolutely right about leadership. Leadership is necessary to address issues. There is no leadership in the government to provide visionary policies that will ensure the next government, which will be a PC government, has the opportunities provided by strong visionary policies by the government now.

**Mr. Tony Valeri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after hearing a couple of hours of rhetoric I hope to be able to communicate to Canadians what was in the budget rather than what most members opposite believe in their own minds and use to their own political advantage.

Yesterday in the House the Minister of Finance delivered his sixth budget. It describes a vision of higher standard of living and a

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better quality of life for all Canadians. The budget articulated a well thought out vision for tomorrow. It also reinforced a plan for today, a plan that will make that vision a reality.

Maintaining sound, economic and financial management is certainly an essential component of the plan, but restoring order to the nation's finances is not, as the Minister of Finance said yesterday, an end in itself. He indicated in his speech yesterday that a better standard of living also requires us to invest in key priorities such as health care. It calls for continued tax relief. That is exactly what the 1999 budget proposes to do.

In my remarks today I should like to examine the fiscal and economic foundation on which we are building this vision.

• (1735)

As a nation our capacity to strengthen the health care system, to provide tax relief and to make other strategic investments depends upon the strength of this foundation. For the second consecutive year the government has brought down a budget that is balanced or better. Canada has moved from a deficit of \$42 billion before the government came to office to a \$3.5 billion surplus last year.

In the current fiscal year the government will again balance its books or better. It will be the first time since 1951-52 that Canada has been deficit free for two consecutive years. In fact by the accounting standards used in most other industrialized countries the government will post a financial surplus for the third year in 1998-99. It is this fiscal hat trick that is remarkable, not only in Canadian terms but in global terms. In the global arena Canada is the first G-7 country to post three consecutive surpluses in this decade.

As the Minister of Finance confirmed in his speech yesterday, the government is committed to keeping federal budgets balanced or better in both 1999-2000 and the year after that.

When we came to office Canada had a history of deficit financing. Today deficit financing is history. As recently as the early 1990s Canada's budgetary position was worse than that of any other G-7 country. Now, when making comparisons across countries, adjustments must be made for differences in accounting practices and in the distribution of responsibilities among the various levels of government.

In light of these considerations the most appropriate measure is the total government budget balance. On a comparable statistical basis our total national accounts based government sector deficit reached a high of 8% of GDP in 1992. It was more than double the 3.8% G-7 average at the time. Today our position is better than that of any other country in the G-7. It has improved each and every year since 1992.

It is our success in balancing the books that makes it possible for the government to consider significant investments in priority areas. First, our success in the fight against the deficit has made it possible to begin providing broad based tax relief for Canadians, both in last year's budget and again in this year's budget.

Next, the fiscal balance in previous budgets has made it possible for us to make a significant investment in health care in this year's budget. This investment, which amounts to \$11.5 billion over the next five years, is the largest single new investment the government has every made since coming to office over five years ago.

The 1999 budget also includes a \$1.4 billion investment aimed at strengthening Canada's health care system through additional resources for information systems, health research, as well as prevention and other health initiatives. This budget and this investment in health care are more than just transfers to provinces. It is all about ensuring that there is accountability, ensuring that there is investment in prevention, and ensuring that there is research in service delivery. It is all about ensuring that Canadians in every province now have a better opportunity of receiving better quality health care.

Fourth, we have proposed investments that will build on the Canadian opportunities strategy by advancing Canada's knowledge and innovation agenda. We said from the beginning that the plan we laid out in 1994 would be followed. Again, in this last budget we are building on previous budgets and building on the Canadian opportunities strategy, a strategy that ensures opportunity for individuals to acquire skills that they need in order to compete in the upcoming millennium. This budget invests and builds on that strategy and advances Canada's knowledge and innovation agenda. That will provide direct support for employment, particularly for youth.

• (1740)

Even with the important investments announced in this year's budget, Canada's program spending as a percentage of GDP is on a clear and downward trend. In 1993-94 program spending amounted to 16.6% of GDP. For 1998-99 program spending is expected to drop to 12.6% of GDP. By 2000-01 it should fall to 12% of GDP.

This will be the lowest level of program spending relative to the size of the economy in 50 years, and that is while we are continuing to invest in Canadian priorities: health, education, providing tax relief and continuing to pay down debt.

Focusing our spending on key priorities and putting an end to decades of deficit financing have allowed the government to make significant inroads in its fight against the debt. Last year Canada's debt to GDP ratio saw its largest single yearly decline since 1956-57. It fell from 70.3% to 66.9%. For the current fiscal year it

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is expected to fall still further to about 65.3%. By 2000-01 the debt ratio should come in at just under 62%.

Economic growth is not the only cause of this remarkable decline in debt relative to the size of the economy. The government is in fact doing what Canadians have asked. Canadians have asked that the government pay down the debt. The Minister of Finance pointed out in his speech yesterday that we are only one of a few countries in the world which is actually paying down its debt.

Nonetheless, Canada's debt to GDP ratio is still too high. Among our G-7 counterparts only Italy has a higher level of debt in relation to the size of the economy. We are therefore committed to keeping this debt to GDP ratio on a permanent downward track. To this end the government is following the debt repayment plan set out in last year's budget.

As part of this strategy we will continue to present two year fiscal plans. These plans will be based on prudent planning assumptions and will continue to include a contingency reserve, a buffer against unexpected financial pressures.

The current plan contains a contingency reserve of \$3 billion each and every year. When it is not needed, as was the case last year, it will go directly to paying down the public debt. This is very important. Only three years ago when the debt to GDP ratio was at its peak, 36 cents of every dollar of federal revenue went to pay interest on the debt. Last year with the debt ratio dropping, the portion of each revenue dollar needed to service the debt fell to 27 cents, which allows the government more flexibility and more opportunity to reinvest in Canadian priorities.

These numbers tell a powerful story. They tell a story of a nation that is in control of its destiny, a Canada that is securing for itself greater economic freedom.

A diminishing debt burden is freeing up resources to strengthen health care and access to knowledge, to provide needed tax relief, to fight child poverty, to improve the environment and to invest more in a productive economy.

However, spending initiatives and tax cuts will be introduced only when they are sustainable, when the government is reasonably certain that it has the resources to pay for its actions. We will not commit to tax cuts, to spending that we cannot afford. We have turned the corner. The government is committed. Members on this side of the House are committed never ever to go back to the reckless spending years of the Tories across the way who continued to bury the country with \$42 billion of deficit and continued to ensure that Canadians did not have the opportunity they were looking for.

• (1745)

Prudence is at the heart of this government's approach to managing the nation's finances. And so it should be, for there is

absolutely nothing to be gained by introducing tax relief if it means running the risk of driving the country back into deficit. There is nothing to be gained by bringing in new spending initiatives one year if the government has to hike taxes the following year to pay for something it thought it could afford.

I know that our opposition critics love the government's prudent approach. We heard about it this afternoon. Why do they love it? Because the opposition will always be able to complain that we are not moving quickly enough to bring down taxes. We heard it from the leader of the Reform Party. We heard it from the Tories. Or that we are not acting decisively enough to beef up spending. We heard it from the NDP earlier today. We heard it from the Bloc.

What does this strategy mean for Canadians? That is whom this government is speaking for. It is speaking for Canadians and it is speaking to Canadians. For Canadians it means they can always have confidence in this government's ability to deliver sustainable measures. It means they can count on us to continue to provide tax relief and to continue to invest in key social and economic priorities year after year after year and budget after budget.

The continuing improvement in this government's fiscal situation is helping to keep interest rates low. In fact, short term interest rates, currently around 4.7%, have returned to the levels of early last year before the financial turmoil in Asia sent them rising. Long term interest rates are near historical low levels. The level of interest rates is further proof that Canada's economic fundamentals are strong.

The member for Kings—Hants made reference to how this government continues to talk about economic fundamentals. The essential difference in the management of the economy between this government and the past administration is that we focus on economic fundamentals. We ensure that the economic fundamentals are in place before we embark on any investment and before we embark on any tax cuts.

Reckless spending and promises that do not mean anything to Canadians and that cannot be fulfilled do not cut it with Canadians any more. They are looking for sustainability. They are looking for priorities that will be invested in and they are looking for leadership. This government has provided leadership. With the help of Canadians it will continue to provide leadership as we move into the next millennium.

A person does not need to be an economist to understand the benefit of low interest rates. When rates are low, the benefit is felt directly by consumers. It is felt by Canadians. It is a bottom line benefit for anyone who has a mortgage to pay or car payments to make. It is a bottom line benefit for businesses of all sizes that borrow money to invest in capital equipment or to expand their operations and create jobs.

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While the Tories ridicule the idea of fundamentals, fundamentals provide a climate of low interest rates and low inflation. They provide an environment where businesses can continue to prosper and create those jobs Canadians are looking for.

Speaking of jobs, one of the most encouraging developments in the last couple of years has been a surge in employment. Employment jumped by 453,000 jobs in 1998, building on the already impressive gain of 368,000 jobs in 1997. Canada's employment performance in 1998 was the best for the decade.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants also made reference to the G-7. The G-7 said that Canada will outpace the rate of job creation in any other G-7 country. The trend continued in January of this year with 87,000 new jobs created.

It is not the government that creates these jobs. It is the private sector. This government has been successful in providing an environment conducive to job growth. The private sector continues to be profitable. When it is profitable and meeting the needs of the global economy, the private sector will be hiring Canadians. We will continue to provide that environment.

• (1750)

The unemployment rate today stands at 7.8%. It is the lowest jobless rate this country has seen since 1990.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of Canada's job performance is the fact that almost 40% of the new jobs created in the last 12 months went to Canada's youth. This represents 202,000 jobs, a 10% gain. The yearly employment gain recorded for youth was the strongest in over 25 years.

As far as the overall prospects for economic growth are concerned, yesterday the Minister of Finance emphasized once again that Canada has been affected over the past year by the financial instability in the global market. We all know what happened in Asia. We all know what is happening in Russia. We know the impact of what may happen in Brazil.

Lower world commodity prices were the most significant channel through which the Asian crisis dampened economic growth in Canada last year. In a survey conducted at the beginning of this year, private sector forecasters indicated that they expected growth in Canada to slow to about 2% this year before picking up to 2.5% in the year 2000.

Even with the lower growth prospects, both the International Monetary Fund and the OECD expect Canada to be among the top performers in the G-7. These organizations also expect Canada to continue to lead the pack in job creation. When the hon. member makes reference to the IMF and the OECD, he should make sure that he tells the House and Canadians the complete story. The IMF

and the OECD are continuing to provide Canada with high marks in job creation.

The 1999 budget invests in health care. It invests in research and innovation and other key areas. The government is continuing to provide general tax relief to all Canadians without borrowing money to do so. The government's ability to move on these three fronts is a result of its firm commitment to good financial management.

The figures in this year's budget plan make it clear that Canada is breaking new ground and putting in place a strong economic foundation. It is the foundation on which we will build a better tomorrow, an enduring period of prosperity and an improving quality of life.

The actions of this budget are mutually reinforcing. Unlike what the parties opposite say, the initiatives we are proposing will work together to ensure that this ambitious but realistic vision of 21st century Canada will manifest itself not only in our finance minister's eloquent words, but also in the day to day lives of all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ):** Madam Speaker, listening to the hon. member opposite I had a great deal of difficulty restraining myself.

I cannot imagine how the Liberal members opposite manage not to choke when they speak in a debate like the one on the budget tabled yesterday.

It is as if we were living on two completely different planets. I believe the hon. member is from Ontario. Before making those kinds of remarks, he should come and travel across Quebec and the maritimes. Having done that, if he still cannot show more compassion, he may at least not get so carried away about how good this budget is, as he described it. I noted a few things. I will first make a comment and then put a question to the member.

The hon. member praised the work done by the Minister of Finance, saying that the minister was working with standards widely used in the G-7. I am not sure how widely used they are in the G-7. But one thing is sure: he was unable to tell us if these standards were widely recognized here, in Canada, by Canadians, so that comparisons could be made.

• (1755)

Neither could the hon. member bring himself to admit that the finance minister had his wrists slapped by the auditor general precisely because this is not a transparent approach allowing figures to be compared from one year to the next.

In fact, to find out what the actual breakdown by province is today, one has to request from senior Canadian officials special

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tables, which show in black and white what the Government of Quebec told us, and that is that the province is getting no more than \$150 million for health care. That is my first point.

Second, he said that the Liberal government's priority for health care would be to make people more accountable and to make the management of the health care system more transparent. They dare brag that they will establish audit systems to ensure that care is actually provided.

I believe I am in the Parliament of Canada, which has the role of protecting the Canadian Constitution, although some would say it is not my job. The Constitution, which parliament must honour, must recognize at least that health care is under provincial jurisdiction. Let them not boast to Canadians watching us that they will establish accountability.

Another odd thing in the speech by the previous member is that the Liberals are accusing the Conservatives of increasing the country's debt. The Conservatives were in office only two terms. What the members opposite forget to say is that the deficits started under Pierre Elliott Trudeau. I would remind the member that we were not in a recession at that point. People who want to provide a lesson should reread their history.

The federal government says that Canadians can now trust it and it will not spend foolishly, or something like that. Can we trust those opposite?

They got elected in 1993 and said they would scrap the GST. From 1993 to 1999, that is six years. This is the sixth budget brought down by the current government. It had the opportunity to eliminate the GST, but not a word was said on that in last night's budget. Should we trust the federal government?

I will give another example of what happens when the Liberals say we should trust them. Following the 1995 referendum in Quebec, they supported a motion in this House recognizing Quebec's unique character. This implied that if Quebec wants to do things differently, it should have the right to opt out of programs. But what did the government do at the first opportunity, when it started making a surplus, last year? It created the millennium scholarships, which was yet another intrusion into areas of provincial jurisdiction.

The Liberals could have eliminated that program in yesterday's budget. They did not. This is another example of an unkept promise. And they are asking us to trust them.

I have a question for the hon. member. I do not see many members from the maritimes here today, but they could put that question to him. Health and education are areas of provincial jurisdiction. Fisheries, as far as catches are concerned, is a federal jurisdiction. What is there in the finance minister's budget for fishers, who will lose everything in May of this year? This is a federal jurisdiction. The federal government could not care less.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Valeri:** Madam Speaker, the rhetoric of rubbish is the only way I can speak to that.

What I want to—

• (1800)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Bernier:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if my comments were misinterpreted, because the member referred to them as rhetoric of rubbish. Yet, I did not use any vulgar expression and I would appreciate it if the member opposite could choose his words more carefully.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I would ask the hon. member to choose his words carefully.

**Mr. Tony Valeri:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. What I said was that it was rhetoric of rubbish. I do not know if that is vulgar or not. It is not, as far as I was concerned.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Bernier:** Madam Speaker, I once again rise on a point of order. In dealing with certain issues, I mentioned historical facts. I did not use bad words. And if this how he sees it, then the answer—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** This is not a point of order, this is a point of debate.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Valeri:** Madam Speaker, the two areas that I will address, because the member was up for quite a bit of time, are with respect to the G-7. He made reference to the accounting practices of the G-7. G-7 countries make use of what is called the financial requirements way of doing their books. We actually use the national accounts system which is a bit more stringent. In fact, if we moved to the way the G-7 looks at countries and the way they do books, our numbers as a country would look much better.

In terms of the health care issue, the member was taking exception to my comments about making the health care system perhaps a bit more transparent. What I was really making reference to was when a physician perhaps in Quebec or a physician in the maritimes or a physician out west may make an advance or a discovery in terms of service delivery, there is no system in place right now throughout the country where there is an exchange of this type of information.

When there is an exchange of this type of information we end up with a better quality of health care. I am not sure that the hon. member really would want to say he does not want to have Quebecers receive a better quality system of health care. That is the

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whole intent of the health care budget, that whether one lives in Quebec, out east or out west, one has an ability to receive quality health care.

There is no question that the delivery of health care is a provincial jurisdiction and that there is no intent by the federal government to invade provincial jurisdiction, because I know that is a big problem for the members opposite. What this health budget does is transfers \$11.5 billion to provinces in order to deal with health care. But it also provides opportunity and framework for provinces and health care providers to communicate with each other so that they can provide greater efficiency in the health care system.

That is what it is all about. It is about Canadians regardless of what province they live in. Canadians want better service and this budget will help governments deliver it.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure as the chief finance critic of the official opposition to respond to the federal budget today, introduced by the finance minister yesterday.

I must say at the outset that the budget read more like a fairy tale than an honest accounting of the government's financial position. I want to explain what I mean by simply pointing out one thing. As I went through the budget documents yesterday I found it absolutely amazing that nowhere in those documents was I able to find the number that told us how much the government was prepared to spend this year; \$104.5 billion was the number.

I think we need a much larger debate in this place about how we report on the government's financial position. Sadly I think the government has taken to using the budget as a propaganda tool instead of an accounting of the government's financial position.

The official opposition has many particular concerns with this budget but these can be summarized simply by saying this budget will mean that Canadians will pay much more in taxes and receive far less in health care. Pay more and get less. Members may have heard that theme but we will continue to say it because it is absolutely true.

I ask the House to consider this. In 1999 the average Canadian taxpayer will pay over \$2,000 more in taxes than they paid in 1993. It is logical to expect that if we pay \$2,000 more in taxes per taxpayer we would get more services. While that is logical, it is absolutely not the case under this government.

• (1805)

In 1999 the government will spend \$450 less in health care per taxpayer than last year. Put another way, the total cuts to health care this government has delivered over the last three years per taxpayer amount to about \$1,500 per person. This is coming from a

government that claims to be so caring about health care, a government that claims that health care is part of our national fabric. I do not believe the government even believes its own rhetoric anymore.

Let us examine how this whole thing happened. The government argues that it had to keep raising taxes and slashing health care in order to eliminate the deficit. I will argue the government did not eliminate the deficit at all. All it did was transfer it on to the backs of taxpayers. It transferred a big chunk of it to taxpayers in the form of \$2,000 a year more in taxes every year.

I see the hon. member from London is speaking in House. This is great to see because as far as I know he has never delivered a speech in this House before. It is good to hear him at least heckling.

The other chunk of the deficit was transferred to people who needed health care. This came in the form of a \$1,500 per taxpayer reduction, as I pointed out a minute ago. I do not think that is the proper approach that this government should take if it truly cares about the citizens of Canada.

What is the alternative? I think the government had some alternatives and did not follow them. In the first place, going back to 1993 when this government took power, it should have acted a lot faster. It waited a full 18 months before it brought in a substantive budget of any kind. When one is carrying a debt of over \$500 billion, time literally is money.

Did this government act right away to save money for Canadians? No. It took its merry time. In the meantime, it cost Canadians literally thousands of dollars per taxpayer in the form of higher taxes and thousands of dollars per health care patient in the form of less services for health. The government really should have acted faster.

Secondly, the government should not have cut our most important services while maintaining our least important services. As Goethe once said, those things that matter most should never be at the mercy of those things that matter least. However, this government does not seem to understand that.

Consider that while it cut \$20 billion out of health care over the last several years it did not touch a lot of the wasteful spending. It cut the things that make us healthier, smarter and more productive but did not at all touch many of the things that many Canadians consider to be extraordinarily wasteful. I want to talk about some of those things.

**An hon. member:** Name them.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** I am happy to do that. Let us talk about the \$4 billion in pork barrel regional development grants spent over the last four years. My friend across the way, the hon. Minister of Transport, will know that some of that money was even spent in the Prime Minister's riding, given to a business associate of his under



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circumstances which people could only describe as very suspicious.

Let us talk about regional development. Let us talk about the millions upon millions of dollars—

**Hon. David M. Collette:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We cannot sit here and listen to the hon. member directly cast aspersions on the Prime Minister and his constituency.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I will ask the hon. member to choose his words more carefully, please.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately we all face the consequences of our actions, and that includes the Prime Minister.

There are millions of other dollars wasted every year in regional development. I am glad that my colleague, the Minister of Transport, helped me make that point. Over the last several years we spent \$3.2 billion running a television network in Canada at the same time as we were cutting billions of dollars out of health care. I think that is completely inappropriate. It shows that the government's priorities are totally mixed up.

Over the last few years we have spent over \$4 billion in redundant bureaucracy in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

• (1810)

My friends across the way know that the auditor general routinely chastized the government for its bungling of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The department recently spent \$91 million to negotiate treaties and not a single treaty was actually negotiated. This was brought to the attention of the government by the auditor general.

There were many things that the government spent money on that it did not need to and that it should not have spent money on. At the same time it was cutting the heart out of health care. I point out that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation routinely uncovers hundreds of millions of dollars in wasteful spending.

It was not very long ago that Walter Robinson, president of the federation, a position held by my colleague, the member for Calgary Southeast, held a press conference and unveiled access to information documents showing the federal government routinely makes loans of hundreds of millions of dollars to some of Canada's most profitable and most successful corporations and then fails to collect on the loans.

My friend across the way says it is not true but he cannot provide a shred of evidence that it is not true. Instead of providing that money to health care we see it go to companies that are making

literally hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. That is a complete mix-up in terms of priorities.

How easy for the Liberals to spend other people's money so unwisely. Even more aggravating is the fact that the voices of business, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Catherine Swift, Garth White, the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council on National Issues, routinely plead with the government to quit subsidizing business. There is not a year that goes by when the finance committee does not have those groups come before us and say please quit distorting the marketplace. Quit taking money from successful businesses, giving it to the government, letting it take a share, passing it on to other unsuccessful businesses so that they can be subsidized and then turn around and compete against these successful businesses. That makes absolutely no sense.

If there is so much wasteful low priority spending in the federal government why is the federal government cutting high priority things like funding for health care, education and RCMP services? Why is the federal government producing dumb blond joke books, giving grants to incredibly profitable businesses and building bureaucracies when sick people are forced to sleep in wheelchairs and in linen closets in Canada's hospitals? I argue that this government truly is the government that put the hell into health care.

When we look beyond the baffle-gab in yesterday's speech from the finance minister, three things become very clear. The first thing is that the government wants us to think that after being world champion tax hikers it is now serious about reducing taxes. The second is that after savaging health care it wants us to believe that it really did not mean it and that taking a dollar out and putting 50 cents back in will fix the problems in health care.

The third thing that becomes abundantly clear is that the most important thing to the Liberal government is not health care, it is not reducing taxes, it is making government bigger. It wants to take more of our money and more our options so it can tell us how to live our lives. If members doubt for a moment what I am saying, look at the budget documents from yesterday where the government announced \$30 billion in new spending. Where did that money go? Only about \$11.5 billion went toward health care initiatives. Only \$7.7 went to tax decreases. The remainder went to all kinds of other new spending, non-priority spending. This government has a huge spending problem. I fear that it has returned to its old free spending ways, its big government Liberal ways. Canadians know that is precisely how we got into the situation we are in now, \$580 billion in debt.

Let me explain why we must have substantive tax relief, why making health care healthy requires more than just cash and why big government liberalism hurts the poor and the sick and those without skills while sucking away our prosperity and our spirit of innovation.

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• (1815)

Let me talk specifically about why we need tax relief. I want to lay out four different arguments for why Canada needs tax relief.

The first point I want to make is that it is the taxpayers' turn. It was taxpayers who balanced this budget. We have had at least, to be generous, 38 tax increases since this government came to power. We are now in the 35th year of having increasing taxes in Canada. We have not had a tax break in Canada in 35 years. We have surtaxes that were added specifically to eliminate the deficit. Well the deficit is still gone but the 5% surtax is still there.

The machinery of government was preserved through all of this, but the taxpayer was hung out to dry, absolutely hung out to dry. We saw government bureaucracies in some cases not only not shrink but actually get bigger.

The first big reason we need to give Canadians some tax relief is simply because it is their turn. Everybody else has benefited in the past with what the government has done, but not the taxpayers. Taxpayers are the ones who have been the long suffering, very patient heroes in this whole mess. They are the ones who bailed this government out. It is time that taxpayers got their share.

The second point I want to make is that the economy needs a tax cut right now. I heard the parliamentary secretary talking a few minutes ago about what is going on around the world and about Brazil, Japan and Russia. We are all very aware of that.

We also know that we had a crisis this summer when the dollar hit new lows which was in part because Canada's tax regime was completely bloated. We could not compete with a tax regime that had Canadians paying some of the highest personal income taxes in the world.

I heard the member for Waterloo—Wellington give a member's statement about how he was so proud that the dollar had now recovered up to 67 cents. I have never seen anyone so inspired by mediocrity in my life. This government seems to think that a 67 cent dollar is just fine. I can guarantee to members across the way that the Reform Party does not agree with them. We think the dollar is a barometer of the health of the economy. We will not accept a 67 cent dollar. We will do things to ensure that Canada's dollar strengthens.

First on the list is to start to cut taxes. I do not agree at all with my friend across the way who says that now is not the time to cut taxes substantially. We disagree with that. We say let us cut taxes substantially. If we do that, the next time there is a crisis in the world, money will come to Canada instead of fleeing Canada like it routinely does under this Liberal government.

The third reason we need to cut taxes immediately is to stem the brain drain. We see a massive brain drain from the member from London. We see it right now. There are four reasons people are leaving Canada in droves.

The first is that young people get their university educations in Canada, subsidized, and then they leave to go to the United States. The reason they go is that there are more jobs in the United States, 4.3% unemployment, than in Canada.

The second point is that the United States pays better. The jobs pay more because there is more of a demand for good employees down there. Jobs end up paying more.

The third point is that they get to keep more of what they earn because their taxes are much lower. The industry department itself pointed out just the other day that in Canada Canadians are paying far higher taxes and their incomes are far lower than those in the United States.

The government's own industry department has chastised the government saying it is time to get our taxes in line with the United States. The Reform Party agrees completely. We point out that if we did cut taxes our revenues would go up just as they went up in Ontario.

The fourth reason people do better when they go to the United States is that the U.S. dollar buys more. We have a 67 cent dollar in Canada, the northern peso. I am embarrassed of our dollar. I think it is ridiculous that my friend from London thinks it is so wonderful.

**An hon. member:** I am not from London.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Well, from Mars or wherever he is from. He is certainly not from this planet.

• (1820)

My friend across the way is heckling but never have I seen him speak in the House on a bill. I suggest to him that he should have the courage of his convictions and rise to his feet and debate this budget instead of heckling and spouting inanities from the other side.

The fourth reason we need to cut taxes in Canada is simply because we have to put some chains on government. I fear very much that government in Canada is starting to grow again. I am concerned that we will see a return to the old-style liberalism where government starts to interfere more and more in people's lives. It already interferes substantially in people's lives and many Canadians today resent it greatly.

What we see after yesterday's budget is a huge increase overall in spending. We saw the government go \$7.6 billion over budget in this year's spending. It is proposing to go somewhere in the range of \$30 billion, I would say over budget, over the next three years, at least if this year's budget numbers are used as a standard for the next three years. That is crazy. We are in a situation where we have had exactly two surpluses to date.

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It is time that we put a rein on government, that we put some limits on government so that those surpluses can accumulate for the benefit of Canadians, so that they can go back to people in the form of lower taxes, so that we can pay down the debt, not so that we can build up more government programs. We do not need that. That is extraordinarily dangerous.

The government continues to tax away \$11 billion a year from people who make less than \$30,000. That is absolutely irresponsible. We are punishing people at the low end of the income scale.

The best way to chain a meddling and clumsy government is to quit giving it so much in taxes. I argue it is time to start cutting taxes in a substantive way. My party has come up with a program that would give Canadians \$26 billion in tax relief over the next three years, pay down \$17 billion in debt, put \$6 billion into health care and also start a debate with the provinces and the public on how we can fix health care in Canada today.

I argue it is time to take a new approach. The only think that stands in our way is the 157 Liberals across the way, including the member for Haliburton—Victoria. I did not know where he was from because he never stands up and speaks.

I encourage people across the country, if they are tired of high taxes and slashed health care, help us throw the Liberals out because it is time for Canada to have a new fresh approach.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Since there are quite a few members who want to ask questions of the hon. member for Medicine Hat, I would suggest two minutes per question.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I was quite surprised when the member for Medicine Hat stated only about \$11.5 billion and the rest are unaccountable for.

He touched upon an issue that is so important to all of us, and I know it is important to them as well, which is the investment in our future, our youth, our future scientists, researchers and what have you. He failed.

Does the member not agree that the \$240 million to support development of the Canadian institutes for health research will help the future scientists and researchers stay in Canada? Does he not understand that the \$200 million to the Canada Foundation for Innovation is a worthwhile investment? Does he not understand that the money going to support our soldiers is a worthwhile investment? Does he not understand that \$190 million to better meet the health needs of the first nations and Inuit communities is a good investment?

I could go on and on but time is short. That is where the rest of the money is going.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member recognizes that people are fleeing Canada in droves and the government in its feeble way is trying to staunch the flow. I would simply point out that many of those people who are leaving are being scared away. They are being punished by high taxes in Canada.

We argue that the government should introduce sweeping tax relief. We argue that we should attract investment here for the high tech and biotech industries by cutting the capital gains inclusion rate in half.

• (1825 )

Many Canadians in those fields argue that we are on the right track. I point out that people from Nesbitt Burns, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Chamber of Commerce chastised the government in the strongest possible language for its performance in the budget this time around. These are people who have a vested interest in ensuring that our high tech industry is well looked after. They think that what the government did was extraordinarily feeble.

I would encourage the member to revisit the budget and consider that there is a much better approach and we offered it just a minute ago.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the importance of our high tech industries. Earlier in his speech he was critical of the government with regard to the technology partnerships. The government is in partnership with a large number of companies to support our high tech industries.

The member also repeated an allegation from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that these refundable loans were not being paid back. The fact is that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation included in its calculations amounts of loans which were not currently repayable under the terms of the agreements. All of those loans are being serviced in accordance with the agreements.

Is the member ignorant of the facts or is he just trying to mislead the House?

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Madam Speaker, there is a lot of ignorance on the other side. I think that is a fact.

My friend is ignorant if he does not understand that when billions of dollars go to high tech companies, it means that billions of dollars do not go into health care and they do not go into giving low income Canadians tax relief. I think my friend across the way is ignorant if he does not understand that Canadians know much better how to use that money. He is ignorant if he does not understand that the money will be better spent by investors if it is turned back to them in the form of lower taxes.

I urge my friend to become more knowledgeable. Ignorance does not wear well on him.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the party opposite is always fond of supporting family values.

The member overlooked in his speech that portion of the budget which dealt with the tax breaks to low and middle income families. I refer him to page 130 of the budget plan. A one earner family of four earning \$30,000 is going to get \$353 more in tax relief as a result of the budget. Similarly, a family of four earning \$50,000 is going to get tax relief of \$373 with this budget.

The member should acknowledge that we are doing something very positive for the nuclear family.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Madam Speaker, how sad that my friend is perpetrating the shell game.

The government is going to raise payroll taxes through the Canada pension plan by \$7.2 billion over the next three years; it is going to raise through bracket creep another \$2.7 billion, \$9.9 billion. The government is offering \$7.7 billion in tax relief. In the end, Canadians are worse off by \$2 billion. If they are worse off by \$2 billion, I ask my friend from Hamilton how does that leave Canadians better off? If they are paying more money out of their pockets, how are Canadians better off?

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** It being 6.30 p.m., pursuant to the order made Tuesday, February 16, 1999, the House will now proceed to a special debate on peacekeeping in Kosovo and the Central African Republic.

\* \* \*

• (1830)

[English]

### PEACEKEEPING

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.)** moved:

That this House take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Kosovo and the possible changes in peacekeeping activities in the Central African Republic.

He said: Madam Speaker, at the outset let me gain the agreement of the Chair for a division of time between me and the Minister of National Defence. We will use the opportunity if we may.

Let me say that tonight we have the opportunity in this forum to discuss the situation in two troubled spots on two different continents, Kosovo and the Central African Republic, and to discuss Canada's contribution in resolving the conflicts faced by these regions and the people in these regions.

This is a demonstration of the range and the extent of Canada's worldwide interest and the responsibilities that the international

community expects Canada to undertake on behalf of the large question of ensuring peace and security in the world.

Members will recall that last October the House took note of and supported the need for the international community to support and prevent an impending human disaster in Kosovo. Fortunately the disaster by the actions of the international community was averted. The underlying issues, however, were not resolved. We were simply put in a position where an agreement was made, but the parties to that agreement were not prepared to fulfil their commitments.

Therefore once again the international community has been called upon to take action when the breakdown of responsibility in Kosovo was so apparent to many of us in terms of the human tragedy that was occurring.

It is important, however, to recognize that in the course of that we learned a very fundamental lesson. The willingness to take action, the fact that NATO and Canada as a member of NATO were prepared to be part of the preparation to take strong, effective action, did bring the parties to the table. Once again the capacity and the capability of a group of international players of which Canada is a part were put forward and brought about the new negotiation.

In the case of Kosovo we are in the situation now where an ultimatum has been given to the parties. Either they come to an agreement to withdraw their troops, to arrive at a settlement that will allow for free elections in an open democracy, that will provide for police and security forces which reflect the population and that they will respect human and civil rights, or once again we will be called upon to take action.

I am here in an optimistic mood in the sense that the negotiations in Ramvoullet are continuing. No one can foresee the outcome, but it is important to recognize that if an agreement is made, if the parties can come to an agreement based upon the principles which were put forward by the top contact group, by the NATO council and by the United Nations Security Council, then there will be a call upon resources of a peacekeeping nature; a responsibility to make sure the agreement is enforced; and a robust intervention which will ensure, as we did in Bosnia, that the breakdowns, the transgressions and the violation that have been so much part of the story of that region will be intercepted by an effective international presence in Kosovo.

The Minister of National Defence and I cannot be in the House tonight to tell members exactly how many or where or what. The minister of defence will do his best to outline what the nature of the rules of engagement would be and the responsibilities. However, it is important for us to be able to indicate to the international community that we are prepared to participate and that we are prepared to make a commitment in this very serious and very important condition in the international community at this time.

*Government Orders*

It is also important to note that the commitment is not simply just for peacekeeping troops. That will be a very important commitment, but accompanying that commitment is also a peacebuilding responsibility. There is no point just simply sending in a group of good soldiers to separate the combatants, if we are not also prepared to invest in helping to put in place the building blocks of a resolution to start helping to develop a society in which elections can be held and in which the communities can begin to develop some degree of responsibility for their own government in which human rights are respected.

It is important to notify the House and have it acknowledge that this is simply not a peacekeeping initiative. It would also require participation through the OSCE and other bodies of a responsibility to help ensure fair and free elections, to help in a commitment to develop a civil society, to help in the resettlement of refugees of which there are close to 300,000 in that country right now, and to help with the basic humanitarian requirements.

• (1835 )

It is important to note that we already have 40 Canadians in Kosovo as part of the verification mission and that CIDA has already contributed several millions of dollars to humanitarian aid.

I want it to be clearly understood by the House the reason for having this debate. If an agreement is reached and Canada participates we will have more than just troops, as crucial a role as they may play. There will also be the civil peacebuilding role that will have to accompany it at the same time.

I would make the case that it is the kind of contribution Canadians would want us to make. It is an investment worth making because to help ensure stability, to help protect the security of helpless civilians who have been harassed and violated and transgressed against, is part of what Canadians can make as a worthwhile, serious contribution to world peace.

The third element which is also important is that as the president of the security council this month we will also be in a position to ensure that the United Nations Security Council is fully engaged on this matter. In the last rounds of negotiation the council did endorse the peace proposal that came out of the meetings of the NATO council. Canada played a role in ensuring that part of the responsibility of the council was met.

We would also clearly like to see, if there is a decision or an agreement this weekend to go ahead with the development of an international presence in Kosovo, that the security council endorse such a movement and that there be a full and open exchange at the council to assert its responsibility under chapter 6 of the charter to exercise that particular role. Those are the kinds of conditions we have.

The importance of having the debate now is clear. Next week the House will be in recess. We will not have the opportunity to debate. If there is an agreement this weekend, which I am sure we all heartily hope there will be, then it will be necessary for us at least to have this initial debate so that when the government decides what course to take, what role we could play, we will have had the full opportunity to hear from members of parliament from all regions what they think the best judgment should be of Canadians on this very crucial issue.

I would like to speak for a moment as well about peacekeeping in the Central African Republic, the other theme of the motion. As the House knows, this is not a new initiative for Canada. We have already been in the Central African Republic, but let us just stop for a moment and look to see what is happening.

I cannot give a full discourse, but throughout central Africa and west Africa we are seeing a continuing situation of breakdown of governments. We are seeing the rising emergence of the warlords. We are seeing the interventions of those people who prey and profit off conflict by selling goods, by selling arms. We are seeing the incredible tragedy of young children being used as human shields. We are seeing the case of young children being recruited into armies. We are seeing the attempt in that area of societies that are trying to redevelop out of extreme poverty, being faced with, as someone said, the most effective weapon today: a young male under 15 with an AK-47. That is the situation we are now facing around the world.

Last year we were asked by the secretary general to offer support for a peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic in order to provide needed communications in both languages. That was a prerequisite for other African members of that peacekeeping mission to be able to mount their effectiveness.

That comes up for renewal. That is one of our responsibilities. We would also like to invite members of parliament to indicate their support for a continuation if the United Nations Security Council decides to go ahead with the MINURCA-UN project of peacekeeping in the Central African Republic. We believe that Canada should continue to play an effective and useful role as part of a partnership with other African states in the peacekeeping matters there.

Clearly, again, we need to have and would like to have the views and positions of members of parliament from all regions so that we can take that decision based upon the best judgment possible.

When I spoke in the House in October about the role of the international community in preventing humanitarian crises, I said that we need to act even in imperfect circumstances because all that is required for evil to triumph is a good do-nothing. The same formula applies. It is not perfect. There are difficulties ahead with

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some risk attached, but if we stand back and do not play our role then evil will triumph and that is not the Canadian way.

• (1840)

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today we are taking note of possible peacekeeping activities in Kosovo and in the Central African Republic.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has just explained to the House the context for Canadian participation in an extension of the commitment to the Central African Republic and our potential contribution to a NATO led peace monitoring force in Kosovo. I am in complete agreement with the arguments that he gives for Canadian participation in both.

I would like to focus on the operational aspects of these missions. They will have an important bearing of course on any government decision.

Let me first deal with the Central African Republic where the situation is stable but tension remains. The Canadian forces currently have 47 personnel deployed in the Central African Republic, including four staff officers attached to a multinational force headquarters, a national logistics and command element, and a signals unit.

The Canadian contingent provides the communications backbone for this multinational force which is known as MINURCA. This force would not have achieved its past success without Canada's important contribution in communications.

While MINURCA's extended mandate would remain essentially the same, as would the communications role, the number of personnel involved would remain the same with one possible exception. We may be asked to augment our current contribution during the presidential election period which is expected this fall. These troops would enhance the force's communication capability during the elections. This was already done last fall during parliamentary elections. It involves only the deployment of another 16 members.

I can assure the House that a continuing contribution of this scope is sustainable, particularly over the initial six month period that the Secretary General of the United Nations is recommending. After a 10 month period we would have to assess our ability to continue to support MINURCA. However, given that the UN intends to end the mandate 60 days after the fall election is announced, we do not see any problem with respect to sustainability.

Because we are serving as MINURCA's communications backbone, the withdrawal of our troops we feel would seriously

compromise that entire operation. Nonetheless, there are some operational considerations that must be satisfied before the government can agree to extend Canadian participation.

The French intention to withdraw from the force at the end of the current mandate raises several important issues. Canada must be satisfied that the alternative UN plans to cover logistics, medical and security arrangements will be adequate. We are working with our MINURCA colleagues to resolve these matters, including assurances that a plan and the capability exist to withdraw our troops should the local situation come to pose serious dangers.

I can assure all hon. members that the government will not put the Canadian forces at an unacceptable risk in this or any other operation.

All in all we believe the prospects for this mission are promising. So long as the outstanding operational questions can be resolved, I believe the House should fully endorse our continued participation in this mission.

Turning to Kosovo, in Kosovo we face a different kind of military commitment with different operational considerations. Its deployment would first and foremost require a diplomatic agreement and a permissive environment for operations. The ultimate size and shape of this NATO led force will depend on the role it is assigned and the specific conditions governing its operations. This of course depends on the outcome of the negotiations.

Nonetheless, we can expect that the key elements of the mission would be to deter new conflict in Kosovo, to monitor the compliance of the parties with the interim agreement and, if necessary, to enforce compliance with that agreement.

The force would also likely be charged with broad support for the implementation of the civil aspects of the interim agreement, including support to other organizations involved in humanitarian assistance. Support of demining efforts would also be an important task for the force.

• (1845)

Where do our friends stand? All of Canada's key allies have announced that they will participate. The U.K. and France will lead with a troop contribution of approximately 8,000 and 5,000, respectively. The U.S., Germany and Italy plan to contribute approximately 4,000, 3,000 and 2,500 troops, respectively. Other non-NATO countries are expected to contribute as well.

This is an impressive display of international resolve and a significant moment for NATO. On this, the eve of the 50th anniversary of the alliance it has demonstrated its continued relevance and ability to act as a force for peace and stability. Canada has always championed collective action. That makes an important contribution to international stability. It is inconceivable

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for me that under these circumstances Canada would choose not to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies.

Canadian forces are in a position to make a meaningful contribution to this mission. The appropriate composition of our contingent as in the case of the entire NATO led force must await the outcome of the diplomatic process. However, I can say that we are in a position to consider making available certain elements of our land forces, possibly supported by helicopters. As members of the House are aware, we have six CF-18s stationed in Aviano, Italy. These aircraft would support the NATO monitoring force as well. As we discussed last fall, they are also there in case any air action is taken with respect to Kosovo should the negotiations break down in Rambouillet.

Aside from being appropriate to the tasks the NATO force would perform, our contribution must be sustainable. It is clear that any operation in Kosovo would need to be mounted for some time, probably at least three years. A sustainable Canadian contribution must take into account the current and future commitments of the Canadian forces. On the domestic side we must be in a position to respond to the potential Y2K disruptions. We hope they will not take place but we must be prepared. On the international side we are already busy. The Canadian forces are currently deployed in 18 missions around the globe.

With this range of commitments our potential contribution has limits. I can inform the House that while the file number will depend on the nature of the agreement that will be reached in Rambouillet, France, we could make a sustainable contribution in Kosovo in the order of 500 to 800 troops.

I can assure the House that a Canadian contribution would be structured to respect our long established practice of only deploying militarily viable units under Canadian national command. I can also assure hon. members that a Canadian contribution would respect our equally longstanding principle of deploying Canadian personnel only within acceptable levels of risk.

The creation of a powerful NATO force is the appropriate answer to the concerns about risk. Canadians can be confident that a military operation with our closest allies will be successful. The NATO force will be robust and very able to provide for its own protection. The Canadian forces are ready to participate. They would join a Kosovo bound force with a wealth of experience in Bosnia behind them. If they go to Kosovo let this House and all Canadians give them the support and gratitude they deserve.

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a question to either the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of National Defence. In his mention of the Central African Republic, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs also mentioned west Africa. Does that include Sierra Leone? Could someone elaborate more specifically on what our troops would be doing.

I recall seeing videotapes and hearing reports of various peace-keeping missions where it seemed the people being sent over were pretty helpless in preventing certain things from happening. They had guns pointed at their heads and they were in situations where they saw people being slaughtered but they were unable to actually intervene because of the nature of the peacekeeping mission, so to speak.

• (1850)

Will our troops be able to protect themselves and to intercede in situations where it appears that human life may be in danger?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The question is for the hon. Minister of National Defence. Is there unanimous consent that either one of the ministers may answer?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy:** Madam Speaker, in answer to the first question, in my opening remarks I wanted to draw the attention of the House that within Africa there are number of major trouble spots.

We have been able in the Central Africa Republic to effectively participate in a peacekeeping mission that has stabilized one of the areas. In the case of Sierra Leone the tragedy is ongoing. In the west African nations there is the peacekeeping force, ECOMOG force. We have already made \$1 million contribution to support that.

Right now as president of the council of the United Nations we are sponsoring a major discussion about what to do in Sierra Leone. What we are talking about is a specific mission in the Central Africa Republic of the nature described by the Minister of National Defence.

We should be aware of the fact that as these things unfold there will be a continuing necessity for the House and the government to look at how we can help in Africa to build up a higher level of stability and to support many of our partners in Africa that are taking on the responsibility of peacekeeping.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I realize that the questions from the member were for two different ministers. It is unusual to do that but with the consent of the House the Minister of National Defence could answer also. Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** Madam Speaker, the second question was what would the troops be doing.

This has not yet been worked out. We are in the throes of seeing that done. There is a NATO meeting of military personnel tomorrow in Brussels who will finalize the preliminary plan. I say preliminary plan because until the parties in Rambouillet agree on

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a formula for allowing ground troops to go in in a peacekeeping role, we cannot finalize what the exact roles will be. In turn we cannot finalize what the roles for Canadians would be.

When that is done we would then get two weeks notice to give a formal response agreeing to NATO's request which would be issued sometime after the agreement is reached. Then there would be 60 days to actually put them in the field.

He mentioned the difficulties we are experiencing in Bosnia by the UN troops. That is one of the reasons they went to NATO troops. NATO troops operate under a different set of rules of engagement and are able to overcome those kinds of difficulties.

In the case of Kosovo we are again looking at a NATO led operation that would be quite successful in being able to keep the hostilities from happening again.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The time for questions and comments has expired. If the ministers were to agree and with the consent of the House we could add another 10 minutes to this period.

Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the minister of defence.

Last week with the joint committee of foreign affairs and defence regarding Kosovo, we heard that we have roughly 2,000 troops out now. We talked about the possibility of 1,000 other troops. The minister mentioned this evening that it might be up around 800. We were told that a 1,000 troops would be really stretching things.

What are we going to do in terms of any emergency that comes up? The minister is stating that we are not looking at a short term. Three years is not what I call a short term in this kind of mission, especially with the kind of back-up that is required. We still have Bosnia ongoing and our 2,000 other troops out there who need to be supported.

• (1855)

I am wondering what we do in the case of an emergency.

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** Madam Speaker, we have outlined in the policy framework for defence, the 1994 white paper, exactly what our contingency levels of commitment are in terms of NATO, the UN and NORAD. We will continue to meet those. Those are always taken into consideration when we decide to deploy people overseas.

We currently have about 2,000 on 18 missions although three-quarters of that number are on two missions, the largest number being 1,300 in Bosnia and the second largest being 185 in the Golan

Heights where we also at the moment have the commanding officer position.

We can manage this at a 500 to 800 level. Quite right, we would be stretching it at the 1,000 level, particularly in terms of sustainability, but that is why we have recommended the 500 to 800 level. I know that is somewhat of a spread but as NATO firms up what its needs will be, and as the agreement is reached hopefully in Rambouillet, then we will be able to pin down more precisely the exact number.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in tomorrow's edition, *Le Monde* quotes President Milosevic, who says this on the subject of the potential deployment of an international force of 30,000 in Kosovo:

Our negative attitude to the presence of foreign troops in Kosovo is not just that of the Yugoslav government, it is also that of the people of our country, and the unanimous attitude of the representatives of the people in the Serbian Assembly, independent of their political leanings.

These are the words of President Milosevic. In the light of this attitude, it is highly likely that the troops to be deployed will not be doing peacekeeping, but rather carrying out air strikes.

I would like to know from the Minister of National Defence what the situation is in his opinion, in the light of the statement by President Milosevic, and whether the Canadian contingent would be different depending on whether the mission is one of more peaceful deployment or has the mandate to carry out air strikes in Yugoslavia?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy:** Madam Speaker, I should first point out that under no circumstances are we talking about a force that would be going in as an active intervention. What we are discussing in the House is a peacekeeping mission that would be required to fulfill an agreement that was arrived at by both sides.

As members know, in any negotiations various bargaining statements are made by both sides in order to up the ante and to gain leverage. It is somewhat encouraging that the Russian foreign minister, Mr. Ivanov, whom I spoke to directly a few days ago, is undertaking a very specific mission to try to convince the Serbs that it would be in their best interests to reach an agreement. The alternative is frankly what we discussed in the opening statement.

We still have in place the activation orders of NATO that could be used in the way of air strikes. But that is the only form of NATO action being contemplated of a non-peacekeeping nature.

I want to assure the House and the hon. member that what we are talking about here is purely peacekeeping activities of ground forces that would be required under an agreement if it is arrived at this weekend.



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**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I have listened fairly closely to the minister of defence. There seems to be a misconception, and I ask for clarification, that this is not a NATO participation role in Kosovo. Is that correct? In other words, it is a UN peacekeeping mission.

• (1900)

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** It is NATO led.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** If it is a NATO led force my understanding is it will be interventionist. They will go in and make peace. That is also some of the discussion that has gone on in spite of the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. If we are not going in as peacemakers but as peacekeepers is it under the UN banner? I do not think that is very clear.

What kind of equipment will they have? The equipment they have right now in any hostilities would not be adequate.

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs clearly stated, we are not going in there under some war like conditions if we go in there with ground troops.

We would be going in under similar conditions as in Bosnia to enforce an agreement and ensure peace. That is the basis on which troops would be deployed. They would be deployed on a NATO led basis. The UN security council would be asked to endorse, and certainly every indication is that it would want to endorse, any agreement that is reached between the parties because the UN has quite clearly said that it wants the killing to stop. It wants the parties to come to an agreement. If they do come to an agreement it would be a NATO led force but it would not be just NATO that would be there. We would expect and hope the Russians would be there and other non-NATO countries, just as we have currently in Bosnia.

If the hon. member looks at the situation in Bosnia in terms of the division of different forces under a NATO led banner he would see a similar situation that would happen in this case.

In terms of the equipment, we are going to send our people in with the best equipment. We bought some new armed personnel carriers. We have in terms of our reconnaissance vehicle the Coyote, one of the best found anywhere in the world. We have been getting new clothing and many new aspects of equipment and kit for our troops and we would send them in there with the best equipment so that they could do their job. They will do a very effective job as they have done in many cases before.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, there are a number of issues I would like to deal with.

The first one is central Africa. We have a briefing set for central Africa tomorrow. Of course the debate is tonight but that is probably not a problem to the government.

I contacted foreign affairs yesterday, five times today, and at 6.53 this evening I got my briefing sheet on the Central African Republic. I think that probably tells us the level of importance of what we are doing here tonight when this kind of blatant abuse goes on in parliament.

To deal with this situation first, the government did not have the briefing and therefore I felt it was essential that somebody at least try to find out a bit of what our mission is all about. This is a rather unstable former French colony of 3.3 million people. It has had a very fragile France sponsored democracy since 1993. Basically the French government has propped up various dictators and regimes from about 1979.

There was a 1,400 man French force that was withdrawn on April 15 of last year and replaced by 1,350 international franco-phone peacekeepers, of whom Canada had 45.

• (1905)

Today the number of Canadians there is 47 and basically they are attempting to maintain stability. When we look at the stability that is being created this is the sort of thing we have.

President Patasse has faced three armed rebellions since May 1996 and really could not have remained in power without these foreign troops, the French and 47 Canadians.

Mutinies are motivated by unpaid wages, ethnic hatred of the president and the story goes on. Human rights records are that there are routine summary executions, torture, restrictions on basic freedoms, looting by the peacekeepers, mistreatment of women and of a whole race of pygmies in the area.

With no information from foreign affairs or DND we are here to endorse the keeping of Canadian troops there.

There are only 47 but those are 47 Canadian lives we are saying we should leave there or extend there, whatever. But we do not live in a dictatorship. We live in a democracy where we need the information. Canadians need the information. We should be talking about this and it should not be a partisan issue. We are talking about Canadian lives, men and women, our armed forces. That is the kind of disrespect the government shows for those fighting people of our country.

There is much more that we can talk about with Kosovo because all of us have watched CNN, we have read the news and we have been part of this debate for a long time. It was back in about 1990 that everybody felt Kosovo would be the part of Yugoslavia to break away first. It has always had a problem and that goes back maybe 1,500 years.

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We can also be fairly certain as Canadians that a decision has already been made as to what we will do. On January 29 when the Prime Minister committed Canadian forces he did not do that by accident. That decision had already been made. The defence minister of course immediately questioned it. The general questioned it. He said we really could not do that. Our critic from Calgary North questioned it.

Certainly we said we should be debating it. In the February 16 *Toronto Star* the defence minister also said maybe we will have to skip a debate in the House and go on with that. On February 16 when asked that question in the House, it was rather interesting to see the House leader jump up and answer the question. He said dare you ask that question because at the House leaders meeting today we are going to be discussing that issue.

How am I supposed to know what will be discussed at the House leaders meeting after question period? Our House leader certainly did not know what the agenda would be and I am not even sure what that answer was all about.

The decision has already been made. The government does not care much about this. It wants this for bragging rights, to say the issue was brought here to be debated by parliamentarians so that parliamentarians had a say in what would happen. Of course that justifies anything that happens.

These are men's and women's lives we are talking about. We should not be talking about politics. It should be non-partisan. We should be talking about whether we should participate, what we are participating in, how much it will cost, what our role will be and who will command those troops. All those are the kinds of questions that should be dealt with here tonight but which I doubt will even be mentioned.

How could we do it better? This will now be the sixth time I believe we have had a take note debate since I have been here. The proposal I will put forward again will be very simple. The way to really accomplish all we want to accomplish is to have a committee of the whole with 301 MPs who should be responsible. They should be in the House listening to this because it is men and women from their ridings who could conceivably lose their lives. We should be here to give support to those troops who do such a heck of a fine job. I will always remember meeting those troops in Yugoslavia and thinking wow, these people are Canadians. I was proud of the flag and proud of seeing them there. They need to know we are 100% behind them.

• (1910)

What should we do? We should have the experts come in and tell 301 members of parliament the exact and complete information. Then what we should do is have two or however many party members from each party and extra ones from the government present the party position. Then we should have a free vote. We

should be voting on this item because it is the lives of our men and women. That is what is really important.

I do not know why the government does not like that idea. We would inform members of parliament, we would inform Canadians and we would then have an intelligent presentation and a free vote. The government would not fall if it was the decision of 301 members to not go to a country. Maybe we should not be going to the Central African Republic or staying there. Maybe we cannot be the 911 number for all peacekeeping missions. Those are the kinds of things this House should decide and the onus should be on us to decide.

Let us get to the committing of troops to this imaginary UN or maybe NATO force that we might send. Should we commit them? Obviously all of us have seen the newsreels. We have seen the 40 people from a village brutally killed and mutilated and tortured. All of us are sickened by that. They are unforgettable sights. All Canadians are hurt by those. All Canadians say we should be involved in trying to stop those. That is not the issue.

It is a lot deeper than that. We have to understand the cultural nature of these conflicts. We have to understand the propaganda involved. We have to understand the interrelationship of history, religion and the conflict going on.

I think we would all say those tragedies have to stop. We all abhor them. We cannot stand them and we want to do something. I think the question that comes down is what should we do. As Canadians I am not sure that it is fair or that it helps us to send troops, to send planes, to send whatever it takes unless they are equipped and unless they can do the very best possible job they are required to do. I am not saying they would not try. The problem is that we handicap them.

Again I go back to Bosnia when I saw those Canadian vehicles with patches, part paint jobs, 35 years old, belching diesel fuel and then I saw some of the other countries' equipment, silent and fast moving. I thought our guys and girls are there trying to do the job for us. But we are handicapping them. We have to be hurting them and their pride just because of what we do.

• (1915)

We have to take that into consideration. We cannot simply go everywhere. Many of our veterans are particularly touched by this issue as well. During the world wars we were right there. We were part of the decision making. We were leading in a lot of situations. There was a huge amount of pride. We had a huge role in many of those conflicts.

It was a Canadian prime minister who started peacekeeping back in the Suez Canal days. There was pride. There was pride when we went to Cyprus. I believe we have hurt that pride. We have done in this country something to lessen our position. By sending off troops

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and again asking them to do something, we do not really know what, we are doing nothing to help enhance that pride.

I cannot help but remind the House about 1996 and the Zaire mission. The Prime Minister and his wife were sitting around watching television. They saw a terrible massacre on CNN and said "We should call Raymond and tell him to do something about this". They called Raymond down in Washington and Raymond went flying over and said "Yes, we will be the saviours; we will be the white knights". The only problem was that nobody else followed.

We started moving troops there. We did not know what they would do. It was probably one of the biggest military-foreign affairs embarrassments we had ever had. A week later it was all cancelled, and we said we had to watch the Prime Minister watching television.

We also have to ask about our UN Security Council position. I am glad we are there. I hope we can make a difference. We must remember that we held it in 1948-49, 1958-59, 1967-68, 1977-78, 1989-90 and 1999-2000. We have had it every 10 years for the last six decades. That is what we would expect. We are along with Gabon, Namibia, Slovenia and so on.

We should not brag too much about that. We should do something. Instead of just talking we should do something. As far as soft power is concerned, as long as there are no bad guys left in the world it might work, but flower power will only go so far.

There are lots of bad guys out there: the North Koreans, the Kadaffes, the Saddam Husseins and the Angolas. The minister is very proud of our record in Angola where we have spent \$2.3 billion on UN peacekeeping. We are about to reduce the 1,000 peacekeepers down to 100 and basically leave in disgrace. The British ambassador says that the crises in Sudan, Angola, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Eritrea and so on demonstrate that the UN is powerless to cope with crises as they arise. While we brag a lot, maybe we should ask what we are to do.

A lot of questions need to be asked about Kosovo. Who will make the decisions on what happens there? Who is in the contact group? Will we have any say as to what happens to our 500 to 800 troops? What are the NATO objectives? Do we agree that there should be a referendum in Kosovo in three years and a vote possibly to separate? Do we agree with those kinds of politics?

What will we bomb if we bomb something? What sort of long term plans do we have? Will we just be a police force with a big stick? The minute we leave will it go back into crisis again? Or, will we really try to accomplish something? What about the expansion of this conflict? What are the chances of it spreading to Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and so on? Has anybody thought about that? What happens when we put this force in Kosovo? Will it spread out?

• (1920)

We have to ask about the cost. We have to ask about the 300,000 refugees. Who will take care of that problem? Who will work on that? What kind of plans are there? We are being asked to provide troops. Will we also provide infrastructure? What are we being asked? Are we being asked for a blank cheque, or what exactly is it that the government wants?

These questions have not been answered. We are not equipped to handle it. We will not have any control over our troops. As I say, it is a blank cheque. We are showing no leadership. We are showing no new spending.

Basically I am embarrassed when NATO calls upon us that we are not prepared to deliver. It is embarrassing for us as parliamentarians. It is embarrassing for our troops. How can we support a full mission? We want to support it. Obviously we owe that to NATO. I think we have tied our hands behind our backs. Governments for the past 30 years have made it very difficult for us to support something like this.

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the House that this debate is not about whether we bomb anybody. It is not about whether we send troops into a conflagration. It is a debate about peacekeeping forces and whether they should go into the Central African Republic and into Kosovo. It has nothing to do with bombing. It has nothing to do with striking.

I would like to cut through all the convoluted rhetoric I have heard across the House and ask the hon. member for Red Deer whether or not he wants to send troops. Yes or no.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Mr. Speaker, the obvious answer is that we are talking about going into a very difficult area, into a war zone. Obviously I am saying we are not equipped to send troops and therefore we cannot send troops.

We can provide some support, but we basically cannot get into this without knowing more details about our ability to deliver. We just do not know any answers. The government has not given us anything.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have the same question as the parliamentary secretary.

I have also heard a lot of rhetoric. I heard someone whose position was not very clear. The government's position is that we should offer to take part in these peacekeeping missions, if peacekeeping is what is involved.

The Reform Party critic is not acting as a responsible member of the official opposition should. I think the Bloc Québécois was a much more responsible official opposition.

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This is an important question: Should Canada participate or not in a peacekeeping force to Kosovo and the Central African Republic? I repeat the question: What does the Reform Party member think? I would like him to give a clear answer.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Mr. Speaker, we have responsibilities as a member of NATO. We cannot live up to the full responsibilities in NATO because the government has undermined our military for 30 years. That is why we cannot live up to what we would want.

If we had the best, if we were able to deliver on what they are asking, yes, we are for that. Because of what the government has done, we have to take a lesser role. That lesser role means we cannot send troops into combat in these areas.

I do not now how else to say that more clearly to you except to answer in that way. We should not send troops into a combat zone. Show us all the answers to these questions and then we will say what kind of support we can give.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Before we get into the next round of questions and comments, I would appreciate it if members would address each other through the Chair. No more personal pronouns.

• (1925)

**Mr. Julian Reed:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member's recollection is right, it was 29 years since the government was accused of neglecting the armed forces.

We had a debate a year ago in committee on the Central African Republic and the provision of peacekeepers. Surprisingly the Reform Party agreed. There was no dissension.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Mr. Speaker, we have quite a different situation. There was no information provided, as much as we tried. I got the information I just presented. I trust that it is true. If it is true, we are in a total different situation than we were then. Obviously our 47 people are in jeopardy, if the information I related to the House is true.

If it is not true information, I would certainly stand corrected. It certainly is not because we got any help from the government in finding out what the truth really was.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to put the following question to my colleague.

Does he not think that the situation in Kosovo is a lot like the one in Sarajevo? And Canada took part in the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Reform Party was in favour then. In this case, it is not Canada that has taken the peacekeeping initiative. It is an initiative by allies who have talked and decided to contribute what they can to ensure stability in the Balkans.

If the Reform Party agreed back then, what does it think is so different this time around that it raises considerations of available equipment and troop numbers? That is not the question. The question is whether or not Canada agrees to participate, as its allies are doing, in a peacekeeping operation, subject obviously to the resources and equipment now available to it.

That is the real question. It is no different than Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Reform Party supported that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Mr. Speaker, basically the government wants the best of both worlds. It wants to continue to cut the forces, not provide any money for new equipment and not provide a better standard of living for the troops. The government wants to go everywhere, to be everywhere.

We deplore what is happening in Kosovo. As a NATO ally we should be equipped to go there and do our part. The problem is because of government negligence we are not able to do our job. That is the bottom line.

Do we want to go? Do we support going? Yes, but not the way we are and the way we are equipped today. We are asking our men and women to go into an impossible situation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** For the benefit of members in the House who may not have been here earlier and for the television audience across the country, I will make a statement now which reflects on issues that occurred earlier tonight in the debate.

Under the standing orders for this debate, the rules were that there would be no requests for unanimous consent and no dilatory motions. One was entertained, so for the purposes of ensuring that this is not precedential in nature and so there will be no confusion in future dates, I will read it into the record.

The Chair reminds the House that the special order under which this debate is being conducted states clearly that the Chair may receive no requests for unanimous consent to waive rules. The Chair has wanted to accommodate the will of the House and of the sponsoring ministers in permitting a period of joint questions and comments after the ministers had spoken. However, the Chair would be remiss if I did not point out that this is not to be considered a precedent in the remainder of this debate tonight or indeed on future occasions governed by similar special orders.

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• (1930)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and to tell you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Joliette.

First, I want to stress the importance of such a debate. The Bloc Québécois has always supported such debates, because it is important for Parliament to discuss peacekeeping or peace-building missions before we send troops to implement decisions made by a regional or universal international organization such as the United Nations.

I basically agree with the Reform Party, which proposed ways to make parliamentary debates more meaningful and influential because, as you can see, there are just a few of us here in the House. The ministers have left and a meaningful debate should take place under circumstances and according to procedures that would promote greater participation from parliamentarians. In that sense, it is unfortunate that the motion recently moved by the hon. member for Red Deer was defeated after a vote in the House.

It is true that lack of preparation is certainly one the main problems with this kind of parliamentary debate, as exemplified by the preparatory briefings held last week on the issue of Kosovo; briefings on the Central African Republic were scheduled for tomorrow, but they will be pointless because the debate will have taken place the evening before in the House of Commons.

That having been said, we have a decision to make on whether or not to dispatch Canadian troops to Kosovo if a peace agreement were to be signed in the next few days in Rambouillet as well as on renewing the MINURCA mandate in the Central African Republic. Unlike the Reform Party, the Bloc Québécois will be clear: we are in favour of sending a Canadian contingent, should a peacekeeping mission in Kosovo be decided on, and in favour of renewing the mandate of the mission set up by the United Nations in the Central African Republic.

That is not to say that we have no concerns. With respect to Kosovo, I would like to share two concerns of ours, which deserve consideration by this House.

First, regarding the nature of the mission to be deployed in Kosovo, what we are expected to be debating this evening is obviously the dispatch of a peacekeeping mission. But it is far from certain that this is the kind of mission that will be contemplated in the next few days, since, as we know full well today, negotiations in Rambouillet are stalled.

President Milosevic has issued a statement indicating that he did not want any multinational force in Kosovo. In this case, unless the President of Yugoslavia changes his position—the Minister of

External Affairs suggested a few moments ago that it could be a bargaining position—the mission in which Canada must take part may very well not be a mission to maintain a negotiated peace, but rather a mission to force the Yugoslav government to accept a negotiated peace, which would most likely involve the use of armed force.

Such debate is not taking place but it should because, should Canada be called upon to take part not in a peacekeeping mission but in a mission involving air strikes, Parliament should have an opportunity to debate the issue. This debate should not be restricted in such a way as to prevent us from authorizing the government to take part in a mission of a totally different nature.

• (1935)

This is one concern that had to be voiced by the Bloc Québécois. Another concern is the way in which this peacekeeping mission, if such is the case, will be set up and whether or not it will be authorized by the United Nations.

On several occasions, I have expressed in this House our party's concern that such a mission should be authorized by the United Nations. Obviously, the Security Council does not seem in a position to authorize such a mission since any country that has the right of veto can exercise that right.

Consequently, Canada, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who himself could chair the Security Council, must still make sure that this question is put to the Council and eventually the General Assembly of the United Nations, since it can deal with it should the Security Council be stymied by a veto. The famous Acheson resolution, which my colleague from Vancouver Quadra knows so well, would enable the General Assembly to consider this mission in Kosovo.

So, there are two unanswered questions that should be the subject of concern to the Government of Canada before a peacekeeping mission is sent to Kosovo.

Regarding the mission to the Central African Republic, I was in New York on a parliamentary mission when Canada was asked to be part of this mission. The Bloc Québécois immediately indicated its support for such a mission there. That is still true today. We know this mission ends February 28 and Canada's participation is to be renewed.

It is important to maintain a certain stability in this African country, which is starting the process of democracy that will lead to presidential elections, and it may help if foreign troops are present as part of MINURCA.

The Bloc Québécois has always supported the idea of sending peacekeeping and peacebuilding troops abroad. We believe it is an investment for and in peace.

When I hear the objections of my Reform Party colleagues, with more of the rhetoric we saw earlier this evening, I do not think they

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show any sign of being able to form an alternative, even a united one, in Canada, to the government, or of being concerned with the matters that should concern a party with ambitions of forming a government.

The concerns of the present government, as presented by the ministers, have enough merit in our view that our party will be supporting them. As it did before, our party reiterates this support and also notes, as did the Reform Party, that it would like to see debates such as this one have a greater impact, be better prepared and be discussed beforehand, probably in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as was done before. This way, the public would have a better understanding of, and be more open to, the investment in material and human resources required of a country engaged in peacekeeping missions.

I will close with the statement that, if war is necessary—because it is likely or at least possible, and the Bloc Québécois no more wants to see a war than any other reasonable person, just to make Yugoslavia listen to reason in its dispute with the Kosovars—then let us hope, as André Malraux wrote in the wonderful novel *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg* that victory goes to those who go to war but take no pleasure in it.

• (1940)

But I would rather quote Aristide Briand to the House. I address my words to the Yugoslavians listening this evening, and particularly to their representative who is in the gallery. Aristide Briand said “It takes two to stop fighting: you and the other fellow”.

**Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry stressed very appropriately the difference between chapter 6 and chapter 7 of the UN charter. There is a huge legal gap between the two concepts.

Did he consider the fact that international common law prevails? That was the ruling made by the international court, in the case of Nicaragua versus the United States.

I support the principle of humanitarian intervention, which was so abused by colonial powers during the 19th century and even at the beginning of the 20th century. Some have raised that possibility. Does the hon. member think this could provide a legal basis for the actions contemplated by the hon. member for Red Deer?

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Mr. Speaker, this evening, as in October, the member for Vancouver Quadra wants once again to discuss international law in the House.

That is fine, but let us never forget that international law must, first and foremost, serve peace. We are reminded of that in the preamble of the UN charter, which includes its most important provisions.

Indeed, we can always claim and argue that international common law now authorizes humanitarian types of interventions, interventions that are different from 19th century humanitarian interventions, which were made for eminently political reasons and far less humanitarian ones.

But I do believe that a practice has developed that would now allow states to take an action such as the one being contemplated for Kosovo, or that was contemplated under other circumstances. That action could be based on international law, so as to avoid the issue of the legality of such an intervention without the security council's formal and express authorization.

But still, I am urging the parliamentary secretary to act as a messenger to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I told him this afternoon, when the standing committee met, that, in spite of the possibility of invoking humanitarian international law, if the UN is to maintain its credibility and its legitimacy in this intervention in Kosovo, the security council must, if not the UN general assembly, be involved. The UN must have an opportunity to approve the intervention by soldiers from various national contingents on behalf of NATO.

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the Minister of External Affairs and the Minister of National Defence, we have two issues to debate this evening. The first one is Canada's participation in the United Nations mission to the Central African Republic.

• (1945)

On this issue, I too would have appreciated a preliminary briefing. We had requested a joint foreign affairs and national defence committee, which was originally approved and scheduled to sit tomorrow. However, this evening, shortly before dinner, we learned that the meeting had been cancelled and could not be held.

It is always desirable that members of parliament be as well informed as possible before undertaking a debate like this one.

In any event, concerning the United Nations mission in the Central African Republic, we know that it involves a small contingent of Canadian signals and logistics officers. This is part of one of the agreements previously entered into by Canada. Obviously, the Bloc will support the renewal of this mission.

The second issue we are dealing with this evening is a more serious issue: Canada's participation in a peace mission to Kosovo. As the previous speaker said, the Bloc Québécois' position is clear on this issue. We have repeatedly expressed concern about the situation in Kosovo. We have condemned the repression, brutality and inhumanity of Serb security forces.

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I spoke on this very issue in March, as did my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry. We strongly condemned the inhuman operations carried out in that country.

We also put several questions in the House, asking the foreign affairs minister what he intended to do to put an end to this conflict. We also asked if he was willing to use force, if necessary, and if he thought diplomacy was good enough when dealing with someone like Slobodan Milosevic.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of Canada sending troops to this interposition and peacekeeping operation. On a more general note, we also agree with the use of force to put an end to atrocities occurring anywhere in the world, especially when these brutal conflicts or operations are taking place in countries that can undermine the very stability of our political system, our democracy.

So, we are in agreement, and I would like to give the House a few reasons why we will be supporting this government decision.

First of all, the world community has repeatedly called for hostilities to end and negotiations to start, but its calls went unanswered.

Also, warnings were given by various countries, including France, the United Kingdom, the United States and even Canada. Diplomatic and economic sanctions have been implemented against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the UN has adopted resolutions 1199 and 1203, but all to no avail. Instead, the conflict has slowly escalated.

The present conflict is a humanitarian disaster involving the killing of civilians, torture, rape, and the massive exodus of whole villages. The conflict in Kosovo could very well spell instability for the whole region, and especially for Macedonia, officially the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or FYROM, with an Albanian speaking minority of 30%, and Albania itself, which is already struggling with economic instability.

• (1950)

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a party to the Dayton Accords, and its present conduct is contrary to the letter and the spirit of the accords, and further threatens a regional stabilization process that is already precarious.

Because of the de facto failure of the Dayton Accords, the international community has decided to impose the Rambouillet negotiations, and the deadline the Americans have set to reach a conclusion is Saturday, February 20.

If it is not to lose all credibility, the international community must therefore follow through with the use of force if its warnings

go unheeded. In this case, the aggressor has been clearly identified and its aggression has been going on for several years.

This behaviour violates international law as well as the spirit and letter of the UN Charter. It destabilizes the Balkans and damages international relations. It increases international instability. It violates UN Security Council resolution 1199, as I was saying a few moments ago.

In short, for a number of years, the behaviour of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has violated the basic values and principles which must guide the international community in its quest for a world that is safer, that is more fair and that respects the most fundamental human values.

The Rambouillet negotiations must be the last chance. One cannot negotiate indefinitely with someone who does not understand democracy, who does not understand what negotiating is all about and who can only be made to understand through the use of force. We must see the obvious and accept the use of force to restore peace in that country.

However, we think the use of force must meet certain conditions. The security of civilians, which is the first condition, must be the primary concern in any intervention. Canada's interventions must take place under the auspices of international organizations, ideally the UN, of course, or NATO.

Any action by the international community in Yugoslavia should ideally be supported by as many countries as possible. The larger the number of countries willing to use persuasion to settle the conflict in Kosovo, the easier it will be to achieve the desired results.

The forces involved in such a mission must be multinational. The objectives must correspond to resolutions by the Security Council. The specific requirements of the parties to the conflict must be made publicly and armed force used until the parties agree publicly to meet these requirements.

Independence for Kosovo must be seriously considered rather than simply dismissed, because it is one solution to be explored to restore peace in the region, including at the end of the three-year transitional period when the Kosovar people will have to decide on their political status.

The aim of our intervention is not to decide for the Kosovars, the Serbs or the Albanians. It is to ensure peace while they continue their negotiations in an effort to find a way to ensure the safety of civilians.

My time is almost up. There are other things I would have liked to say, but I hope to be asked questions that will allow me to complete my comments.

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, to help my colleague, I am going to ask him a few questions. But first

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I would like to mention that the member said he agreed about the need to maintain peace in Kosovo.

• (1955)

My question concerns how long we are prepared to stay. This relates to something that happened two weeks ago in Washington. We were briefed on what the United States was going to do. It is starting to sing a different tune.

Now it says it is prepared to go to Kosovo, but for a very short period, at the request of other NATO members. It says that this is a conflict taking place in Europe and one that should therefore be covered by Europeans, who are right there.

This is perhaps not a bad idea. It wants our presence, it wants visibility, particularly at the beginning, to put together a peace-keeping system. Once the system is up and running, we should withdraw. We should stay perhaps three months, six at most, and not become mired as we are in Bosnia, where we will be stuck for a long time.

We know that Kosovo will be the same, that it will drag on if we become involved. Should we not perhaps consider something like that, taking part at the beginning and then providing support for ground forces?

**Mr. René Laurin:** Mr. Speaker, if an agreement is reached in Rambouillet before troops are sent to that country, the peacemaking process should be a lot easier. It will be a matter of staying in Kosovo, monitoring the situation and ensuring that the conflict does not erupt again in a month or two.

On the other hand, if we must impose peace, it could take longer. As we know, "you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink".

Getting the Serbs and the Kosovars to stop shooting at and shelling each other, getting them to stay on their respective side and to start negotiating again will not be achieved in just a month.

Such a mission could take three years. This may be a reasonable minimum. If, unfortunately, peace is not restored after three years, we would then have to contemplate alternatives. It could be that Canada would find another country prepared to take over the operation. It is not just Canada's responsibility. There are many other countries in the world. NATO and the UN have many members and they are all concerned about maintaining peace in the world.

Canada plays a role because it made commitments to NATO. It plays a role because it is a member of the United Nations. The mission may involve 500 to 800 troops. It is reasonable that we be

there, given Canada's credibility, given its international reputation as a peacemaking and a peacekeeping country.

We must not back off because of a matter of months. This is an operation which we must support to help make it a success. Let us learn from our past experiences in other countries to make this operation a success.

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have an opportunity to speak on this very important subject.

[English]

On October 7, 1998 we gathered together in this House and had a debate on Kosovo. At that time we debated a motion put forward by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs:

That this House take note of the dire humanitarian situation confronting the people of Kosovo and the government's intention to take measures in co-operation with the international community to resolve the conflict, promote a political settlement for Kosovo and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees.

Tonight we are debating the motion:

That this House take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Kosovo and the possible changes in peacekeeping activities in the Central African Republic.

• (2000)

I would say right up front, on behalf of the NDP caucus, that we certainly support the idea that Canada should fulfil its international obligations and should take every measure possible to try to end the suffering, to end the senseless bloodshed that occurs in a lot of these countries and to bring about some humanitarian efforts and to try to stabilize such countries.

I also have to raise a number of issues around this motion and what we are doing here tonight. First, as was mentioned earlier, we are to have a briefing tomorrow afternoon on Kosovo and the Central African Republic. It certainly would have been preferable to have had this briefing prior to coming here to debate this very important topic.

I realize and I am learning every day in politics that things seem to happen very quickly and in a hurry, but I am not convinced yet that is the way things have to be.

My mother has a phrase she has used many times, haste makes waste. I am afraid that in this political business far too often we hurry very important business to the point that we make a lot of mistakes that would not be made otherwise.

I realize that many times things happen quickly and we have to respond quickly. I am sure this issue did not develop overnight. I am sure the hon. ministers could and should have found time to brief us in advance and then had the debate so everyone is debating from a knowledge perspective about the issue.



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Far too often I find I walk in on a certain day and I am told we are going to have a debate on this tomorrow night and I am speaking on it or can I speak on it. One does the best one can.

I am pleased that we are at least having the opportunity to discuss this. A while back I was quite concerned about this whole issue when I heard through the media that the Prime Minister had somehow committed Canadian troops to Kosovo and the matter at that point had not been brought before this House.

I actually had a question prepared but it did not get on the agenda unfortunately. The question was this. Canadian troops have been put on standby for military action in Kosovo. Has the Prime Minister decided to take unilateral control over decision making around Canada going to war or has he handed that over to the NATO generals? Will the Prime Minister commit to bringing any proposal to send Canadian women and men into battle before this elected House and ensure that any such action is backed by a UN resolution? Those questions have some very important points that are still relevant today as we discuss this issue.

I find it very interesting that I am standing here tonight in the House and I can count on one hand the number of people who are here listening to this debate. We had two hon. ministers come to present their information around something that we are going to make a very important decision on and they are no longer present.

I think that something as important—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** We let the first one slide by but we are not letting the second one slide by. We do not refer to the presence or absence of members. As the hon. member knows, the parliamentary precincts are full of people watching this debate from their offices and from other places.

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw those remarks. I am very sorry.

The importance of this issue cannot be underscored enough because we are talking here tonight about sending our men and women off to very dangerous situations. While it has been indicated that we are talking about peacekeeping activities I guess we have to ask ourselves what does this really mean. What do we really mean when we talk about peacekeeping?

If we look at these countries and see the atrocities taking place, far too often peacekeeping means actually peacemaking. It means people going into a very dangerous situation not only for themselves but for many of the innocent civilians living in the area.

• (2005 )

We are talking about sending our men and women into a war torn zone. It is a zone where people are killing each other, where there is

senseless slaughter. We are talking about sending our troops to these areas. We must be mindful of that.

The other thing I am concerned about is that we saw various tapes and heard various reports about people who had returned from previous peacekeeping missions, whether it was in the gulf war or elsewhere. We heard about the post-traumatic stress syndrome and the after effects that many of these people experienced from being on these missions. The question is how well prepared are we to provide support when our troops return home. What kinds of preparation do we give people for these kinds of missions? How well equipped are our troops? This issue has been raised already in terms of what kinds of equipment we will have. We have heard stories of people returning from other missions. As they were crossing over and they knew people were going, they were exchanging helmets because we did not have proper supplies for these people.

The other issue that has been raised recently in the House is with respect to vaccines. We heard about troops who were given vaccines. There were questions as to whether these were properly tested, whether they were safe for our troops and so forth. These are issues that come to mind as well. We saw a person who was court martialled because he did not want to take a vaccine which he felt had some very serious questions about his safety and his health.

These are questions we have to look at when we think about these missions. Quite often we find that the people who have gone on these missions have become skilled and experienced. When it comes time for another mission we redeploy the same troops. We find these people are leaving their families again and are going off on missions quite often for unspecified periods of time. These are questions that have to be dealt with as well.

The other thing I asked the hon. minister earlier is what would be the duties of these people. What authority will they have to protect themselves and take action when they are faced with very serious and dangerous situations. The response was these things have not been defined yet. These will be worked out in due course. These are the kinds of issues that are very important and that we want to know before a decision is made to engage people in that activity. We want to know the kind of training received.

The other very important issue is will these missions be backed by a UN resolution. We find more and more we are moving toward, as the minister said, NATO led missions. What exactly does that mean? We know that when it comes to international affairs and concerns the United Nations is the body that should sanction and give approval to these kinds of missions. That is a very important issue that should be dealt with.

Generally speaking, when we think should we get involved in these missions, I do not feel we have much choice when it comes to deciding whether to help fellow human beings overcome adversity. It is very important that we as individuals, we as human beings,

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fulfil our responsibility to our brothers and our sisters. Am I my brother's keeper? I believe we are. We have an international obligation to fulfil our responsibilities in that regard. But we must do it under appropriate conditions.

We must do it knowing the situation. We should not be responding with a knee-jerk reaction simply because someone else is deciding that they need us to assist them in that mission. We should know the facts. We should know the details. We should be fully briefed ahead of time and able to address these issues with some degree of knowledge and some base of information.

I want to draw the attention of the House to what I feel is a very important matter. While we are looking at fighting or sending our troops to deal with issues in other parts of the world, it is important that we not lose sight of the fact that there are many issues at home that have an underlying dimension which is similar.

• (2010 )

We have talked many times about ethnic cleansing when we look at what is happening in some of the other parts of the world. But we see the same dynamics happening right here at home when we look at different situations involving our own people here in Canada. It is a matter of degree as to where the difference is but basically the same principle is there.

We need to respect each other as fellow human beings and deal with the issues of sharing of resources. A lot of these conflicts are based around struggles for power, for resources, whether it be mines with diamonds or whatever. These are quite often the things that are causing conflict between people. Everybody is struggling for these precious resources.

We have the same thing happening to a large degree right here in Canada. We do not have the kind of sharing of resources that we should have in order for people to take advantage of them, to get along together and lead a productive life.

We have to apply the lessons that we learn abroad here at home. It is just one step beyond that we could find ourselves facing similar kinds of strife within our country. Far too often we look at conflicts in other parts of the world and we think it is happening over there, it is really not the kind of thing that could happen here in Canada. But is it really something that could not happen here in Canada?

I was watching TV the other night when the riot police were called out to deal with the homeless who had come to Ottawa. My daughter said "Oh my goodness, dad, I have never seen anything like this before in Canada". We could have very easily transposed that scene to a foreign country where there would be fighting in the street and riot police confronting people. We are not that different. Let us not kid ourselves.

Even though there are very serious questions around these missions and even though I am speaking on the basis of a lack of appropriate information because of the manner in which we have been briefed on this, I do feel that it is very important for Canada to support its allies with respect to trying to maintain peace and harmony in other countries and to help avoid the senseless bloodshed we see taking place with human beings being killed, maimed and violated every day in various ways.

I feel it is important for us to fulfill our duty and we would support the efforts that would be taken in that regard. As I said before, we must deal with those other issues and not always be responding after the fact and making the decisions in an emergency situation when there is sufficient time to get information in advance and to be briefed on these things properly.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote back to the previous speaker his question, am I my brother's keeper, and his injunction that indeed we should be and we should respond positively.

Certainly all Canadians feel that way. The difficulty the Reform Party has with this in very specific terms is that we have seen this Liberal government, that wants to bring this motion and send our troops, gut the armed forces to the tune of \$7 billion and take away their ability to do things.

We have people in our armed forces who are absolutely second to none. We have heroes and heroines in our armed forces who are there to serve our country and to serve humanity, as the previous speaker said. The problem is that it is undefined whether this is a peacekeeping or peacemaking mission, it is undefined whether this is going to be strictly under a NATO mandate or a UN mandate. This seems to be chewing gum and baling wire where the government is working it as it goes.

The government cut \$7 billion from the Canadian armed forces. The Reform Party has had a consistent position that whatever we ask our armed forces to do, we must be prepared to give them the proper resources, training, manpower, equipment, counselling, back-up support, health care, whatever is required.

If we are not prepared to resource the armed forces adequately, we should not be asking them to be doing things they are not capable of doing.

• (2015 )

I would like to know what the position of the NDP is relative to the funding of the armed forces because I labour under the impression, particularly as a result of some of the comments and pronouncements that have been made by the member for Burna-

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by—Douglas, a very outspoken NDP member, that the idea would be to cut back and to cut back on the armed forces budget.

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot ask our heroes and heroines in our armed forces to go into these conflicts without proper backup training, support, medication, counselling and equipment.

What is the position of the NDP? If we are going to be doing this kind of activity, would the NDP see putting money, not just the \$400 million band-aid the government is talking about in this budget, but the proper resources back into the armed forces so that our people will have the ability to do the job that we are asking them to do?

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure if the member would check the records of the comments we have made on equipment, supplies and adequate financial remuneration for the armed forces, he would find that we certainly support that. We have supported the standing committee's report with respect to the various recommendations made therein. Personally I was quite disappointed to see in this budget the relatively small amount committed to meet the recommendations of that report.

I was also informed today that another Sea King was forced to land because of difficulties it was having. It struck a chord when the minister mentioned earlier in terms of this mission of supplying helicopters and so forth. We feel that it is very important for the armed forces to have adequate and safe equipment with which to do their jobs. I have no quarrel with that comment. I agree with it 100%.

I still feel that we have to support trying to do something to end the senseless slaughter that is taking place even if it is scaled down to what we can afford. I do feel that it is important for people to be properly prepared, to have proper equipment and that there is proper follow-up when they return.

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and indeed some other members remarked that they were not briefed before this debate tonight.

I am sure the hon. member and all members will agree that the reason this debate is being held tonight and not next week is simply due to a logistical problem. All the House leaders agreed that the debate should take place tonight because the House will not be in session next week. As the hon. member and all members know, the full briefing will take place tomorrow. It is simply a matter of sorting out the basic logistics and the House leaders agreed. It should not be a matter of debate in terms of accusing the government of not doing something.

My hon. friend talks about NATO led forces. Does he believe that a NATO led force and a UN sanctioned action are mutually exclusive?

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Mr. Speaker, on the first point with respect to the debate, I hope the hon. member understands that I was certainly not suggesting that the debate be held next week. I was merely suggesting that the briefing should have been held in advance of the debate. I do not know why the briefing could not have been held prior to the debate.

That aside, to come to the question on whether a NATO led force and a UN sanctioned action are exclusive, no I have not suggested that either. The hon. minister mentioned with respect to whether this was backed by the UN, that it was NATO led and that there should not be any problem getting UN support. It seemed to me that was putting the cart before the horse. Perhaps the UN support should have been there and then if it was deemed that it be NATO led, that would be the route. That is simply what I was saying.

• (2020 )

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have more of a comment than a question.

I have been hearing a lot of noise tonight about our government not giving enough money to the Canadian armed forces. In yesterday's budget there was quite an amount given to the Canadian armed forces. I believe it was the first time in 12 years that the Canadian armed forces have had new money. If memory serves me correctly, there was \$175 million for the next three years and also about another \$150 million a year in incremental terms. We are looking at close to \$1 billion over three years.

The member from the Reform Party says it is a band-aid solution. I think \$1 billion for the Canadian armed forces is a lot more than a band-aid solution.

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Mr. Speaker, there really was no question so I will comment on the comment.

When one uses figures and says that the amount is over three years and which adds up to a large number, what is missed in the equation is what was cut in the years before. If so much has been cut to the point that one is operating with an inadequate amount and then something is thrown back in, it does not necessarily mean the full need has been met.

I was saying that the recommendations in the report of the standing committee certainly would have called for a larger amount than \$175 million over three years. The minister's estimate was at least \$700 million to start with.

There was less put in than would be determined to meet the need. Perhaps we can agree to disagree on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that I will be splitting my time

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with my colleague, the member for Compton—Stanstead. You will recall that my colleague is the one who revealed to Canadians that North Korean missiles were aimed at Montreal.

This being said, this debate, which is not really a debate, but rather the opportunity to express our emotions, raises several questions. Parliamentary rules do not really apply and members have until 11.30 p.m. to speak.

There is one thing government members have been asking us often and that is “Will the opposition parties support the government sending troops to Kosovo?” In fact, the true question is “Will the government support Canadian armed forces so they can do their job?” This is the real question. My colleague from Compton—Stanstead will elaborate on this.

For my part I would like to deal with the diplomatic and geopolitical aspects of the problem in Kosovo. It has been going on for some time now. I do not want to trace the history of this situation at this point, but as members know, throughout history, wars have caused countries to be born and countries to disappear, empires to be built and empires to crumble, and borders to be redefined. On a regular basis, we see very regional problems following various operations, various wars that occurred during the last few decades or the last century.

But our main concern about the situation in Kosovo is the way these activities will be justified and explained. We are thinking about sending a peacekeeping force led by NATO. So there is a problem in that the missions we participate in are normally led by the UN or, in a few cases, by the U.S. But this mission would be led by NATO. The foreign affairs minister talks about “NATO plus”.

• (2025)

This reminds me of when the Americans decided to attack Iraq. To justify that operation, the expression “United States plus” was coined, but we said we would not go until a peace agreement was reached. So we hope such an agreement will be reached by February 20.

If this happens before February 20 and we send troops in support of a NATO operation, how will the Serbs and the Kosovars react? These are NATO troops we will be sending over there. These last few months, we had NATO aircraft flying over the Kosovar and Serb territories. This is not a peacekeeping force. That is why it is so hard to justify it.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party have no lessons to learn from anyone. We will indeed support sending troops on peacekeeping duty. It is part of our traditions and we will maintain this tradition. However, I do hope the government realizes we are facing a problem justifying our decision internationally.

Serbia, Albania and the whole geopolitical region are fragile. There are problems in nearby Greece and in Macedonia, where

many Albanians live. In Greece, the problems are with the Turks. Then there is not-so-distant Russia, which is preventing us from securing UN support by using its right of veto.

So we are left wondering under which international organization our troops should be deployed. Next thing you know, there will be a new international organization. Should our troops be deployed under the UN? Under NATO? It may not be NATO's role. Perhaps NATO's role will be redefined. It was the role of the UN, but it has financial problems and can no longer afford to send troops on peacekeeping missions. The UN does not have any money to pay for these missions.

When the UN was established, funding for peacekeeping forces was to be provided by the UN. In committee this afternoon, the Minister of External Affairs gave a very good example, Bangladesh, which used to send highly professional and disciplined peacekeeping troops but can no longer afford to do so.

We in Canada keep sending troops. Canadian taxpayers are paying for that, but the government opposite is not being very supportive. Otherwise, the men and women of our armed forces would be better dressed, they would have boots to wear. Thank God, things are beginning to move in the right direction.

But, once again, we have a problem justifying our involvement. Working only with NATO is dangerous. It is extremely dangerous. It sends a very bad message. The Serbs do not seem to take this threat seriously.

And what will happen should the peacekeeping negotiations fail? The UN's efforts have failed. NATO's efforts have failed. At one point, even the OSCE had representatives in Kosovo. There is a whole lot of people who have gone to Kosovo without having the mandate to settle the conflict. And we are now trying to justify sending our troops there. It is extremely dangerous.

We are pleased to have an opportunity to discuss this issue. I will simply say that I hope parliament will be unanimous in sending our troops on a peacekeeping mission. This is extremely important. We must avoid another situation like the Gulf war, even though this is different, where our Liberal friends refused to support our armed forces.

I sincerely hope that, together, we will be able to support our armed forces in this mission. I also hope that we will be able to provide financial and technical support to our men and women who will represent us in this peacekeeping mission to Kosovo.

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the situation in Turkey.

[*English*]

While it is profoundly important that we debate in this chamber tonight the role of Canada in Kosovo and our possible role in Africa, it is also essential, particularly at this very crucial and

difficult time, that we note another human tragedy unfolding, the tragedy of the Kurds. I want to take the opportunity of this debate to make a brief comment on that.

• (2030)

As members know, Kurds around the world have been voicing a sense of anguish, pain, anger, outrage and deep concern about the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan or Apo. Here in Ottawa today we unfortunately saw a violent confrontation outside the Turkish embassy. Fortunately it was ultimately resolved in a peaceful manner.

I want to take the opportunity of this debate to call on our government, the Government of Canada, to end its shameful silence on the plight of the Kurds, particularly in Turkey but also in Iraq, Iran and Syria. I fear that our desire to sell Candu reactors and military hardware as well as our membership in the NATO alliance have silenced us.

We cannot remain silent on this issue. It is essential that Canada play an important role. With respect to the arrest of Ocalan, it is essential that Canada and others in the international community take steps urgently to ensure an open and fair trial for Mr. Ocalan, to see that he is not tortured as the UN special rapporteur on torture has urged as well. I am calling on our government to send a delegation to Turkey to monitor this very serious question.

Most important, it is time that our government spoke out with respect to the underlying massive violation of the fundamental human, political and cultural rights of the Kurdish people which have led to the destruction of Kurdish villages, which have led to the murder, torture and killing of over 30,000 people.

In conclusion I take this opportunity to say that we face terrible tragedy in Kosovo and the Central African Republic, but let us not lose sight of the unfolding human tragedy of the Kurdish people that for too long has been ignored. *Biji Kurdistan*.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bachand:** Mr. Speaker, I find my colleague's comment interesting.

However, it is obvious that he is quite familiar with procedure; he is using this debate on a specific problem to raise other issues. I believe I could have done the same on a topic I raised this afternoon in committee, namely North Korea, where three million people have died in recent years, out of a total population of 20 million.

This being said, tonight's debate is on Kosovo and that geopolitical region. I have, however, raised the Kurdish problem in an indirect way. What I am asking is that the government, through various embassies, non-governmental organisations or even the minister himself, continue to apply use accelerated, effective and productive diplomacy, not only with Serbia or representatives of

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Kosovo but with every country in the whole region, in order to prevent its breakdown.

This issue must not become a time bomb. If we can deal with the Kurdish problem, so much the better; if we can deal with the problems in other areas of that region, so much the better.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I listened carefully. I knew the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas was straying strictly speaking from the topic tonight. However there is no question that these issues are all interrelated. I felt, since we are here enjoying each other's comments, what is a little bit of extension.

**Mr. André Bachand:** I love you and you love me; it is a big family.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Exactly.

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the situation in Kosovo is grave. We recently witnessed an atrocious massacre and the spring campaign season is upon us within weeks. NATO has given both sides until February 20 to reach a peace agreement or face NATO air power. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and our other NATO allies are preparing to send ground troops into the bloody province and the NATO secretary general is asking for Canadian participation.

The Prime Minister, in his usual open mouth insert foot manner said that we might send ground troops to Kosovo in addition to our CF-18s based in Italy, without our being asked formally or informally for troops by anyone. I cannot imagine another responsible statesman in the world doing such a thing, but there we have it.

• (2035)

The foreign affairs minister and Nobel Peace Prize wannabe has said that Canada would send ground forces only if the operation was approved by the UN Security Council. It seems he has changed his mind. The defence minister who obviously has not clout around the cabinet table after yesterday's insulting budget has said it will not be an aggressive force but simple peacekeeping like Bosnia. Bosnia has already cost 16 Canadian lives. That is something I cannot dismiss quite so cavalierly.

The Serbs have rejected any NATO peacekeeping force on their soil. The defence minister has also said that sending ground troops would stretch the Canadian forces to the limit, which begs the question as to where are the troops for Kosovo going to come from, especially after yesterday's budget which made significant troop cuts a reality. This lack of Liberal clarity has left Canadians wondering what is the government's policy on Kosovo. It has left Canadians with several questions about the deployment of Canadian military forces to this troubled region.

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Lieutenant General Lewis MacKenzie, one of Canada's most famous peacekeepers and someone who is very familiar with the region, has questioned Canadian involvement and has demanded that there be a public debate. This is a public debate in a sense.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** With no information.

**Mr. David Price:** Absolutely.

My fear is that the time when we controlled events with regard to our involvement in Kosovo is now long since past. I want to join our foreign affairs critic and say that all peace loving people would like to see an end to fighting in Kosovo and an end to the killing of innocent civilians. I also think that if NATO decides to go into to Kosovo we as NATO allies must join our closest international friends in facing our joint destiny.

I also think that the deployment of ground troops and military power is the worst decision that any statesman ever has to make. Once taken by the governor in council Canadians will support the government of the day.

These are conclusions that all responsible Canadians would come to with regard to the Kosovo question. The big issue for me is: Are our Canadian forces ready to go to Kosovo and what units are going? The problem is that serious questions are left unanswered about Kosovo.

We have never really had an opportunity to debate government deployment of Canadian forces to the Central African Republic. That was done with a sleight of hand, but I will concentrate on Kosovo today.

The minister has told us that we would only be going in a ceasefire mode. In terms of entering the area on the basis of ceasefire, I point out that just because we enter in ceasefire does not mean that it will hold. We might find ourselves in a situation worse than an invasion.

Let us look at the state of the Canadian forces. The present government defined its defence policy with the 1994 defence white paper which committed Canada to the maintenance of a modern, combat capable land, sea and air force to deal with operations all across the spectrum of combat.

In terms of implementing our national security objectives the government directed the Canadian forces to provide a joint task force headquarters and one or more of the following: an able task group of four major service combatants, one support ship and a maritime air support, three separate battle groups or a brigade group, a fighter wing and a transport squadron, for a grand total of 10,000 personnel at one time.

The intent was to have the vanguard of this joint task force in place within three weeks and the entire force operational within three months. This was to be done by a regular force of 60,000 personnel. Therefore we have a question today. We have 2,000 on

the ground now. It is tough to get another 1,000 and yet we have 60,400 troops that are being paid. We are supposed to be able to get 10,000. There are lots of people missing there.

In terms of the navy, the government started out with an urgent need for a new maritime helicopter to replace the aging Sea King. The white paper also promised to examine the option to buy United Kingdom upholder class submarines. Last, the government stated it would consider replacing our old operational support vessels.

• (2040 )

Canada's army was promised three adequately equipped brigade groups and some 3,000 more soldiers in three light infantry battalions. The white paper called for new armoured personnel carriers to replace the obsolete M-113 fleet. There was also a discussion in very loose terms for the future replacement of direct fire support vehicles. There was not mention of a new main battle tank to replace the obsolete Leopard.

The air force was promised an upgrade of its CF-18 fighter aircraft fleet and new search and rescue helicopters. The government also stated its intention to reduce Canada's fighter fleet by 25%, but the remaining fighters would receive new precision guided munitions for ground support.

In the end, as always, the 1994 defence white paper has been big on promises and very short on substance, with the result that it is now sadly outdated if for no other reason than the absolute lack of leadership and budget.

Canada's navy has yet to see a new maritime helicopter and after yesterday's Liberal budget it is increasingly unlikely to see them for probably up to eight years.

There has been little discussion by the government of the proposed multi-role support vehicles, and the lack of strategic sealift means that the army is largely landlocked on the continent. The upholder class submarines will not start arriving until the year 2000.

The army has just started to receive its new armoured personnel carriers in the form of the LAV-25, but we do not have enough. I suspect we do not have enough for a good recce regiment. The three light battalions were created of about 3,000 soldiers. However, the army has such a budget problem—and I am told right now that it is about \$170 million in deficit—that it may be forced to cut 3,000 positions. This cut would be in addition to yesterday's budgetary slap in the face and would mean cuts through the other three services.

The air force acquired new precision guided munitions for the existing CF-18 fleet. It also got the long awaited EH-101 helicopters for search and rescue. They are getting them; they are not there yet. However the air force lost its air refuelling tankers and received no new airlift capability.

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As of today Canada lacks both strategic sealift and strategic airlift capabilities and thus is forced to rent these items on the open market or to be dependent upon the United States for any large military operation.

The old commitment and capability gap still haunts Canada. The lack of power projection capability is Canada's biggest force problem. After that of course there is money. That is the central issue. The white paper must be implemented if we are to be able to project our forces abroad effectively in support of foreign policy objectives, and that includes Kosovo.

The Canadian army and air force are virtually incapable of projecting power without outside international assistance, and thus the only real force we have for independent timely service is Canada's navy. Unfortunately for the government, Kosovo is landlocked and the navy is just out of the picture. We are left with CF-18s that the air force says need an upgrade and an army that lacks the modern armoured personnel carriers, main battle tanks and troops.

The white paper stated that Canada should be able to deploy 10,000 personnel around the world at any one time, but the minister has said that it would be stretched to the limit to come up with just another 1,000 or so for Kosovo. Tonight he said 800. That gives him a 200 leeway so now he is not quite as stretched. That was before yesterday's miserly defence allocation.

Having examined the state of Canada's Liberal neglected military and its deficiencies brings me to my last point. In terms of the Kosovo operation a number of issues need examination by parliament prior to the deployment of Canadian forces. For instance, how long does NATO make a commitment to stay in Kosovo? Judging by Bosnia it will be measured in years and not just months. The United States, from my discussions in recent briefings with United States officials, do not want a long term commitment. They want to be in and then out. They do not believe that Canada's participation is really necessary.

What happens if both sides decide to engage in hostilities with each other or NATO? This situation could turn to war at any moment. We do not even know how NATO troops, our troops, are getting in and out if it turns to all-out war. Sadly, next to it is Bosnia. What happens to Bosnia? Will we send a significant contingent, perhaps a battalion sized group, or no troops at all?

• (2045 )

We do not know what the national command relationships will be. What are the rules of engagement?

The other day on television a British commander said that his orders were to shoot to kill. I cannot imagine a Canadian officer daring to say that, right or wrong, in the present post-Somalia inquiry climate. We do not know how we will get our troops over to Kosovo because we have no real sea lift or air lift capability. How

will we sustain them in Kosovo? I would suggest probably piggybacking our existing air supply to Bosnia, but no one has said that for sure.

We do not—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Order, please. Unfortunately your time is up. We were trying to give you a couple of minutes to wrap up. If the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead wants 15 seconds to put a lid on it, fair enough, but that is it.

**Mr. David Price:** Mr. Speaker, lastly, we do not even know who will pay for this venture. Will there be a supplementary increase in the defence budget or are we facing even greater troop cuts than the *Globe and Mail* reported? After yesterday's budget, I think it is a big question mark.

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's comments and his concerns about our military and about the possible engagement in Kosovo. It is obvious that we are not getting a clear message from the government side of the House.

I know that the member for Compton—Stanstead sits on the defence committee. He has been over to Bosnia. He has talked to troops from across this country who have served over there. He has an idea of the record of the Canadian military. Those men and women served in the Bosnia theatre under a peacekeeping mission when war was raging all around them. It was the most foolish thing that probably ever happened to Canadian soldiers who put their lives in that kind of jeopardy.

Since the member has had some experience in his travels as a parliamentarian, how does he analyse the situation in Kosovo? Looking at the equipment that our Canadian military has right now, would our troops be safe there in any kind of a peacemaking role? If not, what should they or could they possibly do?

**Mr. David Price:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It gives me the opportunity to continue on a little bit.

We have been talking all along about the fact that we really do not have the troops to send into Kosovo to start off with. Our troops are being rotated so often that they do not have a chance to get proper training. It is obvious they do not have the equipment. We keep harping on that but nothing is happening. This budget ended up giving zilch for equipment.

People watching the debate on TV might think that \$175 million is a lot of dollars, but it is not really. It is \$175 million for this year. We need \$700 million just to come up even with our quality of life study without even talking about what is needed for equipment. There is no equipment upgrade in that.

The government is going to upgrade the CF-18s by selling off some planes in order to grab a little cash. The way we understand it, that is not quite by the book. It is not the way the government is

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supposed to operate. If the government is selling off planes, the money is supposed to come back to the general fund. Then it is supposed to apply for more budget if it wants more money for those planes.

**An hon. member:** The Liberal government works that way.

**Mr. David Price:** Well, that is what happens. I think the auditor general is looking very carefully at what is going on.

Our main problem is that our troops are starting to lack a lot of training because they are being rotated too often. There is also a sad lack of equipment. Equipment is going downhill all the time. Rust out is on its way.

• (2050)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Halton and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Last October, in Kosovo, tens of thousands of displaced people were living homeless as an armed conflict was raging between separatist Albanian Kosovars and security forces of the federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In spite of the protests from the international community and of the attention by the United Nations security council, the conflict continued and innocent civilians suffered. It is only when NATO made a credible threat to use force against President Milosevic that a humanitarian disaster was prevented.

In spite of the positive effects of the events of last October and of the agreements with NATO and OSCE, which the Yugoslav government accepted, no real progress has been achieved toward a durable peace in Kosovo. Diplomatic efforts have not succeeded in getting both sides to the table and the ceasefire in the area remains tense and fragile.

Moreover, I was reading today, in one of the Montreal dailies, that Robin Cook, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, said in the Commons, and I quote "Two weeks ago, I warned the House of Commons that I could not guarantee that the talks would necessarily lead to an agreement. Today I am sorry to say that this is still the case".

Finally, after weeks of provocation from both sides and the killing of dozens of innocent people, it became clear that, once again, we had to force President Milosevic and the Kosovar leaders to choose between serious negotiations or the use of force by NATO.

NATO support for the diplomatic endeavours of the international community did produce results in Kosovo. On February 6, both parties met in Rambouillet, France, to work out a peace agreement.

It is no secret that, to this day, the Rambouillet talks have not been easy.

We know there is still much to be done and that the eventual conclusion of a final agreement would be a significant achievement. Although the outcome of the talks is still uncertain, the involvement of the international community in Kosovo is just beginning.

The conflict in Kosovo has ramifications that extend well beyond the borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We should not ignore the fact that this war-torn region has been devastated because of leaders who shamelessly play on people's fears in order to fuel the conflict. Once again, the Yugoslav government's actions in Kosovo hurt the most vulnerable and make the peace process and the integration of the various ethnic groups in the Balkans all the more difficult.

The displacement of Albanian Kosovar civilians and the polarization of communities resulting from the conflict have had a direct impact not only on Serbia and Montenegro, but also on neighbouring countries. Hundreds if not thousands of Albanians have tried to flee their country because they feared for their lives. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Bosnia, refugees have also tried to escape from the country. The conflict is having repercussions on all of southern Europe and the international community cannot ignore them.

The Rambouillet talks provide an historic opportunity for the leaders of both parties. For peace is now in sight, if the parties gathered in Rambouillet negotiate in good faith and agree to the fair solution being offered. It is up to them to fulfil their obligations to the UN, to the international community and, let us not forget, to the local populations they claim to represent. This unique opportunity must not be allowed to go by.

If the antagonists shoulder their responsibilities and take this opportunity to reach a peace agreement, the international community should support their efforts. Implementation of a peace accord in Kosovo will certainly be no easy matter. Rebuilding the civil institutions destroyed during months of fighting, introducing a democratic political system and creating a representative police force are daunting tasks.

• (2055)

The OSCE and other organizations will face quite a challenge implementing the civilian aspects of a peace accord. Without a safe environment, however, none of these undertakings will even be possible. It is impossible to envisage a positive outcome.

But NATO is in a position to make a tremendous contribution to peace in Kosovo, having already played a crucial role in ending the hostilities and getting the parties to the negotiating table. Once an accord has been signed, as was the case in Bosnia, NATO's



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presence will be essential to implementing the military aspects of the accord, separating the forces and supervising troop withdrawal.

NATO will be just as important in establishing a safe and stable environment for the civilian reconstruction of the country and the establishment of peace, and that is what we are talking about. This is a vital contribution that NATO, with its incomparable experience, can readily handle.

As regards the United Kingdom, London would like to help by sending troops to establish peace in the Serb province, but only as part of an international force ensuring stability.

To respond to the member for Compton—Stanstead, I read in the same paper that the some 8,000 British soldiers are on standby and that according to the Pentagon spokesperson, the rapid dispatch of marines is an obvious option.

We can see therefore that other countries are preparing to intervene under the NATO umbrella. As concerns Canada, we have been playing an important role in the Balkans for a number of years.

After years of peacekeeping with the blue berets serving as part of the United Nations' forces in Bosnia, we will continue as a member of NATO and its stabilization force to make a significant contribution to peace in the region.

The international community recognizes that NATO has played a vital role, not only to establish peace in Bosnia, but to help preserve this peace and to bring the country closer to stability and normality. Once again, NATO is called on to establish peace in the Balkans and, once again, Canada must be prepared to play its role.

The international community is contemplating deploying 30,000 men under NATO command in Kosovo to oversee the application of a future peace accord.

At this crucial time, in this crucial place, we must protect the investments we and our allies have made in the Balkans over the past ten years. Recent history has shown NATO can play a positive role in supporting the international community's determination to restore peace and promote stability.

Clearly NATO's presence in Kosovo is critical if one wants to give peace a real chance. It is a well known fact that for a long time now President Milosevic has been making commitments, only to break them as soon as he no longer is the focus of international attention. It thus follows that a peace agreement without teeth would be easy to ignore and would most likely fail.

NATO's credibility made these negotiations possible, and without it peace would not last in Kosovo. We believe Canada, as an important member of the alliance, has a crucial role to play in any NATO operation in Kosovo.

We have accomplished a lot, but there is still a lot to do. NATO's role in Kosovo is clear and crucial, and Canada has an important role to play to ensure the alliance's intervention is a success.

[English]

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in the evening during the debate, I inadvertently misled the member for Halifax West concerning a briefing tomorrow. Apparently what was news earlier today is not news now. I ask him to accept my apology and my withdrawal in the spirit in which it is given.

• (2100)

I could go on as well because my speech will focus on the Central African Republic. I want to point out to him that concerning briefings on that part, on February 9 at the regular House leaders meeting the leaders of all the official parties agreed that this matter could be dealt with in committee and due notice was given.

Few areas of national endeavour come close as peacekeeping to a source of national pride and international respect and influence. In this House we have a responsibility to examine current and possible peacekeeping operations. We owe it to the peacekeepers and to the mothers and brothers and sisters and fathers to make very good use of this time tonight. Anything less would be a disservice to those who wear the uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces and who daily put their lives on the line for us.

This country strongly supports a continued primary role for the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Canada's pre-eminence in peacekeeping has resulted from our willingness to become involved and our ability to do so quickly and effectively. This has won us the acclaim and admiration of the entire international community.

This government is proud of Canada's peacekeeping tradition and respects the sacrifices of Canadian men and women who have worn the blue beret. We are asking them to take up the blue berets once again, travel thousand of kilometres away from Canada and help unfamiliar people to make sense of their own lives. The government believes Canada must continue to participate in the Mission des Nations unies en République centrafricaine, MINURCA. This is a concrete example of our support for the UN and our concern over continuing conflicts in Africa.

No area of policy has been more openly discussed than Canada's contribution to international security. Canadians of all walks of life continually express their views on Canada's participation in peacekeeping operations. They demand that parliament ensure our peacekeepers are properly supported, properly equipped and that they are sent on missions which make sense and where the Canadian contribution is used effectively.

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The events being discussed here tonight serve to underscore the crucial role parliamentarians can and must play in examining matters of international peace and security. The situation in Kosovo has given rise to careful and meaningful debate tonight. The standing committees have kept a close watch on the UN peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic. The government sincerely hopes that parliamentarians will continue to work on Kosovo and the Central African Republic and on other priority issues of foreign and defence policy.

Parliament is fully engaged as part of the overall Canadian effort to build a safer and more just global community. We are gratified by the contributions made by all members of the House so far and are taking careful note of the points raised by members of all parties here tonight.

As the ministers have noted, the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic has been in existence for almost a year. Canada has been involved since the beginning for several good reasons. Our troops have performed admirably and have made a clear contribution to the overall success of the mission so far. We fully anticipate that this success can be continued throughout 1999 until the current mandate and objectives have been completed.

The year 1993 was crucial in the democratic development of the Central African Republic. After years of struggle for democracy, the CAR held free and fair presidential elections for the first time in its history.

The people of the Central African Republic are among the poorest of the poor. The CAR is a land locked country with few marketable resources.

• (2105)

The 1998 United Nations human development index ranked the Central African Republic 154th out of 174 countries. Canada was marked first. Real per capita gross domestic product is approximately \$1,092 in U.S. currency, less than one-twentieth of the gross domestic product enjoyed by Canadians. Life expectancy in the CAR is 48 years. The average Canadian can expect to live 31 years longer than the average person in the Central African Republic.

In addition to severe economic and developmental constraints and the growing pains that have come with a brand new multiparty political system, the CAR has to deal with internal and external conflicts. The government of President Ange Félix Patasse has for several years now faced unrest among some members of the country's military. Soldiers have mutinied on several occasions. French troops then stationed in the CAR were called on to quell the unrest.

Under the terms of a 1997 peace accord rebels and forces loyal to the president agreed to establish a multinational Mission Interafri-

caine de Surveillance de l'Application des Accords de Bangui. MISAB's job was to maintain peace and security in the capital city Bangui and to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement.

By early 1998 with MISAB's mandate winding down and long planned withdrawal of French military forces underway, it was clear that further international assistance was needed to keep the Central African Republic on a even keel. On March 27, 1998 the UN security council unanimously adopted resolution 1159 establishing MINURCA. This new UN mission has been deployed in the CAR since April 15, 1998 with some 1,350 troops from six African countries, France and Canada. A Canadian forces contingent of approximately 47 has been providing core communication services to MINURCA.

MINURCA was mandated first and foremost to assist the legitimate government of the Central African Republic to maintain security in and around the capital. Other key functions have included dealing with surrendered weapons and demobilised factions, ensuring the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel, training civilian police, and providing advice and technical support for legislative elections.

The activities of MINURCA in the Central African Republic have been absolutely essential to maintaining stability in that part of the world.

This government and the Canadian people are proud of Canada's role as world leader in the field of peacekeeping and as a reliable alliance partner and supporter of the United Nations. MINURCA is important for Canadians, for Africans and for the international community.

Let us tell our peacekeepers in the Central African Republic that the Parliament of Canada is thinking of them, that we support them and will welcome them home with honour when their work is complete.

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to tonight and to this debate. I have to say that I was profoundly disappointed. The Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were here to brief the House and the Canadian people as to the situation in Kosovo, and to inform everyone of Canada's role, as best they could, up to this point.

I am confused over some of the information that came from both these ministers.

• (2110)

On one hand they talk about acceptable levels of risk that our military men and women would be placed in if sent to Kosovo. They talked about the rules of engagement and there was some indication that there would be combat troops sent over. On the

other hand, the foreign affairs minister brought up the point that it would be a non-interventionist type force, a peacekeeping force.

The problem that exists right now in Kosovo is that there needs to be peace. I do not know how peace can be kept in the midst of war. That sounds like another Bosnia situation to me where our troops were chained to poles, a sight for the world to see. It raised all kinds of questions in the minds of the people in this country as to what our military was doing chained to poles.

It was embarrassing to say the least to know that our troops, fighting men and women who should have been engaged in battle protecting themselves and their equipment, were in that kind of horrible dilemma and needed a negotiator to get them out of trouble.

I do not want to see our Canadian men and women placed in that kind of a role again. I cannot imagine that happening. I do not think the Canadian public wants to see that and yet this is what seems to be the message coming from the minister of defence in part but definitely from the foreign affairs minister.

There is need for debate but not from this level because obviously the government side has to resort to newspapers to really find out what is happening in Kosovo as the previous speaker just alluded to in her statement.

There seems to be a real lack of information on the part of the government. One would have to ask why that information is not there. Why is the government side not able to inform this House and the Canadian public about what on earth is going on over in Kosovo? I can only think of one reason, that Canada has been cut out of the negotiations at the international level, both in NATO and probably in the UN, because she is no longer a player, she is no longer able to contribute. That is what I believe.

To have to go through this situation tonight with the foreign affairs minister unable to inform this House and all members in it and the Canadian public about the situation in Kosovo and Canada's role is a sham. It is disgraceful. I expected a lot more.

My colleague from Red Deer spoke about the Central African Republic. I will base most of my comments with reference to the Kosovo question. It certainly is more complicated than the Central African Republic but it needs to be addressed in some terms that we can all think about and questions that should be answered before decisions of any kind are taken.

I want to take the opportunity first to argue in favour of lending morale support to international action to end the suffering in Kosovo. Canada has an undeniable obligation to its NATO allies. We also have a proud history of international engagement and involvement and we should not let that lapse.

If the alliance decides to take military action Canada must support that. We have an obligation to support that. That is a moral

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obligation. No one should accept any form of ethnic cleansing. There is our moral obligation. And we have a moral obligation to take action against the systemic murder and torture of innocent civilians. That has been going on for some time.

• (2115)

There is no doubt that the international community must not stand idly by while Serbian forces commit flagrant human rights atrocities against Kosovars. Ultimately we must support our allies. Canada cannot shirk from its responsibility in this regard.

Nevertheless, there are some serious questions concerning possible military action which give us cause for concern. We have a duty to ask these questions. There is an obligation to the Canadian troops whose lives we may put on the line. A series of questions must be asked and no answers have been supplied by the government thus far. Granted, there may be some questions that cannot be answered at this point in time but the government does not seem to be moving in that direction.

These are the questions: One, have all diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis failed? Two, what are the dangers and possible implications of military action? Three, is there true multinational support for this mission into Kosovo? Four, is there a workable plan for military action?

Five, what precisely is Canada's role to be? This is a major point. There are almost conflicting points of view between the foreign affairs minister and the defence minister. Six, is that role realistic in terms of Canada's military capability?

Seven, who will command Canadian troops? I think that is a very important role which will concern a lot of soldiers. There are so many different countries participating in peacekeeping missions in that region. The troops could fall under the jurisdiction of some other commander and they may not be very comfortable with that. I certainly would not be after having seen some of the things that have happened in other peacekeeping missions Canada has been involved in.

Let us go back to the first question. Have diplomatic efforts failed? We have yet to see. The Serbs continue to drag their feet. They have been negotiating hard for their own position to maintain control of that area. They do not want NATO forces in there. That was pretty clear right from the very beginning. That question has yet to be answered.

With regard to the second question, there is obviously a deep concern about the fighting in Kosovo and whether it may escalate into other countries. We have troops right now in Bosnia. Could they be affected if things go sour in Kosovo? Who is going to protect our Canadian troops? Is there some sort of an extraction force?

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The next question concerns a workable plan for military action. We have not seen anything like that and there have been no assurances tonight that there will be limitations and what those limitations will be. It is very unfortunate because there is an equipment problem in our military and to go into any hot spot, a high intensity conflict or even a low intensity conflict with those problems, the lives of our troops will be in danger. There is no question about that.

All of the questions including the ones I raised tonight have yet to be answered. It is incumbent upon the government to keep everyone informed. I do not believe at this stage of the game that the government is doing that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member for Calgary Northeast would clarify this for the chair. Is it the intention of the hon. member to split his time with the member for Calgary West?

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has advised me that he would give me some more time if I needed it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Then it is up to you. If you keep going then you are taking a 30-minute slot.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to take a little more time here. It is important to go back to the points I mentioned.

• (2120)

The government is very much unaware of the implications when it comes to sending troops. Actually it seems that the foreign affairs minister is running the military. The minister has come up with a policy of soft power. I still do not know what that means but it sure as blazes scares me. If we are going to depend on our troops and soft power is the motivating factor, I think we are in trouble. It sounds like flower power to me and people who were raised in the sixties would understand what flower power is all about.

The defence minister has already implied that the troop selection number will be around 500 to 800. The Canadian army is already stretched to the limit despite the claim made in the government's white paper on defence. We cannot send a combat capable brigade overseas. All we can send is a smaller battalion group force and that would put a severe strain on our capabilities.

Time and time again it comes back to the issue of equipment. I was over in Bosnia, as was with the member for Compton—Stansstead. We both have had the opportunity to examine various equipment that the military is using. I was not aware that Coyotes were rolling off the assembly line. The minister of defence mentioned that tonight. It was a remarkable revelation. There has been no announcement of it. Certainly they are on line but I would suggest that if troops were going over there, they would need those vehicles and some pretty good fire power too.

To my knowledge that has not been considered nor is it part of the completed plan of the military to mount guns on those new APCs. That is a deficiency right there. That would concern me if I were a soldier. What kind of equipment is there? Apart from that, all we have is 20-year old tanks, 30-year old self-propelled artillery, 40-year old towed artillery and tactical helicopters.

The minister mentioned something about tactical helicopters for lift. Obviously the minister has not read the auditor general's report nor rode around in one of these helicopters. I suggest that the minister be the first man off the helicopter just before it lands on the ground. He would have a new hairdo. There is a static electricity and shock problem. Those helicopters cannot be used for what they were intended. Not only do they have that problem but their lift capacity is far lower than what it was intended to be.

If the military were to use that helicopter as an extraction machine to pull troops out of a troubled area, a gun cannot be mounted because it would be too heavy. We have 100 brand new helicopters that just came off the line last year at a cost of \$1.2 billion, and they cannot be used for what they were intended. The minister talks about using those tactical helicopters, and I use the word tactical loosely because they cannot do the job. They are junk. One hundred new helicopters and they are junk. They cannot be used as tactical helicopters.

We have the armoured personnel carriers, certainly some good equipment, yet there are not in full use. They are not coming off the assembly line fast enough nor from what I understand, are they armed properly.

Our troops are going to have to live by their wits because there is no one to take them out if they get into trouble.

• (2125)

Under the circumstances, troops sent into a low intensity conflict area like that would be sitting ducks. If we consider the mountainous terrain in Kosovo, it would be a grave mistake if we were to again send troops into ground like that if we did not have good support. So we have to turn to our allies again. That is troubling, because we do not have the capability to survive on our own, not even to protect our own men and women if they get into trouble in a place like that.

We have good cause to be concerned about the poor position Canada is regarding the decision making process in this NATO area. Because our contribution is so limited now, we do not sit at the negotiating table any more. The minister ought to know what the negotiating table is. He has been weak in delivering funds to support our military. He is also very weak when dealing with a good plan to keep our troops safe and give them the support they need overseas.

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It all comes down to this. The Liberal government has cut \$7.8 billion from the defence department since it took office. It has effectively removed the combat readiness of our forces. Our allies know it and it has seriously damaged our international credibility.

In conclusion, we must ultimately support the alliance and we must support our troops if committed. We must however, be clear and realistic about Canada's role. The Canadian forces must not be committed to a mission which is beyond the operational capability of the military. We must not send our troops anywhere without reflecting on the practical implications of the mission. We must support our allies, but we must also support our troops.

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member for Calgary Northeast was just starting to roll.

The member talked about the famous helicopters and about our working with our allies. Unfortunately we cannot even work with our allies because we cannot talk to them. The radios in the helicopters do not work. They only work to talk to each other. It is a strange situation.

The hon. member, one of the Liberal members and I were in Washington a little over a week ago. We had some briefings from our American friends. What they had to say was very interesting.

First of all they did not even mention Canada. They were talking about Kosovo and what would probably happen going in there. They were looking at probably 2,000 to 4,000 troops. It was quite clear that those 2,000 to 4,000 troops would probably be marines and would probably be in and out very quickly. They were only talking about showing a presence on the ground.

That is probably what our Canadian troops should really be looking at too. We do not want another long term stay like there was in Bosnia. We do not have the troops to do it. The turnover is just not working out.

I would like to hear the member's comments on that particular scenario and how we could go into the area for a while to establish our presence and show that we are supporting our NATO allies. By the way, most of our NATO allies who were with us in Washington agreed that it should be European troops on the ground in Europe.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question.

I was in Washington with the member and several other parliamentarians and there was someone from the Liberal side at the briefing. There was a tour of various places, the State Department, the Pentagon, the war college in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It was a real eye-opener, I must say. They talked about risks. They talked

about protection of the homeland. They talked about Kosovo and the fact that they should be in and they should be out.

● (2130)

It would be nice to say that Canada should do the same thing—I would agree with that wholeheartedly—and to say then that Europe could move back in with its peacekeeping role or its peace maintenance role and look after things afterward.

I shudder when I look at Canada's military and the backup to it. Where is the backup? The Americans have all kinds of fire power behind them. If their boys get into trouble they are in there with their helicopters and they will take them out of there. We do not have that kind of capability. We should have because we have had our members in these hot spots. Bosnia was one such place. Kosovo is very similar to what happened in Bosnia.

I would not want to see our men and women trapped somewhere and we could not get them out. I find that unacceptable. I think most Canadians would find that very unacceptable if they knew the plight our military was in and the expectations across the floor.

It is not coming from a military standpoint at all. The foreign affairs minister is driving our military. Unfortunately we could never participate in a role like the Americans can, even though we could if we had the equipment. We could never do it because we just do not have the equipment.

**Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga South.

This debate is in many respects a reprise of the debate we had in the House on October 7, 1998 on the peacekeeping issue. It enables us to reiterate some points in the evolving constitutional law of parliament.

This government is not the Government of the United States. We are not bound by the United States constitution. The power to make war, to declare war, is within the prerogative power of the executive alone here. Even in the United States undeclared wars, which are the phenomena of our times, are a different constitutional system.

What our government has done is to engage, to submit to the House of Commons any question of the involvement of Canadian Armed Forces in service outside Canada. That is to say, when parliament is in session, we will allow a House debate. When parliament is not in session, a practice which I in fact was the instrument of in the last parliament when I was parliamentary secretary, we will inform the leaders or the porte-parole of the opposition parties of our intention. That is the constitutional law of parliament today. It is part of our conventions and I welcome its reiteration in this case.

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The issue that I am addressing myself to is really the issue of international law, the technical base of our involvement, because many of the high policy aspects, the political foreign policy aspects have been already covered.

There are others like Dean Acheson, President Truman's secretary of state, who said that survival of the state is not a matter of law; it is a matter of power. I think most of us would prefer President Kennedy's point that a great state wishes its actions to be in conformity with international law, not merely in terms of the substantive principles but also in terms of the manner of exercise, that the more moderate controls less than force are controlling when they are available.

Our approach to involvement in military operations abroad has without exception been with the United Nations under the United Nations charter. It is our great foreign minister and later Prime Minister Lester Pearson who developed the concept of UN peacekeeping. It was a notion implicit in chapter 6 of the charter as drafted, but until the Suez war it was not an actuality. As has been said in this debate, it involves the interposition of unarmed forces between combatants who normally have already agreed to cease hostilities and want a face-saving way out of that.

• (2135)

The gap between peacekeeping in chapters 6 and 7 of the charter is a very large one. Chapter 7, the imposition of force, gets into the areas that are under interdiction in the United Nations charter itself. The principle of the non-use of force, which is one of the imperative principles of the United Nations enshrined in one of the opening sections, article 2(4) of the charter, is also the key to chapter 7 of the charter. The use of force is outlawed except in the limited situation of self-defence which is strictly defined and in accordance with United Nations practice must be authorized by UN Security Council resolutions.

It is a fact that even in operations that have been strictly chapter 7 operations, for example the original gulf war in 1990-91 where the authority was security council umbrella resolutions, some very general and very many of them under which the United Nations command force operated, there was no direct involvement of Canadian forces in armed military offensive action. Ours was an ancillary role.

This was true again in the activities in 1996 in which we committed ourselves but in which we were not directly engaged. Ours was an ancillary, supporting role. We ourselves have been aware of the difficulty of legal definition and of establishing a legal base when we get into offensive armed military operations.

The issue of regional organizations has been raised. It is true that the legal justification or *raison d'être* of regional military organiza-

tions today comes from the United Nations today and only from the United Nations charter. They cannot exceed the mandate of the United Nations charter. They cannot exceed or transgress the stipulations limiting the use of force which are established in the charter.

In a discussion with a European diplomat in recent days I talked about the issue of whether NATO itself, as a regional security organization, could not give a contractual style legal justification within its region. The problem with that would be within Europe itself. This would exclude the strangers to Europe, and I use that in the geographical sense, Canada and the United States. For our purposes the security council is our source of power.

We are aware of the limitations in article 27(3), the veto power given to the big powers. We are aware of the possibility of a wilful or intemperate use of the veto power to obstruct the primary peacekeeping role of the United Nations. As the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry reminded himself, that was overcome by the uniting for peace resolution in which it was established quite clearly that the UN general assembly could fill the gap.

The case of Nicaragua and the United States establishes that the United Nations does not cover the whole field of international law. There remains the area of customary international law. This is perhaps the most interesting area of international law because it is in the new concept of international humanitarian law. Humanitarian intervention is given a role more noble and more altruistic than its 19th century essentially colonialist application by European and other powers.

It is in this area in which there is not much doctrine—there is certainly no jurisprudence *constante* in the sense of court decisions—that I think the future lies. It is perhaps best there. If we have reached a situation where common humanity cries out for intervention, that is where the direction for support should be placed.

My advice is to rely on the security council resolution and a recent one where possible, but the new norms of the new international law are there and they have a habit, the new customary law, of galloping along to meet new realities.

• (2140)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion calling on the House to take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Kosovo and possible changes to our peacekeeping activities in the Central African Republic.

First I would like to address some comments to the issues relating to the situation in the Central African Republic beginning with the background to the current situation that we are facing.

The past several years have been enormously difficult ones in that country. In November and December of last year, free and fair legislative elections were held. These were the first tentative steps toward the restoration of national institutions since dire political and economic conditions swept the country in 1993.

In recent years, unpaid soldiers mutinied on three separate occasions and French troops were brought in to quash the uprisings. In January 1997 the rebel soldiers and those forces still loyal to President Patassé signed the Bangui accords which addressed measures necessary to bring peace back to that country. This agreement also established the Mission Interafricaine de Surveillance de l'Application des Accords de Bangui, or commonly referred to as MISAB.

This mission, made up of military and civilian personnel from France and six African countries, was created in order to maintain peace and security and to monitor the implementation of the Bangui accords. In June 1997, MISAB was forced to put down another mutiny against the government. Meanwhile, conditions in the country continued to deteriorate.

By early 1998 MISAB's mandate was coming to an end and French troops had begun their withdrawal. It was apparent, however, that further international assistance was required if the Central African Republic was to remain free of violence. In March of last year the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1159 establishing a UN peacekeeping operation to replace MISAB. The initial three month mandate of this new mission, the Mission des Nations unies en Republique centrafricaine, or MINURCA, began with 1,350 troops from six African countries, France and Canada.

As was previously outlined in the debate, MINURCA was given a variety of roles including maintaining security in and around the capital of Bangui, training civilian police and ensuring the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel. This mandate was extended in July 1998 and again the following October.

The UN Secretary General recognized the progress that had been made in his December 1998 report to the security council suggesting that MINURCA was a success story so far. UN involvement has allowed the Central African Republic to become as he said "an island of relative stability in an otherwise wartorn region". He reported that the mission had played an important role in the legislative elections just a couple of months ago and had been instrumental in helping the government prepare plans for restructuring the army and civilian police force. As we also know, the UN presence launched a human rights awareness campaign and provided medical and humanitarian assistance in and around Bangui. In addition, the stabilization of the country has led to some economic recovery.

Nevertheless the secretary general also noted that peace remains fragile and that the political climate is still permeated by division

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and distrust. He concluded that continued MINURCA presence is required at least until the fall of 1999 when there will be presidential elections. The UN Secretary General, Mr. Annan, is recommending that MINURCA's mandate should be extended and that the force structure should remain essentially the same.

The current mandate will expire at the end of this month. MINURCA still has a very important role to play in a slow but steady recovery of the Central African Republic. It is important to seize that opportunity to build on our success to date. Canadian participation is vital in this regard as our forces are providing the communications framework for the multinational force.

At the joint defence and foreign affairs committee meeting last April, members of parliament recognized the importance of this contribution and unanimously resolved that Canada should participate in MINURCA. Today there are compelling reasons to support both the extension of MINURCA as well as our continued participation.

The extension would allow MINURCA forces to continue to foster a secure and stable environment so that the presidential elections scheduled for later this year can take place in a free and fair way. It would also continue to foster the process of reconciliation and reconstruction in the Central African Republic.

• (2145 )

The key considerations in this matter are clear. First, given our past involvement in the region and our record of leadership in peacekeeping and peace support operations, it is only natural that the UN would look on us to stay the course. We are in a position to share our valuable experience and to work with the Africans to help them to find lasting solutions to complex the challenges they face. Through MINURCA and other operations, through our memberships in La Francophonie and through our membership in an ad hoc UN group known as the friends of the Central African Republic, Canada has already made meaningful contributions to international efforts to maintain stability in Africa. The UN is looking to us for help by continuing in this effort.

Second, we are in privileged during our two year membership on the UN security council, and during our presidency of the body this month, to make an especially meaningful difference efforts to improve the situation in the Central African Republic. Our continued participation in MINURCA is a natural way of making most of our opportunities in this sphere.

Finally, the skills and professionalism of our troops would clearly of enormous benefit to our colleagues in MINURCA. As is well known, Canada has contributed to almost all UN peacekeeping missions and along the way has developed a wealth of experience. This experience and our ability to work in English and in French

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make Canadian soldiers perfectly suited to work alongside other military contingents of MINURCA.

In the Central African Republic we have a chance to continue to help foster stability in a troubled and fragile place. We have the opportunity to demonstrate once again our continued ability and willingness to promote international peace and security. Finally, we have another chance to reflect the wishes of Canadians who have told us that they want Canada to continue to work toward a stable global order. In my view if the right security and other assurances can be provided these alone are compelling reasons for us to continue our efforts to make a difference in the Central African Republic.

In the final moments I have I would like to briefly comment with regard to our position in Kosovo. Earlier this day I listened carefully to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence. All parliamentarians appreciated their words of praise for our troops and about the need for Canada's continued participation, particularly in Kosovo.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said something that I thought was very relevant, very simple but straightforward. He referred to our participation not just as a peacekeeping contingent but for civil peace building. This aspect of peace building is extremely important. Canada has developed an international reputation as peacekeepers as well as peace builders. It is that reputation, that skill and that ability that we can bring to the situation in Kosovo.

The minister also referred to the human rights situation, the fact that young children are being drawn into military conflict and that Canada as an internationally recognized champion of human rights around the world is well suited. It is important for us to play a role there. I wanted to highlight that.

As the minister concluded his speech he finally asked parliamentarians to put on record their views on this matter. I am pleased to have participated in this debate and I am pleased to support the minister's call for parliamentarians to support our participation in Kosovo as well as in the Central African Republic.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to participate in this special debate on sending Canadian troops to Kosovo and to the Central African Republic to conduct peacekeeping operations. I will not speak as an expert, I do not claim to be an expert in external affairs or defence, but rather as the member representing a riding in Quebec.

I have had the opportunity to participate in this kind of debate in the past, the debate on Bosnia for instance, because soldiers from

Quebec and Canada were to be deployed. People from my riding were among those who eventually participated in those missions.

• (2150)

This gives a different perspective to such situations, and I think it is important to take the attitude we are taking. I believe it is important to have debates like the one we are having this evening.

Basically, what holding a debate like this one means is that we believe in discussion rather than force. We believe that people can often be convinced to settle difficult situations peacefully.

If the Government of Canada wants not only to enjoy the privileges but also to assume the obligations associated with its election to the security council and its present position as chair, it is important that government decisions be supported by the House, unless the situation is extremely urgent. It allows us to see, especially with regard to these kinds of international issues, if there is a consensus, if a common position can be arrived at to contribute to the quality of the international debate.

Let us not kid ourselves. What is going on right now in Rambouillet is a negotiating game in which the various parties involved will be influenced by the strength of those who favour a particular way of solving the problem over others.

When the U.S. Secretary of State went to Rambouillet, she told the parties they had to choose between working hard to find a compromise that would allow them to live in normal political states, or to be caught up once again in the vicious circle of permanent conflict. In this debate on Kosovo, it is important to be well aware of the role of parliament.

We must also be aware of the fact that Canada must show leadership, as I said earlier. The time has come for the international community to take action. We have had signs, over the last few weeks, that efforts to solve this conflict would intensify. Members who spoke before me talked about, among other things, the similar debate that took place in this House on October 7, 1998. At that time, we talked about the situation in Kosovo, about the need to adopt a humanitarian approach and to seek a political solution.

Now, a few months later, there is still no solution on the table. Proposals have been made. There is a will to come to a satisfactory solution, and our interventions must be made in that context. We have to ask ourselves what more we can bring to the table, what contribution we can make to help both sides find a peaceful solution.

There is an urgent need to take action, if only on a strictly humanitarian level. Many Kosovars are already in exile. Many people are in danger of being killed, raped or tortured. These people are facing very difficult situations.



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We must send a clear message to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We must not forget the civilian populations which have already suffered too much. It is above all for this reason that the international community must take action.

All the geopolitical considerations are but one aspect of the problem. However, the fundamental problem is a human one. The fact is that we cannot treat human beings as they are being treated right now. The international community as a whole must be made aware of the urgent need to address the situation. Today's debate is a way to help ensure that a consistent and effective solution is found.

As for us, it is urgent that we take concerted action. The minister's concern must be above all a humanitarian one. We should not be afraid to consider every solution which could lead to a compromise, any solution which stakeholders might accept in order to pull out of the conflict and try to resolve this difficult international situation. The further you are from a problem, the more you tend to believe that solutions are easy. But when you get closer, you can see all the implications. There is certainly no easy solution, but there is a will to act, so let us build on the momentum so that peace is restored as soon as possible.

• (2155)

So far Canada has remained firm with Mr. Milosevic. We have shown our position very clearly. The presence of Canada and our providing a sizeable military contingent, mainly in Bosnia, sent a clear message about the role and the solutions we wanted to put forward.

The Bloc Quebecois has often showed how concerned it was about the situation in Kosovo by condemning the repressiveness, brutality and inhuman behaviour of the Serb security forces. The Bloc Quebecois is in favour of sending Canadian troops as part of interposition or peacekeeping operations. The Bloc hopes that this peacekeeping mission is the result of a negotiated agreement.

I read in *Le Monde* that this is currently one of the major problems which have not yet been settled by negotiation. The article says that on Tuesday, three days before the deadline, Mr. Milosevic reiterated Belgrade's opposition to the deployment of a multinational force in Kosovo.

Saying today that we support Canadian involvement in a peacekeeping mission, provided this mission is the result of negotiations and helps to achieve peace, is our way of contributing to the search for a solution.

In the meantime, NATO continues to plan for an operation. This pressure is part of the negotiating process. If there are no clear signals that we really intend to intervene if necessary and to help restore sustainable peace or to at least eliminate violence, the

people who are not really interested in this type of solution will just sit and wait.

If the international community truly supports this type of position, and I think that tonight's debate will help Canada make its position clearer, then I believe we can play an interesting role.

It was clearly established that the deployment of troops is the main issue to be resolved during the current negotiations. So, let us send a clear message that Canada believes a peacekeeping mission might be one of the key elements to a solution, an approach to the future that would finally restore peace in this part of the world.

Under these circumstances, the Rambouillet negotiations must be the last chance negotiations, not in the sense that negotiations will come to a stop tomorrow, but in the sense that we have to give these people every possibility to succeed and reach an agreement before the deadline.

As a parliament, however, the mandate we would like the government to give our troops must be subject to some conditions. First, the security of civilians must be our main concern in any intervention. On this issue, I would like to qualify the position we have heard from some members in this House tonight. We hear a lot about the Canadian soldiers who will take part in these activities and we seem to focus only on their security.

I think the lives of all the people taking part in this operation have to be protected. Obviously, we are responsible for the lives of Canadian citizens, but we must take a humanitarian approach so that our first concern is the safety of individuals.

Canada's interventions must be under the aegis of recognized international organizations, ideally the UN or, failing that, NATO. With mandates Canada has accepted from the UN, to do otherwise would not be acceptable in the present situation.

Specific requirements must be imposed on the parties to the conflict and stated publicly, and armed force must be used until the parties formally agree to meet these requirements.

We must give thought to the possibility of recognizing the independence of Kosovo rather than writing off the idea, because it could be one of the solutions to be explored in order to restore peace to the region, including at the expiry of the three-year transitional period when the Kosovar people will have to decide on their political status.

• (2200)

The solution may lie here. What compromise may be found at the end of the current debate, following the exchanges and negotiations being carried out at the moment? All we are saying is that we must not eliminate an option at the outset. We must look at all the possibilities and let the negotiations take their course.

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I would like to mention too that this is a time for modesty in international diplomacy. In this conflict, which began in 1989, the international community, of which Canada is a part, failed to recognize the Bosnian tragedy and the cost in human, financial and political terms of the failure to intervene forcefully when it was time to do so. The time may have come to draw lessons from that experience.

It is high time Canada, which sits on the UN Security Council and has been chairing its sessions since February 1, assumed the necessary leadership to resolve this crisis. This country could play a greater role in Rambouillet. Following this evening's debate and the position adopted by this House, Canada's representations will be more visible, more present and will help find a solution.

We must also be aware of the stubbornness of certain states that refuse to consider the declaration of independence of a wide majority of people over a defined territory, when these people are being oppressed. As I said earlier, no peaceful solution should be dismissed out of hand. We must consider all the options.

Such an attitude did not stop the inescapable independence of Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia, but it did not prevent a terrible war. The international community must take note of the very recent past and be innovative and open so that potential conflicts can be resolved.

In Kosovo, it is important that the ongoing negotiations be supported by the international community. It is important that Canada fully assume its leadership role in that respect. It is to be hoped that, following this evening's debate, the Canadian government will be on solid ground and will feel it has the support of all members of Parliament.

I would like to say a few words about the issue of the Central African Republic, which is the second part of this evening's debate. At the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I took part last fall in the meeting of African leaders in Burkina Faso and one thing that struck me was the fragility of the political situation in Africa. Situations can change from one day to the next and from one country to the next.

Great care must be taken as to the form of intervention. When a peacekeeping mission has been set up and it is felt that this type of safeguard might be needed for a while longer, peace must be maintained so as to avoid the situation where a decision taken in haste or in the interests of short-term savings leads to the outbreak of another crisis.

Let us put all the chances on our side. The relations Canada has built up with a number of African countries merit this attention. This is important, because this is one continent where all the rich nations can be judged by their international actions. Thought must be given to how Africa can be helped to build strong governments,

improve governance, and acquire independence and the democratic tools needed for further progress.

This evening's debate on these two issues shows us that discussion is valuable. As parliamentarians, we have an opportunity to bring matters to the public arena. It is important that we make these positions known to Quebeckers and to Canadians.

• (2205)

This is the kind of action international peace is built on. Let us continue to clearly show that solutions can be found by discussing instead of fighting and making a show of strength.

In that sense, our debate tonight is of the kind that will eventually contribute to a solution. We must recognize that the international community ought to intensify its effort and put extra energy into finding a solution, so that next week, next month or two months from now, we are not faced with a tragic situation in both of these countries.

Canada is already involved in one of them and it would be desirable for it to intervene in the other, especially if there is an agreement calling for this kind of peace force.

[English]

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member very carefully but I would like to ask him one thing.

Given the present situation of calling this debate on such short notice and without any briefing to government members on this issue, perhaps a decision has already been made and this take note debate is merely a formality. On the other hand, we are committing our brave men and women of the defence forces to go to a country without the proper equipment to help them fight a war or maintain peace in that country.

We do not know what the long terms plans are. We do not know how much it will cost. We do not know a lot of things and so many questions have been unanswered.

Given these situations and these uncertainties, does the member feel we should send our forces or not?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to remind my colleague that we already had a debate on Kosovo in this House, on October 7, 1998.

We said then that what was needed was a political settlement on a humanitarian basis. Several months later, he proposes instead to wait for more information, to wait and see what happens and then to hold a debate.

Will this better serve the cause at issue here tonight? Would this help find a solution in Kosovo? Would this help the ongoing negotiations in Rambouillet lead to some kind of settlement? Personally, I do not believe this is the solution.

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I do believe that tonight we must send the message that should a peacekeeping mission be organized, Canada will participate to the best of its abilities and limited financial resources. If the government ever spent too much money on this, it would be held accountable, and we in this House would let them know what we think.

This does not mean the member is wrong. It would be interesting to be better prepared.

Indeed we might want to have an annual debate on Canadian foreign policy as a whole. We could hold a one- or two-day debate during which members could speak on various aspects of a specific issue. The minister could answer questions, not from a partisan point of view as is done in question period, but in a more open debate where we would see in advance what the Canadian government's approach is with regard to the various problems encountered in international politics. It is an interesting avenue that I think is worth considering.

In conclusion, to answer my colleague's question, I think it is important that we have this debate tonight in the House of Commons, even though we do not have all the information required on the practical and technical impacts of the intervention, so we can send a clear and precise message to the international community.

• (2210)

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton.

I am pleased to address the motion moved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding Canada's possible role in Kosovo and the changes that could be made to our peacekeeping activities in the Central African Republic.

Canada has been a promoter of internationalism for a long time. We fought tyranny during the two world wars, and also in Korea and in the Persian gulf. We are a founding member of the League of Nations, the United Nations and NATO.

Over 100,000 Canadian men and women have served in peacekeeping operations all over the world. In fact, Canada has participated in almost every UN mission. We have made exceptional contributions to international peace and security during missions in various countries around the globe, including Cyprus, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Haiti.

The Canadian forces can really be proud of that tradition of commitment and courage. Today, we have once again an opportunity to publicly express our support for that tradition and our determination to maintain it.

Let me first discuss the fragile peace established by MINURCA, the UN mission in the Central African Republic.

Established in 1998, MINURCA started carrying out its initial three month mandate with 1,350 soldiers from Canada, France and six African countries after a series of military mutinies in 1996 and 1997.

At a meeting of the Standing Joint Committee on Defence and Foreign Affairs in April, committee members recognized the contribution Canadian forces could make in the context of this sort of mission. They unanimously passed a resolution recommending Canada's participation in MINURCA.

MINURCA's mandate consisted in helping the government of the Central African Republic maintain security in and around the capital, look after the arms given up by demobilized factions, ensure the safety and freedom of UN personnel, establish a civilian police force and provide limited advice and technical support for the legislative elections.

MINURCA made a lot of gains and in so doing paved the way to the political progress necessary to national reconciliation. Nevertheless, despite improvements, the UN secretary general indicated that a very fragile peace had been established. He considered that an extension of MINURCA's mandate would help consolidate the progress made to that point. The secretary general also pointed out that it would be vital to maintain an ongoing UN presence to ensure that the presidential elections, slated for the fall of 1999, are free and fair.

By deploying 47 members of the Canadian armed forces to MINURCA, our country has made a vital contribution since the start of this mission.

Provided that certain conditions are met, I think we should extend our participation in MINURCA. Because we are providing the signals component, we are pivotal to the mission. Our bilingual soldiers are getting along well with their counterparts from other countries also taking part in the mission.

We have a wide range of experience to share with African nations regarding all sorts of peacekeeping and peacemaking operations. Our tradition of and commitment to adopting multilateral solutions to peace and security challenges naturally inclines us to provide assistance to others when we can change something. And, in my view, we can still do this in the Central African Republic.

For these reasons, we feel that a response to the secretary general's request to extend the MINURCA mission is imperative.

• (2215)

We also recommend that Canada continue to supply a contingent to MINURCA, provided that security, logistical and sanitary support services are put in place.

As for possible participation by Canada in Kosovo, although the details are different, the broad principles are similar to those mentioned earlier.

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Members will recall that, during the special debate on Kosovo last October, all parties agreed that the crisis had taken on a humanitarian dimension. Members also agreed that Canada should continue to support its allies in this struggle against aggression and human rights violations.

I for one had given many reasons in support of Canada's participation in the peace restoring effort in Kosovo. First, we have an obligation to support our allies and to respond to the acts of violence and human rights violations in Kosovo. Canada's commitment to freedom and respect for human rights would become meaningless if we failed to act.

Second, Canada should be part of any peacemaking force mobilized by NATO following the negotiations because of the alliance's proven expertise in carrying out this kind of mission. On the eve of NATO'S 50th anniversary, we must continue to co-operate with our NATO allies in maintaining peace and stability in Europe.

Third, our participation would be in line with our foreign and defence policies, which are based on promoting Canadian values abroad and contributing to international peace and security.

Finally, I had indicated that Canada's participation would constitute a logical extension of our prior and current contributions to UN and NATO peace operations in that region since 1991.

My position has not changed since our debate in October. Unfortunately, the situation has deteriorated in many regards. We cannot accept human rights violations like the ones in Racak, nor can we ignore the serious geopolitical problems associated with this crisis. I am more than ever convinced that the international community, of which Canada is a member, must be prepared to take action in favour of peace and stability.

During my first trip to Bosnia in 1994, I was able to see the damage caused by years of war to the people and the country. I witnessed the contribution of the NATO stabilisation force in Bosnia when I went back to Bosnia in November 1997 as part of a delegation of members from the defence and foreign affairs committees. At the time we met with members from the Canadian armed forces and we saw all their efforts to promote peace.

The international community has taken several steps to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict which has been going on in Kosovo since hostilities first escalated in early 1998. We are eagerly awaiting the outcome of the Rambouillet negotiations hoping the leaders of the Albanians in Kosovo and the representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be able to settle their differences at the negotiating table.

I urge all my colleagues to recognize the seriousness of the situation both in Kosovo and the Central African Republic. Under these circumstances, we would be well advised to maintain our

presence in MINURCA in the Central African Republic. Moreover, if it is determined that a NATO led implementation force should be part of the solution to the crisis in Kosovo, Canada would be well advised to be involved in such a force.

[English]

**Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, renewed fighting in Kosovo has once again fixed the eyes of the world on the Balkans and as we debate this issue in the House tonight we do so with a real hope that a solution can be found.

I direct my remarks to this aspect of the motion we have before us. The contact group sponsored talks between the Serbs and the Kosovar Albanians in Rambouillet, France offer for the first time the possibility of a solution to this struggle. We earnestly hope the parties can come to an agreement and that the differences between them can be resolved.

Canada must be prepared to participate in any potential peace agreement emerging from the Rambouillet process.

● (2220 )

Just as we were ready to participate in NATO's implementation force upon confirmation of success at the Dayton peace process, we must be prepared to react should these talks also succeed.

As a member of the international community, as a member of the NATO alliance and as a nation that values peace and democracy, we have a moral obligation to participate in a NATO led peace operation in Kosovo should such action be deemed necessary.

Peace and security in the Balkans have been under threat for nearly a decade now and Canada has joined the international community from the beginning to respond to those threats.

As I conceive it there are four key reasons why we should favourably consider a role in any NATO led operation in Kosovo. First, let me remind members that Canada has a proud multilateral history. As a major trading nation, this country thrives in a stable, international system where we protect our interests by working with others. While Canada faces no immediate direct military threat, we are directly affected by instability elsewhere. Our security and prosperity depend on global peace and stability.

Our willingness to play a meaningful role in international relations is a Canadian tradition. We went to Europe to fight for peace in 1914 and returned to do so again in 1939. After the end of the second world war we fought for those same ideals in Korea. In addition, we have done so for many years through our commitments to peacekeeping. Over the last 50 years over 100,000 Canadian men and women have served in peacekeeping missions around the world. We must continue this tradition.

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Canadians are internationalists and not isolationists by nature. We are proud of our heritage of service abroad. Our multilateralism is an expression of Canadian values at work in the world. We care about the course of events abroad and so we are willing to work with other countries to maintain peace and stability.

Second, our desire to contribute to international security has made us active partners in the North Atlantic treaty alliance. The North Atlantic community is one of Canada's most important and enduring international links. We are fully committed to collective defence and see the alliance as a force for stability, deterrence and rapid reaction to emergency.

Canadians have kept faith with NATO and these ideals for five decades now. We have always been ready to join our allies in opposing threats to stability and peace.

Today we face another such situation. If NATO becomes involved in a peace support mission in Kosovo then we should be there to play our part. Canadian participation in a NATO peace mission to Kosovo is in every way consistent with our commitment to peace and security in the transatlantic region and our commitment to the North Atlantic alliance.

Third, the Balkan region is highly volatile and represents a serious threat to international peace and security. Should the situation in Kosovo worsen, the risk of neighbouring states getting drawn into the conflict would also rise. Albania, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, as well as Greece, Turkey or even more distant powers such as Russia and Iran could conceivably become involved.

Twice in this century brush fires in the Balkans have resulted in war in Europe. Canadians are not blind to the lessons of history. While the chance of another major war seems remote, in the Balkans and elsewhere we must persevere with our efforts to maintain international peace and security through the reinforcement of regional stability.

This brings me to my fourth reason for continuing a Canadian presence in this troubled region. We have been an active player in the Balkans since war first broke out in 1991. So long as we can make a meaningful contribution to improving the situation there we should continue to do so.

When the warring factions agreed to a ceasefire in the former republic of Yugoslavia in September 1991 we were among the first participants in the European community monitoring mission that was set up to verify the settlement, contributing up to 15 of the mission's 350 civilian and military observers.

In 1992 the UN security council established the United Nations protection force in Yugoslavia, UNPROFOR, as an arrangement to facilitate a negotiated settlement in an atmosphere of peace and

security. Canada contributed two major units, a logistics battalion and personnel for various headquarters positions.

UNPROFOR's mandate included the protection and demilitarization of the three UN protected areas, deimplementation of various ceasefire agreements in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the delivery of humanitarian aid and the protection and monitoring of the no fly zones and the UN safe areas.

• (2225 )

NATO's implementation force or IFOR was the next significant step to establishing peace and stability in the Balkan region. The purpose of IFOR was to enforce compliance by the warring parties in the former Yugoslavia with the Dayton peace accord. Canada contributed more than 1,000 personnel, including a brigade headquarters, an infantry company, an armoured squadron, an engineer squadron, a military police platoon and support personnel.

Building on IFOR successes was NATO's stabilization force or SFOR. Responding to a UN security council resolution, the North Atlantic council authorized in late 1996 a NATO operation to support the further implementation of the Dayton peace agreement. SFOR's mission, still being carried out today, is to provide a continued military presence to deter renewed hostilities and to stabilize and consolidate peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There are currently about 1,300 Canadian troops deployed with SFOR. Our contingent, deployed throughout an area roughly the size of Prince Edward Island, includes a mechanized infantry battalion group, national support and command elements and an engineer design and works team. Canada also provides personnel to various multinational staff positions in SFOR headquarters.

Our other operations in the Balkans that Canadian forces personnel have or are participating in include a NATO led operation enforcing compliance of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina, the enforcement of a United Nations embargo of the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations mission of observers in Prevlaka and the UN preventive deployment force in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. We have also been contributing to a variety of multinational operations in Kosovo.

We currently have 23 troops deployed with the OSCE Kosovo verification mission, established to verify compliance by all parties to the October 1998 Holbrooke-Milosevic agreement.

Our contributions to current NATO operations in Kosovo include 60 personnel with the extraction force ready to remove OSCE verifiers and other designated persons from Kosovo should it prove necessary, eight Canadian forces personnel deployed as headquarters staff with the Kosovo air verification mission, and 130 personnel and 6 CF-18s with operation echo, ready to participate in any NATO operations.

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The many operations and missions I have just outlined are illustrative of Canada's strong and continued commitment to maintaining peace in the Balkan region. More than 20,000 Canadian forces personnel have rotated in and out of that theatre. We clearly have invested significant personnel and resources in order to promote peace and security there and have made a genuine and meaningful difference.

We should maintain that investment because more remains to be done, as events of the past few weeks have clearly shown. Large refugee flows, political struggles between various ethnic groups, continued human rights abuses and the ever present danger of widespread war are all illustrative of just how much more work the international community needs to do. With the right kind of agreement out of the negotiations in Rambouillet, we can and should once again shoulder our share of the international efforts in the region.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, given the situation we are facing today, let us keep the question to one side that the brave men and women of the armed forces are not well equipped. They do not have enough facilities to go to those countries. Keeping aside the question of how much it is going to cost us, keeping aside what our long term plans are, I would like to find out from the member if he knows how much involvement we are asking from the European Community or the other affected or related countries to deal with this issue in their own backyard.

I would also like to find out from the member what strategy we have to deal with the regional security in that area?

**Mr. David Pratt:** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to respond to the hon. member's question. First of all, with respect to the issue of how many troops would be provided by other European countries, I think it is safe to say that still is part of the negotiating process within the NATO member countries. Unfortunately we have not yet got an agreement at Rambouillet although there are increasing signs that the Americans, the French and the British are putting significant pressure on the negotiating parties to come up with an agreement.

• (2230)

Clearly when there was discussion about the number of troops that would be involved, the numbers were somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 troops. It is obvious that the Europeans would be required to shoulder a significant amount of that burden.

A number of my colleagues and I on the defence committee had the opportunity to visit Germany recently to get briefings on what was happening with the German armed forces and their views along with the foreign ministry officials' views of what was going on in Kosovo. They understand fully the need for more European

participation in a Kosovo operation. They understand as well as we do that if the situation in Kosovo is allowed to deteriorate, then the stability of the Balkans itself comes into question. That is something that no members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would want to have happen.

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder what the Liberal member across the way thinks about the in excess of \$7 billion worth of cuts his government has made to the Canadian military and whether or not he thinks that assists them in their mission overseas.

**Mr. David Pratt:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that when this government took office back in 1993 a number of very difficult decisions had to be made. There were cuts to transfer payments. There were across the board cuts in many government departments. And yes, there were cuts to the military.

We saw in the budget an increase in funds for health care, a rejuvenation of many programs of departments of the government, including national defence. We are going to see in the years to come continued reinvestment in Canadian programs and services.

In terms of the ability of the military to do the job in both Bosnia and Kosovo, I have the greatest of respect for our commanders in the field both in Canada and overseas. I had the opportunity to see them in action during the ice storm and with my colleagues on the national defence committee when we visited Bosnia last May.

I say to the hon. member across the way that they are well equipped in Bosnia. They are fully able to do the job and they are doing a tremendous job over there. If Canadians had the opportunity to see what our troops face from day to day they would be extremely proud as I was to see that maple leaf flag flying over the camp at Velika Kladusa, in Zgon and in other camps where the Canadian soldiers are based. They are doing a tremendous job. They have the equipment and they are getting better equipment.

Over the years I think the Canadian forces can look forward to even greater triumphs in terms of peacekeeping and contributing to world peace and security.

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, for the folks back home I am going to give them a thumbnail sketch of why this is going on.

This evening we are debating whether or not Canada should be sending troops to Kosovo and the Central African Republic. That is the basic gist of why we are here.

Our servicemen should be commended for their loyalty and dedication to Canada. Even though their morale is at an all-time low they should be commended for their continued commitment to the armed forces. Despite everything else, it is nothing short of outstanding when we consider what they are making do with under

the circumstances. My hat tips to the Canadian armed forces and I appreciate what they do.

• (2235 )

To give a little background on the issue, the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo is mounting an ongoing campaign to liberate Kosovo from Serbian control. The Serbs meanwhile are mounting an offensive against the ethnic Albanians in what appears to be an attempt at ethnic cleansing. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, has served notice that unless Serbian aggression toward ethnic Albanians in Kosovo ceases, NATO will use military force against Serbian military positions until the Serbs back down. Canada has been asked to participate in any NATO action in Kosovo.

Further to the issue of Kosovo, the population of Kosovo is some 90% Albanian and 10% Serb. Kosovo had political autonomy within Yugoslavia until 1989 when that autonomy was abolished. The region is of great historic and symbolic significance to the Serbs who lost their national independence to the Turks in the battle of Kosovo in 1389. I will say that date again, 1389. That is a long time ago, over 600 years. I guess some are beginning to wonder whether a few even though passionate but poorly equipped Canadians are going to be able to rectify a situation that has been more than 600 years to the boiling point.

I would like to quote someone who I think has relevance with regard to this debate, General Lewis MacKenzie. He stated that a full parliamentary debate had to be held on this issue. In his words, "I would like mothers and fathers of soldiers and spouses of soldiers if and when they are killed to feel that it was a justifiable cause that only can be determined after a public debate".

I would also like to touch on the fact that one of the Reform caucus members, the member of parliament for Calgary Northeast and the Reform Party defence critic, has been quoted recently that if the number of our forces drops below 60,000, as some people are saying, it is unrealistic to participate in activities such as Kosovo. I am going to talk about that during my speech.

Despite how badly some of our forces would like to see time in the field, and I can certainly understand that, nonetheless they know and I know, and I am going to talk about it this evening, how they are suffering because of the lack of proper equipment which they need to be able to get the job done.

Let us run down a top 10 list, a thumbnail sketch of why there are problems and then I will put flesh on the bones of that.

First, sending our troops to Kosovo is going to put them at risk. That is always the case with military operations. Furthermore the current chief of the defence staff and his predecessor both have said that Canada is not combat ready. I repeat that, the chief of the

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defence staff and his predecessor have both said that Canada is not combat ready.

Why is that? I am going on to my next point. It is because this Liberal government is starving our military. That is why this is going on. How has the government been starving the military? The Liberals have siphoned off over \$7 billion from the military budget since they have come to office. That is why there is a problem.

The government has cut a third of our military, over 30,000 personnel. I guess we could say it all started with Pierre Elliot Trudeau and not having a love or appreciation of the armed forces, but the song goes on with the Liberals.

The government is not giving our troops the tools they need to do the job. What type of tools are we looking at? Artillery that is 25 years old, helicopters 35 years old, tanks 35 years old. They barely have the funds to train properly never mind an insufficient budget for live firing. They cannot even do live firing. I have been on some of these ranges. It is absurd that we are training troops without the ability to do live firing with live ammunition.

• (2240 )

To be a player in international politics we have to pay the price. If we want to have power and influence to make peace in places like Kosovo, we have to pay that price. The price is combat capable armed forces.

The Liberals have failed our hardworking military. They are starving our military the funds they need to do their excellent work. This Liberal irresponsibility, inadequate training and old equipment are putting our troops in jeopardy and the blood of our troops will be in their hands.

That is a brief thumbnail sketch. I am going to put some meat on the bones of this.

What type of Canadian contribution to a NATO force is envisaged? What size of force is envisaged? What equipment will it have? How can parliamentarians discuss in an informed way what Canada's role should be when they do not know these facts? We are being asked to send troops but because of all the problems with the funding, the equipment and everything else we are going into this blind. And it is not as if that has not been done before by this government, has it?

Political decisions are being made by the leading western powers at negotiations in France, at which Canada has almost no voice. Why do we have no voice? Because our influence in NATO has eroded so badly.

When I was in Esquimalt last year I was told that we were going to be removed from the grid for undersea mapping because we were no longer in the submarine club. The United States would love to have an ally to share that information with and to participate in games with so they could test their capability. But

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when we no longer have any ability to provide information for that, they can no longer justify keeping us on the grid. Because of that pressure, the government went ahead and purchased the bare minimum needed to stay part of the grid.

That is the reason Canada is a joke when it comes to things like NATO. That is a travesty.

We want to participate in a NATO military force but the forces we have are seriously deficient. We have no combat helicopters. We have no heavy lift helicopters. We have mostly light armoured vehicles, not heavy armoured vehicles. We have no ability to withdraw or reinforce our troops in a crisis due to the lack of any strategic lift. Those are serious problems with this mission. The equipment of the forces is a real disgrace. It is rusting out.

One example is the Griffon helicopters. The auditor general reported that they have inadequate lift capability. They have poor reconnaissance capability. They can lift army artillery only for very short distances. They have a buildup of static electricity. Yet these are the helicopters we are planning to deploy in Kosovo. They cannot mount guns. They are unable to be used for the purposes for which they were bought.

I list off all these things and the government is still considering going ahead and doing these things when it is not properly equipping the forces.

We have already one battalion group, 1,300 troops in Bosnia. On February 9 the deputy chief of defence staff stated before the House of Commons foreign affairs and defence committee that he could have no definitive answer to the question of how many troops could be sustained overseas. Yet we are increasing our contingent. I know the people in the armed forces would like to see time in the field. They know and I know and the Canadian public now knows that they are being sent into these operations without having what they need to do the job.

That all being considered, Canada because of all these considerations is going to be reliant on our allies for logistics in helicopter support. What other option is there? We are playing Russian roulette with the lives of Canadian troops because we do not have the proper things to give them in this particular situation.

A ground invasion of Kosovo has already been ruled out. If a ground invasion has been ruled out, what is left is an air only campaign. There is a question of whether or not that is likely to achieve the desired results. With an air only campaign, we are sending in helicopters that are ill fitted for the mission. It has already been ruled out that there cannot be a ground campaign. It will have to be an air only campaign. Yet we are sending troops into the area without having appropriate air support. I do not know how

that makes any sense. But I guess that is Liberal logic when it comes to the armed forces.

• (2245 )

I am going to talk about Canada's national interest. We do have national interests in the Balkans. We certainly have a strong interest in regional stability. We have an interest in ensuring that the instability in the Balkans does not spill over into neighbouring countries. But the question is are these vital national interests? Whether these are vital national interests has never been adequately addressed by our government.

Should Canadians die to ensure the stability of the Balkans? This is a sobering question. But we have to reflect on the fact that 17 Canadians have already died in Bosnia and more than 100 have been wounded. How big a sacrifice can Canada be expected to make if our vital interests are not at stake and especially if this government is not willing to give them the supplies, material and equipment they need to be able to make sure they are not putting their lives at any more risk than they absolutely need to?

The national interest considerations need to be at the forefront when troop deployment decisions are taken by any Canadian government. We owe that to our troops and we owe it to the Canadian people.

Reform has laid out six criteria that should be met with regard to committing and deploying Canadian troops. One, there is a serious threat to international stability and that diplomatic efforts have been exhausted. Two, that so far as possible there is multinational support for military action. Three, that there is a workable plan and strategy for military action to resolve the issue. Four, that the plan includes a well defined mission and a clear definition of Canada's role. Five, that the role expected of Canada is within our fiscal and military capability. Six, that there is a command and control arrangement satisfactory to Canada.

I have run through six questions and we do not have satisfactory fulfilment of these six criteria for the deployment of Canadian forces, all this considering that we have a crippled armed forces.

I am going to talk about some of the problems we have. This is a question that was posed a few days ago to the defence minister in the House of Commons. I quote part of it: "Since the Liberal government has come into power it has cut over \$7 billion from the defence budget. The Sea Kings were grounded again and unable to fly. Pilots are taking risks, undue risks, flying old equipment".

When that question was posed, and we all know the problems that have happened with the Sea Kings, what did the Minister of National Defence say when he was questioned on this important subject? The minister said: "We are developing a procurement strategy". Men are dying in the field. I am happy to know that our



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defence minister is developing a procurement strategy. Good for him.

During the election of 1993 the Prime Minister promised he would cancel the Conservative government's EH-101 contract valued at \$5.8 billion for 50 helicopters. Those are 1992 estimates. The cost of the promise was approximately \$530 million due to cancellation costs and penalties.

It is ironic that the new helicopters are similar in design to the cancelled EH-101s. As a matter of fact, the similarities between the models are so prevalent that it forces us to question what the real motives behind the Liberal's 1993 election promise were. This is an important issue and it will not go away. It will only get worse.

There was a news conference 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. We all remember the complications when we actually had troops die.

• (2250)

Now we have unreliable aging aircraft and the government is putting lives before budget dollars with this. This is a question that was posed to the Minister of National Defence. What did he say when he was asked about our 35 year old helicopters that have had seven engine failures? He said: "In this case there have been starter problems with the engines when they start them on the ground". Bravo. Where else do you start helicopter engines but on the ground? Are we supposed to start them in mid-air? Do helicopters just start a thousand feet in the air and then plummet to the earth killing the people on board? I do not think so but our good old Minister of National Defence seems to think that just might be the case.

My conservative estimate of what Somalia cost us is \$30 million although it could have been higher.

I will talk to the issue of tanks because we have terribly old tanks. The United States was willing to give us Abrams tanks. I was told this by people in the U.S. embassy and by our own Canadian soldiers. Rather than mothball them in the desert in Arizona, the American government was willing to give us these tanks and willing to pay for maintenance costs because we are their ally. This government turned down those tanks. It would rather have them sit in mothballs in Arizona than use this equipment, and it bellyaches about funding. Shame on the government.

In my riding CFB Calgary was closed. There were a thousand acres of land. The troops were moved up to Edmonton where there were only 640 acres of land. It does not sound like a very wise move in terms of the land space but nonetheless that was done. I have it written down that there was a \$65 million price tag but there are speculations it cost a lot more than that. All this was going on

yet our government continued to cut troops and put them into commitments it knows it will not be able to properly fund.

The government wants to go ahead and send our troops to Kosovo. I know some troops want to see time in the field, and I appreciate that. I could feel that when I was on the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

I wish I had more time. I could go on about other UN involvements we have had. For example, they have not solved the problems in Angola even though the UN tries to play international cop and does not seem to have what it takes to do it.

I could go on about who will have to pay for this. The *Globe and Mail* has talked about the fact that paying for these types of operations with a shrinking military budget means there will have to be more troop cuts, that we will have to rotate more of our troops and they will be more tired and more prone to accidents and fatalities on the job.

I could talk about the search and rescue problems we have in Esquimalt. We cannot do our own search and rescue. We have to rely on Americans because of budget cuts and because we do not have helicopters. I could go on and on but I have wrapped up my time. I wish the best of luck to our men and women in the armed forces. I only wish the government appreciated them more and funded them properly.

**Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the debate this evening, however late the hour, to share with members of the House some thoughts on this important issue. I do not believe the last member who spoke bothered to address the second aspect of this question, whether we should continue our troop presence in the Central African Republic.

This debate is to deal with two things, whether we should retain our troops in the Central African Republic and whether we should make our troops available in the event, and only in the event, they are needed for an operation in Kosovo. I would like to address those two items.

• (2255)

The first item is dealt with more simply. It is a smaller number of troops, some 65 or 75 troops, who are in a communications position in the Central African Republic.

It is important to speak to this because it shows the type of commitment that Canada and our armed services are making toward peacekeeping in the world. We need to keep our troops in the Central African Republic.

There is an election to be held there shortly. We have responsibilities as a member of the security council to ensure peace and

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security in the world. We have chosen to be on the security council. We must accept the responsibilities that go with that post.

It seems to me that Canadians and our armed services as well would be anxious to serve and to continue to serve in the Central African Republic to ensure that an election will be held there in a way that will guarantee establishment of a free and democratic country there. It is one of the best things we are doing in the world today where we are able to provide to the world some of the finest people in terms of peacekeeping.

They are some of the finest examples of men and women who are able to work in different communities and difficult situations in order to bring their expertise, particularly in that area which requires bilingual expertise which is the perfect example of what we have in our services, and make it work in a way which will ensure peace in that African country.

It would be a tragedy if the official opposition were to have its way and, for the reasons given by the last speaker in talking about the inability of us to survive and provide the services necessary to keep those troops there, we were to withdraw from that essential function.

Of far greater import is the debate over the issue of whether we should be prepared to stand and commit troops to Kosovo.

I will share with the Canadian public and members of the House an experience which I had in January this year which makes me believe it is not only our duty and obligation but it is common sense for us to make available our forces for that operation.

I will address at the end of my comments the observations of the hon. member who preceded me that we do not have the capacity to make the commitment I would ask our troops to make.

I happened to be in Vienna at the OSCE parliamentary assembly in January this year. A group of us came together. The chairman of the Russian Duma, a member of the U.S. Congress, a French member of parliament, I and other members of parliaments from around the world. We crafted a resolution on Kosovo in which we sought to bring both sides together. We criticized both sides for their excesses and asked that both sides come together to achieve a peaceful solution to the dispute there.

As we were leaving Vienna 45 innocent Kosovar civilians were taken out by the Serbian police in charge of that country and shot point blank, massacred. I realized then that all the talk, all the words in all the parliaments of the world in the end cannot change a situation if we are not willing to back up at some point our words with some force and some action.

That is where we are at tonight. That is what we have to determine in this House. Are we, as representatives of the

Canadian people, willing to commit our troops, part of ourselves, to the process of trying to bring peace to Kosovo?

We would not be where we are in the process of trying to bring peace to that region if Mr. Milosevic had not been told that there will be an employment of force. We need the presence of troops. We need the threat of troops to kickstart the Rambouillet process. That is now working. We need the presence of troops ultimately to ensure that process will work.

• (2300)

We have seen before Mr. Milosevic and his lack of respect of international engagements. Nothing short of the presence of an enforceable mechanism to make sure that he will adhere to his responsibilities, if he enters into a political arrangement, will make any sense in that arena. We have learned that through bitter experience in the Bosnian theatre and we are learning that today in Kosovo.

Are Canadian troops needed for that? The Reform Party may well take the position that everything I have said is correct but that there should not be Canadian troops there. It is true that we need a larger presence of European troops. This is a European problem and Europeans should be in a position to deal with these issues themselves.

However, there are two features we must bear in mind. We as Canadians have a specific responsibility in peacekeeping because we have contributed to the United Nations role in peacekeeping and we have made a specific and an enormous worldwide contribution to that area. When we look at the contribution we have made in Bosnia we recognize that this is exactly where Canadians can make a difference.

I believe that a force in Kosovo will not be able to make the difference that it makes with Canadian troops there. I have had the opportunity and privilege to visit our troops in Bosnia. Our troops are serving there with great pride, with enormous professionalism and with great expertise. With all deference to the member who spoke before me, they are doing so knowing they are equipped to do their job, are able to do their job, are trained to do their job and are proud to do their job. The Canadian people are proud of the job they are doing there.

Canadian troops will make a difference in the event that troops are required in Kosovo. I urge our government to ensure, if and when the call is made under the UN mandate and through a NATO operation to provide troops to make sure that peace will come in Kosovo so normal men and women can survive and live decent lives without being threatened with arbitrary execution or being expelled from their homes, that we will be standing with our allies and with, I hope, as in Bosnia, not only NATO allies but Russian

troops and troops from other parts of the world who will join us to try to bring peace to this troubled region.

I have participated in many of these debates on similar subjects about whether we should commit our forces to the betterment of humanity and to the advancement of the Canadian goals of tolerance and of making a better world. In each one of these debates the Reform Party has taken the same position: "Oh, yes, we think this is a good idea but we are not equipped. We should not be there. Our men and women should not be exposed to this because they are not equipped".

Do Reform Party members go and talk to our men and women? Have they been to Bosnia as we have and talked to them? Have they consulted our troops? The last member was honest enough to constantly say "I know that our troops would like to do this but we do not think they should do it". He is a greater expert in the knowledge and understanding of what our troops are able to do and what they would like to do than themselves.

Let him consult our troops or, even better, let him and his colleagues come with me and my colleagues to meetings of the OSCE general assembly, for example, in which the Reform Party refuses to participate. They will not come and talk to colleagues from Albania, Kosovo, Russia and other countries. They do not believe in that. No, they do not deign to travel. It is not worthy of them to be involved in debates with the other members of the world community so that they could have a better understanding of what is taking place.

They were not there in Copenhagen where you and I were, Mr. Speaker, when we debated the Kosovo issue this year in the OSCE parliamentary assembly. There was no Reform Party member there because they chose not to come. They do not wish to be associated with discussions of these issues. They do not wish to taint their debate in this House with any sense of knowledge or understanding of these issues. They choose to sit here wrapped in a blanket of ignorance that enables them to take the position they are taking in the House tonight. I think that is most unfortunate.

● (2305 )

Let them come out of that eggshell they are in. Let them come with us, meet the people, come to the OSCE this summer, come to St. Petersburg, meet colleagues from other parliaments around the world, get an understanding of the problems that other people have to deal with, and we will be able to deal with those together as we could as Canadians, as our troops will be dealing with when they are there on the ground with their Canadian values and their Canadian sense of how to make things work for a better world and for better conditions for people to live in.

I read with great interest an article which the member of parliament for Red Deer, who is the spokesperson for the Reform

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Party, wrote in the *National Post* recently in which he accused the government of a failure of being willing to take a strong stand on issues. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, he wrote, "is interested in soft power, will do nothing, is cowardly, cavilling, unwilling to take a stand". The world in his view was a Manichaeian one, one of darkness and of light, and we in the Liberal Party were unwilling to ever take a stand on these issues.

Where are we tonight in this debate when members of the Reform Party faced with a true, articulated and clear issue of darkness are unwilling to take a stand? They are the ones who are unwilling to deal with this. They are the ones that are of soft power because they are soft on understanding the nature of the way in which the world operates. They will not participate in it in a way which enables them to be a real player.

I would like to leave members of the House with this thought. If we as Canadians are to play the role in the security council, which we have just accepted this year for the next two years, the best thing we can do is contribute to the peacekeeping conditions in which the United Nations and in which other international institutions are able to keep the peace. If we do not contain situations such as Kosovo and situations such as prevail in the Central African Republic, conditions will prevail in the world which will in turn come and overwhelm us in this country.

It is for that reason we must go forward in this debate. It is that reason we must adopt the position of enabling our troops to be available in the sense of availing the world community of a chance to make peace for the sake of the people who live in Kosovo, all the people of Europe, and ultimately the people of the world if we are to have a better life for all of us.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier I listened to all the speeches made by members of the House. I particularly admired the speeches of two members of our party, the hon. member for Red Deer and the hon. member for Calgary Northeast. They have thrown light on this issue. They brought to the attention of the House very good issues and I really appreciated listening to those issues.

Just now I listened to the hon. member from the government side. He is the chairman of the foreign affairs and international trade committee and I had the opportunity to work with him. I highly appreciate his knowledge and his experience. He was bragging about the Liberal government's achievements and the direction it is giving us on this issue. He was almost name calling with regard to the official opposition's foreign critic.

Putting that aside, I would like to find out if the hon. member could throw some light on what diplomatic initiatives the Liberal government has taken since we had a take note debate in the House on October 7, 1998. What preventive measures has his government taken in Kosovo or the Central African Republic?

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• (2310)

I would also like to know why his party has not given any briefing about the situation in Kosovo and the Central African Republic to members of parliament. We had no briefing and I would like to find out why not. If the hon. member is so proud of the government's record and if he is so proud of the \$7.8 billion cuts made to the defence forces, why is he pleading that we should send them whenever we get a 911 call from any country in the world?

I would like to find out why briefings were not given to members of parliament. Also I would like to know why this issue is not put for a vote in the House. If the member is so clear in his ideas, why is there a take note debate and why is there is no vote?

The hon. member bragged about peacekeeping initiatives. When we send forces to the Central African Republic and Kosovo what will they keep there? Will it be peace? Which peace? Is peace existing there? Did we make peace first?

I would like to find out from the member how can he keep something which does not exist there. It is common sense that one can keep something when something exists. First we have to make peace. Then we can keep peace. There is no peace. I would like to ask the hon. member for answers to these questions.

**Mr. Bill Graham:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions. He says we cannot keep peace where there is no peace, but in fact the presence of the forces in the Central African Republic is establishing at this particular point an important sense of stability in that country to enable democratic elections which if we withdraw at this time will make it impossible. The member will probably agree with me that it would be very foolish for us to withdraw at this crucial time when we can keep those troops there until such time as the elections can be held.

The Central African Republic is a special case. I appreciate that his comments are more directed toward the problem of Kosovo because that is the more difficult one and the one which will require the greater number of troops. It is precisely the threat of the use of force in Kosovo which is enabling us to get to the point where we may have peace in that region. We may establish a humanitarian regime for people in which to live.

I would suggest to the member that he would have to agree. Whether or not, as his party seems to be saying in the House tonight, Canadians should be involved, would he intellectually say nobody should be involved? Would he say the United States should not be involved or the Europeans should not be involved? In fact the view of his party is that it would be best if everybody stood back and let this whole thing just blow up. Should we let the Albanians and the Serbs go to war with one another, spilling over

into other regions, spilling over into Bosnia where we have our own troops that would be at risk?

I took it from the position of his party in the House tonight that I do not think he would go that far. I think he would say some force is necessary but let it not be us that provides the force, which I do not think is an appropriate response in these circumstances.

As for votes in the House in take note debates, I cannot speak to that. That is an agreement the leaders of the House have taken over the years. It may well be that at some point a vote in the House would be appropriate for these debates. At the moment these are called take note debates. They give an opportunity for the members to share views as we are able to do tonight in a way that is helpful to the government to understand issues without necessarily requiring a vote.

As for our party, which he says should be giving a briefing to his party, I do not know whether his party would really want to have a briefing from our party. If that is what he would like, I am sure I would be willing to share with him the views of the minister if he had attended the foreign affairs committee meeting this afternoon where the minister came before the committee and was with us over two hours.

We discussed this issue and the government has always tried to make documents and information available to every member of the House. Every one of us would like to have more information. I share with him the desire to have more information, but I do not think we can say that the government side or the government as such is keeping information from members of the House. I wish that he had had an opportunity to be with us. His colleagues were there in the foreign affairs committee this afternoon where we had a discussion of this matter with the foreign minister. Finally, what are the diplomatic initiatives which Canada has taken? Canada takes an active role in the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, an organization which has been directly involved in the Kosovo issue. It is perhaps the most significant organization involved in Kosovo. Canada has played an important role in the OSCE. I know from my own work there that there are many European and other governments which would like to see Canada play an even larger role. But we are not a European country.

• (2315)

We are a North American country. We have limited resources. But within those resources we play a very important role and we have provided observers in Kosovo. We have provided police in Kosovo. In the course of dealing with this situation we have provided an enormous amount of energy on behalf of the department and on behalf of the minister to try to bring the sides together, to persuade the KLA, the armed wing of the Kosovars, to moderate their demands and to persuade the Serbian government of Mr.

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Milosevic to behave in a civilized way in a part of a country where they are supposed to be managing their own citizens and not treat it as an occupying army.

We have been active in that and I am surprised to hear the member suggest that we have not, because what is curious is that when we do get active in these files we get criticized for spending our time and energy on them, and our money on them, from the party on the other side which does not wish to spend any money, but then when nothing is done it says to us we are doing nothing.

A great deal is being done by this government in working on this file. A great deal has been done by our ambassador at the OSCE. A great deal is being done by all our diplomatic corps in supporting our NATO allies and other in the Rambouillet process and I am surprised that the member would seek to use this partisan moment to criticize what we are trying to do in this very important matter.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Surrey Central to participate in this take note debate concerning the situation in Kosovo and the situation in the Central African Republic.

This debate was arranged at very short notice and without any briefing to members of parliament.

Minutes ago I asked a question. I did not get the answer. I wanted to ask the question to any other member in the House to find out if anyone can explain or highlight the diplomatic initiative or the preventive measures this government has taken to address the situation in Kosovo or in the Central African Republic, particularly in Kosovo since we had a debate in the House on October 7. From then until now what initiatives have they taken? I did not get an answer to that question.

The government should have been pursuing initiatives long ago, at least when we saw the signs of the problem occurring. But it failed to take any initiative.

Now we know that plan A has failed. Plan A is the diplomatic initiative or preventive measures. Even though the government did not pursue it aggressively, we are asked to go to plan B. Plan B is military action. I call it the bitter medicine for peacekeeping.

I ask the foreign affairs minister to look into the possibilities of peacemaking missions rather than peacekeeping missions in the long run.

The Central African Republic is the poorest of the poor countries. I lived in west Africa. I was a university professor in Liberia, west Africa. I have visited many countries in west Africa. What I saw in the bloody civil wars were 10-year old, 12-year old children with AK-47s. I am talking the real guns which can kill, not toys.

• (2320 )

The point is those guns are not made in those countries. Some countries in the weapons trade have manufactured those guns and then sold them to the poor people in those countries. That is how they get the guns. I wonder what action the United Nations, the international community and, for that matter, Canada have taken to prevent infiltration of those war causing weapons, particularly in poverty ridden countries.

People have problems putting food on the table in the evening. Their families are starving but they get guns to fight. How can they afford to buy those weapons? What have we done to stop the weapons trade? Absolutely nothing.

Some countries sell weapons to those countries and then they send in peacekeeping missions. How appalling this situation is. We need to find sustainable, long term and real solutions to these civil and tribal wars. We should help promote democracy and education in those countries. A democratic power in any country should lead to justice. Justice should lead to love. People should love each other when they get justice because they are satisfied. No one has worked on these things. When power leads to justice and justice leads to love that is how we get rid of hatred, poverty, ignorance and bloody civil wars which we face every now and then. It is a sad story.

Let me give the House an analogy. When a pressure cooker is heated steam is produced. To contain that steam we put weight on the pressure cooker. Here we try to put military pressure to contain that steam. People of these countries are already deeply divided based on their ethnic backgrounds or on their tribal origins. If we do not want that steam have we ever taken any action to remove the heat from under the pressure cooker? No, I do not think so. Have we ever resolved an issue by solving the problem before it explodes? No, we have not.

In most African countries, including central Africa, ethnic and tribal problems lead to these bloody civil wars. Did any member of the international community do anything to stop the branding of the people based on their ethnic origin, based on the tribes they belong to? That is a root cause of the civil war and tribal wars in those countries.

In African countries when people meet and greet each other either they recognize what tribes they belong to or they ask them what their tribe is, whether it is Loma or Mandingo or whatever. What education has been given to them to recognize the similarity among them rather than dwelling on the differences among them? No one has done anything. These people have similarities. No one has made them recognize the similarities.

What can we expect from the Canadian government? There are no efforts to do that even in our country. This government

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encourages the concept of hyphenated Canadians. With the hyphenation concept we divide people, not unite them. Unfortunately this government has done absolutely nothing on that.

• (2325)

Our government, I am sorry to say, lacks a proactive role. It reacts to a situation but does not take a proactive role. This government does very little to prevent conflicts in the world. But it is always on the front line making decisions to send our troops without worrying about what situation they are in or whether they have enough equipment and facilities, whether they have consulted elected officials of the House of Commons. The decision is made before that.

We try to resolve political problems by providing foreign aid or by sending military personnel. These are the two solutions we have to resolve these problems anywhere in the world. We either send foreign aid dollars or we send the military. That is not appropriate.

The government needs a broader agenda for peacekeeping and peacemaking issues. Repeatedly there have been serious situations in countries like Rwanda, Nigeria, Bosnia, Haiti, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the list goes on. Unfortunately this situation will happen again.

I am sorry the United Nations has the inability to respond in a timely fashion. I recognize there is a vacuum and we have to show leadership. Britain, France, Russia and the United States, which was kept busy for one year by Monica, cannot do that.

We are in a strong position as a nation to be mediators in the world. We belong to NATO. We belong to the security council. We are a member of the G-8 countries. We have sent many peacekeeping missions around the world. We are in a perfect position to lead. But this government does not have leading capabilities.

This government is in a better position to lead if it wanted to. We can take peacemaking initiatives in the world. But unfortunately this government lacks those initiatives. There is no leadership. Here is another vacuum.

This is a very important issue but there is also another important issue. If we are planning to take any military action and if we are committing our military support to NATO that means we are committing men and women of the Canadian forces. Many questions deserve answers before we should commit anyone or anything anywhere.

The main question arises here as to whether we are well equipped. Obviously the answer is no. Based on what we have been hearing in the last few months, the answer is no. The defence minister asked for \$700 million but he received only \$325 million in the 1999 budget. Yesterday the minister received less than half the money he wanted.

I also learned that the Canadian forces have 35 year old Sea King helicopters, decades old tanks, 100 useless tactical helicopters, 20 to 45 year old jets and we are expecting to participate in the air attacks with the equipment we have.

This government has cut \$7.8 billion in the defence budget since taking office in 1993. Our defence forces are starving. The minister allowed our troops to be inoculated with expired vaccine. Here is the funny part. He allowed our troops to be inoculated with expired vaccine and he is so irresponsible and so uncaring that he inoculated himself with the expired vaccine.

My constituents and all Canadians need answers to many questions. Canadians are asking why we are choosing a military situation over a diplomatic situation. I do not have any answers. What other possible solutions could we pursue? What are the possibilities of finding a long term solution to this bloody civil war? How are we dealing with the hatred in the minds of those ethnic people?

• (2330)

We can send our troops on a peacekeeping mission. They can keep discipline, they can scare people or they can kill people. But how can they kill the hatred in the minds of the people which is the root cause of these bloody civil wars? That is most important. That is the root cause of the problem. Since I have been here the Liberals have never addressed the root cause.

How much involvement are we asking from the European Community or other affected and related countries in dealing with this issue which is in their backyard? What strategy do we have to deal with the security situation in that region? What participation do we have from the neighbouring countries? Canadians want to know whether we will be creating more victims by bombing in that area. What about those victims we will be creating? Are we creating more victims of the war by bombing?

What is the game plan? We on this side of the House do not know what the game plan is. We do not know what equipment we will be using, how many people are going, for how long, what will be the cost and how much will be our share. We do not know those things. Canadians would like to know how much it will cost, who is paying, what is our share, and whether the government assessed the degree of risk before it committed the men and women of the Canadian defence forces. What is the degree of risk? Do they have enough equipment and facilities? They have old equipment and absolutely no facilities. They were exchanging helmets on previous missions.

I am looking forward to those answers but I doubt we will get them from this government. We will only get answers after our tax dollars have been spent and our troops have had to take the great risks.

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For how long are we going to commit our military forces? We had a bad experience in Cyprus. We were stuck there for 29 years.

Can the government members throw some light on that? No they cannot because the Liberal backbenchers and even the cabinet ministers are insignificant under the tyranny and dictatorship of the current Prime Minister. The very few Liberal backbenchers who are here tonight are pretending to debate in this House. They only know what they are told to say by the foreign minister, the defence minister or the Prime Minister. Even the minister feels like the last one to know. The Prime Minister takes orders from President Bill Clinton or others. They tell him when and where they need our troops. Do we simply have a take note emergency debate and then decide that because it is a humanitarian issue we have to show support for our allies?

We need answers to all these questions before we decide what we should do. This government is the root cause. It is causing our armed forces personnel to jump without knowing where they are jumping to. An eleventh hour take note debate is not an appropriate way to deal with the important and sad situations in Kosovo and the Central African Republic but it is the only option given by the Liberal government to the members of this House.

We will unfortunately be dealing with these peace initiatives in the future. We expect the government will come up with some strategy to educate Canadians, to let them know what we are doing, why we are doing it and where we are going from here. We can go

to plan B because plan A has not succeeded. We did not take the aggressive initiatives for plan A so we are going to plan B which is military action. That is bitter medicine and we have to use it.

I could understand doing that in order to put pressure on the conflicting parties so they would come together in an agreement. But if we really want our forces to go there, I would be skeptical. Like other members of the opposition, I do not have full information.

• (2335 )

We intend to support our allies and the brave men and women of our armed forces but we need answers to those questions. We need a good briefing and then a good logical debate in this House. Otherwise, whatever we decide has no effect because the decision has already been made by this government. The Liberals do not have the courage to put this issue to a vote in the House. They do not have the courage to educate Canadians on this issue.

In conclusion, let me wish good luck to our brave men and women of the armed forces.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no further members rising to speak, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, February 16, 1999 this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 o'clock a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11.36 p.m.)

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