



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 25, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I wish to seek unanimous consent for the following motion. All parties have been consulted and I believe they all agree with the following. I now want to submit it to the House. I move:

That for each of the following items of business, at the specified times, all questions necessary for the disposal of the specified stages shall be deemed to have been put and divisions requested and deferred to the end of consideration of Government Orders on Tuesday, April 13, 1999:

1. Report stage of Bill C-27, when debate concludes or at the end of the time provided for Government Orders on March 25, 1999, whichever is earlier;
2. Second reading of Bill S-11, when debate concludes or after 45 minutes of debate, whichever is earlier;

That at the commencement of consideration of Bill C-27, all amendments that are ruled to be in order shall be deemed to have been duly moved and seconded;

That, when the aforementioned business has been completed, if the House has not yet attended a royal assent ceremony, the sitting shall be suspended to the call of the Chair; and—

For further clarity, if we complete government business before question period, that would also mean that the Chair would suspend the sitting until question period and recall us for that.

That the House shall not sit on Friday, March 26, 1999, but shall be deemed to have sat and adjourned on that day for the purposes of Standing Order 28.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the government's response to the report of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs on the quality of life in the Canadian forces.

* * *

[*English*]

ESTIMATES PART III

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board I am tabling part III of the estimates consisting of 83 departmental reports on plans and priorities.

These documents will be distributed to members of the standing committees to assist in their consideration of the spending authorities sought in part II of the estimates.

* * *

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your committee has studied the report of the Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Financial Services Sector.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we wish to indicate that the Bloc Québécois has tabled a dissenting opinion to the final report of the finance committee concerning the Mackay report.

We feel it lacks precision where Canadian financial services in support of the disadvantaged are concerned, as well as not going far enough. We also consider it an injustice toward provincially chartered insurance companies in Quebec, which cannot at present acquire blocks of insurance from federally chartered companies, and this is an injustice which must be remedied promptly.

Unfortunately, the dissenting opinion does not allow us to remedy that injustice in such a way as to serve the interests of Quebec.

* * *

MOTOR VEHICLE TRANSPORT ACT, 1987

Hon. Stéphane Dion (on behalf of the Minister of Transport) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-77, an act to amend the Motor Vehicle Transport Act, 1987 and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

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

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL ACT

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-490, an act to amend the Auditor General Act (Poverty Commissioner).

She said: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of any tools to demonstrate the true face of poverty and of any assessment of the effectiveness of federal government programs and policies, I propose creation of a position of poverty commissioner.

This person's mandate would be to analyze the causes and effects of poverty in Canada, to assess the effectiveness of federal government measures to reduce or eliminate poverty, and to advise

the federal government on measures it might take to reduce or eliminate poverty.

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

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS—14TH REPORT

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented on Wednesday, October 28, 1998, be concurred in.

● (1015)

Mr. Speaker, it is truly unfortunate that I have to stand today in the House to address a very serious issue that happened in the House of Commons yesterday. I will take my time to go through it. From a personal perspective, I am going to tell members what kind of impact this decision has had on my community and many communities throughout the country.

My concurrence report and motion, which I originally put on October 28, 1998, No. 17, refers to the justice committee and issues relative to victims' rights, the sentencing of offenders and that sort of thing.

The rights of individuals, in particular victims of crime, the issues related to prison reform and what happens to individuals who walk away from our prisons and commit crimes has been an issue that has been very near and dear to my heart. I can tell those people listening and members opposite that not only is it a very serious issue for me and my community, which has affected my community very dearly, but I can assure the House that members on this side, in particular, have been fighting these issues for some time. I have a private member's bill that is very close to the issue that I am about to bring up.

This is not just an issue of the Reform Party. There was a very interesting private member's bill that was introduced by the member for Mississauga East. It was brought into the House some time ago. On second reading only three people in the House opposed the motion to send this private member's bill to committee to be further developed. I am glad to see the solicitor general here this morning because I hope to impress upon him how important this particular issue is and how the decision of the justice committee yesterday affects this issue.

The member for Mississauga East knew full well when she developed her private member's bill just what the implications were of the kind of justice issues that we have today. She introduced Bill C-251, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act respecting cumulative sentences for first reading on October 21, 1997.

Routine Proceedings

As we have said all along in the House, the relevance of Private Members' Business is important to all of us. This is not just an issue where the cabinet should be able to say "That is nice. You have a bill, but that is not our decision, so nothing else matters". The fact is that the member for Mississauga East who developed this private member's bill was not only speaking for the people of Mississauga East, she was speaking for many members on all sides of the House, including me.

Do not laugh over there. This is damn serious stuff and those members better get used to it.

To the folks who are listening, the revenue minister is taunting us on something that is very important to this country. It may not be important to him in Vancouver, but I can assure him that it is damn well important to most people in this country. That is the problem with this government and its ministers. They have the unmitigated gall to cancel good business that comes into this House from private members, but they do not seem to have one ounce of regard for private members when it is their cabinet business that comes into the House.

The Minister of National Revenue is heckling us. I would like you, Mr. Speaker, and the rest of the people listening to understand exactly what that fellow is heckling. This is the nature of the bill that was quashed in committee yesterday, which was supported by all members of the House, save three, last October.

This is how the bill reads and this is what a minister of this government is heckling:

This enactment provides for the imposition of consecutive sentences where a person commits—

• (1020)

I am going to stop for a moment because a member of the cabinet is trying to disrupt the process. The member is from Vancouver. I guess the victims of crime in Vancouver would be a bit more than disturbed to understand that a cabinet minister is heckling, because we are trying to get this cabinet to understand that this is an important bill.

It is nice to see the solicitor general sitting quietly and attentively. If we could finally get the revenue minister from Vancouver to shut up for a little bit, maybe—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford is an experienced member of the House. He knows, as we all know, that heckling is something that does happen in the House from time to time. I think he would recognize that while he may disagree with what some members are saying in the House from time to time while heckling, as we all do, I cannot hear the heckling very well. I think his speech perhaps is not being unduly interrupted by the noise in the House. It is fairly quiet in here today. Perhaps we could continue with the remarks with a little more spirit of co-operation on all sides of the House.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I am an experienced member of this House and that is why I am standing today. I am sick and tired of private members bringing legislation into this House—

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am having difficulty hearing my hon. friend, the House leader for the Reform Party. I was in fact sitting behind him for awhile and still had difficulty hearing him because of the heckling of the revenue minister.

I would appreciate the opportunity to hear the speech this morning. It is just a matter of respect to allow that to happen.

The Deputy Speaker: We all want to hear the speech that the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford is making. I am sure hon. members will bear that in mind.

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I sit considerably farther from my colleague in the Reform Party and I am having absolutely no trouble, using my earphone, understanding what the hon. member is saying.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we will manage. We will do our best to all hear the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford. I am sure all hon. members appreciate the assistance of the hon. member for West Nova.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to something that is very serious indeed and I will forget the heckling of the minister of the government from Vancouver.

This is the private member's bill that was passed in this House. I will read it so that everybody will understand.

This enactment provides for the imposition of consecutive sentences where a person commits sexual assault and another offence arising out of the same events or where the person is already serving another sentence at the time.

The enactment also provides that a person sentenced to life imprisonment for first degree murder or second degree murder is not eligible for parole until the person has served, in addition to the portion of sentence that the person must serve for murder, one-third or a maximum of seven years of any other sentence imposed on the person in respect of an offence arising out of the same events or that the person is already serving. The mandatory portion of each life sentence imposed on a person who is convicted of a second murder must be served consecutively before the person is eligible for parole.

I have to ask, what in blue blazes is wrong with that? This is an issue that all sides of this House felt was very important to Canadian society.

I live in an area that has seven federal penitentiaries and numerous provincial penitentiaries around it. In our communities of Abbotsford and Langley, and throughout Mission where some of my colleagues live, in Chilliwack and, indeed, throughout the lower mainland, people are walking out of prison, and in some cases, like the Sumas Centre, just walking out of prison and

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committing such crimes as rape and murder, very serious offences. What happens? They go back, get tried and, if they are lifers, nothing really happens. They get a concurrent sentence with no additional time added to their sentence.

One might say that they are serving life anyway, so why does it matter?

• (1025)

The fact is that life does not mean life in Canada. First degree murderers, for goodness sake, can be out after 15 years under the faint hope clause, section 745. The problem is that this Liberal member for Mississauga East introduced a completely logical private member's bill. And we applaud her for that.

It is so typical in this House where it is a logical issue that the justice minister or the solicitor general, who I appreciate is listening today, says that yes, that is logical and we do not want to fight this one publicly, because if we do the public will ask what is wrong with that and they may not vote for the government, and therefore we better be concerned because the general public is concerned.

What happens? Ministers stand in the House of Commons on second reading on a private member's bill such as this and they say that as a cabinet they will support it; that, indeed, they are the champions of the rights of Canadians and the protectors of law-abiding Canadian citizens; that they will see this goes through second reading of the House of Commons, that it goes into committee and everybody will be happy.

We took the word of the ministers on that. What happened yesterday in committee? It took all but three minutes plus a few odd seconds for Liberal members to go clause by clause through this private member's bill and nix, negate, forget, throw away, quash every darned word of this bill. There were no amendments, nothing.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Shame. They deleted the whole bill.

An hon. member: It was not only the Liberals. It was not just the Liberals, though, there was a Bloc MP. Put it on the record.

Mr. Randy White: A member says it was not just the Liberals. Yes, I believe we do have one member who is not a Liberal who did not quash this.

Why do we face the situation in the House of Commons today where all but three members of the House on second reading said yes, but when it went to committee the Liberals, who have a majority on the committee, said no? What happened? Did these very members on that committee who voted no yesterday vote yes in 1997? The answer is yes. So what happened? Only three members said no to it way back when and we had seven nixing the bill yesterday. If they cared that much about it, then what changed between the vote on second reading and a committee meeting?

I will tell hon. members what changed. The cabinet sat down and said that it never did like this bill. Cabinet members only wanted to stand in the House of Commons to tell Canadians they were all for it and then go behind closed doors to tell the chairman of the committee to scrap it.

The parliament secretary for justice was on that committee and voted against the bill yesterday. Government members sitting on that committee said "We do not give one damn what we did at second reading. We are telling you now that is not going to go".

There are two issues here. There is the issue of criminals who perpetrate crimes, serious offences, who go to prison and get out on an unescorted leave of absence or an escorted leave of absence or parole or some form of exit from prison.

An hon. member: Or when they are golfing.

Mr. Randy White: Or when they are golfing or riding their horses. Maybe they jump over the fence. Who knows? When they get out, they commit another crime and then nothing else happens. The public says "He certainly will get punished for raping my daughter. After all, this guy is a rapist", but nothing happens. They are given a concurrent sentence, which means no additional time. It says on their record that they committed another rape or another murder.

• (1030)

Is this what the Liberal government wants? Was this the agenda all along? It did not care about this issue. When Liberals were standing up in the House voting for it, they lied to the Canadian public. That is what they did. They gave a false impression that they support this kind of stuff but as soon as they get out of the House of Commons, hey, bury that thing.

It is really too bad. It is just sickening for somebody in a community who has seen more than his share of this kind of thing happening. I have recently been working with a victim, an individual who was raped by an inmate who was out on a unescorted temporary absence, a UTA.

We know what that inmate will get. We know he got his pound of flesh and the legal system will give him a concurrent sentence. That is what this bill was all about. It was all about showing inmates that just one crime or as many crimes as they want are punishable by the same sentence. That indeed is wrong.

I can say from personal experience that every time I come into the House on these kinds of issues I get a little more disappointed in how the Liberal government operates. How long did we wait for the Young Offenders Act to be amended? We came in here in 1993 and pushed and pushed again. There was minor tinkering and lots of press announcements by the group over there. It was tabled after two sessions of parliament. Even that is not adequate enough today.

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It is not hard to see that the public wants a change in the country. If the public wants real meaningful change it will not get it from the government and it should understand that all the rhetoric will not in any way get or deliver justice in this country.

I remind the House and all those who are listening of three things. First, the Liberal government save three people in the House of Commons passed on second reading the bill I have here. I will read the contents of the bill once again.

Second, after getting it to a committee, it deliberately behind closed doors told its members on that committee of which it has a majority to squash it. It deliberately misled the Canadian public on this.

Third, the good intentions of this private member's bill have been lost. They are gone. The process now may well take another two or three years to get this back and that is sad because I can guarantee there are many people who will become victims of crime, the subject of this bill.

I want to read it once again and remind everybody what the Liberal government has done. The bill said the following:

This enactment provides for the imposition of consecutive sentences where a person commits sexual assault and another offence arising out of the same events or where the person is already serving another sentence at the time.

The enactment also provides that a person sentenced to life imprisonment for first degree murder or second degree murder is not eligible for parole until the person has served, in addition to the portion of sentence that the person must serve for murder, one-third or a maximum of seven years of any other sentence imposed on the person in respect of an offence arising out of the same events or that the person is already serving. The mandatory portion of each life sentence imposed on a person who is convicted of a second murder must be served consecutively before the person is eligible for parole.

• (1035)

It is so very serious that it has been turned down like this in this shady way. I want the member for Mississauga East to be present in the House and she is not available at the moment. Therefore I move:

That the debate do now adjourn.

I wish debate to be adjourned until the member for Mississauga East is in the House so we can talk further on this bill.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1115)

And the bells having rung:

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to advise the House exactly why we are here and the circumstances.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am afraid that is not a point of order. I will proceed to putting the question to the House.

The question is on the adjournment motion.

• (1120)

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

(Division No. 363)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Assad
Asselin	Augustine
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bevilacqua
Bertrand	Blondin-Andrew
Bigras	Boudria
Bonwick	Brown
Brien	Byrne
Bryden	Calder
Caccia	Caplan
Canuel	Carroll
Cardin	Cauchon
Catterall	Charbonneau
Chan	Coderre
Clouthier	Copps
Comuzzi	Cullen
Crête	DeVillers
Dalphond-Guiral	Dion
Dhaliwal	Dockrill
Discepola	Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Drouin	Duhamel
Duceppe	Earle
Dumas	Eggleton
Easter	Finlay
Finestone	Fry
Fontana	Gauthier
Gagliano	Godfrey
Girard-Bujold	Goodale
Godin (Châteauguay)	Grose
Gray (Windsor West)	Guay
Guarnieri	Harvard
Harris	Jackson
Hubbard	Jordan
Jennings	Keyes
Karetak-Lindell	Laliberte
Knutson	Lastewka
Lalonde	Lebel
Laurin	Leung
Lee	Loubier
Lincoln	Maloney
MacAulay	Manley
Mancini	Marchi
Marceau	
Marleau	

Routine Proceedings

Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
McCormick	McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague	McWhinney
Ménard	Mifflin
Mitchell	Murray
Myers	Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Peric
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Picard (Drummond)
Proctor	Provenzano
Redman	Reed
Richardson	Robillard
Rock	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Serré
Shepherd	Solomon
St. Denis	Steckle
St-Hilaire	St-Julien
Stoffer	Szabo
Telegdi	Torsney
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Vautour	Volpe
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
Whelan	White (Langley—Abbotsford) —144

Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented on Friday, May 15, be concurred in.

• (1125)

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the debate on this motion. It is particularly a pleasure to do so, as a result of the most disgusting performance I have ever seen in my life that happened in the justice committee yesterday when the member for Mississauga East had her private member's bill destroyed by a bunch of sheep Liberals who were following orders from their justice minister and from the Prime Minister.

This was on Bill C-251, a bill that was overwhelmingly passed in the House. It was approved by all but one Liberal member of the government; all but one voted for it to go to committee. In a matter of five seconds, following the orders of the government and the Minister of Justice, Bill C-251 in the name of the member for Mississauga East was destroyed.

Shall the first clause pass? No. Shall the second clause pass? No. Shall the title pass? No. It was destroyed by her own people, stabbed in the back by her colleagues, joined by Bloc members and NDP members. In disgusting solidarity NDP, Bloc and Liberal members voted down a very acceptable private member's bill.

I will read Bill C-251 for the pleasure of the Liberal government that destroyed it yesterday and for the interest of the Canadian public that is watching today. Her bill read as follows:

This enactment provides for the imposition of consecutive sentences where a person commits sexual assault and another offence arising out of the same events or where the person is already serving another sentence at the time.

The enactment also provides that a person sentenced to life imprisonment for first degree murder or second degree murder is not eligible for parole until this person has served, in addition to the portion of sentence that the person must serve for murder, one-third or a maximum seven years of any other sentence imposed on the person in respect for an offence arising out of the same events or that the person is already serving. The mandatory portion of each life sentence imposed on a person who is convicted of a second murder must be served consecutively before the person is eligible for parole.

In other words, the bill was presented to take the discount out of sentencing which the Liberal government supports. We are talking about getting rid of the discount sale of the government in its justice system if one commits more than one serious offence like murder or sexual assault. That is disgusting.

The Liberals destroyed private member's Bill C-251 by the member for Mississauga East in five seconds and then laughed. They laughed and joked in committee about how easy it was to destroy a colleague's bill in committee. They laughed and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice laughed as well. She laughed and all her colleagues laughed. They thought it was funny.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Anders
Benoit	Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Borotsik	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brison	Cadman
Casey	Casson
Cummins	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duncan	Epp
Forseth	Gilmour
Grey (Edmonton North)	Hart
Herron	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hoepfner	Jones
Keddy (South Shore)	Konrad
Lowther	Lunn
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mark
McNally	Morrison
Muise	Penson
Power	Price
Ramsay	Scott (Skeena)
Solberg	Strahl
Vellacott	Williams—42

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS—8TH REPORT

Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the eighth report of the Standing

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Mr. Richard M. Harris: They deny it, Mr. Speaker. Why would they admit to such a disgusting display as laughing at a bill as important—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair is finding it very difficult to hear the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. Perhaps members on all sides could restrain themselves so we can hear the debate.

• (1130)

Mr. Lee Morrison: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I distinctly heard the loud mouthed parliamentary secretary shouting “liar” on several occasions.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I realize that debate in the House on issues such as this can be pointed and tough at times.

We talked a moment ago about the parliamentary secretary calling one of our members a liar. She reaffirmed that in the House. I would expect that we will be asking for a question of privilege that this member be asked either to take those words back or be removed from the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair asks the hon. parliamentary secretary did she use the words that have been complained of? If so I ask her to withdraw them.

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw my comments and my calling the member a liar if that member returns to what actually happened in the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There are no ifs involved in this. The hon. parliamentary secretary is an experienced member. She knows that it is not in order to use the word liar. I ask her to stand up and please withdraw the word immediately and unequivocally.

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos: Mr. Speaker, I said that was a lie. I did not call the member a liar. I said his facts were a lie.

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid the parliamentary secretary cannot get out of this on that basis. I ask her to withdraw the word lie or liar unequivocally right now, please.

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos: Mr. Speaker, considering that I have great respect for this institution I withdraw the words.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Richard M. Harris: Mr. Speaker, let me name the ridings of the Liberal members who attended as well and who laughed and joked when that bill was destroyed in five seconds.

• (1135)

Apart from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, the member for Winnipeg South also thought it was a big

joke. The member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford thought it was a big joke. The member for Simcoe North thought it was a big joke. The member for Oshawa thought it was a big joke. The member for Brossard—La Prairie thought it was a big joke. The member for Scarborough East thought it was a big joke. They all thought it was a big joke to destroy the private member’s bill of the member for Mississauga East.

The Liberals voted overwhelmingly in favour of second reading and to go to committee. Did they mean it? Of course not. They did not want this bill. They wanted it to get to committee so that the government orders could be followed to destroy this bill in under five seconds in committee.

We have seen some disgusting things out of this government since 1993 and this one rates right near the top. Not only was this bill, which had a tremendous amount of merit and a tremendous amount of benefit to the public safety of this country, destroyed by this government, by the sheep that follow the orders of the whip, the House leader or the Minister of Justice, but this act has destroyed what little confidence the Canadian people might have in the effectiveness of private members’ bills.

What happened yesterday sent a clear message out to every member of parliament, who represent millions of Canadians across the country, that if one puts a private member’s bill forward, no matter what happens in the House in first and second reading, no matter if there is overwhelming consent or not, if it gets to committee and someone on the government benches, the cabinet, does not want this bill, it is destroyed. Is that democracy?

Is there any semblance of democracy in that process? The answer is no. This malicious, disgusting act by the Liberal government has destroyed whatever confidence Canadians had in the ability of their elected members to present a private member’s bill in the House and have any chance of it going through if some member of the government benches does not want it. That is a crime in itself. That was a criminal act yesterday.

What the Liberal members did yesterday, following the orders from their dictator, whoever he or she was, was nothing less than a criminal act.

The Deputy Speaker: If I heard the hon. member right, he said members committed a criminal act. If that is what he said I am sure he would want to withdraw those words. Members in their capacity as members of the House voting on bills and motions in committee or in the House surely are not committing such an act. I am sure the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley would want to withdraw any such suggestion.

Mr. Richard M. Harris: Mr. Speaker, of course I will withdraw. What I said was in passion. What I should have said is that what the Liberal members did in committee could be described as nothing less than a criminal act. It was so vile and so disgusting that it could be accurately called an immoral act or an obscene act of power hungry dictators in the government having their orders

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carried out by their minions who show up for these committee meetings attempting to give some impression that they are actually interested in what is going on. They are attempting to give some impression that they actually care about business in committee.

The killing of this bill by the Liberals yesterday also had another effect. It had a profound effect on the ability of law-abiding Canadians to have a sense of security about the safety of their families.

• (1140)

This bill, had it passed, would have kept murderers and rapists and others who commit heinous violent crimes of that nature in jail. It would have ended the volume discounts for murderers, rapists and other violent criminals the Liberals government supports.

This act yesterday was a clear example of the Liberal government's supporting the most lenient treatment possible for violent criminals. That is what it did yesterday. It supported the most lenient treatment possible under the Criminal Code. That is what the Liberal government is all about. That is what it supports.

It is disgusting. How can any law-abiding Canadian citizen have any sense of security about the safety of their family when this worthless government does not have the guts, does not have the intestinal—

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid the hon. member is perhaps overwrought today, but he is going beyond the bounds of proper discourse. He knows it has been ruled unparliamentary on numerous occasions to use the last words he used. I would invite him again to withdraw the words and perhaps show a little temperance in his language.

Mr. Richard M. Harris: Mr. Speaker, on this issue it is very difficult to show temperance but I will try. I will withdraw that. What did I just withdraw?

I say this for the benefit of the Canadian people. The government killed Bill C-251, a bill that would keep in jail violent criminals, criminals who commit the most heinous and serious crimes, a bill that would end the volume discounts where, if a person commits three murders, they would only serve time for one and if a person rapes three or four or five women, they would only serve time for one. That is the way the law is now. This would have changed it. This would have provided for consecutive sentencing.

This government clearly displayed yesterday that it supports violent criminals being treated in the most lenient manner possible. That is the message it sent out yesterday. That is the message this government sent out yesterday when it destroyed Bill C-251.

I sat there in utter amazement as I watched this bill destroyed in under five seconds. All the efforts of the member for Mississauga East in putting this bill forward, the turncoating of the Liberal members who supported her bill in second reading, now cast aside as if it were some worthless piece of paper.

I think the Liberals showed no support for law enforcement officers. They have clearly demonstrated in everything they have done in justice terms that they do not support police forces in this country. They do not support law-abiding citizens. Who are they supporting? They appear to be supporting and have given credibility to the thought that the people they support are the people who commit crimes.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Simcoe North.

• (1145)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I move:

That the member from Mississauga East be now heard.

She was standing.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has now been three full years since I first introduced my private member's bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

When you called for those in favour and those opposed, more than five members rose. I therefore call for a recorded division.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair did not see five members rising at the same time. Some members stood up and sat down, and then others stood up, but there were not five standing at one time that the Chair was able to see. Accordingly I declared the motion carried. The hon. member for Mississauga East has the floor.

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Albina Guarnieri: Mr. Speaker, it has now been three full years since I first introduced my private member's bill on consecutive sentencing for multiple murderers and rapists.

It was blocked once by the subcommittee on private members' business. It was blocked again by the same committee six months later when I reintroduced the bill. Then again after the election it was finally permitted to be made votable and was voted at second reading and referred to the justice committee which did hear from many witnesses. Yesterday the bill's three year journey ended in three minutes.

The bill has the unfettered support of the attorney general and the solicitor general of Ontario, the justice minister of Alberta and the justice minister of Manitoba.

Bill C-251 passed second reading, as I mentioned, 81 to 3. The bill has the support of the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian police chiefs, the police services board and every major victims organization in the country. Bill C-251 has the support of both NAC and REAL Women. The bill has the support of the national Union of Solicitor General Employees.

The bill is the second of three key legislative requests made by the Canadian Police Association during its 1999 annual legislative conference and lobby day.

As this will likely be the last time in this parliament that concurrent sentences for multiple murderers and rapists are challenged, I would like to read into the record some of the arguments that were presented in opposition to the bill and respond to them.

• (1150)

The Criminal Lawyers' Association asked the question: Why does this particular offence, referring to sexual assault, have to attract consecutive sentences? Why is it centred out? Why do we not pick robbery, break and enters, car jackings, or home invasions? A convicted murderer who also presented to the justice committee had a similar problem distinguishing between rape and going through someone's drawers during a break and enter.

Sexual assault I would maintain is different from break and enter in that sexual assaults cause permanent, often catastrophic harm to the victim. From the perspective of the assailant or his legal representatives, this impact on the victim may not be of great importance. But again I remind the House that not long ago this House both supported consecutive sentences and mandatory minimums for offences involving firearms, including imitation firearms. Is a conviction for sexual assault any less important than a conviction for the use of an imitation firearm?

The myth that life is life was also perpetuated. The Criminal Lawyers' Association, the John Howard Society and Lifeline, a society of paroled murderers, all protested that a life sentence

actually means life imprisonment: "The punishment for murder, regardless of whether it is first or second degree is imprisonment. There can be no greater term of imprisonment".

Multiple murderers, according to Correctional Service Canada using its own statistics, serve an average of only 18.8 years in prison. That was the evidence of a witness from the Department of the Solicitor General who presented data to the committee showing that the largest group of multiple murderers in the system, 292 multiple murderers in total, can expect to spend only that long in prison.

I remind the House that Denis Lortie was luckier. He was released on full parole after 11 years after committing three murders. Three and one-half years for each murder. That is the reality of today's justice system. Once parole is granted, a life sentence can mean as little as one visit to a parole officer every three months. It usually means one visit a month according to one witness.

Even in the current law there is a degree of differentiation within a life sentence. The minimum parole ineligibility for first degree murder is 25 years, while the minimum for second degree is 10. Hence there is already ample precedent for applying different parole and eligibility periods for different crimes within a life sentence, as is called for in Bill C-251.

The assertion that a life sentence results in imprisonment for life is an Orwellian deception that serves to mislead Canadians.

The justice committee heard evidence of the extent of volume discounts in the current system. The committee was told that 321 multiple murderers had received concurrent sentences, and according to statistics, an average volume discount of 58%. That means the average multiple murderer will actually serve less than half his cumulative sentence in jail.

The committee also heard that 60% of all sex offenders admitted to federal prisons were multiple sex offenders who received concurrent sentences. The average volume discount was 68%. Time served under concurrent sentences was shown to be less than one-third of the time that would have been served under a consecutive sentence.

The committee also heard of the threat to society posed by paroled murderers. Various organizations claimed that released murderers posed no great threat to society but sadly, statistics tell a very different story. Paroled murderers, according to Correctional Service Canada, using its own statistics, are 100 times more likely to commit a future murder than the average Canadian.

• (1155)

Most Canadians would believe that a rehabilitated person should be no more likely to commit another murder than their neighbour.

Routine Proceedings

That is not the case. Paroled murderers remain a high risk group, 100 times more risky than any other Canadian. We were told in committee that five Canadians have been murdered because of the early release of murderers who were not genuinely rehabilitated.

The argument of constitutionality was raised. Various groups attempted to give the impression that Bill C-251 would not survive a charter challenge. But what the supreme court has actually said, and I cite *Steel v Mountain*:

It will only be on rare and unique occasions that a court will find a sentence so grossly disproportionate that it violates the provisions of section 12 of the charter which deals with cruel and unusual punishment.

And I cite *Queen v Smith*:

The test for review under section 12 is one of gross disproportionality because it is aimed at punishments that are more than merely excessive. We should be careful not to stigmatize every disproportionate or excessive sentence as being a constitutional violation.

The above cases and others demonstrate that there is no basis whatsoever to assume that consecutive sentences will fail a charter challenge. The only constitutional lawyer who testified before the committee expressed his legal opinion that there is no charter vulnerability.

There is no precedent anywhere in the world that would directly support a charter challenge. It is telling that no witness who spoke against the bill provided a legal opinion on the constitutional matter, choosing instead in large part to focus on matters of policy.

I would like to remind the House that Bill C-68, imposed by the same justice committee, imposed consecutive minimum prison terms for the use of a firearm or an imitation firearm in the commission of a crime. These consecutive minimums actually exceed the median time served for sexual assault.

Judicial discretion was raised. For multiple sexual offenders witnesses opposed to the bill could not agree among themselves as to the impact that the bill would have on the total sentence received by a multiple sex offender. Some said that it would cause a substantial increase. Others suggested that judges might adjust sentences for each offence to reach the same overall sentence.

Witnesses obviously have different views as to the impact of the bill on sentencing because they cannot predict the reaction of judges. Witnesses cannot predict the reaction of judges because judges will continue to maintain judicial discretion as to the overall sentences in these cases.

At present, in the case of multiple murderers there is no judicial discretion in sentences for first degree murder. Bill C-251 does not change that. A mandatory period of parole ineligibility will still apply but must be of a length that is proportional to the number of victims. Is that so unjust?

The question of costs was raised. Various organizations referred to cost and resource issues potentially associated with Bill C-251 in relation to multiple murderers. One presented a misleading figure that totalled the annual cost for the next 69 years. Bill C-251 can have no cost impact whatsoever for at least 10 years. The bill is not retroactive and can only have an impact on resources when future murderers come up for parole not less than 10 years from now.

Delayed parole for multiple murderers will cause an annual increase in prison population of about .1% per year for about 20 years beginning in the year 2010. This is derived from information provided to the justice committee by Mary Campbell of the Department of the Solicitor General.

• (1200)

With respect to the position of women's groups one witness claimed that the women's movement and NAC in particular were opposed to separate penalties for male offenders who victimized women and children. She said:

They have stopped short of calling for stiffer penalties or for longer periods of incarceration.

This statement is clearly intended to give the impression that NAC opposed the bill. As I mentioned earlier, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women sent a letter of support for Bill C-225. It supported the principle of my bill. REAL women also sent a letter of support.

Those were the arguments. The bill is supported by three provinces, police associations, women's groups and victims' groups. I leave it to the House as to whether it wishes to have a vote to provide Canadians with the view of parliamentarians on volume discounts for murderers and rapists.

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga East for her words. I know how much this means to her. I know her persistence in trying to get it through for a number of years.

Does she have some thoughts on the impact this kind of legislation would have? Should we eventually get this kind of legislation, what does she feel the impact will be on Canadian society as a whole?

Ms. Albina Guarnieri: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I know he has a particular sensitivity to this issue.

It is my fervent hope that the wisdom of the House will prevail and that legislation, whether it emanates from the department or whether it is translated by my bill, will come forward to ensure that the bulk rate for murder and volume discounts for rapists do not prevail. Currently that is the law in Canada today.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments and questions. It is important for those watching today to understand exactly what has taken place.

We are debating today a private members' bill that has been before the House numerous times, as indicated by the actual mover of the debate who was the last speaker. She indicated a witness list. We should also indicate that of the witnesses that appeared before the committee many were opposed to it, including the National Association Active in Criminal Justice, the Canadian Criminal Justice Association and the Church Council on Justice and Corrections.

I hear members of the Reform Party throwing jibes at these witnesses: the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, the Criminal Lawyers Association, the Canadian Bar Association made up of prosecutors that prosecute those people who are charged, the John Howard Society, and the Elizabeth Fry Society. The John Howard Society said that the bill and the intimidation tactics used to support it were regrettable.

It is important for people to understand what debate was interrupted today by members of the Reform Party. It was a debate dealing with fish stocks. It is important for people and fishermen in British Columbia to understand that the important issues affecting them and affecting the fishermen in Atlantic Canada were interrupted by a tactical manoeuvre by the Reform Party, which says it is a populist party, to play games and get this issue before the House.

I make that comment so that fishermen on both sides of the country will understand that if we do not get to the fish stocks debate, which is crucial to the livelihood of fishermen, it is because members of the Reform Party wanted to play this game and make certain political points with a bill that has already been debated in the House numerous times.

I direct my comments in that vein. They are important for members to understand.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri: Mr. Speaker, there is no denying that fish stocks is a crucial issue and is pertinent to the lives of fishermen.

I thank the initiative of the Reform Party and my colleagues opposite in the Tory party who have chosen to highlight one of the obscurities in the Canadian justice system.

• (1205)

I remind the hon. member that despite the witness list he cites, I commissioned a Pollara poll which indicated nine out of ten Canadians agree with this position.

Mr. John Bryden: So what?

Ms. Albina Guarnieri: I hear someone saying "so what". Perhaps there is a disconnect between the justice committee and the

will of the majority of Canadians. I believe it is imperative and important for the matter to have a full hearing.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am the member who said "so what". On issues like this one, issues involving the lives of people and understanding justice issues, we should not conduct opinion polls in order to enact legislation. Those people, the Mulroney Tories, were the ones who tried to run the government and the country by opinion polls.

The bill got due process in committee. It heard from witnesses who found fault with it. I suggest that members of the Reform Party accept parliament as it is. Members of parliament have spoken to the bill, so let us leave it and move on.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like clarification, if I could, from the Chair whether the member is indicating that the lives of Canadian citizens are more important than fish.

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid the hon. member knows that is not a point of order. He is really raising debate.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri: Mr. Speaker, tempers are rising here. I am sure my colleague did not mean to suggest that this is not an important issue for debate.

However, it is my firm belief, after being here 10 years, that the only way the bill should be dealt with is by a vote in parliament. A handful of individuals may be thoroughly disconnected from reality.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to commend the member for Mississauga East for her diligence and persistence, much against the will of her own party. I do not want to get into the partisan side of it. I do not want to respond to the remarks in the previous intervention with respect to which parties best represent public interest.

There is a very important element here of representing what it is that the public wants. As has been quite clearly demonstrated by the comments of the member for Mississauga East, this is a very emotional and visceral issue for most Canadians when we start talking about volume discounts and shortening the parole eligibility of murderers.

We are talking about repeat offenders, those who have not committed just one offence but have committed multiple offences and offences on the very high end of Criminal Code violations in terms of their seriousness. The consecutive sentences that would result from this private member's bill would obviously—and I defy anyone to argue otherwise—protect Canadians from those specific offenders to which these sentences would attach.

Routine Proceedings

Implicit in the bill is the very genuine intention to deal with habitual criminals who are released by virtue of early parole. The current government and the current commissioner of Correctional Service Canada have a very insidious plan with respect to the release of prisoners on parole, a 50% release plan that would see by the year 2000, 50% of current inmates back on the street through one form or another.

This is something that should be alarming and shocking to all Canadians. The point of the bill is to ensure that convicted offenders, murderers and rapists, do not have an opportunity to go out on to the streets and perpetrate the same types of offences.

The most startling and disturbing statistic was that the likelihood a person who has committed an offence of murder or rape will reoffend, compared to average law-abiding citizen, was 100% more likely to commit a murder or a rape after being released on the conviction of such an offence.

• (1210)

I invite the member for Mississauga East to respond to the intent of the bill and what it would accomplish in terms of its broad spread application on our parole system and the effect it would have in terms of protecting Canadians from repeat offenders for these types of offences.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very astute comments and insights into my bill. Since I presented the bill I have sadly been visited by far too many victims who have told me their tales of woe in terms of how the justice system impacts on their lives.

Canadians are far too familiar with the story of Don Edwards whose sister was raped and subsequently her assailant ended up murdering her parents. Don Edwards has told me his story of how his family has gone into hiding, how dysfunctional it has been for the community and for the extended family. His sister is in hiding. He has moved his family south of the border. One of the saddest commentaries I have ever heard in my life, including the 10 years I have been here, is when Don Edwards said the border would be his protection for his family.

My bill would impact on victims in giving them a sense of security so they would—

Mr. John Cummins: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Previously the member for Sydney—Victoria suggested this debate would replace a critical fish debate. The debate it is replacing is not worthy of support and he should know that.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member knows that is not a point of order.

Mr. Paul DeVillers: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I want to take the opportunity to respond to some of the comments

made by the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. He named me specifically as a member of the justice committee and he used the term these criminal acts, which he has now withdrawn, in reference to the activities of the committee yesterday.

I will point out a couple of inaccuracies where he implied that all members of the justice committee on the Liberal side who voted not to approve the bill had voted in the House to send it for second reading. I would like to correct that, in that I did not vote for that bill. The implication that the bill was disposed of in five seconds is not accurate. There were many witnesses—

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid we are getting into debate. It is one thing for the hon. member to air a grievance in respect of how he voted, but beyond that I am afraid the hon. member is entering into a debate which I do not believe is a question of privilege.

I am not sure that he had one on the first point. It may have been a grievance. I think the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley recognized that this was not a question of privilege.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that today, when we were to debate Bill C-27, we are spending so much time debating a private member's bill because of delaying tactics.

I do not want to get into an argument about the possible merits of this bill, but since spring is upon us and the government is taking such a long time defining a fisheries management policy, I would like to propose the following motion:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

The purpose of this motion is to allow us to proceed to orders of the day to hear what the government has to say on the fisheries bill and to have done with it.

• (1215)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1300)

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

(Division No. 364)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Asselin
Augustine	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bevilacqua
Bertrand	Blondin-Andrew
Bigras	Brien
Boudria	Bryden
Brown	Caccia
Byrne	Caplan
Calder	Carroll
Cardin	Cauchon
Catterall	Clouthier
Chan	Comuzzi
Coderre	Crête
Copps	Dalphond-Guiral
Cullen	DeVillers
Desjarlais	Discepola
Dion	Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Drouin	Duhamel
Duceppe	Easter
Earle	Finlay
Eggleton	Fry
Fontana	Gagnon
Gagliano	Girard-Bujold
Gauthier	Godin (Châteauguay)
Godfrey	Gray (Windsor West)
Goodale	Guarnieri
Grose	Harvard
Guay	Jackson
Hubbard	Jordan
Jennings	Keyes
Karetak-Lindell	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Laliberte
Knutson	Lastewka
Lalonde	Lebel
Laurin	Leung
Lee	Loubier
Lincoln	Malhi
MacAulay	Mancini
Maloney	Marceau
Manley	Marleau
Marchi	Massé
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McGuire	McWhinney
McTeague	Mifflin
Ménard	Murray
Mitchell	Normand
Myers	O'Reilly
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	Parrish
Pagtakhan	Perron
Peric	Pettigrew
Peterson	Proctor
Picard (Drummond)	Redman
Provenzano	Richardson
Reed	Scott (Fredericton)
Saada	Shepherd
Serré	St. Denis
Solomon	Stewart (Brant)
Steckle	St-Julien
St-Hilaire	Szabo
Stoffer	Torsney
Telegdi	Valeri
Ur	Vautour
Vanclief	Wasylcia-Leis
Wappel	
Whelan	

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Anders
Benoit	Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Borotsik	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brison	Cadman
Casey	Casson
Cummins	Duncan
Epp	Forseth
Gouk	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Harris
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jones	Keddy (South Shore)
Konrad	Lowther
Lunn	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mark	Mayfield
McNally	Morrison
Muise	Penson
Power	Price
Ramsay	Scott (Skeena)
Solberg	Strahl
Vellacott	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams—41	

PAIRED MEMBERS

Alarie	Anderson
Assadourian	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bulte
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	de Savoye
Debien	Desroschers
Dromisky	Folco
Fournier	Graham
Guimond	Harb
Mercier	Patry
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pratt
Proud	Sauvageau
Stewart (Northumberland)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp	Venne

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I declare the motion carried.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if you would seek unanimous consent of the House for the following. While the government side pairs with one of the other official parties in the House, the Bloc Québécois, earlier today at a previous vote we erred in adding the names to the register. I understand from our table officers that procedurally we have to seek unanimous consent to apply the last vote taken to the previous one in terms of the pairings that are in the register for this day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There has been consultation among the parties and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the subcommittee on Corrections and Conditional Release Act be granted authority to travel to Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg during the week of April 19, 1999, to Kingston and Toronto during the week of May 10, 1999 and to Montreal and region during the week of May 24, 1999 and that the necessary staff accompany it.

(Motion agreed to)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you will also find, after consultation, that there is unanimous consent for the following motion for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade:

That Group "A" composed of seven members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment, be authorized to travel to Winnipeg, Toronto, London and Windsor from April 25 to 30, 1999, and Group "B", composed of seven members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment, be authorized to travel to Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Saskatoon from April 25 to 30, 1999, in order to hold public hearings in relation to its examination of Canada's trade objectives and the forthcoming agenda of the World Trade Organization, WTO, and examination of Canada's priority interests in the FTAA process, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

COASTAL FISHERIES PROTECTION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-27, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act to enable Canada to implement the agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December, 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly

migratory fish stocks and other international fisheries treaties or arrangements, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We go now to the rulings on the groups at report stage of Bill C-27.

There are 18 motions in amendments standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-27. The motions will be grouped for debate as follows.

Group No. 1, Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

[*Translation*]

Group No. 2, Motions Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17.

[*English*]

Group No. 3, Motions Nos. 4 and 7.

[*Translation*]

Group No. 4, Motions Nos. 8, 10, 12 to 16 and 18.

• (1310)

[*English*]

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the motions in Group No. 1 are deemed moved and seconded. This group contains Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, on Group No. 4, I do not believe you mentioned Motions Nos. 14 and 15. I believe it is supposed to be Motions Nos. 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I can understand the parliamentary secretary's having a little difficulty with my French.

[*Translation*]

In French I said Motions Nos. 8, 10, 12 to 16.

[*English*]

Motions Nos. 12 to 16. It is included.

[*Translation*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-27 be amended by adding after line 10 on page 3 the following new clause:

“1.1 The Act is amended by adding the following after section 2:

2.1 The objectives of this Act include the implementation of the Agreement, in accordance with which, in order to conserve and manage straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks, coastal States and States fishing on the high seas shall, in giving effect to their duty to cooperate in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982:

(a) adopt measures to ensure long-term sustainability of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks and promote the objective of their optimum utilization;

(b) ensure that such measures are based on the best scientific evidence available and are designed to maintain or restore stocks at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, as qualified by relevant environmental and economic factors, including the special requirements of developing States, and taking into account fishing patterns, the interdependence of stocks and any generally recommended international minimum standards, whether subregional, regional or global;

(c) apply the precautionary approach in accordance with article 6 of the Agreement;

(d) assess the impacts of fishing, other human activities and environmental factors on target stocks and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks;

(e) adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures for species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent on or associated with the target stocks, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

(f) minimize pollution, waste, discards, catch by lost or abandoned gear, catch of non-target species, both fish and non-fish species, and impacts on associated or dependent species, in particular endangered species, through measures including, to the extent practicable, the development and use of selective, environmentally safe and cost-effective fishing gear and techniques;

(g) protect biodiversity in the marine environment;

(h) take measures to prevent or eliminate over-fishing and excess fishing capacity and to ensure that levels of fishing effort do not exceed those commensurate with the sustainable use of fishery resources;

(i) take into account the interests of artisanal and subsistence fishers;

(j) collect and share, in a timely manner, complete and accurate data concerning fishing activities on, inter alia, vessel position, catch of target and non-target species and fishing effort, as set out in Annex I, as well as information from national and international research programmes;

(k) promote and conduct scientific research and develop appropriate technologies in support of fishery conservation and management; and

(l) implement and enforce conservation and management measures through effective monitoring, control and surveillance.”

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-27 be amended by adding after line 10 on page 3 the following new clause:

“1.1 The Act is amended by adding the following after section 2:

2.1 This Act shall be interpreted in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 and the Agreement, including the

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designation of any area of the sea falling under the jurisdiction of regional organizations, regulated by regional arrangements or established by other international fisheries agreements or treaties.”

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-27, in Clause 2, be amended

(a) by replacing, in the French version, line 22 on page 3 with the following:

“espace maritime désigné au titre du sous-ali-”

(b) by replacing, in the French version, line 36 on page 3 with the following:

“maritime désigné au titre du sous-alinéa”

(c) by replacing, in the French version, line 41 on page 3 with the following:

“me désigné au titre du sous-alinéa 6e(ii) ou”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-27, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing line 8 on page 4 with the following:

“6. (1) The Governor in Council may make”

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-27, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing, in the French version, line 25 on page 4 with the following:

“(ii) désigner les espaces maritimes tom-”

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-27, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing, in the French version, line 21 on page 5 with the following:

“(ii) désigner les espaces maritimes visés”

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-27, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 2 on page 6 the following:

“(2) No regulations shall be made under paragraph 6(e) or (f) unless the Minister has laid before the House of Commons a draft of the regulations that are to be made at least 120 days before the regulations are made.

(3) No regulations made under paragraph 6(e) or (f) of this Act shall come into force unless they have been approved by the committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to fisheries and oceans.”

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-27, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing lines 5 and 6 on page 6 with the following:

“7.01 (1) If a protection officer has serious reasons to believe that a fishing vessel of a”

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-27, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing, in the French version, line 9 on page 6 with the following:

“se trouve dans un espace maritime désigné au”

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-27, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 13 on page 6 with the following:

“may, with the consent of the Minister, take any”

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-27, in Clause 8, be amended

(a) by replacing, in the French version, line 5 on page 7 with the following:

“dans un espace maritime désigné au titre du”

(b) by replacing, in the French version, line 12 on page 7 with the following:

“un tel traité ou entente et désigné au titre du”

(c) by replacing, in the French version, line 16 on page 7 with the following:

“maritime désigné au titre du sous-alinéa”

(d) by replacing, in the French version, line 19 on page 7 with the following:

“espace maritime désigné au titre du sous-ali-”

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-27, in Clause 8, be amended

(a) by replacing lines 21 and 22 on page 7 with the following:

“subparagraph 6(e)(i). An officer who has serious reasons to believe that the vessel has”

(b) by replacing lines 28 and 29 on page 7 with the following:

“(2) If the protection officer has serious reasons to believe that the vessel has contra-”

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-27, in Clause 8, be amended by replacing lines 34 to 41 on page 7 with the following:

“the consent of the Minister, exercise any powers referred to in section 16.1.”

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-27, in Clause 8, be amended by replacing lines 38 and 39 on page 7 with the following:

“(a) has not responded within forty-eight hours after a notification was given to the state under subsection (2); or”

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-27, in Clause 11, be amended by replacing line 30 on page 8 with the following:

“paragraph 6(f) or of a fishing vessel without nationality for an offence under this Act, it”

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-27, in Clause 11, be amended by replacing line 4 on page 9 with the following:

“described in paragraph 6 (f) or on a fishing vessel without nationality that is convicted of”

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-27, in Clause 12, be amended by replacing, in the French version, lines 13 to 17 on page 9 with the following:

“a.1) soit dans un espace maritime désigné au titre du sous-alinéa 6(e)(ii), à bord ou au moyen d’un bateau de pêche d’un État assujetti à l’accord;

a.2) soit dans un espace maritime désigné”

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-27, in Clause 12, be amended

(a) by replacing line 16 on page 9 with the following:

“of a fishing vessel of a participating state or of a fishing vessel without nationality;”

(b) by replacing line 21 on page 9 with the following:

“subparagraph or of a fishing vessel without nationality; or”

[English]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask, being that we jumped over petitions because of the previous motion in the House, if I could have unanimous consent to present some petitions I would like to very quickly and urgently table in the House. There may be others who have that same request. I will get through them quickly. Could we have unanimous consent for that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

BANKING

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for granting my request.

I present a petition with some 1,000 names. It is necessary to get this in. The petition is asking for the rejection of the recommendations of the MacKay task force report pertaining to the entry of banks into the casualty and property insurance markets.

The petitioners urge the government not give in to the pressure of the banks on this matter at present or in the future.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition in respect to young offenders.

These petitioners, about eight pages in total, simply ask that there be a more serious approach taken to crimes of young offenders and more serious consequences and proper punishment for the crimes committed by young offenders.

ABORTIONS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is with respect to medically unnecessary abortions. These increase health risks for women undergoing this procedure. Opinion polls indicate consistently that Canadians do not support tax funded abortions.

The petitioners urge that there be a referendum to ask voters whether they are in favour of government funding for medically unnecessary abortions. The petitioners uphold the sanctity of life for all preborn.

THE SENATE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the last petition is with respect to the Senate.

These petitioners ask that in view of the fact that Canadians deserve an accountable Senate responsible to the wishes of the Canadian people, a house that will act as a sober second thought in law making, they call on parliament to accept the results of a Senate election.

BILL C-284

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today adding to the 25,000 names calling for legislative changes regarding pardons for those who are in positions of trust over children.

• (1315)

These petitions add to those 25,000 names in support of a bill that I have now before the justice committee, Bill C-284. The petitioners are calling for access to the pardoned records of pedophiles when they are applying for positions of trust or care over children.

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[*Translation*]

COASTAL FISHERIES PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-27, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act to enable Canada to implement the agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish

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stocks and other international fisheries treaties or arrangements, as reported (with amendments) from the committee; and of Group Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems to be very difficult for me today to finally get down to work on the fisheries problem, but here we go.

For those members who have just joined us, and for those listening to the television, I repeat that the purpose of Bill C-27 is to implement the United Nations fisheries agreement. This agreement flows from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The purpose of the first two amendments the Bloc Québécois wishes to move to Bill C-27 is to clarify meaning and to ensure that Canadian legislation is consistent with the international agreement. In my view, there were oversights.

I will begin by looking at Motion No. 2 and then go to Motion No. 1.

The purpose of Motion No. 2, which we wish to introduce concerning Bill C-27, is to provide a basis for interpretation for tribunals that will be called upon to use this Canadian law. It reminds them that interpretation of Bill C-27 shall be in accordance with the fisheries agreement based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982.

This may seem highly technical, but my colleague for Beauharnois—Salaberry has reminded me that all laws and agreements must draw their essence from somewhere. When an act is to be interpreted, when a case goes before a judge, it is important that the basis for interpretation of that act be written down in black and white.

Now, I return to Motion No. 1, still in Group 1. For the benefit of the public and of those who sat on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the objective of this motion is to add a new clause, 2.1, to Bill C-27, making reference to article 5 of the United Nations fisheries agreement, part 2.

Why do I take the time to make this clarification? Because the purpose of clause 2.1 is to provide a philosophical base for administration of the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

When Canada wants to sign an international agreement, when it wants to implement this treaty, we must be assured of having the tools here in Canada to go along with the international law.

I have merely asked the clerk to include, word for word, the contents of article 5 of the UNFA, as I have already explained. I am simply trying to summarize, since it is a fairly long clause, unless the House will give me permission to read it entirely, without shortening my speech. I am summarizing it in order to provide some principles of the philosophy of management.

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This clause sets out in subclause (a) administrative measures to ensure the long term sustainability of straddling fish stocks.

In subclause (b) our intention is to ensure as well that there is a data base containing verifiable and reliable scientific information that serves the interests of all parties concerned for the welfare of the so-called migratory species.

• (1320)

Subclause (d) concerns the assessment of the impacts of fishing and other human activities on the marine ecosystem.

Subclause (e) concerns the adoption of conservation and management measures. I would remind people that these are general management philosophy principles.

However, I draw members' attention especially to the following. Our reference in subclause (f) to minimizing pollution, waste, discards, catch by lost or abandoned gear and such things should be noted. This is why I want this introduced into Bill C-27, so Canada may then set out its future policy on fishing, a statement of policy. For example, what will Canada do with respect to the measures including the development and use of selective environmentally safe and cost effective fishing gear and techniques.

That means we are prepared to be ecological and to give thought to the environment, but always from a cost effective standpoint. I agree with that, but we will have to get into the details one day.

I would draw members' attention to another point, still in this clause 2.1 we are proposing to the House. It is subclause (i), which provides that we must take into account the interests of artisanal and subsistence fishers.

This is important for me because I live in a coastal area. My house looks out on Gaspé Bay and the Gulf of St. Lawrence beyond, so there are lots of fish going by. We want to make sure that all those living in maritime areas will have artisanal and subsistence fishing rights because they were born near the sea and it is very much a part of their lives. We want to make sure that this right will always be respected. That is why it is important that this be included in the legislation.

But there is much more and I will try to summarize it in more general terms. When Canada is allowed to ratify and implement an agreement with an international treaty, Bill C-27 tends to Canadianize things. I did not find the management principles that are part of this agreement in the bill. Nor did I find them clearly stated in earlier legislation, unless members opposite can tell me where.

As far as I am concerned—and I would remind members that the auditor general had already asked the government to come up with a national policy—we in the Bloc Québécois are still interested in helping to define such a policy, not that I intend to stay shackled to the centralist federal system forever, but so that we can have our say.

It is important that we be given an opportunity to provide input. I would like to be able to go into more detail in this clause, but because its only purpose is to implement the fisheries agreement, I would merely remind the House that spring is upon us. On April 1, the fishing season will be opening in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for many fisheries, including shrimp and crab in certain areas.

Every time the fishing season opens, there is always a debate among fishers from the various regions. Since quotas are set by the federal government, there are very few mechanisms, if any, to guarantee to these fishers what quotas they will get. Some would like to have, to the extent that it is possible, historic quotas by province.

I would go even further. We should take into account provincial historic quotas, the proximity of stocks as well as the regions within a province.

This is why I am asking hon. members to think about the French management model, which includes since 1992 the criteria of relative stability; it is designed to put an end to the bickering between fishing regions since people know what their quotas are and can work with them. This would help fishers.

Second, and we often forget this, plant workers should be allowed to know what volumes will be handled by and go through their plant during the year.

• (1325)

I will come back to the other groups later, unless the House consents to my continuing to speak, but I see the other side is in a hurry to talk too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Continue.

Mr. Yvan Bernier: Since I am told I may continue to speak, I will address the criterion of relative stability.

I would like the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to use the meeting to be held in Quebec City after the parliamentary Easter break to ask his provincial colleagues what they think of the criterion of relative stability. Then we could total the factors the various ministers might take into account to establish the stability criterion.

I think traditional share should be a factor, and the proximity of the resource.

My final point concerns the problem of new species, new fisheries. I think this should be addressed urgently.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Before I recognize the member for Vancouver Quadra, I want to clarify that we are debating all of the amendments before the House. It is quite

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legitimate for anyone to speak to any of the amendments before the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

I appreciate that the government members can talk about any group they want, but I want to make sure that I will be allowed to speak to the other groups. Usually, a member can speak only once to a group of motions.

If I understand my sheet, I should be able to rise another three times. For example, if certain members have to leave and if one wants to speak to the fourth group before the first, I have no objection, but on the condition that I may return to speak to the three other groups.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The order made earlier today indicates that all groupings are on the floor. Having said that, I understand that the critics very often have specific interventions on specific groups. I will seek further clarification on the member's specific concern. However, given the circumstances, the member would find that the Chair and the House are favourably disposed, through consent, but we cannot count on it. I will get a specific ruling on that intervention before we proceed.

We have a technical glitch. All of the amendments are before the House to accommodate some members who are not able to be here for all stages of this debate. However, the critic for the Bloc has to speak to each of the preordained groupings. May we have the unanimous consent of the House to afford the critic for each party or a representative from each party to speak to the groupings, even though all are before the House at this time?

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, we have no problem with that, as long as that includes the critic for each party and the parliamentary secretary on this side.

• (1330)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that if we give unanimous consent it would include all of the members of the committee, all of the critics who sit on that particular committee and the official opposition party as well. Could that be included?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Please give us a second to sort this out. I think that the Chair understands the mood of the House in what we are trying to achieve. We need to make sure that we can do this technically.

The Clerk has brought to my attention the fact that the only member who was compromised by the fact that I did not indicate

that all motions are before the House is the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, the critic for the Bloc. Would it be the pleasure of the House to provide for the member to intervene a second time on the motions as they are presented? Everyone else has the option.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I understand what the member from Gaspé is trying to do and I agree with his intent. However he will have an opportunity to come back and speak again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): That is exactly the problem. Under the rules the Bloc critic does not have the opportunity to speak to the other amendments and was not advised thereof before he spoke for the first time.

I would suggest that the way for us to get around this is to provide for the member from the Bloc to be able to speak to it.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, would not a much simpler solution be to gain unanimous consent to debate each group separately and then we can just move through the groups very quickly. If no one has any comments, then away we go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We could do that. It is a good point but there is no way that we could necessarily get back to all groups today.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I would give consent to giving the member an opportunity to speak again at the end of the rotation, if we have unanimous consent. The member would have an opportunity to speak once more at the end of the rotation. That would resolve it and we could carry on. I make that motion and ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The motion presented by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for unanimous consent would be that because the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok was not aware of the fact that all motions were on the table, that the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok and only that member be given the last 10 minutes of debate so as to ensure that he does have the opportunity to speak to all of the amendments on the floor.

Just to be clear, the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok will have one more opportunity to speak for 10 minutes during debate.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I want to be sure I understood correctly. I will be allowed to speak again, but will that be after all

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members in the House have spoken, or when my party comes up again in the rotation? That is my first point.

• (1335)

Second, I understand that the members who speak now will have only 10 minutes to address four groups of motions. If that is what the House wants, I will bow to its wishes, but I think members should understand that 10 minutes for four groups of motions is very little time, since the future of the fishery and the fate of an international treaty are involved.

However, if that is what the House wants, rest assured that when we come back at third reading I would like my speaking time to be longer than any fish ever seen.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I think the House has been very generous in affording the critic time.

I am sure the House understands the very real interest that all members, but particularly the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok has in the fisheries. The member may speak during the normal rotation. It would probably be best to speak again in normal rotation. Therefore, resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok for his helpful contribution to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

At the time, I was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The hon. member is an intelligent man and an unflinchingly co-operative committee member.

[*English*]

To return to the subject specifically, the kernel of our discussion is of course the 1982 United Nations convention on the law of the sea.

It is worthwhile reminding the House that Canada, with Singapore and Venezuela, in effect was the conscience of this great international law making project. It lasted for 12 years. Alan Beesley who was legal adviser to our foreign ministry, Tommy Koh of Singapore, and Aguilar Mawdsley who later became a judge at the World Court, provided the modernizing ideas on the law of the sea. It is a great credit to their initiatives that this became a convention after 12 long years of negotiation.

We still have not ratified the convention which recently became law with the 60th instrument of ratification and there were reasons for that. It was thought that there were gaps in the treaty which became apparent in the light of subsequent developments.

Those hon. members who were in the previous parliament will remember the problems the minister of fisheries of that period had with flagrant overfishing as we saw it by certain long range European fishing countries just outside Canadian territorial waters. This overfishing contributed to the degradation and ultimately the threat of disappearance of scarce fisheries stocks.

The minister, on excellent and imaginative advice, decided to go ahead anyway. He was right that there was a legal base for the control action we took. It was necessary to go back to the 1958 and 1960 conventions, the first and second United Nations conventions, to get the main philosophical support for what we did.

It will be remembered that Canada was taken to the World Court over this by Spain. In a ruling in December, the World Court upheld Canada's position but on a technical adjectival law issue, not the main substantive issue, of the ability to conserve endangered or diminishing stocks.

In the meantime, to make assurance doubly sure we went ahead with negotiation of supplementary international agreements that would fill the gaps as they had now become apparent in the 1982 convention. These were the 1994 and 1995 UN agreements on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks which are the substance of the United Nations agreements on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, UNFA as it is referred to. For these treaties to be able to go ahead, in our view we need to supplement what the then minister of fisheries did by divine inspiration and the power of the apple. This is not an instrument of discord, an apple of discord. It is a friendly object in international negotiations.

• (1340)

The minister went ahead and took the action but it would be very important to cross all the *t's* and dot all the *i's* and make sure that Canadian internal legislation provides the enforcement powers for the purposes of Canadian internal law that the minister found, correctly, in international law as it then existed before 1982 and as imaginatively reinterpreted to meet new conditions.

That essentially is what this bill is all about. It will tidy up our national law. It will then put us in a position to do what I have asked for at least five or six times in the House over the last several years, to go ahead and finally ratify the 1982 convention on the law of the sea.

This is a convention that Canadians inspired, in very large measure. We gave it the interesting dynamic elements. We did not have the problems that our American friends had. They worried about damage to their internal mining and other interests by the convention's very imaginative provisions on sharing some of the to be expected wealth from ocean depth mining with underdeveloped countries and others under a special United Nations fund and a special United Nations administration. We did not have these fears.

We did have this feeling and commitment to environmental protection, the special concern that Canadians have had for protect-

ing endangered species and species in danger of extinction as we have seen both on the east coast and the west coast. On the east coast it is Europeans and on the west coast we feel it is sometimes internal states within the American system that do not respect the United States treaty obligations under international law and on the west coast, the 1985 Canada-U.S. Pacific salmon treaty.

This is a measure to tidy up our law. It will remove the objections that some have made to our ratifying the 1982 convention. Immediately after the adoption of this law, it will enable us to do everything to present a 200% perfect legal case on which the then minister of fisheries in 1994-95, with great imagination and that special gift of poetry that Newfoundlanders and I suppose people from all of Canada's maritime regions have, decided to go ahead. He cited the duty of protecting endangered species, the notion that it is one world of scarce resources. One country diminished by unnecessary illegal acts in terms of general international law damages all the world community.

It is a very constructive piece of legislation. We welcome the contributions that have been made from all parts of the House in support of the measures conveyed in this. It is my great pleasure to endorse the legislation, to urge its support and to thank members from all parties in the fisheries committee and in other arenas for the support they have given these general principles.

We are a law-abiding country. We support international law, not international law narrowly construed, but international law captured in its full spirit and with an eye to emerging needs. It is not simply a static re-statement of the old in relation to old problems. It is capturing the new problems and finding creative solutions for them.

I am assured by the former minister of fisheries and the fisheries minister that this will enable us to proceed to ratification of the 1982 convention.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the intent of this legislation. It is obviously trying to implement the UN fisheries agreement which was negotiated in 1995 and also the UN convention on the law of the sea of December 1982, some 15 years ago.

• (1345)

There is one very troubling clause, and that is clause 4 which will change section 7.01. This is with respect to enforcement on the high seas for unauthorized fishing vessels in Canadian waters. We have foreign vessels fishing inside of Canadian waters, in a NAFTA regulatory area. I will read it word for word:

If a protection officer believes on reasonable grounds that a fishing vessel of a participating state or of a state party to a treaty or an arrangement described in paragraph 6(f) has engaged in unauthorized fishing in Canadian fisheries waters and

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the officer finds the vessel in an area of the sea designated under subparagraph 6(e)(ii) or (f)(ii), the officer may, with the consent of that state, take any enforcement action—

It completely nullifies this entire agreement. It waters down our existing provisions. If we have a foreign vessel fishing in our waters illegally in the NAFTA regulatory area, before we can proceed with enforcement action we must get the consent of the flag state. They will argue that that has to be in there because it is part of the UN fisheries agreement.

Let me go back to the enabling legislation, Bill C-96, which was introduced by the former fisheries minister back in April 1997. He introduced the enabling legislation for the same UN agreement. This is the enforcement section which he intended:

A protection officer may, subject to any regulations made under subparagraph 6(e)(iii), arrest without warrant any person who the officer suspects on reasonable grounds has committed an offence under this act.

That is our difficulty. This makes it meaningless. It waters down our position. In fact the Premier of Newfoundland, Mr. Tobin, has written letters to the committee with respect to this very issue. His concern is why we would water down our current position.

We have amendments which would correct that and we would ask the government to look at them. What we are asking under the amendments we put forward is to give the minister the power of consent. In other words, if there is a foreign vessel fishing in our waters in the NAFTA regulatory area, that enforcement could be taken with the minister's consent. We are saying, in these circumstances, let us have a clause that if this exact situation existed enforcement officials would have to contact the department and, with the consent of the minister, they could take enforcement action. Right now they have to go to the flag state.

The member for Vancouver Quadra talked about a very colourful moment. Let me read a paragraph from Michael Harris' book *Lament for an Ocean*. This takes us back to 1995:

It was the other shot that was heard around the world. The 50-calibre machine-gun burst from the *Cape Roger*, three in all, marked the first time since Confederation that Canada had fired on another country in defence of the national interest. When the order came to open fire, the officers aboard the fisheries patrol vessel were so taken aback, they asked that the command be repeated. The faithful words crackled once more over the ship's radio: An initial burst was to be fired over the bow of the Spanish trawler *Estai*, the next rounds into her screw sixty seconds later if she refused to stop.

That was Mr. Tobin who did that. We had illegal fishing. What we ask is that this legislation protect our sovereignty and our interests. The issue we keep coming back to is that we have to get the consent of the flag state. That waters it down.

I have read the provision, word for word. We have to get the consent of the flag state to take enforcement action. What I ask is that we amend that section so that officers on the high seas, with the consent of the minister, can take enforcement action.

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• (1350)

That would correct this fundamental flaw in the bill. Again, the intent is worthwhile. But if we correct that fundamental flaw, put that power into the minister's hands in this rare exception, then we could take enforcement measures against foreign vessels.

I want to touch on one other thing. I will be quick because I would like to give a couple of minutes to my friend from Yorkton—Melville.

We have laws for foreign vessels so we can protect our sovereignty, but what is even more troubling is that in British Columbia, in the town of Ucluelet, our government is giving Canadian fish away to foreign nations. Foreign nations are fishing in our waters. This bill does nothing about that issue, even though it was brought up over and over again in an east coast report.

We now have a piece of legislation, an international agreement, with respect to foreign fishing. However, I would encourage our government to really look on both coasts at what foreign nations are doing inside our waters, both on the processing and the fishing side, to ensure that we take action and give fishermen on both coasts priority to this resource. Our fishermen should get first crack. Unemployed fishermen on both coasts do not know how they are going to pay their mortgages or make ends meet, and yet we have foreigners processing our fish and fishing in our waters.

If it is possible, I would like to share the couple of minutes that are left to me with the member for Yorkton—Melville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is requesting the unanimous consent of the House to give the member for Yorkton—Melville the last two minutes of his allotted time. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was hoping to get this time at the beginning of the debate to outline for the various members what is happening and how things are going.

As members know, we reverted to orders of the day today. A bill was being debated that had been supported by the majority of MPs in this House. It had been sent to committee where the Liberals and the NDP killed it. That bill was on consecutive sentencing. It was something which nine out of ten Canadians supported.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We are debating report stage of Bill C-27. If the member for Yorkton—Melville does not have words that are germane to that bill, he is out of order.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the first two amendments to Bill C-27 which were

proposed by the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok.

The first proposed amendment is to include in Bill C-27 the general principles of article 5 of the United Nations fisheries agreement. The second, as members know, is to add an interpretation clause to the bill.

I am pleased to be able to contribute to this debate on a sound piece of legislation that clears the way for the ratification of an essential international agreement. The bill amends the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act to enable Canada to implement certain provisions of the UN fisheries agreement.

Ratification of this agreement and, more importantly, its full implementation are crucial to the conservation of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. The agreement will not come into force until 30 nations have ratified it. So far 19 nations have done so, but Canada's name is not yet among them.

It is important that we move forward with the passage of Bill C-27. Once Canada has ratified the agreement we will be in a much stronger position to urge others to do the same.

Canadians across the country, and certainly people in my riding of Waterloo—Wellington, want to see the resources of the sea protected. No one wants to see a repetition of the devastation caused by the collapse of the Atlantic groundfish stocks.

As important as this bill is, the democratic process cannot be hurried. The government has, accordingly, given full consideration to the concerns raised by members of the opposition parties in committee. However, in the case of the first two amendments proposed by the hon. member the government cannot agree.

• (1355)

The first would include in Bill C-27 the general principles of article 5 of the UN fisheries agreement and I would like to first speak to this proposed amendment.

When Canada ratifies the UNFA, which will happen as soon as Bill C-27 is passed and the requisite regulations are made, Canada will be bound by the obligations and the responsibilities provided by that, including the general principles found in article 5 of the UNFA.

Canada pushed for the inclusion of these principles in that agreement during negotiation of the agreement. We used, as a basis for these principles, our Canadian fisheries management policies and practices, and I think that is important to note. Canada, therefore, already has in place scientific and fisheries management policies and practices which implement these principles.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has, for instance, adopted a precautionary approach as a policy objective. I would

like to note at this time the obligations for UNFA parties, which include that we adopt measures to ensure long term sustainability of fish stocks, that we ensure the use of best scientific evidence, that we assess the impacts of fishing, that we adopt conservation and management measures, that we minimize pollution, that we take measures to prevent or eliminate overfishing, that we take into account the interests of subsistence fishers, that we collect and share data concerning fishing, that we conduct scientific research and, finally, that we implement and enforce conservation and management measures. Many of these obligations are met through DFO's process of developing integrated fisheries management plans for individual fisheries in our land.

Canada will continue to co-operate with other fishing nations and coastal states, as UNFA provides, in order to implement all those principles through decisions taken within regional fisheries organizations to which Canada is a party, such as NAFO and ICCAT.

As hon. members can see, the first proposed amendment is not necessary as the amendment of the principles contained in the UNFA does not require specific authority in the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. Canada has been and continues to apply these principles through the application of existing and revised fisheries management policies and practices, and we would on this basis urge the House to vote against this first motion.

I understand that I am out of time. I wonder if I would be allowed to come back later to deal with the second amendment.

The Speaker: Yes, the member is not out of time. As a matter of fact, you have about five and a half minutes left.

However, I thought I would intervene now and you can bring your arguments to bear on your second topic as you see fit. You will be recognized when we return to orders of the day.

As it is almost 2 p.m., we will proceed to Statements by Members, and I will recognize the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the arrest and forcible transfer to jurisdiction of a national criminal court of the Kurdish leader, Abdullah Ocalan, raises the possibility for the Canadian government to make use of our excellent diplomatic relations abroad to offer our good offices in having Canadian observers present at any future trial processes and to

offer to provide additional legal counsel from Canada, if that would be relevant.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is a serious situation developing within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The plan to eliminate some 1,000 RCMP positions is very disturbing. What is even more disturbing is that half of these positions are to be left vacant in British Columbia.

To open up the Regina training centre for four groups of 25 trainees each, for a total of 100 new officers a year, is an inadequate token.

RCMP detachments in rural British Columbia are seriously understaffed and overworked. Investigations per member are at record numbers. The personal and health consequences for them is frightening. What happens when a violent situation erupts and there is no backup available?

This is a serious problem with long term implications. The Mounties are unable to provide Canadians with basic services, yet they are still expected to target long term organized crime and to support the new gun control implementation.

We need our Mounties in full force. I call upon the government to act now to restore staffing and funding so that Canadians from coast to coast can have the police—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Paul's.

* * *

TUBERCULOSIS

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark World TB day.

Dr. Brundtland, director general of the World Health Organization, said yesterday:

Tuberculosis, which many of us believed would disappear in our lifetimes, has staged a frightening comeback.

Today TB kills more adults than AIDS, malaria and all other tropical diseases combined.

● (1400)

It is the first disease to be classified as a global emergency by the WHO. This is not just a developing world problem. In Canada our aboriginal population suffers at a rate seven times greater than the rest of the population. We need to treat this disease seriously.

I thank Dr. David Brandling-Bennett, deputy director of the Pan American Health Organization; Dr. Howard Njoo, director of

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tuberculosis prevention and control at Health Canada's LCDC; Dr. Neil Haywood, director of immigration health policy for Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Duane Etienne, health promotion officer for the Assembly of First Nations; and Deirdre Freiheit, chief operating officer and manager of government and corporate affairs for the Canadian Lung Association for their enlightening presentations—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nunavut.

* * *

NUNAVUT

Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I speak for the last time as a member from the Northwest Territories. When I return to the House I shall be the member from Nunavut, Canada's third territory, and the map of Canada will have been redrawn to show the new boundaries.

Last night friends enjoyed a small preview of what the festivities will be like throughout Nunavut next Thursday, April 1. My Nunavut celebration was an evening of throat singers, country food, drum dancers, and traditional games and clothing. I thank everyone who participated in making the evening so special, and most of all for their continued support throughout the process.

I look forward to next Thursday and I know Canadians will welcome their third territory with open arms. It is a momentous occasion of which all Canadians can be proud as we begin to make footprints in new snow.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CASINOS ON CRUISE SHIPS

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the action of the Canadian government, cruise ships operating casinos may continue to do so until they are within five nautical miles of port.

Previously, they had to shut down casino operations as soon as they entered Canadian territorial waters, or in other words at Anticosti Island.

This amendment to the Criminal Code, which came into effect on March 15, will allow casinos on cruise ships to continue to operate in Canadian waters.

I would point out as well that the ports of Quebec City and Montreal draw some 75,000 cruise ship passengers annually, and they generate tourist revenue of close to \$12 million.

[*English*]

CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, April is Cancer Awareness Month. An estimated 129,000 new cases of cancer and 62,700 deaths from cancer occurred in 1998.

The most frequently diagnosed cancers are breast cancer and prostate cancer. The incidence of breast cancer has risen steadily over the past decade but the mortality rate has been slightly decreasing.

Early detection techniques are responsible for our progress in beating cancer. Cancer can be beaten. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of death among men and women. Keeping Canadian youth and children from smoking is the most effective cancer prevention.

My past involvement with the Canadian Cancer Society makes me proud to extend a special thanks to all volunteers. Let us give generously when the Canadian Cancer Society knocks on our door. We can achieve our goals through research, education, patient services and advocacy for healthy public policy. Cancer can be beaten.

* * *

[*Translation*]

STUDENT SUMMER EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the launching of the fourth edition of the student summer employment exchange program.

Four years ago, we initiated this little pilot project, which now provides more than 800 young people with an opportunity to discover another region of Canada, to learn a second language and appreciation of another culture, and to earn a little money toward their studies.

This project has become what it is today thanks to the contributions of many different parties. I want to particularly mention the involvement of the many host families and employers throughout Canada, and the more than 100 parliamentarians of all political stripes.

Our young people are the wealth of our future. Our young people are the best ambassadors of this program. They are our pride, and they will make tomorrow's Canada an extraordinary country in which mutual understanding lies at the heart of Canadian values.

COMMON CURRENCY

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 15, the House of Commons rejected a motion from the Bloc Québécois proposing that a special committee of the House be struck in order to consider the possibility of Canada's participation in the creation of a pan-American monetary union.

Far from advocating the immediate adoption of a common currency, our motion sought to provide elected representatives with an opportunity to discuss this issue of the future.

• (1405)

Instead of assuming its responsibilities, the Liberal Party, and the NDP, resorted to acrimonious and falsely patriotic arguments. Liberal backbenchers and NDP members spewed claptrap and baffleleg all day long.

Today, the Senate begins examining this vital issue for the future of Quebecers and Canadians. This is the direct result of the Liberals' lack of leadership, of the Liberals running out of steam and getting weary.

By abdicating the legitimacy of the House of Commons in favour of an obsolete and archaic institution like the Senate, the Government of Canada is making a very telling demonstration to its partners in the Americas of its lack of leadership and vision, this on the eve of a new millennium.

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[English]

CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week marked the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Canadian Jewish Congress, a national representative organization of the Jewish community of Canada.

In 1919 the upheaval of the first world war and the desperate situation of Jews in eastern Europe contributed to the movement in Canada to found a body that would represent the interest of Canadian Jews and coordinate their efforts to send help to their brothers overseas.

Democratically elected, nationally representative, CJC has become one of Canada's foremost human rights organizations and a voice for social justice, harmony and equity for all Canadians.

Over its eight decades it has become a model community advocacy organization, blending its efforts on behalf of the Jewish community of Canada seamlessly with its outstanding contributions on issues of national scope and significance. Internationally its vigorous promotion of global human rights and the elimination of racism and discrimination everywhere complement its efforts on behalf of the State of Israel and Jews around the world.

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To CJC, I say happy anniversary. It has earned our admiration. *Yashar koach*. May it go from strength to strength.

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CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has now been more than two months since the possession of child pornography was made legal in British Columbia. We still have more than a month to wait before the court hears the appeal of the Shaw decision.

The Minister of Justice and her parliamentary secretary have been consistent, if nothing else, as they falsely continue to assure British Columbians that everything is under control.

Everything is not under control. We now have two child pornographers walking the streets in B.C. because of the Shaw decision. The second dismissal was even more galling, given that the accused pleaded guilty to the charge but had to be released because of Shaw.

I have recently received an RCMP intelligence report that indicates the extent of the child pornography flooding into British Columbia from outside the country. Yes, it is business as usual for this element of sick, perverted behaviour in B.C., behaviour that is aided and abetted by a Liberal government that refuses to act.

* * *

THE LATE EDMUND TOBIN ASSELIN

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mark the passing yesterday of a prominent citizen and lawyer from the West Island of Montreal and a former member of the House, Mr. Edmund Tobin Asselin, who served as the MP for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce from 1962 to 1965, sitting for two years at the same time as his brother, Patrick Tobin Asselin, the MP for Richmond—Wolfe in the province of Quebec.

In addition to being twice elected to the House, in 1962 and 1963 Mr. Asselin served Canada as a flight lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

[Translation]

After World War II, he had the distinction of sitting on Montreal's municipal council from 1950 to 1962, before being elected to the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Asselin is survived by his wife, Carmel, his six children and his niece, Constable Janet Asselin, who is a member of the House of Commons security service and on duty this afternoon in the House gallery.

I would like to offer all my sympathy to the family.

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GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the big oil companies have confirmed what every Canadian consumer believes when they said to the *National Post*, “When did costs have anything to do with gasoline pricing”.

The world crude oil price fell 60%, 17 months ago, but it took 15 long months for gas prices in Saskatchewan to drop even a couple of cents. Now crude oil prices are rising slowly but it only takes 15 hours for gas prices to jump right back again, an unjustifiable gouging of Canadians.

The major oil companies brag that Canada has among the lowest gas prices of the G-7 countries, but they do not tell Canadians that we have the highest prices of any oil exporters. The gas retail market in Canada is dominated by those four big elephants that sing “It’s every man for himself” to their tiny competitors while they dance all over them, according to Tommy Douglas.

The Competition Bureau is supposed to report soon on its investigation on predatory gas pricing in Saskatchewan following the complaint I made along with my leader and my NDP Saskatchewan colleagues.

I call on the major oil refiners to quit gouging Canadians on gas prices.

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• (1410)

[Translation]

DAFFODIL DAY

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, March 25, is Daffodil Day.

Organized by the Canadian Cancer Society, Daffodil Day has, for almost 40 years, been a major fundraising activity for this agency, whose goal is to wipe out cancer and improve the quality of life of those who have the disease and of their families.

In Quebec alone last year, Daffodil Day raised over \$1 million. It is through the continuing generosity of Quebecers and of Canadians that the Canadian Cancer Society can provide material and psychological support for the tens of thousands of individuals struggling with this terrible disease and help fund medical research.

Let us give generously. We may think that cancer is something other people get, but life has a way of proving us wrong.

To all the Canadian Cancer Society volunteers, I say thank you for your generosity and have a great Daffodil Day.

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GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadians of Hellenic origin join with 17.5 million Hellenes

around the world in celebrating the most important day in the history of Greece, my country of origin, that is March 25, 1821, Greek Independence Day.

[English]

Today I welcome to Ottawa and to Canada a group that has travelled from Greece to participate in the various celebrations organized in Montreal and Ottawa: Mrs. Maria Lambrou, deputy mayor of Chalkidos; Ms. Pagona Theodorou and Ms. Fevronia Kastani, members of the provincial chamber of commerce of Evoia; and the Hellenic national organization whose goal is to preserve and promote the authenticity of Greek dance and the genuineness of Greek traditional dress.

I am proud of my roots. More important, I am proud of Canada which allows for the respecting of the cultures and traditions of all Canadians. I invite all members of the House to join in the celebrations to celebrate this important day.

[Editor’s Note: Member spoke in Greek]

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[English]

RUN AGAINST RACISM

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House as a proud participant of the 10th anniversary of Run Against Racism, its motto being “Together we can make a difference.”

Last weekend the founder of this event, Henderson Paris, and many residents of communities in Pictou County came together for one common noble purpose: to heighten the awareness of racism in these communities and throughout Canada.

This ultimately will help alleviate racism from society. People of all ages and races came together to lend their support for this worthwhile cause. This event was held in conjunction with the International Day to Eliminate Racism and Discrimination observed worldwide on March 21.

The goal of this annual marathon is commendable in its efforts to eliminate racism everywhere. Efforts such as this touch on the hearts and souls of every member of society from the youngest to the most senior. We hope that one day the dreaded perils of racism and discrimination will be eradicated completely.

I express sincere congratulations to Henderson Paris, a resident of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, who started this marathon 10 years ago. His efforts are applauded and admired. Next year’s run will be highlighted as part of New Glasgow’s 125th birthday and millennium celebrations. I encourage all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Malpeque.

*Oral Questions***EAST WILTSHIRE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate the grade seven students of East Wiltshire Intermediate School who recently won a national anti-racism award sponsored by Heritage Canada and Much Music.

The anti-racism video produced by these students was one of 10 award winners chosen from almost 300 entries. The students used their own time to write scripts and construct props for the one minute video.

On March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, five of these students, Erika Weeks, April Walker, Elyse Roberts, Emilie Michellod and Meghan Harris, took part in the awards program at Much Music studios in Toronto.

Once again, congratulations to all East Wiltshire students and faculty involved. Their efforts and actions speak well to the future as we attempt to eliminate racism from our society and around the globe.

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GUN CONTROL

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week members of the Canadian Police Association told me that the people of Saskatchewan were losing faith in the criminal justice system.

Do you want to know how bad it is? On February 20 the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation passed the following resolution with 84% support:

Whereas the opposition to Bill C-68 continues to grow, and whereas several provinces including Saskatchewan, have opted out of enforcement and administration of the bill, and whereas the federal government intends to use the RCMP to enforce C-68 in spite of overwhelming opposition to this legislation in Saskatchewan, Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan replace the RCMP with a provincial police force that is more accountable to the people of Saskatchewan.

If respect for the law erodes, the work of the police becomes more difficult. Law-abiding gun owners in Saskatchewan are even calling the RCMP the Chrétien cops. See what stupid ineffective gun control laws do.

* * *

• (1415)

RED CROSS

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, over the past year the Red Cross has experienced many changes. However, its

fundamental commitment toward helping relieve human suffering remains the same.

During last year's ice storm the Canadian Red Cross mobilized some 3,300 staff and volunteers to help those affected by the disaster. Last September it assisted with the Swissair crash off Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia.

In addition to programs such as water safety, emergency services and first aid, the Red Cross offers programs from homecare support to abuse and suicide prevention programs.

Overseas the Canadian Red Cross is part of a network of 175 Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and has sent relief workers on many humanitarian missions.

The Canadian Red Cross would like to thank the Canadian public which generously donated \$6 million to its hurricane Mitch relief fund.

I ask all hon. members to join me in proclaiming March as Red Cross month.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the first time that Canada was directly involved in a major bombing attack since the Korean conflict.

Canadian pilots flew in the first wave of NATO air strikes against Serbian military positions in Yugoslavia.

Will the government give us an update on what was achieved yesterday, including a comment on the safety of Canadian personnel involved?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our four Canadian CF-18s participated with other aircraft in the air mission over Yugoslavia. They hit targets as they were required to do. It was a successful operation and they returned safely. We hope that in any future missions they will also return safely.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the stated objective of the NATO air strikes is to damage Serbia's capacity to make war, including making war against innocent civilians in Kosovo.

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Will the defence minister inform the House how long he expects these NATO strikes to continue and at what point the mission will have been considered to be a military success?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has quite correctly pointed out that the purpose of the mission is to diminish the capabilities of the air force and other components of the military of Yugoslavia so as to stop the advances they are making against the people of Kosovo.

Hopefully the air campaign will come to a conclusion as quickly as possible, with the Milosevic government coming back to the negotiating table and signing the agreement so that we can get on with implementing a diplomatic and political solution.

We do not know, though, the precise time that will take. We take it a step at a time and are hopeful that will occur soon.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canada also has a longstanding reputation as a peaceful country and our participation in military action against Serbian military positions should not mean that we cease diplomatic and political efforts to find a solution.

Is the Prime Minister or the foreign affairs minister participating in any new political and diplomatic efforts to bring about a peaceful end to the crisis in Kosovo?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the foreign affairs minister and all of us are anxious to get back to the negotiating table as quickly as possible.

Overtures have been continually made, the most recent being by Mr. Holbrooke when he was in Belgrade, to get a peaceful resolution of this matter as quickly as possible.

We are there because we are trying to stop a humanitarian disaster. We simply cannot allow evil to take over and good people do nothing. We must ensure that this genocide comes to an end. We do need a political solution quickly and hopefully the bombing will have the effect of bringing them to the table.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the Industry Canada estimates released this morning:

We have had the lowest rate of growth in productivity among the G-7 countries for the past 25 years.

This is a damning indictment of the policies of the finance minister.

• (1420)

Is he proud of the high tax, high debt record of his government, of the falling standards of living he has contributed to? Is he proud of that?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the same report:

Canada is well equipped to be a leader in the knowledge based economy of the 21st century. We have the people, the institutions and the research excellence. We know the challenges that we face, and the opportunities afforded to us. By mobilizing our resources, we can be a leader in the new economy. By working together, we can ensure continuing success as we embark on the new millennium.

The policies we have been pursuing over the last five and a half years are the very policies that will turn around that gap and successfully lead us into the 21st century.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, study after study points to the feckless performance of the industry minister and the finance minister.

A month ago the deputy minister of industry said the gap between Canada and the United States is widening. It is interesting that now when the pressure is on the industry minister gets up and tries to defend this terrible record of his government.

Again, is the government proud of a record that is destroying Canada's standard of living?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the biggest danger to the standard of living when we assumed office was that the Canadian government was running deficits of \$42 billion a year. It has been reversing that trend, the key to building success in the next century.

Meanwhile we work hard on issues like increasing R and D performance in the private sector, encouraging the adoption of new technologies, encouraging training in the workforce. These are the things that will make a difference, all of which have been measures that party has consistently been opposed to.

* * *

[Translation]

KOSOVO

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now that the air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have begun, a number of questions arise, particularly the question of Canadian participation in expanded military operations.

Will the Minister of National Defence tell us whether he intends to support expanding the Canadian contribution to NATO's military effort if necessary and, if so, what action might be taken in the short term?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not been asked for an additional contribution over what we have there at the moment.

We have 6 CF-18s and approximately 130 personnel. We also have approximately 100 personnel working out of Germany under the early warning system known as AWACS. They are all part of this mission as well. We also indicated that we would send ground troops if and when there is a peace agreement signed. That would be premature at this point.

We have a contribution in keeping with the contribution of the other NATO nations save and except the United States which has a very substantial contribution. We have professional expert people there who are well trained and who are doing a terrific job.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, another question Quebecers and Canadians have has to do with the risk of the war spreading to other countries in the region.

Could the Minister of National Defence tell us what the Canadian government is doing within NATO and the OSCE, and as a member of the UN security council to ensure that the conflict will be confined to Yugoslavia and other countries not dragged into a deadly spiral?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is every effort to contain the matter.

For example, the forces in Bosnia are on special alert. Precautionary measures have been taken. They are also on the border of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and Kosovo where the UN mission unfortunately has come to an end. There are NATO troops there and every precautionary measure is being taken to prevent this conflict from spreading. We will try to bring it to an end as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in time of war, we need to give a thought to the terrible conditions civilians are experiencing. Kosovo has no lack of examples of such conditions.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Does Canada intend to play a lead role on the humanitarian level, in order to ensure that measures to provide aid to the many present and future refugees who are victims of the Kosovo conflict are put in place?

• (1425)

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already committed in excess of \$3 million Canadian in the form of humanitarian aid to the refugees, and are prepared to provide more assistance.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the government whether any Canadian nationals are still in Kosovo, and if so what steps have been, or will be, taken to help and protect them?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): At the moment, Mr. Speaker, there are no Canadians in that area.

We trust that the conflict will be over soon, so that we will be able to send over representatives to facilitate humanitarian aid.

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*[English]***INDUSTRY**

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian Airlines, Metronet, Canadarm, the list goes on. Slowly but surely American firms are devouring our high tech industries. Today it is Ameritech acquiring 20% of Bell Canada. Head offices go south, R and D goes south, Canada's productivity goes south. What will it take for the government to abandon its don't care policy with respect to Canada's economic sellout?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the acquisition of an interest in Bell Canada is what the member is commenting on. As she well knows, there are foreign investment limits in our telecommunications sector. We are not proposing to change those.

The growth that is happening in the telecommunications business is increasingly North America-wide. We should be looking at the job and growth opportunities that will exist for our companies as they expand into the U.S. market. I remind the hon. member of some important high tech acquisitions that have occurred going the other direction, Nortel's acquisition of Bay Networks for example.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we see it again, the government's "like, whatever" economic policy. Let us look at the facts. In 1994 the sellout was \$8 billion. By 1998 it was up to \$50 billion. In information technology the sell-off increased sixfold in just one year. Does the minister refute these Industry Canada figures or will he admit there is a direct relationship between Canadian control and growth in the R and D sector?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): What is happening increasingly, in particular in technology related sectors,

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is that the world is becoming smaller and much of the market is global and international. It might be interesting for the leader of the NDP to realize that while investment in Canada has been growing, Canadian investment abroad has also been growing, so much so that in 1997 income from Canadian direct investment abroad reached \$11.5 billion, the highest figure ever, which is almost equal to the amount that has been paid on foreign direct investment into Canada in the same year.

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HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday the Prime Minister appointed a new minister for the homeless yet this new minister has been given no program budget and no research budget. Can the Deputy Prime Minister explain why the Prime Minister appointed a new minister for the homeless and failed to give this new minister the tools to get the job done? Is this just window dressing?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put up the money at the beginning of December last year. We added an additional \$50 million to the RRAP program. We did not wait for a conference. We financed the Anne Golden report. We participated financially in today's conference in Toronto. Our ministers are there and we will continue to listen to Canadians in need so we can answer their needs.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, that is just more talk and what the homeless need is more action from this government. The finance minister mentioned the word homeless in his budget speech but no funding was actually provided to deal with this very serious problem. Since then we have seen the appointment of a new minister for the homeless and she has not been provided with the resources needed to get the job done.

Why does this government only talk about the serious issue of the homeless instead of doing something for the homeless?

• (1430)

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should have listened to the very informed answer of the minister responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

We have not been waiting for conferences. We have not just been talking. We have already put money on the table months before this conference. We are ready to take action, as we have made clear by what we have already done. This has to involve a partnership with provincial and municipal governments. We have to hear from them. They have to be involved as well if real action is to be taken to help the homeless.

THE ECONOMY

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, they seem to be house cleaning over at industry. Anyone who has ever said that our standard of living is too low or taxes are too high has been told to change his mind.

Reports are being censored, conference presentations cancelled and diaries are being revised. But before the purge, the deputy minister was able to say at a conference that "improvement of Canada's cost competitiveness has been entirely due to the depreciating dollar".

Does the minister agree with his deputy that our low dollar is the only thing masking our high taxes and high debt?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual the Reform Party tries to simplify a complex issue and to confuse people about what it is.

If the hon. member would look at the speech the deputy minister gave, it is very consistent with the Empire Club speech that I gave.

We acknowledge that productivity is a key to growing a stronger economy, to creating economic growth and to increasing the standard of living in Canada. The issue that the hon. member raises, trying to simplify it to simply one or two minor questions, is misleading. The reality is that we have to look at issues like research and development, like the commercialization of scientific research in universities, like—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton North.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is the deputy minister who appears to be simplifying this by saying that our standard of living is low, taxes are too high and our depreciating dollar seems to be totally responsible for this. That is the minister's own deputy minister. It is sort of like *Pravda* which said that wheat production in the Soviet Union was just absolutely terrific when in fact there were food shortages there.

The minister's deputy minister is telling the truth. I would like to ask the minister again. Does he agree with his deputy minister or not? Is he going to send him away for political indoctrination?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I do not agree with is the foolish representation of those views by the hon. member for Edmonton North.

If the hon. member had the faintest understanding of what she is talking about, she would be standing in shame and saying that she regrets that she voted against support for research and development in the private sector. She would say she is sorry that she has not put a focus on the lack of training in Canadian firms. She would say

Oral Questions

she understands the years of Tory governments that she supported ran up a debt load that is still burdening this country.

Those are the real causes behind Canada's productivity challenge.

* * *

[Translation]

POVERTY

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the 1993 election campaign, the Liberal government promised to fight poverty in Canada.

The number of poor children in Canada has increased from one million to one and a half million under the Liberals.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Does the government intend to act on my proposal that a position of poverty commissioner be created in order to more effectively fight this terrible phenomenon, poverty?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what our government wanted to do, for the very purpose of fighting child poverty, was to bypass structures and appoint individuals to look after it.

I think the member's idea is interesting, and we should look at it, but let us look at what we have done as the government.

We have invested \$3 billion a year in the national child benefit. These investments will come back each year. We established this national benefit in co-operation with the provinces so that they too are contributing to the fight against poverty.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a human rights commissioner, an official languages commissioner and an environment commissioner to ensure these matters get more appropriate attention.

Is poverty not of sufficient concern to get this government to agree to the appointment of a poverty commissioner, right now?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have done a whole pile of things. We have improved our employment insurance system by giving the most disadvantaged unemployed access to family income, a family income supplement, specifically to help fight child poverty.

• (1435)

We have introduced specific measures to put money into the pockets of those responsible for children. I think there is already an

improvement in the situation at the moment. In the coming years, I think it will be even greater.

* * *

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this government trumpeted the certainty and stability brought by the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement. The very opposite has happened. The newest U.S. attempt is to restrict Canadian exports of painted and manufactured wood product by reclassifying it as softwood lumber. This could cost thousands of jobs.

Why is the minister not fighting this unjust reclassification?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again the Reform Party is late. Not only are we fighting but we have already consulted the American side. We have told them that we will be proceeding through the dispute mechanism system as well as taking this to the World Customs Organization.

We are trying to work within the confines of this agreement. But we do not accept the American intention to expand the agreement into areas that quite frankly are unfair. We will, and have already started the claim.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is going through the motions. NAFTA phased out duties on value added products to create free trade. That is why U.S. special interests want to classify these products so they become subject to restrictions under the softwood lumber agreement. The softwood lumber agreement has already cost Canadian jobs and now more are threatened.

Will the minister commit to not renew the agreement when it expires?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that a few years ago four provinces and the entire industry recommended to the federal government that we enter into this agreement. The member also knows that I have instructed our officials, two years before the agreement lapses, to consult with the same industry and the provinces to try to gather a national consensus on where we go from here. Will they want to continue the agreement? Do they want changes? Do they want to have no agreement?

We are engaged in that process. It is the member that is going through the motions.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we ask questions of the Minister of Industry on the federal government's shipbuilding policy, he always says that the government is doing enough and that its programs are working.

But surely there must be something wrong, since Canadian shipowners have their ships built abroad.

Instead of telling us that everything is fine when it is not the case, is the Minister of Industry willing to take a closer look at what is not working with his support measures for the shipbuilding industry, and improve his policy, so that it will finally yield results?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not prepared to give subsidies to the shipbuilding industry.

I also want to reiterate that we have made changes in recent years, particularly as regards our support to exports. EDC changed the rules and increased support.

If the hon. member really wants to change things, he should give us examples which do not involve subsidies.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will provide one example to the minister.

In 1998, the Minister of Finance rammed Bill C-28 through the House, to help shipowners.

When will the Minister of Finance introduce a Bill C-29 to help Canada's shipyard workers?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we already have tax shelters to help the shipbuilding industry.

We have systems to help them with regard to exports. There is already a lot of support provided to this industry.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government tells us the Nisga'a treaty is a done deal. Yet the minister of fisheries refuses to allow his bureaucrats to brief the fisheries committee on the impact the treaty will have on the fishery. What does the minister have to hide?

● (1440)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working diligently to prepare legislation to bring to this House to debate the very important and historic Nisga'a treaty. We are working on all

aspects. We will have good legislation that truly reflects the treaty. I am looking forward to good and fulsome debate in this House.

I would only ask the members opposite to consider what their side of this story is and to realize that they will not bring certainty or investment to British Columbia. Their point of view will only bring chaos.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the deal is signed but I want to tell the House what the problem is. The department of Indian affairs and the department of fisheries cannot agree on what the treaty means for fish.

Why did this government sign a deal when it did not know what it meant? Why is it prepared to ram it through parliament without knowing what it means?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House knows precisely what writing modern treaties in British Columbia is all about. It is about bringing certainty to that province. It is clarifying who has what jurisdiction and who has what authority. It is about making investments in a province so its economy can very much appreciate and benefit from the settling of these land claims.

This government knows precisely what it is doing. It is that side of the House that has no idea how to reconcile aboriginal rights in a modern Canada. All that side would suggest is to bring chaos.

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[Translation]

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its annual report, the Canadian Human Rights Commission again criticizes the delay tactics being used by Treasury Board in the matter of pay equity.

While employees have been deprived for years now of equal pay, the government is spending time and money on various approaches in order to put off the inevitable.

Can the President of the Treasury Board acknowledge his error today, commit to withdrawal of the appeal application, and pay what is owing once and for all?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only is the government in favour of pay equity, but it is the one that proclaimed it and the one that wrote it into Canadian legislation. The government has already paid out more than \$1 billion for pay equity.

Our experts are clear, however: the human rights tribunal is wrong in its judgment. We have filed an appeal, as unions do when they believe the courts to be wrong, and we have to wait for a ruling by experts in the field in order to find out what portion the Canadian public really needs to pay.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, I travelled the country last year and learned firsthand that many of the men and women in our internationally respected armed forces work for low wages and live in substandard housing. Hopefully the concerned and compassionate Minister of National Defence will tell us what he is going to do to improve their quality of life.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian forces are an important national organization. They contribute a great deal to the life and security of this country and deserve to have fair compensation for a reasonable standard of living.

I was very pleased to table today the government's response to the 89 recommendations of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. It did a fine job. We agree with most of all its recommendations.

We will be putting into effect for example pay increases come the first of April this year. As an example, for privates the committee recommended some 10% and we are making it 14.4%.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, business people in the Vancouver Island community of Ucluelet have spent millions of dollars upgrading their fish processing facilities, yet we hear this government is about to sell out on them. In fact, it is going to give this fish to foreign nations, Polish vessels offshore to process this fish.

My question is very simple. Before the government gives any Canadian fish to any foreign nations to process offshore, will it ensure that every single Canadian processor has priority access to this resource and no foreign nation will get fish before Canadians to process?

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that our objective is to Canadianize the fishery.

The current quotas that Cubans are fishing are Canadian quotas. Foreign participation by Cuba this year, 1999, in the silver hake fishery is low. The catch has been reduced from 55,000 to 30,000.

• (1445)

In terms of the ships that the Cubans are building, the Cubans have been made fully aware that there is a three year program in

Oral Questions

place setting quotas that will end in the year 2000 and it is uncertain if those quotas will be renewed after that date.

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have yet another example of Liberal interference with tax dollars at the St. John's Port Corporation.

The Liberal appointed CEO, Sean Hanrahan, tore down the old building and is spending millions to put up a new one with offices bigger than the premier's. He ignored the request of clients to invest in dock improvements, he ignored the request of the mayor and increased the already high vacancy rates in St. John's.

Why was this transport money not spent on docks rather than on these posh new offices? For a Liberal—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Industry.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as acting Minister of Transport today I will simply have to take note of the hon. member's question. I am sure the minister will want to respond to him directly.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our military is actively engaged by way of air strikes in the conflict in Kosovo. Concern has been expressed that this present action may not achieve its goal and the conflict may escalate to require ground troops.

Will the minister assure the House that, should NATO make a formal request of Canada for an expanded commitment, this request will be brought before parliament for a debate and a vote?

We spent all night long debating the government's legislation to send public servants back to work. Surely we can and should debate any expanded commitment of military action in Kosovo.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no contemplation of sending ground forces into Kosovo under the current conditions where there is no peace agreement. There would have to be a peace agreement before we could send in a peacekeeping mission.

If there was any substantive expansion or change in our role with respect to this NATO led effort, then we would of course want to consult with members of parliament.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN FORCES**

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has tabled its response to the SCONDVA report on quality of life in the Canadian forces. That report had a number of recommendations concerning the housing crisis.

While recommendations concerning pay and allowances have been accepted and are being implemented, many of the housing recommendations have only been accepted in principle, subject to operational or training imperatives.

Will the minister advise the House as to why the housing recommendations are not being given top priority in the best interest of military families?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): They are, Mr. Speaker. We in fact are putting \$40 million more this year into the repair of the married quarters for our personnel.

We recognize that there is a lot of substandard housing. We are going to move immediately to fix that up, but we are also developing long range plans. We are looking to reorganize our Canadian forces housing authority to give it more of the tools it needs to do an effective job and to make sure our people are properly housed.

We have long term plans, but we have plans for \$40 million additional dollars to immediately go toward repairs.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, we support our forces and the NATO action, but in the middle of the war the government is rotating home our CF-18s and crews from Italy and is replacing them with Cold Lake based fighters and crews.

Obviously there has been no planning or forethought to this military operation. Canadians are left wondering what military genius came up with this poorly timed plan.

Why are Canadian forces rotating the CF-18s now, or is this a back door chance to increase our CF-18 presence in the theatre?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has it wrong. We originally were going to rotate at the end of March, but that was set months ago, before we knew what action we would be involved in at this point in time. It is hardly the time to do that.

But eventually we will need to replace the people who are there with others. That is an operational question that will be dealt with

at the appropriate time and it will be determined by the chief of defence staff.

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[Translation]

KOSOVO

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is off to war, without the slightest thought for the Canadian forces personnel in Bosnia.

One of the serious risks is that the war in Kosovo could spread to Bosnia, and thus the Canadian troops would find themselves in the midst of open warfare.

I wish to ask the minister what steps he has taken to reinforce Canadian troops in Bosnia, should the hostilities spread.

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I prefer to think of this as a humanitarian mission, an effort to stop what is being done to the Kosovars, as opposed to a war.

The troops that we have in Bosnia have taken extra precautionary measures to strengthen their security. We have done everything to reduce the risks so that our troops will be as safe and secure as possible in that kind of environment.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

A Canadian delegation recently attended the United Nations fisheries and agricultural organization meeting in Rome. What was accomplished in terms of protecting the world's oceans from destructive fishing, from overfishing and from pollution?

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the world's oceans are under threat from overfishing capacity and pollution. We have to put international pressures on those areas.

In Rome, Canada pressed all nations to enact the UNFA agreement by the year 2000 to protect global high seas and migratory fish stocks. Canada set the tone at the FAO. We have led the debate in terms of conservation of the fisheries.

Our Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will continue to provide leadership not only domestically, but globally and internationally around the world.

*Oral Questions***HEPATITIS C**

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first anniversary of the health minister's two tier hepatitis C compensation plan, but there is no celebrating.

Is the health minister proud of this? After one year of legal wrangling no victim has received one single cent.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud that there is an agreement in principle with respect to a proposal for thousands of Canadians who were infected between 1986 and 1990. We expect that will soon go before the courts for approval.

What is more is that this government has offered over \$500 million to people outside that period to ensure they get the care they need. That is what this is about, providing care to people when they are ill.

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[Translation]

DAIRY PRODUCERS

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week the WTO ruled in favour of the United States and New Zealand in the matter of milk exports, which is contrary to the interests of Quebec dairy producers.

My question is for the Minister for International Trade. Does the federal government intend to appeal the decision by the WTO, or is it going to lower its arms and drop Quebec dairy producers?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. We only received the report last week, on March 17.

Yesterday the federal government met with the stakeholders from the dairy industry. As well, it has consulted all of the provinces.

I am now in a position on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Government of Canada to say quite clearly that indeed it is our intention to make an appeal and thereby stand four-square behind the dairy industry.

* * *

[Translation]

POVERTY

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, finally, the Prime Minister has recognized the problem of

the homeless and appointed a minister responsible. He has now to provide her with the resources necessary to resolve the problem.

The new minister must also have the freedom to criticize the government policy that gives rise to poverty.

In order to ensure real success, is the government prepared to strike a parliamentary committee where all the parties will be represented to assist the minister in her job and to make sure that the problems of the poor and the homeless are eliminated and not simply hidden under a title?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has suggested the creation of a new parliamentary committee.

A very legitimate request, but I must remind her there is a procedure for creating a parliamentary committee. The leaders of all the parties meet, discuss such suggestions, which are then submitted to the House. They are not made by the minister responsible for a portfolio. The decision is taken by the House collectively following recommendations by the leaders of the individual parties.

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[English]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the acting Minister of Transport.

Twelve years ago Department of Transport officials identified what they called a major safety concern at the Kelowna airport. The safety concern was that air traffic controllers cannot see the runways.

● (1455)

In 1989 the Department of Transport issued a temporary waiver to allow the airport to continue operations on the condition that a new tower be built. Ten years later there is no new tower, no plans, no nothing.

Considering that Kelowna is one of the fastest growing airports in Canada, will the minister now do whatever is necessary to stop the delays and address what his own department calls a major safety concern?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the first concern of the Department of Transport, and I might add its minister, is the safety of Canadian air travellers. While of course I am unaware of the particulars of this situation, I am sure that upon investigation, if the minister finds that the situation indeed has not been improved, he will want to instruct that those improvements occur with the appropriate haste.

*Oral Questions***WILDLIFE**

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in two weeks it is going to be National Wildlife Week and Canadians are saying that they are very concerned about the state of wildlife and its habitat.

[Translation]

Could the Minister of the Environment tell us what measures she is taking to protect wildlife?

[English]

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 4 to 10 marks National Wildlife Week. The 1999 theme is "Home is Where there is Habitat".

[Translation]

Environment Canada is working in conjunction with its provincial and territorial partners. We are protecting the habitats thanks to a network of programs across Canada. A bill to protect endangered species will soon be introduced.

[English]

Together Canadians can work to ensure that future generations inherit a country at least as rich and diverse in wildlife as the one we enjoy today.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the immigration system is broken. In 1993 Dr. Sharif Karimzada, a former Afghani diplomat, was granted refugee status here in Canada. Later the government retroactively determined that he was no longer a refugee and was going to be deported.

He was here to plead his case in Ottawa this week. I am wondering if this government's policy is to retroactively change the law to ship people out like Dr. Karimzada who deserve our protection here in Canada.

Is the government going to do that? Is it going to send him back to Afghanistan to face certain death, yes or no?

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Immigration Act is quite clear on persons who were senior officials of certain governments which engaged in crimes against humanity and are inadmissible to Canada. These provisions have been put into place to protect the safety of Canadians.

If the Reform Party really cares about the integrity of the system, then it should be concerned that all inadmissible individuals to this country be removed.

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[Translation]

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Human Rights Commission just released its annual report.

In that document, the commission's chair, Michelle Falardeau-Ramsey, says: "Unfortunately, the actual situation of people with disabilities has again deteriorated in 1998".

Could the Deputy Prime Minister tell us how his government intends to remedy the situation of people with disabilities?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House that our government has truly identified disabled people as a priority.

I was very pleased that we released a document prepared jointly with the provinces, to truly help people with disabilities integrate the labour market.

I want to point out that we have given a high priority to the whole issue of employability. I am pleased to inform the House that this morning I signed a bilateral agreement with the Government of Quebec on the employability of disabled people. The agreement was signed today by Mrs. Marois and myself.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the past year Canadian lumber companies have been able to ship value added, rougher headed lumber products which are used in the exterior trim and finish of building projects to the United States without paying U.S. duties.

• (1500)

Last week U.S. customs announced that it was planning to reclassify Canadian exports of rougher headed products and subject them to strict quota limitations, thereby putting thousands of jobs in British Columbia at risk.

Will the government commit today to fight this blatant attempt to break international tariff rules and to ensure market access for these important products and protect B.C. forestry jobs?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we already mentioned moments ago in our answer to a

question by another member that we will not accept this American ruling. We will challenge it both from within the dispute mechanism system in the softwood lumber agreement as well as consider taking the case directly to the World Customs Organization in Brussels. We are clearly standing for our industry and will not accept this latest attempt by the United States of America.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, I got such an intelligent, capable answer from the Minister of Industry in the last question I asked that I am tempted to ask him if he would answer all my transport questions from now on. I want to raise the question about the air traffic control tower in Kelowna. I would like him to confirm. The first answer he gave me was such a good one.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to further qualify the answer if the hon. member was satisfied with it except to say I hope that if changes are to be made, they are done by the time I next fly to Kelowna.

The Speaker: That would conclude our question period for today. Have a good break.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, while most Liberals do not know what day it is, it is Thursday. Therefore the hardworking MPs from the official opposition will be heading home to listen to their constituents for two weeks. Before we go would the government House leader tell the House what the business of the House will be when we come back from the two week break?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the House will know, this afternoon we are completing the report stage of Bill C-27, the fisheries bill, pursuant to a special order adopted earlier this day. Tomorrow the House will not sit, pursuant to the same agreement.

When the House returns from the adjournment on April 12, it shall take up the second reading of Bill C-71, the budget bill. April 13 shall be an allotted day. On April 14 we will consider third reading of Bill C-27, the fisheries legislation. Although it is still somewhat early, I expect that the business on April 15 will be Bill C-72, the income tax bill.

I take this opportunity to thank all colleagues in the House for their co-operation during the past number of weeks and to wish everyone the best during the two weeks of adjournment.

Points of Order

• (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my point of order is very succinct.

Standing Order 30(5) says that during Standing Order 31 members other than ministers of the crown may make statements. Then with respect to Statements by Ministers Standing Order 33(1) says a minister of the crown may make a short factual announcement or statement of government policy. It goes on to say a member from each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly thereon.

Mr. Speaker is very familiar with those standing orders. The government has taken to using question period for this, depriving us of being able to respond. The example today was the minister announcing the pay raise for privates in the military. I think that should be corrected.

The Speaker: Colleagues, like you, I enjoy question period and never have I commented on the quality of the question or the quality of the answer. Virtually all questions, unless members use unparliamentary language and providing they go to the administrative responsibility of one of the ministers of the government, will be allowed.

Today and on other days when hon. members have sought the floor seeking information from ministers, very infrequently have I intervened. If the hon. members from the governing party wish to ask their questions in a certain way, they will be permitted to do so. They will be able to get the answers, hopefully, they are seeking just as the members in the opposition parties would be able to do.

ESTIMATES

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today part III of the estimates was tabled. I realize that there are difficulties with massive distribution of bulky documents. However, I have not been able to obtain a copy of those papers. Members of the media have been provided with copies while the majority of members of the House do not have copies. The media want my reaction and I have been significantly disadvantaged by the House distribution system which has been inadequately served by the government.

I want to bring this situation to your attention, Mr. Speaker. Today there is not a satisfactory arrangement to serve the needs of members of parliament.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I do not know the particulars of the case, I will endeavour to find out. If a sufficient quantity was not made available to the distribution branch, as is normally the case, I will raise it with the minister responsible. If it

Government Orders

is a matter of actually delivering them to the office only, the member knows he can pick one up himself. That is a matter of distribution and involves only that.

Meanwhile, I intend to ask my own officials to make a copy of the document available to the hon. member immediately.

The Speaker: I hope this will satisfy the hon. member. He will have a copy as soon as is feasible.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

While we are all in a good mood, I would ask for the consent of the House to allow members to discuss the four groups during the 10 minutes allocated to them if they wish to do so. I would not object to that.

The Speaker: The Chair always gives members the opportunity to say what they want to say during debate, provided of course they stick to the issue at hand.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Waterloo—Wellington has five and a half minutes remaining.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, prior to question period I noted and I reiterate that the first proposed amendment as outlined by the hon. member opposite is not necessary insofar as the implementation of the principles contained in the UNFA do not require specific authority in the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

With respect to the second motion proposed by the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, the scope of the proposed amendment is much broader than the scope of Bill C-27.

As stated in its title, the purpose of Bill C-27 is solely to deal with the implementation of UNFA and other international fisheries agreements to which Canada is a party. Furthermore, this amendment is unnecessary. This is in effect supported by the fact that the government and governor in council's authority to make regulations in Bill C-27 related to UNFA is restricted to making regulations "for the implementation of UNFA". Adopting this amendment then would open the whole of the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act to interpretation in accordance with UNFA, whereas this act covers situations falling outside the scope of UNFA.

The proposed amendment also refers to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Canada participated actively in the negotiation of the law of the sea convention and members will recall the member for Vancouver Quadra spoke about that and noted that aspect.

Similarly, Canada participated actively in the negotiation of the two treaties concluded in 1994 and 1995 to implement the convention, an agreement dealing with sea bed mining and an agreement dealing with straddling and highly migratory fish stocks.

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[*English*]

COASTAL FISHERIES PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-27, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act to enable Canada to implement the agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks and other international fisheries treaties or arrangements, as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Group Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There was some confusion this morning with some as to the interpretation of the special order made earlier this day for the purpose of debate.

I want to clarify that for the benefit of all hon. members by moving the following. There has been consultation among the parties and I think the House would find that this clarifies the situation:

That the special order made earlier this day shall be interpreted as permitting each member to speak separately on each group of amendments as grouped for consideration at report stage of Bill C-27.

In other words, the effect of this would be that once we finish considering a particular group, we could start another group and then a member who has spoken on a previous group could therefore speak again.

That clarification seemed to meet the consent of everyone. Actually most of us had interpreted it as saying that already. Perhaps it was not properly worded to do that.

The Speaker: Does the hon. House leader have permission to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Canada has also participated actively in the development and work of the institutions contemplated by the convention. I mention in particular the International Marine Organization, the International Sea Bed Authority and the Continental Shelf Commission. I think that is important to note.

The Canadian government is committed to ratifying the convention, I think rightfully so, something all Canadians want. However, the timing of this ratification must be placed in the context of Canada's broader policy regarding high seas fishing.

UNCLOS does not effectively address concerns over high seas fisheries management and therefore we must have an effective international high seas enforcement regime to protect fish stocks which straddle Canada's 200 mile fishing zone in adjacent high seas.

The UNFA was negotiated to fill the gaps left in the convention relating to high seas fisheries management. Canada's immediate priority then is to ratify UNFA, and Bill C-27 will enable us to do so. I think in that sense we need to hurry and move on this expeditiously.

The effective functioning of the high seas enforcement regime under UNFA will pave the way then for Canada to ratify the convention, and while Canada is committed to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the timing of this ratification has yet to be decided. It would therefore be improper in the meantime to bind ourselves to the convention as a whole in such a broad way.

Therefore the government cannot agree to the second proposed amendment as it stands to add an interpretation clause to Bill C-27 and therefore I urge the House to reject it.

Finally and by way of conclusion I want to add my voice to those who have urged the House to move quickly to adopt Bill C-27.

• (1515)

Canada has learned the hard way that unregulated fishing has disastrous consequences wherever it takes place. Overfishing outside our 200 mile limit contributed to the collapse of our groundfish stocks. Collapse of that fishery has damaged many Canadian coastal communities. It is something we all regret happened.

It is time we took the steps needed to ensure this kind of destruction will never happen again off the coast of Atlantic Canada or anywhere in the world. Therefore we need to move expeditiously in this very important area. I urge all members to vote for the bill accordingly.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me as the fisheries critic for the federal NDP to rise in the House to speak about a very important piece of legislation. We do support it

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although we would like to see accepted a few of the amendments being put forward to make the legislation even stronger.

I wish to thank the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry for his expert legal opinion when he offered our committee help. He is a fine member of the Bloc Québécois. His expertise in helping us draft some of the legislation was greatly appreciated.

There are also three other people I would like to acknowledge publicly who assisted me in deliberations over the bill: Professor Tony Charles of St. Mary's University; Professor Trevor Kenchington from Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia; and Mr. Sam Elsworth of the Sambro fisheries in Nova Scotia who is one of the finest experts when it comes to fisheries management and the international fisheries agreements of Canada.

A former prime minister, Mr. Trudeau, once said "The problem with fish is that they swim and that is the problem". We need international agreements to control, conserve and protect fish stocks so that we can protect not only the thousands of jobs in coastal communities in our country but the millions of jobs in coastal communities around the world.

The member for Vancouver Quadra was correct when he said that the Law of the Sea Convention was enacted in 1982. We are now in 1999 and we have not ratified it. Canada has dragged its heels for 17 years. The reason is that they waited for me to be elected as a member of parliament. Now the legislation is before the House and I greatly appreciate the government and you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing that very simple fact.

Bill C-27, the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, was part of an initiative in 1995 when the *Estai* ship from Spain caught headlines around the world. For the first time in a long time Canada got tough and shot at someone. We did not want to hurt anyone. We just wanted to scare them a bit. The former fisheries minister, the present Premier of Newfoundland, ordered it. He became known as Captain Canada and the hero of Canada. Everyone loved him.

What really happened with the *Estai* ship? The ship went back to Spain along with all the fish that had been caught. It cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland \$110,000 to keep the crew in Newfoundland. I love Newfoundland as much as anyone else.

The eloquent speaker from St. John's will speak on this matter. He would love everyone to go to Newfoundland to visit his province. The only thing is that he will not pay for it. We did. We paid \$110,000 through our taxes for the Spanish crew to stay in Newfoundland.

What resulted in the end? We now have Bill C-27, the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. The parliamentary secretary from the beautiful area of Malpeque, P.E.I., stated quite clearly, although it is not written, that their intention is that Canadian fish caught by Canadian fishermen be processed in Canadian plants. My party and

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I have been saying that since we got here. As always, a good idea takes a long time before it sinks in. We hope Canadian fish will be caught by Canadian fishermen and women and processed by Canadian workers in Canadian plants.

One of my amendments to the bill will be that fisheries officers, when they realize there is an infraction in our seas, will have to ask permission from the foreign state in order to enact any kind of action.

• (1520)

My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands was incorrect ever so slightly by saying we could not do anything. I know that if officers suspect a wrongdoing, they can board the ship. They have to notify the foreign nation of the action being taken. If I am correct, 72 hours notice is needed for the foreign nation to respond to Canada on exactly what action can or cannot be taken. That is an awfully long time for our peace officers, our coast guard officials or even our military people to be on board a foreign vessel. It is also not clear in the act whether that is 72 hour of business days. What happens on a weekend or a national holiday in the particular country?

My amendment of 48 hours simplifies it and makes it much more clear. It does not state whether it is over a weekend or on a business day. I think 48 hours is enough time to give any nation warning of what Canada plans to do when we suspect illegal fishing in our waters.

I am also glad to note that one of the amendments the parliamentary secretary will be bringing forth concerns stateless vessels. We are very concerned about what Spain, Iceland or any other nation has done when it comes into our waters, but what about those with flags of convenience or stateless vessels? I call them pirates. If I had my way I would not have missed the last time; I would have got them. Every time a foreign vessel comes into our water and takes away tonnes of our fish, they destroy the hopes, the lives and the aspirations of hardworking people in the country from coast to coast to coast.

It is sinful and it is a shame that we have become the laughing stock of the world when we sit back and ask what we can do now. These are Canadian resources and they should be controlled by Canadian management policies in agreement with other nations. I realize we just cannot arbitrarily do it when it comes to straddling stocks and stuff.

I will give the government credit. Effective today, it is starting to talk about it and starting to do it. The problem is that it took so long to get around to it. As I have already explained, I am here now and we will get this problem corrected.

I want to say something to the members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans from all parties. I keep saying

it is the best committee in the House because we try to work as co-operatively as possible. The member from the Gaspé area is a very constructive member of our committee, along with his colleague who also helped with drafting the amendments. They are very good amendments. We will be reviewing them and deciding in the future whether or not we will be supporting them. In essence, from what we have read up to now, we should have no problem supporting the majority of his amendments.

I look forward to a great Newfoundlander speaking about the problems of the fisheries. It should be a very interesting debate. Hopefully we can all learn something from this wonderful individual.

Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nova Scotia who always speaks with such great sense and passion about the fishing industry.

It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this good piece of legislation which all my caucus colleagues and I will be supporting. I am especially delighted to be speaking on behalf of our fisheries critic, the member for Burin—St. George's, who has become a leader on both the fisheries committee and in the House of Commons on all matters relating to fisheries, especially on conservation and protection.

The member for Burin—St. George's cannot be with us today because his father is in the hospital having some surgery. On behalf of all members, we offer our good wishes to Mr. Matthews, Senior, who is in the hospital today. Hopefully he is doing well.

This act is obviously an act that gets a lot of support from all people in Newfoundland and Labrador. It has extensive industry support from all sectors. It is a piece of legislation primarily designed to add to our enforcement capabilities, to add to our abilities to protect conservation, to protect the fish off the coast of Newfoundland and to protect the jobs of many Atlantic Canadians who depend on the fishery.

The act is not perfect, and probably no piece of legislation ever is, but it is certainly an improvement. Even though it is not perfect we will be supporting it because we know of the tremendous pressures that have been placed on the fish stocks off the coast of Atlantic Canada. They are badly in need of some protection and certainly in need of enforcement of our present laws.

• (1525)

The fish we are talking about in particular are the migratory species especially on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. They include cod, flounder, turbot, tuna and swordfish. Those are the fish we protect, but the people who depend on the fishery are the people we are really trying to protect in this regard. They are mainly Atlantic Canadians, especially Newfoundlanders, who depend

upon the fishery. All Canadians are also well served by protecting this tremendous resource which feeds many of the world's people.

Bill C-27 will have the support of our caucus. However, I want to move an amendment. There is a problem with the act. Yes, it is an improvement over the old act, but there is one very serious gaping fault with the act. The amendment I will propose would change that problem. The act has to be made stronger. I will give a very quick history lesson.

In 1966 in Newfoundland waters there were 266,000 metric tons of cod taken. Although my math may not be great, to me that is well in excess of 532 million pounds or more than a half billion pounds of fish in fishing year 1966. In 1977 through an act of the House of Commons we brought in the 200 mile limit. There was euphoria in Newfoundland; there was joy and bliss. We were finally to have within Canada control of our resource. Everyone thought that there would be more jobs in Newfoundland, that there would be more fish resources and that we would have a very vibrant economy based on that fishery.

In a real short history lesson we went from 532 million pounds of cod in 1966 to zero pounds in a little less than 25 years, in 1992, even with a new fisheries management regime in Canada and even with the 200 mile limit.

Very often during the 25 year period from 1966 to 1990 or so we lost a lot of fish because the fishery was not managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Often the fisheries industry was managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs for trade purposes, the department of external affairs or foreign trade, and a lot of our fish were bargained away and given away.

In particular, with the few short moments I have today I want to move an amendment to subsection 7.01(1). This is the most important part of the act. It gives strength to our enforcement officers.

It reads, as the previous member mentioned:

If a protection officer believes on reasonable grounds that a fishing vessel of a participating state . . . has engaged in unauthorized fishing in Canadian fisheries waters and the officer finds the vessel in an area of the sea designated. . . the officer may, with the consent of the state, take any enforcement action that is consistent with this act.

In other words, when the enforcement officer finds something that he thinks is seriously wrong, a new set of laws takes place for that and only that act within Canada.

Basically what it says is that if the enforcement officer thinks this person, this vessel or this captain has committed a crime in Canadian waters, the officer must call the home country and get permission to lay a charge. Maybe then the officer will be allowed to lay the charge. Therefore I move:

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That section 7.01(1) be amended by removing the words "may with the consent of that state" and "any" and inserting the word "shall" before the word "take".

In effect I am saying that the enforcement officer, not that he may, not that he might, not that there might be some minister of fisheries as proposed by the member from British Columbia, shall take action consistent with the act.

That will give the enforcement officer at sea exactly the same provisions as RCMP officers and wildlife officers and in effect the same provisions that enforcement officer has in our offshore to lay a charge against a Canadian vessel. He does not have to call the minister of external affairs, the Prime Minister of Canada or the Minister of Justice of Canada to lay a charge against a Canadian vessel. If it is a foreign vessel in Canadian waters, why in the name of God would we want the enforcement officer to somehow call some foreign country to get permission?

Just imagine if it were the other way around. Imagine if this law were in place in Greenland and a Canadian vessel was found overfishing or was suspected of overfishing in Greenland waters. Greenland's external affairs department would call external affairs in Canada who would get in touch with the minister of fisheries. A cabinet meeting would probably have to be called in Canada to get the permission of the minister. If it involved a Newfoundland vessel, the premier of Newfoundland would talk to the federal minister of fisheries and ask the minister not to lay this charge. How in the name of God even in a country as organized, disciplined and democratic as Canada, would you get permission of the state government of the vessel committing the crime?

• (1530)

If we look at it in the absurd, most of these pirate fishing vessels are registered in Panama. Imagine some poor fisheries officer off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland who comes upon a Panamanian vessel. This is what happened with the *Estai* and others. They are probably from Spain, Portugal or some other country but are registered in Panama. That would be the state we would have to deal with.

Imagine the poor old fisheries officer trying to get hold of Foreign Affairs Canada to get permission from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to call Panama's minister of foreign affairs to get permission to lay a charge off the coast of Newfoundland. It simply would never happen. It could not happen. It would take so long the evidence would be all gone. As a result we would never get a charge laid.

My amendment, which I hope will be supported by all members of this House of Commons, simply says that if a foreigner commits a crime or is suspected of committing a crime in Canadian fishing waters, then he will be treated like any other foreigner who commits any other crime in Canadian jurisdiction. He lives by Canadian law, that a charge be laid by the enforcement officer.

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This is so absurd. It reminds me of a police officer in Canada finding a juvenile delinquent breaking into a shopping mall and having to call the delinquent's mom first to see if he can lay a charge.

These fishing vessels off the coast of Newfoundland have devastated our stocks. They have taken us from 532 million pounds of fish in 1966 to no pounds in 1992. We have gradually been bringing it up in the last few years. That protection and enforcement is crucial to the fishing industry and its people in Newfoundland and all of Atlantic Canada.

This amendment is very simple. It gives the enforcement officer the right to enforce a law that is consistent whether you are a Canadian or a foreigner. We are talking about foreigners breaking the law in Canadian waters. From the point of view of Newfoundland and on behalf of my colleague from Burin—St. George's I want to say that if we are going to have a successful fishery in Newfoundland that employs a lot of people, then we certainly need this law changed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): If the hon. member for St. John's West would permit me to interrupt, would you be kind enough to give the amendment to the page so we can bring it forward before your time expires.

Mr. Charlie Power: Mr. Speaker, this bill is a good one. It is good for the Canadian people. It is good for the Canadian fishing industry. It will be an enforceable act and an act that can do exactly what it chooses. If we remove or change the amendment I just mentioned, it will be more similar to acts that have been passed in other parts of the world to agree with the United Nations agreement on fisheries and oceans. It is a good suggestion that will make the act stronger and better for all Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The amendment is in order.

For the benefit of some members who were not here earlier today, all of the amendments are deemed to be put. Everything is on the table, but we are speaking to the amendments in groups. So it is quite in order for this amendment to be accepted by the Chair. Resuming debate.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be very short. At this point I want to make a couple of comments on the last two speakers.

I have no choice but to oppose the amendment put forward by the member for St. John's West in that it is not needed. We do not need to ask permission within our 200 mile limit to board and take actions against vessels. The member is certainly wrong on that

point, but we do welcome his support and the support of his party on Bill C-27.

• (1535)

With regard to the comments made earlier by the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, Bill C-27 does in fact deal with stateless vessels. If the member looks closely, the three government motions are for the purpose of ensuring that Bill C-27 effectively covers stateless vessels.

I will talk on those amendments when we get to that point a little later. We would certainly welcome the member's support in that regard.

My colleagues who spoke earlier outlined in detail why we cannot support Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will make a few brief remarks with regard to this bill before us which amends the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act. I understand the purpose of Bill C-27 is to amend domestic legislation to implement an international agreement on the conservation and long term sustainable use of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory species.

The background of the legislation is interesting. In the first instance the legislation was brought forward in the last parliament by the former fisheries minister, a member from Newfoundland. That was on April 17, 1997. It died on the Order Paper when the election was called.

There is one item among many in the bill that I want to address which causes me some concern. It is the notion that the fisheries enforcement officials are inhibited if they attempt to enforce conservation laws outside Canada's 200 mile limit. The predecessor to this bill, Bill C-96, did not require the express consent of participating states in order for Canadian officials to take enforcement action. In other words, if a foreign vessel was operating in a way that was contrary to Canadian law outside our 200 mile limit, on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks for example, Canadian vessels would have been able to take enforcement action under that bill.

That particular part of the legislation was one that Canadians were quite proud of achieving. I would like to give a little history on how that came about.

I was fortunate enough to attend the UN on two instances when the convention on straddling stocks and migratory species was being discussed. At that time one of the concerns Canadians had was that they would not be able to apprehend a vessel which was in violation of Canadian conservation laws if it was outside the 200 mile limit.

Members will recall the shameful incident of the Minister of Fisheries in the previous government, the current premier of

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Newfoundland, firing upon an unarmed fishing vessel in the north Atlantic. I say shameful because he was not firing on a military vessel but he was firing on an unarmed vessel which was manned by some poor fishermen from Spain, men who were making just a few thousand dollars for five months work in the north Atlantic in very unpleasant conditions, guys just trying to make a living. Because we did not have some good legislation in place that would allow us to take enforcement actions or compel the people on the *Estai* to abide by our laws, this action was taken. The action was still inappropriate.

The later action of the former fisheries minister in attempting to sever the net from the vessel was just as inappropriate. He put at risk the lives of people not only on the coast guard vessel involved but also on that fishing vessel. Anybody who has any sense of the inherent danger of operating or working on the ocean knows that you do not play around like that man did.

• (1540)

I think it was shameful. I thought it was shameful at the time, and I still do. I do not want to see it happen again. The act will not prevent that kind of action. It simply will not do it because we have given up the right. How did we give it up?

I mentioned that I had been at the UN when this was being discussed. The Canadian negotiators were absolutely delighted with one item. They got U.S. consent to allow U.S. vessels to be boarded if they were in violation of conservation laws off the shore of any country, outside the 200 mile limit of any country.

The Americans were very reluctant to allow that to happen. They could not abide the thought that some foreign nation would be able to board their vessels and enforce some conservation laws, but they did come to the table and they agreed that they would do that. The pressure came from the non-governmental organizations in the United States. It did not come from the legislators, but from the non-governmental organizations which are concerned about conservation matters.

The Canadian delegation felt that they had achieved a great victory when they got this consent from the Americans. Back in Canada those of us in parliament and on the committee as well as those who are interested felt a great victory had been achieved as well. We felt that if a foreign vessel was operating in a manner that was detrimental to the welfare of fish stocks outside Canada's 200 mile limit on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, Canadian vessels would have the authority to apprehend. They do not have it now, but they would have had that authority.

We know that Canada is not too proud of its actions at the time of the *Estai*. We know that Canada knows it was operating outside the law. When the Spanish people took that matter to the World Court at The Hague, Canada refused to square off in the courtroom.

Canada said no, it was not going. The court's jurisdiction did not apply because Canada would not agree.

We have problems with the Americans. We would like to get the Americans into the court at The Hague and square off with them over the problem of the A/B line in B.C. or over the problem with the salmon, but they will not go. They can always say that as Canada did not go in the case of the *Estai*, why should the Americans go on this issue when they think they may lose. That is the problem. If we violate international law, it is pretty hard to take the high ground and ask somebody else to abide by it when we will not.

What we needed to do in this bill was to ensure that Canada would have the authority to enforce its conservation laws outside our 200 mile limit when the laws were being broken by a foreign vessel. Without that, this whole thing really is worthless.

In talking about this point and the actions of the premier of Newfoundland up to that point I think Canada was inching slowly toward the notion of not just having control of the seabed on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, but also the water column. That is important to be able to enforce fisheries laws beyond the 200 mile limit on the nose and tail. Up until the *Estai* incident, we were making some progress in staking our claim to the water column as well as the seabed. That initiative really has died as a result of the *Estai* incident and we still suffer.

We see that with this bill the government has backed away from an important concession it got from the Americans, an important concession that it won at the UN in my understanding of it, by not insisting in the bill that we would have the authority to arrest foreign vessels which are violating our conservation laws beyond the 200 mile limit.

I do not think this bill is worth the time we are taking to discuss it. This morning the member for Sydney—Victoria commented about what he referred to as a diversion when we were talking about a private member's bill on consecutive sentencing. He said we were taking away from the debate on an important fisheries bill.

This bill is not important because it is not doing the job. It is not doing the job because this government caved in. To whom I do not know. It caved in on the important concession it had won at the UN, that we would have had the ability to force conservation laws outside our 200 mile limit on the straddling stocks and migratory species. We do not have it in this bill. The bill is not worth wasting time on until we do get it.

• (1545)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There being no further members rising on debate on the first group, we will proceed now to the second group.

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[Translation]

Pursuant to the order made earlier today, the motions in Group No. 1 are deemed moved and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred.

[English]

The House will now proceed to the debate on motions in Group No. 2.

[Translation]

Pursuant to the order made earlier today, the motions in Group No. 2 are deemed proposed and seconded.

[English]

They have all already been moved and seconded. This group contains Motions Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make sure that, in the time remaining until the end of the sitting today, which is 5.30 p.m. I believe, the three groups of motions can be debated. I urge all participants to make sure that we can cover all three. This will mean splitting our time at some point.

I will therefore set an example by picking up the pace. The purpose of the motions in Group No. 2, Motions Nos. 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17—I am trying to put this briefly to give people the idea—is to address the so-called extraterritorial role the Canadian government could assume by slipping certain terms into Bill C-27 that, in my view, are open to interpretation because they are not consistent with the terms already used in the UN fisheries agreement, or UNFA.

The purpose of Bill C-27, let us not forget, is to implement this agreement. It would be very wise to use the terminology found in the agreement as an example to bring other countries around the world to sign that agreement.

At this point, I would like, if I may, to make use of some notes left to me by my colleague, the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, when he had to leave to travel with the foreign affairs committee this week. The member for Beauharnois—Salaberry worked with the members of the standing committee on fisheries, precisely because an international treaty is involved and he is far more familiar with international jargon than I am.

Here are the notes my colleague wanted me to bring to the attention of the hon. members. Reference is made to changes that ought to be made to Bill C-27 to ensure full conformity with the UNFA. One of these changes would be to replace, in French, the

term “délimitation” by “désignation” throughout the bill; clauses 2, 3, 4, 8 and 12 would be affected.

This would bring the French more in line with the English version of the text. In French the term “délimiter” confers a kind of power upon Canada to decide what the zones will be, while the fisheries agreement speaks of “désigner”, and in English “designated”. So why not take advantage of this opportunity?

• (1550)

As well as bringing the terminology more in line with the English version of the text, using the word “désignation” would also have reassured Canada’s partners, particularly those in the European Union, who are still concerned that Canada may again wish to confer an extraterritorial scope to its Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, in contravention of its new obligations to be assumed when it becomes a party to UNFA.

In order to ensure that the bill does not assume this scope, we also proposed adding a new clause 2.1, to which reference has already been made earlier.

The point of all that is to bring the report into line with the fisheries agreement.

Still on the subject of the bill’s conformity with the UNFA, we also proposed that the words “serious reasons” used in the text of the agreement itself replace the words “reasonable grounds”, as we were not convinced that the test of reasonability the government wanted was as exigent as that provided in the treaty being implemented.

The interpretative provision we proposed to add to clause 2.1 could also have promoted the alignment of the concept of reasonable grounds with that of serious reasons, but its rejection by the government does not guarantee it would necessarily be interpreted in this sense.

What should be understood here, and I am pleased other members have already mentioned it, is that the fisheries agreement is inherently good. What the government is trying to do is ensure that it is indeed the United Nations fisheries agreement they want to allow to be Canadianized and to incorporate in our laws. However, they must be very careful. As someone mentioned earlier, only six countries have signed and ratified this agreement.

An example must be set. Insofar as possible, it must be incorporated textually into Canadian law. I think the parliamentary secretary said that we can do it integrally for the moment, since it has not yet become international law. For sure, but I would remind the House we may have a problem.

The aim is to permit the maximum number of countries to sign it. Thirty countries are required for it to become international law. Right now, there are people getting ready to sign, the European Community in particular, and there are 11 countries that I think will

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sign this agreement. We must show confidence and then urge these people to sign.

How can we do this? By means of the United Nations fisheries agreement. If we do not agree with the agreement, let us use international diplomatic channels to amend and improve and, in certain cases, as the member for St. John's has proposed, put more bite into this agreement, so that straddling fish stocks will be off limits in Canadian waters.

I agree, except that, with the present wording of Bill C-27 making it possible to Canadianize certain passages of the fisheries agreement, I am afraid we are missing the boat. I am concerned that we are scaring off allies who are getting ready to sign this agreement.

Earlier, the member for Delta—South Richmond mentioned the problem raised by the boarding of the *Estai*.

I personally took part in drafting Bill C-29, which allowed the boarding of vessels fishing our straddling stocks. The Bloc Quebecois worked on Bill C-29 to prevent illegal fishing because it could not be stopped under international law.

• (1555)

Now, with the UN fisheries agreement, we have a proposed framework, but the spirit of the letter included in that agreement is in contradiction with the fact that to implement the agreement by enacting Bill C-27 is to forget that Bill C-29 contradicts this agreement.

I am in favour of the agreement, but I do not agree with how Canada wants to implement it in its own legislation. It is inappropriate and even contradictory.

I wonder what we want to do exactly, particularly since the Canadian government can, without consulting the House, without getting its approval, sign and ratify this agreement on its own, thus promoting its signing by other countries, including the European Community. As the parliamentary secretary pointed out, we will come back later in this House to Canadianize the texts of the agreement.

If we really want to implement that agreement, we might drop Bill C-29. I am in favour of having a system based on the rule of law. If we do not agree with such a system, we must notify the proper authorities. As the hon. member for Delta pointed out, we will have to go back to the UN and ask for a clarification.

I realize we were dragging so far behind, internationally, as regards the conservation of fish stocks, that this first step, with the UNFA, is a necessary one.

However, the terminology used in Bill C-27 leads us to believe that Canada does not intend to respect the spirit of the agreement,

but to assume the role of a protector, which is good in itself. However, one cannot have it both ways. We will have to choose.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I want to deal specifically with Group No. 2, the member for Delta—South Richmond mentioned a couple of points earlier in his general comments. He said he did not think this bill was worthy of discussion. Nothing could be further from the truth. I do not know where the member comes from in terms of making that point. He has expressed endless times that we need better management plans, that we need to conserve fish stocks. That is what this agreement is all about.

It is a very important international agreement through which Canada has provided leadership to the world in terms of getting to this stage. Now we are at the stage within our country where we need Bill C-27 in order to ratify the UNFA agreement as a whole.

Although the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok seems quite supportive of the bill he kind of inferred that the bill is somewhat about motherhood. It is much more than that. The bill does provide guiding principles of conservation and management which we all in the House want to move forward on. We want to ensure we do a better job of managing the fishery, that stocks are conserved and that it becomes an industry of the future both in this country close to our shore and globally around the world for other countries.

The bill provides strong measures such that we will have an enforcement regime in place. That will be in a number of areas. The bill provides a compulsory binding mechanism for the settlement of disputes. All those points are important. As a country we are showing leadership to the world on the whole area. As I mentioned earlier today in question period, we set the tone of discussions at the FAO, in which we are moving forward, on stock conservation and management measures.

I will speak on the Group No. 2 amendments, Motions Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17, tabled by the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok with regard to the French text of the bill. The concerns raised by these amendments, with respect to the use of the word “délimité” in the French text of Bill C-27, where the English text uses the word “designated”, were raised by the hon. member and his colleague during discussions at the standing committee. We discussed it at quite some length.

• (1600)

The government fully appreciates the strong need for precision and clarity in both official languages. However, after careful consideration by expert legal and linguistic advisers, we have determined that the best term to be used in the circumstances is the term “délimité”, which is currently used in Bill C-27. We are

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certainly standing with that word because it provides, in our opinion and based on legal and linguistic advice, the best clarity to the bill.

Further to the other motions, the governor in council's authority to make regulations designating areas of the high seas subject to the UNFA regime is not open ended. The designation must be for the implementation of UNFA or other fisheries treaties. Only those areas of the sea regulated by the relevant regional fisheries organizations can and will be designated, neither more nor less.

I would therefore urge the House to vote against the second group of amendments proposed by the member opposite for the reasons I have outlined.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to very briefly ask the parliamentary secretary for fisheries and oceans a couple of questions.

Previously the member for Delta—South Richmond indicated a concern about UN conversations at meetings or groups that he had been to a few years previously. He raised a couple of very interesting points about the possibility that Canada may have reduced any kind of managerial control over or opportunity to toughen our conservation laws, especially on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks.

I would like to ask if it is at all possible for the parliamentary secretary to respond to the Reform member's assertions and if he could table any kind of response to the House of Commons so that all of us could review the comments from the department and the government on what the member said.

I wonder how the member got a holiday named after him. I guess he was lucky in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish you, all the pages and all of my political colleagues in the House of Commons, as well as the people of Canada, a very happy Easter and a very restful holiday.

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I wish to clarify something for the member opposite. He asked me a question that I would love to answer, but under the rules I do not think I can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The parliamentary secretary will have an opportunity very shortly because I see no other members rising to speak to Group No. 2. We will proceed to Group No. 3 in just a moment.

Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the questions on the motions in Group No. 2 are deemed put and the recorded divisions are deemed requested and deferred.

The House will now proceed to the debate on the motions in Group No. 3.

Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the motions in Group No. 3 are deemed moved and seconded. Group No. 3 contains Motions Nos. 4 and 7.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Group No. 3 comprises Motions 4 and 7.

Motion No. 4 is made for concordance purposes. The purpose of Motion No. 7 is to ensure that MPs have a right to review when the minister wishes to enter into other treaties or when the minister or the governor in council wishes to apply something different.

I am not speaking here of restricting the power of the minister, but of allowing us as parliamentarians, since we are asked to participate in the ratification and implementation of the UNFA, to have a say in it subsequently.

Ratification of an international treaty does not require the creation of Canadian legislation. At the very least, out of simple politeness, they could have simply tabled a notice of motion. We would have treated this like a motion, exactly as they did in the case of the motion on distinct society. It was fine to use that approach for distinct society, but not for Bill C-27, while all their legal experts tell us that they could have signed and ratified this agreement without asking us.

Since I have the microphone at this time and we are still on the air, allow me to point out that the purpose of Motion No. 7 is to introduce two new subsections. First, subsection (2) reads as follows:

(2) No regulations shall be made under paragraph 6(e) or (f) unless the Minister has laid before the House of Commons a draft of the regulations that are to be made at least 120 days before the regulations are made.

One hundred and twenty days, or four months, is not all that long. It allows the parties time to learn the contents of the regulations, to sound out those who will have to live with application of these regulations, or in other words the fishers, and to get back to the House, to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, to make comments. This could not help but improve any regulations the minister would be tempted to make.

Once again, this would allow us, as parliamentarians, to have a say in the matter. We are the ones who are accountable to the public—public servants are accountable to their minister—but we should also be given the opportunity to have a say.

Motion No. 7 proposes to add subsection (3), which reads as follows:

(3) No regulations made under paragraph 6(e) or (f) of this Act shall come into force unless they have been approved by the committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to fisheries and oceans.

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Again, this only makes sense. If the House of Commons says that it needs a standing committee on fisheries to clarify and understand marine-related issues, it would be appropriate for the department and the minister himself to respect the wishes of the House regarding anything that may concern the implementation agreement, and have the issue come back before that committee.

This motion is based on common sense. I will sum things up by saying that parliamentarians must have a look at the issue. This is very important.

I want to go back to the motions we discussed earlier. Since I am the sponsor of the motions included in the first three groups, I was the first one to speak, but I have not yet had the opportunity to comment on remarks made by hon. members.

I did mention that the fisheries agreement could be ratified and signed without the approval of this House. I would like members opposite to realize what we are really trying to do.

We are talking about the way to protect our stocks at the Canadian level—the hon. member from Newfoundland wished we would go further—but we already have Bill C-29 for that. We have the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act to protect what is in our waters. As for straddling stocks, we already have Bill C-29, which allowed us to behave the way we did with the *Estai*. The international community understands that. The important thing is to make the international community understand.

• (1610)

The subtleties of language are very important in international diplomacy. If a word is used in French or English, the people who have to live with the French expression provided by the government are perhaps better qualified to say care should be used in that regard.

I am not claiming to be the best linguist Quebec or the francophone community ever produced. Sometimes I murder my own mother tongue. But God knows I want to try to improve it.

When we ask that care be used in choosing the words, it is because we feel, perhaps with our Latin blood, that it is important for the countries we will be inviting to sign the agreement. I think that is what counts at the moment. We want a UN fisheries agreement.

With this umbrella, we can try to add a little more bite and make sure people understand the same thing, but if to increase the bite we frighten potential signatories, we will miss the boat. So we must choose our words carefully.

The Bloc Québécois knows a good thing when it sees it. In this case, is that not getting the largest possible number of signatories to the agreement? I think that is the aim. Or does it lie in protecting fish stocks?

The Bloc Québécois has already helped do this in the absence of international law. We worked with the government to move Bill C-29 through all three stages in a single day. We have shown common sense and co-operation because we believe that our stocks must be protected.

With Bill C-29, Canada has already done its part. The important thing is to get the maximum number of countries on board. The Bloc Québécois is holding out its hand precisely so that the House will be careful.

I do not know whether I will be allowed to table the document. I will not hold it up right now, but it is here on my desk. It is a press release dated March 11 issued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans when it took part in an FAO forum in Rome. There was a question about this earlier during Oral Question Period.

This press release is very eloquent. The fifth paragraph reads as follows:

In Rome today, Canada called on all nations that have not already done so to ratify and fully implement key international agreements, in particular the UNFA, before the end of 2000. For its part, Canada has already introduced legislation in Parliament with the objective of ratifying UNFA by the end of the year.

The key word in this paragraph is not something I made up. It is the representative of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans addressing all countries of the world in Rome and calling on them to fully implement key international agreements.

When I ask that some provisions of the UNFA, like article 5 of part II, be included as general interpretation and management principles, I am not being mean. I did not write them, they are in the agreement. Now I am told “This is not necessary. DFO already applies these principles in the measures it is taking”, but a measure and legislation are two very different things.

One can change a measure like one changes one's shirt—some people change shirts every day. I have the feeling DFO sometimes changes its mind two to three times a day.

It is important to know that DFO recommends integral measures. I think the minor amendments we put forward to ensure that Canada can get the most people possible to sign the agreement are laudable efforts and I urge all my hon. colleagues to weigh all of this very carefully.

I remind the House that the Bloc supports the UNFA, but has some difficulty accepting the way the government is using Bill C-27 to pick and choose the parts of the agreement that suit it. We could miss the boat here.

• (1615)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased that the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Made-

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leine—Pabok recognizes the elegance of DFO press releases. I am sure those in the DFO headquarters communications branch will be putting that one on the wall because it is something we have not heard that often.

With regard to the remarks just made, we on the government side appreciate the efforts made by the member opposite in terms of trying to debate and discuss and get the best bill forward we can. I clarify that we did listen intently to the discussions held at committee in terms of the concerns coming forward by the Bloc Québécois on wording. We had it checked out by legal and linguistic experts and it was found that better wording and better clarity rests with the wording we have currently in the bill. We certainly thank the members opposite for their interest and the points they raised in that regard.

Group No. 3 motions, Motions Nos. 4 and 7, propose amendments to Bill C-27 that would require that regulations made pursuant to the bill be reviewed and approved by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I believe Motion No. 4 is consequential to Motion No. 7.

Bill C-27 does amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act. Its passage is required for Canada to be able to ratify the UN fisheries agreement which we need to protect straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. Existing legislation is for the most part sufficient to allow Canada to implement the UN agreement. There are, however, some gaps.

Bill C-27 is intended to allow Canada to assert the rights and meet the obligations set out in the agreement. Various speakers talked about some of those rights and obligations earlier and I specifically indicated that it does create guiding principles of conservation and management, that it creates an enforcement regime, that we all have to respect and give some authority to our fisheries officers, and creates compulsory binding mechanisms for the settlement of disputes. They are all very important.

The government has worked hard to ensure the bill is fully consistent with the agreement. Once the bill is passed and subordinate regulations are made, Canada will be in a position to ratify the United Nations fisheries agreement.

In general the purpose of regulations is to set out the details, the nuts and bolts, of a legislative regime. This is the intent of the proposed regulation making power found in Bill C-27. This regulation making power allows for the making of regulations that would set out such details as the fishing rules adopted by regional fisheries organizations such as NAFO that vessels of states party to UNFA or to the other treaties implemented pursuant to Bill C-27 must comply with, in the areas of the high seas where these rules apply, and the circumstances and procedures that must be followed to enforce these rules, a very important point.

To have such regulations approved by parliament would be both impractical and inefficient. The member for St. John's West made that very point, that we need to act with haste in terms of people violating these agreements. The fishing rules adopted by regional fisheries organizations are amended every year. These rules provide for such details as the amount of fish that can be caught, where the fish can or cannot be caught, the size of the fish that can be caught, bycatch restrictions, gear restrictions and so on.

• (1620)

Many of these rules are valid for only one year and must be put in regulations quickly so as to be applicable in as short a time as one month.

There is already the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations which has the express role of reviewing government regulations.

I submit the House should not usurp the role of that committee. Having the House review and approve regulations made pursuant to Bill C-27 would be inefficient, impractical and not in the best interests of Canadians in terms of acting quickly.

For those reasons the government cannot accept these two amendments and I urge the House to reject them. Furthermore, I call on all members to continue to give their support to Bill C-27, which will clear the way for the implementation of this valuable and necessary international agreement.

If we are serious about conservation, and I know all members are, we need to ratify UNFA and get on with the task of rebuilding what is left of our straddling and highly migratory fish stocks before it is too late. As I said earlier today, we are making progress in the House. We made progress a couple of weeks ago at the FAO in Rome and Canada can continue to provide leadership in that regard. With the support of hon. members on this bill it will move us a huge step forward.

Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back on these Group No. 3 amendments to section 7, enforcement and the heart of the act.

If this act will be an enforcement act rather than a diplomatic act then section 7 seriously needs to be amended. I will read it again as it stands now. It talks about a foreign vessel in Canadian waters committing an apparent offence: "The enforcement officer may, with the consent of that foreign state, take any enforcement action that is consistent with this act".

I amended that to say that the officer "shall take any enforcement action that is consistent with this act". It actually gives some power to the enforcement officer. I am very disappointed that the government seems unwilling to listen to logic in this section.

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I will give an example. What other enforcement agency in the Canadian system has to ask permission of the foreign state of citizenship of a person who has committed a crime? If a Panamanian citizen kills a Canadian citizen, does the RCMP have to call the president of Panama, the minister of external affairs from Panama and ask them if it can lay a charge of first degree murder against the person? Obviously it is too silly to talk about. I do not mind picking on Panama because it really is in fisheries the pirate country in the world.

If a person from Panama came to Newfoundland and took up partridge hunting, which I dearly love in the fall, and he wanted to shoot partridge in February or March, does the Newfoundland wildlife officer actually have to call and say he cannot lay a charge against this person from Panama until he gets permission from somebody?

If a customs officer finds a person from Panama with a trunk full of cocaine, does he have to call the minister of international trade from Panama to get permission to lay a charge? Obviously not. It is too silly to talk about.

The amendment our caucus is suggesting in section 7(1) is to provide for the enforcement.

The parliamentary secretary might say he does not agree with this but it is funny that he did unanimously agree with it when he was a member of the fisheries committee, when it had some leadership under the member for Gander—Grand Falls. The fisheries committee agreed to change that section of the act to put in that the enforcement officer shall take whatever action is consistent.

Of course we also know the parliamentary secretary came in the House and would not concur or agree with the fisheries committee report which he had also agreed with at committee. That is how Liberals do things.

The parliamentary secretary and all the Liberals and everybody on the fisheries committee realized that section of the act was very weak and a change was required. They made in the committee exactly the same recommendation I am making, that the enforcement officer shall take any action consistent with the act.

• (1625)

I would like the parliamentary secretary to tell his caucus that this is not a diplomatic act we are talking about here. We are talking about an enforcement and conservation act that is crucial to the way of life of many persons in Atlantic Canada, especially Newfoundlanders.

I ask the parliamentary secretary to reconsider the Liberal position on this and to really put some teeth in this so it really does become an enforcement act rather than a diplomatic act.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—East-shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to speak again but a couple of issues have just risen that I think need clarification.

I know it is not question and answer period but I want to reiterate something. My colleague from St. John's West is correct on what happened in committee. We had agreed on a certain wording of a piece of legislation. Unfortunately it has been changed.

I want to ask the parliamentary secretary if he can ask the department for complete clarification one more time and table that response in the House so that not only my colleague from St. John's West but the Bloc, the Reform and we can have a clear answer on what the department sees as a response.

I have another question for the parliamentary secretary. If Bill C-27 passes in the House and passes in the Senate, how quickly will we be able to sign the law of the sea agreement? Will Canada sign it? Will the government do it immediately or will it wait? I think that is a very important question. I know the parliamentary secretary cannot respond right now. If he could agree to table those responses in the House, we would greatly appreciate it on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, have a great Easter, you and your family, and to everyone in the House.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions on the motions in Group No. 3 are deemed put and the recorded division is deemed requested and deferred.

The House will now proceed to the debate on the motions in Group No. 4.

[*English*]

Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the motions in Group No. 4 are deemed moved and seconded. This group contains Motions Nos. 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after a full day of practice, you are now able to pronounce the name of my constituency almost perfectly. I invite you to visit my beautiful riding this summer. You will love it.

We are now looking at the fourth group. I know that clerks are trying to work miracles to find a connection between motions but I will do my best to quickly find the link.

Motions Nos. 8 and 12 were both introduced by the Bloc Québécois. Motion No. 8 concerns section 7.01, which would read, and I quote:

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7.01(1) If a protection officer has serious reasons to believe that a fishing vessel—

The purpose of this change is to bring the terminology in line with that found in the United Nations fisheries agreement, instead of referring to reasonable grounds. Some will say I am splitting hairs here. This is not my intention but, if we want to make the work of lawyers easier, I believe that in dealing with an international treaty special attention must be paid to terminology and format.

The same goes for Motion No. 12. The Bloc Québécois proposed these motions in order to bring the terminology used in the bill in line with that found in the agreement.

I will now comment on Motions Nos. 10 and 13 put forward by the Reform Party.

• (1630)

Motion No. 10 also concerns clause 4 and relates to terminology. They replace “with the consent of that state”, that is the flag country of the offending vessel, with “with the consent of the Minister”, which would enable the Minister to decide what he will do. Same thing in Motion No. 13 I believe.

It is very difficult. I will read immediately Motion No. 14, put forward by the NDP member who spoke earlier. With respect to clause 8, he asks through this motion—and this was the subject of his first speech this afternoon—that:

(a) has not responded within forty-eight hours after a notification was given to the state under subsection (2); or

It is the 48-hour concept the NDP member would like to change.

I have a big problem when I listen to what Newfoundlanders, NDP members and all other members are saying. Everybody seems to want to protect our fisheries, and that is fine. They are right when they say this agreement on fisheries does not have enough teeth. The point the NDP member is making in Motion No. 14 says a lot. I do not want to create any panic, but I want to show if I may the new weapon the fishery officer will now have to use when he boards and inspects a vessel.

Try to imagine a fishery officer boarding a ship. He will wear a uniform, he will have a handgun on one hip, but what will he have on his other hip, under the regulations? His new weapon is here, a cellular phone. He will need a phone to enforce this agreement.

From now on, he will not be allowed to board and inspect a fishing vessel without first notifying the country of the vessel caught in the act. Gun in hand, he will have to ask “Okay, wait a minute. What is the phone number of your government? I have to call your prime minister to ask for his permission”. That is what we have in this agreement.

In a more serious mode, I am sure members understand the problem I have. I come from a fishing community, and I want to protect our fisheries, like all other members here. This is what we did with Bill C-29, when international law did not cover this.

There was the *Estai* episode in 1995 and, oddly enough, it is in 1995 that the UN fisheries agreement was drafted, and Canada was actively involved in that agreement. But what do we want to do exactly? Today, the House is not being asked to protect fisheries, but to agree to implement the UN fisheries agreement.

I did not negotiate this agreement. I hear members say that it is not strong enough. Is this the proper forum to discuss it? I do not think so. We will have to go back to Rome with DFO drafters, as the parliamentary secretary said earlier, because we are being asked to comply with the agreement in its entirety.

This means the Department of Fisheries and Oceans believes it is the best tool in the world. Now it recommends “the new best tool in the world”, as our Prime Minister would say, to its fishery officers, saying “Now, you must have a phone because that is the way that, at the international level, it was decided to proceed when you want to board and inspect a boat or when you have serious reasons to believe that someone did something illegal with regard to fishing”. But the proper forum to talk about it is at the international level.

• (1635)

If it is really to protect fisheries, and we all agree to say “We are strong and we try to have it our way like this”, let us stick with Bill C-29. However, if Canada is now ready to sign such an agreement, it may mean that Bill C-29 is not enough at the international level.

We have to find allies. People have to understand that fisheries need to be protected. Foreign countries must streamline their fisheries as we did on the east coast and on the west coast too. If we want to stop our stocks from being depleted, we have to ask people not to help themselves to our food locker. But we also have to understand that people need time. A way to increase public awareness through international diplomacy is to implement a fisheries agreement.

According to what I have heard here today, the proposed agreement would not be enough. If people really want strong tools, this agreement will not be enough. I would expect that when the House returns on the Tuesday following the Easter break, all the parties in the House will not agree to let Canada sign the agreement, because we really want stronger tools.

The main point here, that tool in question, is a telephone given to fisheries officers, who have to contact the foreign countries involved and give them three days to respond. It is as if the telephone service in these countries did not allow them to respond any faster.

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If we want to live in an international law environment, and I think we must educate people about this, we may have to set aside our desire to get tough internationally and try this mediation, have the agreement ratified; once covered by this agreement, we could then try to find some way of incorporating into it the stronger measures requested by the hon. members, but if we want firm measures now, this agreement should not be ratified.

The Bloc Quebecois agrees with an international law system. We will support the United Nations fisheries agreement, but we do not agree with Bill C-27, which I believe completely misses the mark and fails to respect the spirit and the letter of the agreement. By trying to keep two pots on the boil, Canada might miss the boat.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who just spoke spent a lot of time talking about cell phones. We on this side of the House believe in using all available technology in the interest of protecting our fishermen, fishing communities and fishery resources.

I want to deal specifically with the question that the member for St. John's West, a member of the NDP and the member opposite raised about the consent requirement in section 7.01. I will outline it in some detail in the hope that before third reading they will see the good logic in it, understand that there is not a problem as a result of section 7.01, understand that their concerns are being taken care of, and be able to come into the House and support the bill in its totality.

The consent requirement in section 7.01 is there for a legal reason. International law requires that consent of the flag state be obtained in the circumstances described in section 7.01.

Section 7.01 deals with a very narrow situation. It deals with the situation where a foreign vessel is spotted in Canadian waters and there is reason to believe that it has committed a violation in Canadian waters. For some reason Canadian enforcement officials are unable or were unable to follow the vessel in hot pursuit when it escaped from Canadian waters to the high seas.

• (1640)

In such a specific situation international law requires that the flag state's consent be obtained if Canada wants to board the vessel on the high seas, if it is spotted there later. In other words, if there is not a hot pursuit or the pursuit is broken, Canada cannot simply board that vessel on the high seas two days later, for instance, without the flag state's consent. This would be contrary to international law.

The hon. member's proposed amendment would be contrary to the international law as reflected in UNFA. We should understand it

is only in that specific instance where that occurs. We certainly want to abide by international law.

I want to deal with the government amendments to the bill as a result of the standing committee's discussion that we think improve it substantially. Bill C-27, in the final analysis, will enable the Government of Canada to implement the agreement. The bill amends the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the Canada Shipping Act which is necessary before the agreement can be ratified.

Once this is done and Canada has implemented the agreement, we will have an important tool for protecting straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. Specifically Motions Nos. 15, 16 and 18, which are government motions, are necessary and were decided as a result of the discussions in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

The proposed amendments are to clauses 11 and 12 of the bill. Clause 11, which amends sections 18.01 and 18.02 of the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, provides for procedural rules applicable to prosecutions and to the collection of fines where the vessel is the defendant as opposed to a person. UNFA contemplates actions against vessels, not against persons.

New sections 18.01 and 18.02 will enable the crown to institute proceedings and collect fines against vessels rather than persons. This is what is sometimes referred to in maritime law as an in rem procedure. These two procedural rules were meant to apply to pursuits and collection of fines from all vessels including vessels that are stateless.

Clause 12 of the bill proposes an amendment to section 18.01 of the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. This amendment provides that whenever an enforcement officer exercises power under this act on the high seas, as described in Bill C-27, the rules provided by criminal law, including those contained in the Criminal Code, apply to the enforcement officer's actions.

A good example of the application of this provision is the protection that the Criminal Code offers to enforcement officers when using reasonable force in the exercise of their duties. It is to protect our officers who are doing work for Canada and for its fisheries.

This section is amended by Bill C-27 to apply to situations where enforcement officers exercise powers in relation to vessels of state party to UNFA or to other relevant fisheries treaties. Stateless vessels should have been covered in this provision, and the government's proposed amendment will ensure that it covers stateless vessels. Therefore I encourage all members of the House to support Motions Nos. 15, 16 and 18.

With regard to the other motions in Group No. 4, we will be opposing those particular motions. In the time remaining I will try to get through them.

Private Members' Business

• (1645)

The first two amendments proposed by the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, provided in Motions Nos. 8 and 12, seek to substitute the term “reasonable grounds” currently used in Bill C-27 for the term “clear grounds” used in UNFA.

Bill C-27 uses the term “reasonable grounds” for good reason. This standard has been tested in light of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and has obtained approval from Canada’s highest court. It is equivalent to the standard of clear grounds used in UNFA. I therefore would urge the House to understand this reasoning and to vote against the proposed change submitted by Motions Nos. 8 and 12.

I would now like to comment on the amendments proposed in Motions Nos. 10 and 13 tabled by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, which really refer to the point raised earlier on 7.01.

Both motions seek to substitute the consent of the minister for the flag state’s consent prior to exercising certain powers. Flag state consent in the situations described in Bill C-27, for example, sections 7.01 and 16.2, is required under international law, which I explained a moment ago. To do otherwise would be contrary to international law and Canada’s obligations under the United Nations fisheries agreement.

Finally, I would like to address the one amendment proposed by the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore in Motion No. 14 with respect to Canada’s obligations under UNFA to implement a three day waiting period before taking any further enforcement action once on board the vessel of a state party to UNFA. Adopting a shorter time period, as proposed by Motion No. 14, would put Canada in breach of its international obligations. We certainly do not want to do that. We want other countries to abide by the agreement and we should ourselves.

The government intends to prescribe the three day period in the regulations to be made under Bill C-27. It would not be practical to specify this period in the bill itself because if this period was shortened we would have to amend, yet again, the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. The proposed amendment would, therefore, not only be impractical, it would be contrary to the United Nations fisheries agreement. For these reasons I would urge the House to vote against Motion No. 14.

I encourage all members of the House, in order for us to move ahead and continue to provide the leadership that we have been providing with regard to fisheries around the world, to support the government amendments I have talked about, Motions Nos. 15, 16 and 18, and reject the others I have mentioned for the reasons outlined.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the questions on the motions in Group No. 4 are

deemed to be put and the recorded divisions are deemed requested and deemed deferred.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions on the motions at report stage of the bill now before the House are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, April 13, 1999, at the expiry of time provided for Government Orders.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as being 5.30 p.m. so that we could proceed to Private Members’ Business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The parliamentary secretary has asked for unanimous consent that the House see the clock as being 5.30 p.m. Is their unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members’ Business, as listed on today’s order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

• (1650)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed from February 9 consideration of the motion that Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill and to discuss an issue that is important to many Canadians, the human rights issue in Canada. Although I am not convinced it is the proper way to address the issue, it at least raises the issue of human rights. Often a discussion of it and the debate that surrounds this kind of important issue helps to not only educate members of parliament, but also to make sure that we put it on the front burner instead of the back burner here in the House.

I am disappointed that this bill originated in the Senate. As usual, anything that comes from the Senate is a little tainted in the sense that it did not come from elected representatives, those chosen by the electorate. Those people are chosen by prime

ministers, and that is unfortunate. We might say that the party with convictions is over there. Unfortunately, the Senate is not the place to originate bills. Bills should come from the House of Commons, from both government and opposition benches.

Bill S-11 has good intentions. The bill is intended to add social condition as one of the designations in the charter of rights that cannot be discriminated against. I believe that the intention of the bill was to make sure that poor people are not discriminated against. That is what it amounts to.

While a lot of legislators may feel they are looking after the poor by adding social condition as one of the listed items in the charter, I do not believe this technical listing is going to add another red cent or look after the needs of the poor at all, if that is the intention. I do not believe it will change the personal situation of the hundreds of thousands and maybe millions of people who have the greatest needs in this country.

It almost makes a mockery of the real solutions to helping poor people by easing the conscience of legislators who say "Maybe if we just put this into the legislation then the poor people will go away and we will not have to worry about the situations that are causing the poverty and the distress for families and so on". That is almost worse than nothing. Then it means that instead of putting together taxation laws and actions and creating a society that gives poor people the greatest opportunities, we somehow ease our conscience by putting a word in the charter. I do not believe that will help people in the long run.

I believe the Liberals have actually hurt the poor over the past years. With their pay more, get less budgets they have gutted health care without providing an alternative for most people. They have hiked taxes to the tune of billions of dollars. They now take \$39 billion to \$40 billion more out of the economy than they did a few years ago. There is the usual waste in government. We have been talking in the House over the last while about the decline in the standard of living, the decline in productivity and the decline in opportunities for Canadians, as well as the tax discrimination against single income families.

Often some of the poorest families in the land are the single income families and this government has chosen not to address that taxation discrimination. It found itself before the United Nations in a rather embarrassing situation trying to justify why its tax laws discriminate against single income families.

Poverty is not just a children's issue, it is not just a single income family issue, but it certainly does affect entire families. People are not poor in isolation. Often they are poor due to a whole set of circumstances.

Lowering taxes is one way to help those who are poor. That is not just putting words in the charter, that will actually help people. If we allowed them to increase their personal deductions, a proposal put forward by the Reform Party, we would actually put more money in their pockets, which would allow them to make the decisions that would help them out of the poverty trap.

Private Members' Business

• (1655)

Our proposals to end bracket creep and reduce taxes by some \$26 billion over the next three years would help poor people the most. They would take poor people off the tax rolls altogether. That is what should happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I regret that I must interrupt the hon. member for Fraser Valley.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House
Ottawa

March 25, 1999

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable John Major, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 25th day of March, 1999 at 5 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Judith A. LaRocque
Secretary to the Governor General

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad we had that interruption. It is nice to know that the Senate is actually doing something.

Royal Assent

We have been talking about adding social condition to the charter as one of the conditions that we would no longer be able to discriminate against in Canada, although, again, I do not know how we would define social condition. There is no definition in the dictionary, so it is a hard thing to know exactly how to define.

This leads me to the second point which talks about judicial activism. I am concerned that by adding another category called social condition to the charter the lawyers are going to have a field day trying to interpret for the benefit of the judges and to have the judges rule on what social condition means. Will social condition be used to justify all sorts of interference by the courts into the lives of ordinary Canadians? How do we prove to someone that a social condition is a discriminatory act?

• (1700)

If we need to mail someone a letter, can we ask whether they have a job, or a mailing address, or whether we can do a background check on them? Would that be a discriminatory act? Is it somehow meandering and nasty to ask people to do certain things based on their social condition?

Other provinces have added social condition to their provincial charters. Almost without exception they have not been able to use it in the courts. It is so undefined it takes a lot of court time and a lot of imaginative work by the lawyers with very little constructive action on behalf of poor people themselves.

My concern for judicial activism is well grounded in recent decisions that have happened here in Canada. Judges have taken it upon themselves to write laws, reinterpret laws and rewrite laws on behalf of Canada and override the express wishes of the House of Commons. That is a bad trend.

We in this House have voted on the extension of spousal benefits to same sex couples. I think that is a good subject to debate in this place. We will hear good arguments pro and con. Regardless of a person's personal position on it or what they may say in debate, this is the place to decide those things. Instead the courts step in and overrule what was an express decision of parliament that I voted on in the last House. The courts say that regardless of what was done in the House, they are going to make that decision.

We in this place took a position on child pornography and said it is wrong for people to use and possess child pornography. Then a judge in my own home province stepped in and said, "I do not care what you guys said. I am going to interpret that law differently. I am going to strike down the child pornography ruling". And the justice minister said not to feel so bad, at least it is only in my province. In my province, there is no law now against the use and possession of child pornography.

When judges choose to step in and overrule and make the law in huge decisions, like the Delgamuukw decision which has now tossed my province into complete turmoil on land use and aboriginal use of land issues, it causes havoc.

Within the Reform Party we believe that rather than allow judges to exercise increased and increasing influence in Canada, there needs to be a reasonable balance between the judiciary branch and the legislative branch here in this place.

Part of that balance means that this House should have an opportunity to be involved in the selection and appointment of justices, in reviewing controversial decisions by a judicial review committee, by ensuring that legislation has an adequate preamble as to the purpose of the legislation, what we are trying to accomplish with it, what we do not want accomplished with it and by having good definitions within the law itself and so on.

There are lots of ways to make sure the House of Commons is the supreme law making body in the country and that we do not turn over, by abdicating our role to the judiciary, the chance to unduly not just interpret laws but to actually make laws.

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sad to advise the hon. member that his time has expired. All comes to a good and timely end.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, it is the desire of the Honourable Deputy to His Excellency the Governor General that this honourable House attend him immediately in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

• (1715)

And being returned:

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber the Deputy to His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the royal assent to the following bills:

Bill C-58, an act to amend the Railway Safety Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act—Chapter No. 9.

Bill C-61, an act to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act, the Pension Act, the Merchant Navy Veteran and Civilian War-related Benefits Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act and the Halifax Relief Commission Pension Continuation Act and to amend certain other acts in consequence thereof—Chapter No. 10.

Bill C-65, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act—Chapter No. 11.

Bill C-35, an act to amend the Special Import Measures Act and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act—Chapter No. 12.

Bill C-76, an act to provide for the resumption and continuation of government services—Chapter No. 13.

Bill C-208, an act to amend the Access to Information Act—Chapter No. 16.

Bill S-20, an act to amend the Act of incorporation of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Mackenzie.

Bill C-73, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Public Service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 1999—Chapter No. 14.

Bill C-74, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Public Service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2000—Chapter No. 15.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Shefford who introduced this bill on the important issue of discrimination to the House.

In my opinion, the Reform Party did not understand this bill at all. It is totally wrong, totally false to say that social condition has produced no result.

Let me say that, since 1977, when social condition was added to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in Quebec's charter of rights, 21 decisions have been handed down.

What tangible results did this have? It was recognized that income security beneficiaries were a group whose social condition was special. The member for Shefford is saying that poor people have a special social condition. This, in my opinion, can be easily proven.

From the 21 decisions handed down in Quebec, the first province, I repeat, to add social condition to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in its charter, five extremely important conclusions were drawn. First of all, it was established that discrimination based on social condition is totally unacceptable and that people, particularly the poor to whom housing may have been refused, have a redress mechanism.

There are many legal precedents. There are many decisions on social condition. And they make it clear to owners that discrimination based on social condition will not be tolerated. Those who are

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refused an apartment, because they supposedly do not earn enough money as welfare recipients, have a redress mechanism.

Second, the inclusion of social condition in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights gave redress mechanisms to single parents. As I already said, the rich, the well off and those who are free from want do not need this kind of protection.

I do not understand why our Reform colleague would ask what useful purpose it can serve. In view of the plight of the disadvantaged, the legal precedents and the changes it has brought about, that kind of comment is totally uncalled for.

Courts ruled in favour of single parents. One case comes to mind, D'Aoust v Vallières. This was the case of a single mother who had been refused a mortgage to buy her first house despite the fact that she had an income of about \$1,000. That decision was handed down in the early 1980s. Her mortgage would have been \$300, which is what she was paying in rent.

Because she was a single parent registered for income security, the credit union—I will not name it but it was a credit union in the Quebec City area—refused to even consider her application, even though she could qualify as a home buyer.

Also, some decisions recognized that social condition included a criminal record, so the fact that somebody had a criminal record was not an acceptable ground of discrimination. In other words, social condition means something.

It means at least three things. First, it means education. It also means income, personal wealth, general capital and, above all, it means how people are perceived within the community, according to social class.

Who would dare claim nowadays that the unemployed, welfare recipients and single parents are not victims of stereotypes and prejudice? But what is more, and more unacceptable still, is the fact that such prejudice still has a voice in an institution like the Parliament of Canada.

• (1725)

I remind the House without hesitation that it is often Reform members who promote social prejudice. I do not say all members. Some are obviously very progressive, but a number are not. The remark made earlier by our colleague shows that he is unbelievably unenlightened, and I think his comments are unworthy of a member of parliament.

We should not forget that we do not live in a society where poverty is on the wane. We do not live in a society where the number of poor people is dropping. We live in a society where there are more poor people than ever.

A report by the OECD—not a report by the Bloc Québécois or the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party—a report by the

Private Members' Business

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which is neutral, reminded us that Canada ranks third for poverty.

Our society is producing more and more poor and that is thanks to government policies. Among industrialized countries, only the United States and Australia have a worse record in this score.

What would social condition offer if it was included in the Canadian Human Rights Act? It would offer redress to have a number of sections in the Employment Insurance Act invalidated.

Which sections? Those who know human rights, those who know Canadian law, those who, like me, have read all the decisions handed down since 1978 know which ones.

That has led to significant improvements in the situation of welfare recipients and single parents. I am willing to bet that as soon as social condition is included in the Canada Human Rights Act as a prohibited ground of discrimination, we will be able to challenge sections 7.2 and 7.3 of the Employment Insurance Act, which discriminate against labour force entrants.

Those who have never had a job and who make their first employment insurance claim must have 910 hours of work. They are the only ones who have to meet that requirement. This is discrimination. It is not equal treatment.

I am convinced that if challenges on the basis of social condition were allowed under the Canada Human Rights Act, those who are unemployed would win their case, because it must be recognized that unemployment is a social condition.

The same goes for sections 12.3 and 22 regarding maternity benefits.

Mr. Scott Brison: I agree.

Mr. Réal Ménard: My colleague agrees with me and it makes me happy. That shows he has a progressive mind.

Mr. Scott Brison: I always agree.

Mr. Réal Ménard: He always agrees with me. I want to say he is my friend.

We could challenge, based on sections 12.3 and 22, the 710 hours eligibility requirement for maternity benefits, since that requirement does not exist in other parts of the act.

I urge parliament to pass this bill brought forward by the member for Shefford, and I think we would help those less fortunate in our society by giving them the opportunity to challenge and obtain redress, based on social condition, because social condition is a reality. The poor are discriminated against, and we must give them the opportunity to take their case to a human rights tribunal.

• (1730)

I hope all members of the House, including Liberal and Reform Party members, will vote in favour of this bill.

[English]

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, poverty is a recognized source of inequality and disadvantage in society. In Canada the federal government has lost or relinquished most of its capacity to support Canadian citizens and is creating a culture that puts far more value on wealth than on human values.

In the past Canada has managed to move away from discrimination based on gender or ethnic background, but today we are moving toward a system of discrimination based on wealth. On February 13, 1998, our party put forward the following motion in the House of Commons:

That this House condemns the government for promoting an economy where the gap between the super rich and ordinary Canadian families is widening, risking the future of our youth, and strongly urges the government to introduce in the coming budget measures ensuring every Canadian an opportunity to share in a new prosperity.

Figures tend to indicate that in today's economy a few are getting richer while the majority of the population is not getting a fair share of the wealth in our nation.

A recent report by the Centre for Social Justice indicates that the average income for the richest 10% of families in 1971 was \$170,000, 21 times that of the poorest 10%. By 1996 Canada's richest were making 314 times the average income of the poorest.

Bill S-11 is related to a recommendation from the Canadian Human Rights Commission which calls for, among other things, an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act that would outlaw discrimination against the poor.

Poverty is discriminatory enough. It prevents full participation in society and can deny adequate housing. It certainly affects educational opportunities and keeps a child in hunger. As Canadians we must not add to that litany by giving the poor no protection or recognition under our laws.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the case of *Vriend v Alberta* that:

The law confers a significant benefit by providing state recognition of the legitimacy of a particular status. The denial of that recognition may have a serious detrimental effect upon the sense of self-worth and dignity of members of a group because it stigmatizes them—. Such legislation would clearly infringe on section 15(1) of the Canadian Human Rights Code because its provisions would indicate that the excluded groups were inferior and less deserving of benefits.

Poverty is still not recognized as a source of inequality in society. It is true that attitudes cannot be legislated, but attitudes can be changed and can be challenged, especially when decisions such as denying a service are based on discrimination. We will

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support the objective of ensuring that poverty or social condition cannot be used as a reason for discriminating in Canada.

The NDP is a party that promotes an egalitarian society. We believe in the role of the state in supporting a fair and equitable distribution of the benefits or the wealth generated. For us, society should be a humanistic one in which all members are treated equally, with respect, dignity and fairness. The law must protect a large segment of society that is being discriminated against just because it is living in poverty.

[*Translation*]

I think it is important to note that the motion before us today gives us an opportunity to speak to the issue of poverty in this country. I believe that this week the Liberal government has finally admitted that there was a great deal of poverty in Canada, given that it is considering appointing a minister responsible for the homeless.

It is interesting that the Liberal government would decide to appoint a minister for the homeless. One would need to look at why there are homeless people in this country today. There are homeless people because there is poverty. I am pretty sure that it is not the rich who are living in our streets. There are very few rich street people out there.

We need to look at why they are in the street, why there are people in my riding who have to go to the food bank, why there are children going to school without breakfast. Teachers know that when such children go home after school, there is probably no supper for them either.

• (1735)

It happens in the counties of Kent, Westmorland and Albert just as it happens in Toronto, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. We can pretend it is not there, but that will not resolve the problem.

The Prime Minister has appointed the Minister of Labour as minister responsible for the homeless. We are pleased he did, but we must note that no money or information resources came with the title. The minister was given a title. What is her mandate? What resources are available? Who will be working with her?

I also asked for a parliamentary committee to be struck. We know that, if the minister is to really do her job, she will have to review and criticize the policies of her own government. When they changed the unemployment insurance program, they made people poorer. People are not poor for no reason. There are reasons.

Laws passed in this House continue to attack the poor. There has to be someone to make sure that, when legislation is introduced in this House, no group is attacked by it. It is clear that with the

changes to the unemployment insurance program the poorest suffered. That is clear.

There needs to be someone to make sure it remains. I hope the minister responsible for the homeless will have the tools and the freedom to change the policies of her own party. That is where the problem starts. She will also need a committee.

If no members of the opposition work with her, how can we be sure that her appointment is not just a title to hide behind? We must make sure that the Liberal government does not find a way to go outside the House and blame everyone else if there are homeless people or poor children in our society so that it is not held responsible. We must ensure that the minister has the tools and latitude she needs to do her job.

Bill S-11 is necessary. This week, I took part in a press conference with my Bloc Québécois and Progressive Conservative colleagues and our views on this are similar. I supported them. I think that we must sometimes put aside all partisanship and use common sense.

When I see something that can help someone in difficulty, I do it. That is what I did this week when I supported the bill introduced by my Bloc Québécois colleague. The Progressive Conservative Party joined in as well, but the Reform Party refused. That is often the case. We are having the problems we are encountering today because the Liberal Party is promoting Reform Party policies. This is causing a serious problem.

I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak in favour of this bill. I have no problem supporting it, nor does my party. We must start to pay attention to poverty, to the discrimination that takes place when someone is prevented from opening a bank account because they are on welfare. That is discrimination.

If an individual living in poverty declares personal bankruptcy, he will file for bankruptcy. That person will be told he must have \$1,500 to declare personal bankruptcy. The majority of people living in poverty who declare personal bankruptcy do not have \$1,500. But the service responsible for managing personal bankruptcies has this arrangement with the government, whereby the child tax credit can be used toward paying this \$1,500 fee. The government takes that money out of the pockets of the family to give it to the personal bankruptcy service.

• (1740)

Once again, the children are the ones who are made to suffer when their family is in dire straits.

These are but a few examples of how much injustice there is in this country. I hope all opposition parties that object to the growth of poverty in this country will work together to make the Liberal government more accountable.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the hon. member for Shefford who sponsored Bill S-11, asked me to convey to the House her deep regret at not being able to take part in today's debate. The member for Shefford who has become a leader in our caucus, a leader in the House and a leader in the country on all issues relating to poverty, was called away at the last moment.

I am therefore speaking for her when I thank all hon. members who have spoken to this private member's bill. Honoured as I am to speak on my colleague's behalf, I am equally proud to speak for myself about Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

As its title indicates, the purpose of the bill is to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act so that no one can be discriminated against simply because they are poor and to offer genuine recourse when such discrimination occurs, for example, when a landlord refuses to rent to someone on social assistance or a bank refuses to open an account for them.

In light of all the contributions to the debate on the bill, it seems that reservations about it are centred mainly on the following two points. One is the wording which has been criticized as too vague to achieve the desired results. The other is the need for wider consultation or an in-depth review of the whole issue leading to a complete revision of the Canadian Human Rights Act. I would like to take a few moments to respond to these two objections before wrapping up the debate.

Many speakers have voiced concern about the wording. The term social condition is considered too general. Questions have been raised about the possible impact of too broad an interpretation of the term and the legal implications that could result.

While social condition may seem a vague expression to some, I want to point out that specialists in the area of human rights and the Canadian anti-poverty movement prefer it to all others. It allows for an individual situation to be interpreted on the basis of a whole range of social economic factors, unlike the word poverty which is deemed to be too narrow because it focuses exclusively on economic factors.

Professor Jackman of the faculty of law at the University of Ottawa said when she appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs:

To entrench a prohibition against discrimination based on poverty does not really encapsulate all dimensions of the type of discrimination which people experience. That discrimination relates not only to their economic circumstances, but to all the social and political stereotypes that emanate from being poor. Again, the advantage of talking about social condition rather than poverty is that, within social conditions, we

encapsulate notions like source of income, receipt of social assistance, perhaps even the status of being unemployed. These are all conditions that tend to go together, but are not necessarily always together.

Even Canada's chief commissioner of human rights, Ms. Falardeau-Ramsay, the very person who would have to manage the legal repercussions of this addition to the Canadian Human Rights Act, has come out firmly in favour of the term social condition.

Incidentally in March 1998 Ms. Falardeau-Ramsay stressed with respect to this whole issue that human rights were indivisible, affirming that economic and social rights could not be separated from political and legal rights or equality rights.

Finally, those who have expressed concern about this choice of terminology should bear in mind that social condition has been used in Quebec's charter of human rights and freedoms for almost three years and was approved for more than a year by the British Columbia Human Rights Commission.

Moving on to the second point of objection to Bill S-11, we find it is primarily based on a perceived need to carry out an expanded consultation with more stakeholders before this addition is made to the act. We are told that it would be better to wait for the next comprehensive review of the act announced by the Minister of Justice several months ago.

I remind the House that the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs held wide-ranging consultations before the bill was passed by the Senate. It is possible that some points of view were not heard during the process, but there is no reason whatsoever to delay or prevent the passage of Bill S-11.

Interested parties who did not participate in the Senate's consultations will still have the opportunity to propose any amendments they consider helpful during the comprehensive review of the act.

• (1745)

By supporting this bill we can both correct a legislative omission that for many years has been the target of criticism from national anti-poverty organizations and at the same time bring Canada into compliance with the recommendations made in December 1998 and in 1993 by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In so doing we will, among other things, be sending a strong message across Canada that in this country discrimination against poor people will not be tolerated. It is high time in my opinion that fundamental human rights should be respected in a country like Canada, especially the right to equal opportunity in life.

I would like to remind the House however, in the words of my colleague, the hon. member for Laval Centre:

Private Members' Business

Entrenching Bill S-11 in the charter should amount to more than wishful thinking. The best way to fight discrimination against social condition is to improve the living conditions of our fellow citizens who find themselves in difficult economic straits incompatible with human dignity.

This government thus has an urgent responsibility to take concrete action to ensure that justice is done to the most disadvantaged members of our society.

Regrettably, as my colleague, the hon. member for Shefford said in her original remarks to the House on Bill S-11, the general obsession with deficit reduction often impels our political leaders to take measures that add to the proliferation of laws and regulations, making it more difficult for the poor and blocking any possibility of their improving their situation.

This state of affairs confirms the popular belief that the people with the power to change things, i.e., the people who make the laws, often just do not realize the scale of the oppression and discrimination suffered by their fellow low income Canadians.

As my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver East so justly remarked, "The greatest challenge for us is to get governments, not just the Liberal government but all governments, to examine their record and acknowledge their policies which have quite deliberately and consciously created increased poverty within Canada".

We have an opportunity today as parliamentarians to do what needs to be done by uniting our efforts as we did in 1989 with the resolution on eliminating poverty. We can recognize social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination and include it as such in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

At the present time the act is neither clear nor consistent. While it aims at promoting equity for all Canadians, in effect it perpetuates the discrimination it seeks to eliminate by protecting only certain vulnerable groups.

The fact that the Canadian Human Rights Act does not include social condition among prohibited grounds of discrimination is an indication of the social and economic alienation of the poor and of their lack of influence in the Canadian political system. To correct this unacceptable situation, we must change our approach and look at poverty from the human rights perspective.

It cannot be said often enough. The prejudices the poor have to face in Canada are similar to those faced by the marginalized groups who are listed in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Yet poverty is still not recognized in law as a direct and dominant cause of inequality and disadvantage in Canadian society.

In conclusion, I call on all my hon. colleagues in this House to join me in rectifying this deplorable legislative omission by voting for this bill.

Also I, like others, would like to wish all members, our pages and our support staff an excellent and safe Easter break.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier this day, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill S-11 are deemed put and a recorded division is deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, April 13, 1999 at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

It being 5.48 p.m., this House stands adjourned until Monday, April 12, 1999 at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

May I also extend to all hon. members very best wishes for the Easter break. I look forward to seeing all hon. members on their return on April 12, 1999.

(The House adjourned at 5.48 p.m.)

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