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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, April 19, 1999**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 19, 1999

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105 )

[*English*]

### REFORM OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.)** moved:

Motion No. 338

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should convene in 1998 a meeting of 'like-minded nations' in order to develop a multilateral plan of action to reform international organizations (e.g. International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations) so that they can identify the precursors of conflict and establish multilateral conflict-prevention initiatives.

He said: Madam Speaker, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House for the removal of the words "in 1998" from the motion. It was written two years ago and 1998 makes it obsolete. The removal of "in 1998" removes the time course from the motion and gives it more flexibility.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The hon. member is asking to remove "in 1998" from the motion in order to make it more pertinent to this date. Is there agreement?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Keith Martin:** Madam Speaker, I thank the House for its tolerance with removing the date from the motion.

From Kosovo, to Cambodia, to Central Africa and to many other parts of the world, we see over 40 conflicts that are taking place as we speak. Kosovo, the one which has dominated the House for so long, is just the latest in a series of conflicts that have torn across the world for many years resulting in the death and dismemberment of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people, and the removal from their homes.

Over 90% of those involved in conflicts, individuals who have been killed or maimed, are people who do not have arms, are non-combatants and innocent victims who only want to live in peace.

Before 1945, we had World War II. Between 1945 to the late 1980s, we have had a cold war with two superpowers glaring at each other, armed to the hilt with very powerful nuclear weapons. Since the late 1980s, with the breakdown of the cold war and the post-cold war era, we have seen a proliferation of conflicts. In fact, over 40 conflicts have and are still taking place today throughout the world.

After the post-cold war era there was a belief that we would have a peace dividend, that the world would now be a safer place to live. The fact is the world is a much more dangerous place. We do not have the tools to deal with this fluctuating situation, a situation that is imperilling more and more innocent people, costing billions of dollars and wreaking havoc over nation states, many of which are imploding as we speak.

Although Kosovo has drawn most of our attention, it is by no means the largest, bloodiest or most destructive conflict existing today. The largest land mass battle ever to exist in the world is taking place right now on the continent of Africa. From Sierra Leone and Liberia to the west, to Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, right through the Central African Republic to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and down into Angola, a bloody war is taking place causing the deaths of thousands upon thousands of people every single week. Many people are maimed, many are raped, children are left to starve and entire countries are laid to waste.

As a nation and as an international community we have been completely and utterly unable to deal with this situation in any pre-emptive fashion.

• (1110 )

In 1957 Lester B. Pearson won the Nobel prize for peacekeeping, an innovative measure to save people's lives. Many interesting initiatives have taken place since then, such as rapid humanitarian relief and the introduction of peacekeeping and peacemaking forces around the world.

However, we confuse peacemaking with conflict prevention. It is not conflict prevention because the moment we need to make

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peace, blood has already been shed, people have been killed and the seeds of ethnic discontent and future conflict are there for generations to come. We need look no further than to what is taking place now within the former Yugoslavia.

Slobodan Milosevic came to power and fomented violence against people. He initially stirred it up with the Croats by using propaganda and is now stirring it up with the people of Kosovo. The international community's response has appropriately been to engage in diplomacy.

When we were faced with the situation of the Jewish people and many others being slaughtered during World War II, what did we do? Nothing. If history has taught us anything it is that we have learned nothing. We continually sit on our hands and do nothing while people are slaughtered and killed.

The purpose of Motion No. 338 is to do something. It will change the international organizations that we are part of to become tools of conflict prevention. When despots are engaged in actions that result in the deaths of thousands of people we will not stand by and watch. We will act with other like-minded nations.

The cost of this has been enormous. From 1945 to 1989 the UN has spent 23% of its budget on peacekeeping. From 1990 to 1995 it has increased that amount to 77%. Peacekeeping is bankrupting the United Nations.

I will articulate solutions to this problem through the revamping of the international organization. These conflicts did not appear overnight. Bosnia has been around for a long time. Kosovo has been around for 10 years. Many situations have been brewing for a long time. When General Roméo Dallaire spoke eloquently and forcefully before the slaughters in Rwanda and Burundi saying they would spiral out of control and result in the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people, we did nothing.

There are things we can do. We need to look at the precursors to conflict. We can see a polarization taking place before anything else happens. One group of leaders will start to remove the human rights of others. It will start abusing and ostracizing groups. It will polarize groups and try to get its own people inside.

As Michael Ignatieff, the famous author, said, they manage to polarize groups by focusing on the narcissism of the differences. Two people can be very similar but their small differences can be expanded out of proportion. This enables the despot to cause his people to start killing one another. We can see that happening. It is very obvious.

We can use the international financial institutions, the United Nations and NGOs who are on the ground to report back to the UN crisis centre. The UN crisis centre, headed by Stan Carlson, a Canadian, can be the centre through which information is chan-

nelled. The information can then go to the UN security council or farmed out to other organizations as part of the intelligence needed to determine ground activity earlier.

The security council needs to be reformed. Now that we are on the security council for the next year and a half there is much we can do. The security council is obsolete but maybe there is a way to change it. We could expand the security council by getting more countries involved, particularly those from Africa, South America and other developing countries. We would then have a more comprehensive and representative security council.

• (1115)

Vetoes should be removed from the five security council members. Granted, this would be extraordinarily difficult. Maybe the way around it is to ensure that the veto power can be only used for chapter VII actions under the UN security council. Or we could require two vetoes to block a motion or an action by the security council. Or we could require that all actions by the security council be passed by a two-thirds majority.

The UN needs to be overhauled in terms of its diplomatic initiatives. It needs to focus on what it needs to do. It cannot do everything and be everything to all people. Right now dozens of organizations are doing the same thing. Why not focus and streamline it so that one organization is tasked to do these things rather than many?

The actions which the UN can take are many. First, as I mentioned, propaganda is one of the most powerful tools that groups use to polarize individuals. For example, Slobodan Milosevic used anti-Croat sentiment to format anti-Croat actions by his own people. In Rwanda the Hutus disseminated propaganda against the Tutsis through short-wave radio.

The UN has the capability to engage in positive propaganda to bring together like-minded moderates from both sides. We need to do this. It is essential to do this if we are to dispel the negative propaganda that despots use to polarize groups.

We need to use diplomacy to bring groups together. When that fails sanctions can be utilized as well as military actions.

Soft power is good, but soft power needs teeth. We can only back up soft power if we have strong, sharp teeth. Strong military action is sometimes required if we are to prevent the deaths of thousands of people. I would submit that is what we are engaging in today in Kosovo.

All the diplomacy in the world is not going to convince individuals like Slobodan Milosevic to come to the peace table, with an olive branch, wanting peace. These people do not engage in the same moral frame of reference that we do. It is different. Individuals like Hitler, Milosevic, Sese Seko Mobuto and Daniel

Arap Moi do not engage in the same moral framework; they engage in behaviour that is reprehensible to us.

The UN also needs to look at revamping its arms registry, making it obligatory for countries to sign on to the registry so that we know where inappropriate militarization is taking place. If the Jane's fighting ships can engage in intelligence gathering to put together comprehensive military expenditures, then certainly the United Nations could do that.

I would like to consider international financial institutions. The World Bank and the IMF are two parts of a triumvirate. They were brought together at Bretton Woods after 1945 to engage in peace-building, the reconstruction of societies, improving the markets of societies and also to engage in exchange rate stability around the world. I would argue that they have a much more powerful, potent and important force in the world for peace.

The first thing we need to do is to have them communicate and co-ordinate their actions. Much to my shock, I learned when I was in Washington and New York last year that it has only been since the end of last year that the UN, the IMF and the World Bank started to talk to each other. They have existed and operated in isolation. As a result, sometimes their actions have resulted in matters being worse from an international security perspective. They need to co-ordinate their actions.

Canada, being on the security council and having connections with most of these organizations, could act as a catalyst to work with like-minded nations to pull these countries together. Canada could act as a force to bring other countries together to work to reform these groups.

Wars need money. Every time we look at the television and we see developing nations, we see a 13 or 14 year old kid walking around with an AK47, the cost of which exceeds what that person would make in a year. Where does the money come from? Sometimes the money comes from us, through the IMF, the World Bank and other organizations. Sometimes these developing countries engage in destabilizing activities which result in the deaths of innocent people. We cannot tolerate that. We should have the power to prevent those moneys from getting into the hands of world leaders who would abuse their power at the expense of their people and at the expense of regional security.

• (1120)

The IMF, the World Bank and other regional development banks need to pay close attention to where those moneys are being spent and make the giving of those moneys conditional upon countries engaging in good governance, peacebuilding and investing in basic human needs such as education and health care. That builds peace. Investing in AK47s and small arms does not and we should not be a party to that.

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We could invest in activities through international financial institutions, which is what the Grameen Bank has done for a long time. Micro credit loaning to average citizens helps them to become self-sustaining and self-sufficient, and it also builds peace.

While the actions of the IFIs can be used as a carrot, they can and must at times be used as a stick. When leaders of these countries engage in bloody actions against others, such as we have seen with Laurent Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or with Emperor Bokassa in the Central African Republic, or what we see today with Daniel Arap Moi in Kenya engaging in bloody action with the Maasi and the Kalenjin people against the Kikuyus, why do we support that?

These people cannot be allowed to do that. We need to hold their feet to the fire. There are things we could do. We could call up loans and we could prevent those loans from being renegotiated. We could suspend borrowing privileges.

I remember being in Kenya in the late 1980s when Daniel Arap Moi, one of the richest men in the world, was begging the world for handouts. He is a multibillionaire. That should never be allowed to happen.

There are other tools we can use, such as withholding money and imposing economic sanctions. However, money needs to go to the people, as we do not want them to suffer. Money can be channelled through non-governmental organizations. Good NGOs, working effectively to provide basic services, could be used as a conduit to ensure that there is economic stability and that money is provided to the people so they can provide for themselves in the future.

Historically the biggest stumbling block to early intervention has been the concept of state sovereignty. Many people around the world have said that state sovereignty is sacrosanct. Many people feel that what goes on within a country's borders is that country's problem. However, if we look closely at what the concept means in terms of international law we can see that does not hold water where leaders are engaging in behaviour that is destructive to their people.

State sovereignty comes from the belief that sovereignty is a manifestation of the will of the people. The UN convention on human rights protects and upholds the will of the people and is the basis of government. Therefore, international law protects the sovereignty of a people and the will of the people, not the sovereignty of the nation state.

Therefore, under international law it is acceptable for us to engage in actions against state leadership when that leadership is engaging in brutal behaviour that contravenes the will of the state and also destabilizes the region.

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There is also a very pragmatic and selfish reason for us to get involved. When wars blow out of control, when countries implode and descend into hell, who picks up the pieces? These countries are developing nations, generally speaking. After the conflict they are more of a wasteland than they have ever been. The cost to pick up the pieces rests on the shoulders of the developed world, countries such as Canada. We provide aid and we provide defence. At times our people lose their lives in peacekeeping operations, such as those we have seen in the former Yugoslavia.

• (1125)

We have a right to intervene, and to intervene early, because we pick up the pieces after the war has taken place.

In the first 40 years of the history of the United Nations there were 13 peacekeeping missions. In the last 10 years there have been more than 25. Rather than the situation getting better, it is getting worse. What I am proposing through Motion No. 338 is that we pull together like-minded nations, such as we did on the land mines issue. I firmly believe we can do this. We need to bring together like-minded nations such as Norway, Iceland, South Africa, Australia and Central American nations; countries that are interested in pursuing peace. We need to give them a plan of action. We need to convene a meeting, maybe in Ottawa, to agree on a common plan of action, not a commitment for more study. We can take this common plan of action to these international organizations. If we all have the same plan of action, if we are all working toward the same goal, other countries will come on side.

The ultimate outcome will be the revamping and rejuvenating of international organizations. They will be a tool for conflict prevention so that the conflicts of yesterday will not happen tomorrow, and innocent civilian lives that have been laid to waste in imploding countries will not continue.

We cannot prevent all conflicts of the world, but we can prevent some. That is what Motion No. 338 is about and I hope members from all parties will support it. It is something upon which we can work together, it is congruent with our history as a nation, and it will save many lives and billions of dollars.

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member has raised a number of very serious issues on the world scene, each of which represents a separate debate.

One very important issue to which he referred was the reform of the monetary system. World finances have a great bearing on conflicts which erupt in various countries. It is not the only reason, and we certainly acknowledge that. However, the monetary system in our world is very important. With his indulgence and with the indulgence of the House I will dwell on the monetary system rather

than try to make an omnibus contribution to this debate. I want to zero in on that one very important area.

The international agenda recently has been saturated with initiatives of crises prevention, more effective management of international financial crises and more sustainable economic development. What started as a G-7 plan of action is now being echoed by the nations of APEC, the primary international organization for promoting open trade and economic co-operation among 21 member countries around the Pacific rim, which will be discussed later this month at spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, and in June at the G-7 summit.

There is a groundswell of support for strengthening domestic and international financial institutions and for economies that are more resilient to economic and financial crises when they do occur. Canada is committed to strengthening the international financial system and the world economy. We started this at the G-7 summit in Halifax in 1995.

Last year, in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, Canada proposed a six-point plan aimed at helping to sustain global growth while at the same time reducing the risk of future financial crises.

• (1130)

We call for ensuring appropriate monetary policy through G-7 central banks, paying close attention and giving appropriate weight to the risk of a further slowdown in the global economy; expeditious action to strengthen national financial systems and international oversight; development of a practical guide or road map for safe capital liberalization in developing countries; agreement to work urgently toward a better mechanism to involve private sector investors in the resolution of financial crises, including the possibility of an emergency standstill clause; and greater attention to the needs of the poorest countries to ensure they receive the resources and support they need to reduce poverty and begin growing.

At the G-7 summit in Birmingham in May last year, leaders accelerated work begun in the 1995 Halifax summit on strengthening the international financial architecture to help prevent and better manage financial crises. Key elements of these efforts include: reports of the three G-22 working parties, improving transparency and accountability, strengthening national financial systems and addressing international financial crises delivered at the G-22 meeting October 5, 1998; the G-7 leaders statement on the world economy issued October 30, 1998 together with the declaration of G-7 finance ministers and central bank governors; the plan for implementing reforms to the global financial architecture presented by G-7 finance ministers to heads in December 1998; the February 20, 1999 communique of G-7 finance ministers and central bank governors; the February 1999 Tietmeyer report to G-7 finance ministers and central bank governors on international co-operation and co-ordination in the area of financial market supervision and surveillance, and its proposal for the establishment

of a financial stability forum to provide a mechanism for co-ordination and exchange of views among financial sector regulators and supervisors; the first meeting of the financial stability forum on April 13; and two seminars, one held on March 11 and the other to be held on April 25, 1999, involving 33 industrial countries and emerging markets to discuss outstanding issues in the international financial architecture.

Priority areas for strengthening the international architecture outlined in the October 1998 leaders statement on the world economy include greater transparency and openness in financial systems, better processes for monitoring and promoting international financial stability and improvements in corporate governance, orderly capital account liberalization, private sector involvement in preventing and resolving future crises, protecting the most vulnerable in society, and improving the effectiveness of international financial institutions.

The latter includes a proposal for an enhanced IMF facility to provide a precautionary line of credit for countries pursuing strong IMF approved policies, accompanied by bilateral assistance on a case by case basis, and with appropriate private sector involvement. Much has already been accomplished in these areas.

Six areas were also identified in the October 1998 leaders statement as requiring further attention. These six priority areas form the basis for G-33 discussion in the international seminars held on March 11 and to be held on April 25. They include: examining the scope for strengthened prudential regulation in industrial countries; further strengthening prudential regulation and financial systems in emerging markets; considering the elements necessary for the maintenance of sustainable exchange rate regimes in emerging markets; developing new ways to respond to crises and promote greater participation by the private sector; assessing proposals for strengthening the IMF, and proposals for strengthening the interim and development committees of the IMF and World Bank; and minimizing the human cost of crises and protecting the most vulnerable.

• (1135)

Canada supports the six priority areas outlined in the October 1998 leaders statement as requiring further action and is committed to advancing work in these areas. In particular, Canadian objectives in discussions on reforming the international architecture are presently focused on ensuring that the substantive aspects of these discussions take place within a permanent process that is representative of the major participants in the international financial system, that measures to effectively involve the private sector in crisis resolution are established to attenuate imprudent lending, and that the social aspects of international financial crises are addressed.

Prospects for a successful conclusion of the substantive aspects of discussions on establishing a permanent process for addressing

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international financial issues will be enhanced if they take place within a process that represents the interests and points of view of the major participants in the international financial system, and is anchored within the governance structures of the IMF. For this reason, Canada is supportive of efforts to improve the functioning of the interim committee.

The G-22 working group on financial crises agreed on some mechanisms for enhancing private sector involvement in crisis prevention and resolution, including collective action clauses in bond contracts and contingent financial arrangements with the private sector. Canada attaches a high priority to moving ahead with their implementation and moving even further to address the incentives that lead to imprudent lending. Canadian proposals for greater private sector involvement in crisis prevention and resolution received general support at the March 11 seminar.

Canada is particularly concerned about the social impacts of financial instability. We welcome this opportunity to put forward Canada's position on the reform of these financial institutions.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in the debate on Motion No. 338, which was moved by colleague from the Reform Party.

The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should convene in 1998 a meeting of "like-minded nations" in order to develop a multilateral plan of action to reform international organizations (e.g. International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations) so that they can identify the precursors of conflict and establish multilateral, conflict prevention initiatives.

This is very nicely put, but the Bloc Quebecois must point out right away that it will vote against Motion No. 338. Let us have a closer look together at the motion.

First it says, and I quote:

—the government should convene in 1998 a meeting of 'like-minded nations' in order to develop a multilateral plan of action—

Members will agree with me that "like-minded nations" is a very vague and general concept. According to the logic of the motion, it would appear that the Reform Party is trying to create some level of separation, which we in the Bloc Quebecois find unacceptable, between industrialized countries, otherwise known as "like-minded nations", and developing countries.

This is clearly undemocratic and paternalistic. How dare the Reform Party exclude developing countries out of hand from the drafting of such a multilateral plan of action?

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The reform proposed by the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca would directly affect poor countries since for the most part conflicts are taking place in developing countries.

Any reform aimed at significantly changing the role of international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations must be carried out in consultation with the countries affected.

In fact, I would like to remind the Reform Party that the main aim of organizations such as the World Bank or the United Nations is to help developing countries.

● (1140)

Therefore, why exclude poor countries from this reform? They are the primary beneficiaries of the assistance provided by these organizations. It is important to consult these countries before undertaking any reform, so as to be aware of their needs and concerns, and have an accurate idea of the reality of the people affected by poverty or conflicts. This only makes sense.

Any reform must be undertaken in partnership with international organizations and governments, the people affected and NGOs in the field. We have a lot to learn from them. But the Reform Party is advocating unilateral action by industrialized countries. The Bloc Québécois is opposed to this way of doing things.

With its delusions of grandeur, the Reform Party wants to reform everything. But before trying to reform everything on this planet, it should start right here, in the Canadian government's own back yard. Believe me, there are lots of weeds in that back yard.

Since the Liberals came to office in 1993, CIDA's budget for international assistance has been reduced by almost 30%. Yet, more than 1.3 billion people are living in abject poverty, barely surviving on less than a dollar a day. Every day, 34,000 children die from malnutrition and disease.

Before the Liberals took office, Canada was seen as a leader in development aid. Now, because of the Liberals' poor record in this field, Canada's image and reputation have been tarnished.

Canada is, in fact, no longer one of the top donors to the developing countries. It has now dropped from fifth to eleventh.

Betty Plewes, the president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Council for International Development, the CCIC, a coalition of 100 major Canadian organizations active in the development field, stated as follows:

The aid to development program has been more affected by deficit cutting measures than other federal programs.

This is proof that Canada could very well, within the very near future, no longer be on the list of the most generous and most committed members of the international donor community. This government is so irresponsible that it has reached the stage of neglecting the true human values.

In the last budget, the government added \$50 million to its international aid budget, out of a total CIDA budget of just under \$2 billion.

The Minister of Finance claims to thus be taking a step toward attaining the objective of devoting .7% of the GDP to development aid. Yet all this does is to just barely allow it to keep up. At the rate it is going, the federal government will not attain that objective before the fourth millennium.

The international aid budget is a perfect example of the distortion between Liberal rhetoric and the reality of facts and figures.

I hope that this brief analysis will enable the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca to realize that it would be advisable, and preferable, to look to what is going on in here in Canada before trying to revolutionize the entire world. Before trying to create new international structures, let us concentrate on better adapting the institutions we already have to the new political, social and economic realities of our day.

Motion No. 338 by the Reform Party is all the more incomprehensible when one looks at the May 1995 final report by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "From Bretton Woods to Halifax and Beyond: Towards a 21st Summit for the 21st Century Challenge". This was a unanimous report addressing issues of international financial institutions reforms for the agenda of the June 1995 G-7 Halifax summit.

At page 14 of the executive summary, it states:

Ultimately the world's peoples through their representatives need to have a democratic voice in the changes affecting global economic security and development.

The Reform Party supported this statement, because it supported this report. So, what is behind this sudden change in direction? Could we say improvisation?

● (1145)

I invite the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca to read the very instructive report on the renewal and reform of the institutions responsible for international economics, including the IMF and the World Bank. Had he read this report, the member would probably not have presented his motion, because it raises the concerns the member refers to in his motion.

In closing, I would remind you that the Bloc Québécois has always had a concern for the operation of international agencies,

such as the UN, the IMF and the World Bank. They have repeatedly proven their role in the maintenance of world order.

That said, nothing is perfect. Political, social and economic change occurs on our planet at a tremendous rate and these institutions must keep up with the changes. However, if the developing countries are to be denied a say in the reform of these institutions, as the Reform Party is proposing, the Bloc Quebecois must oppose Motion No. 338.

The world balance is precarious enough at the moment. There is therefore no question of heightening the reality of excluding the developing countries. Globalization is not only economic, but social and human as well.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise to make a few brief observations on the worthwhileness and the relevance of the hon. member's private member's motion. It is probably more timely than the member might have thought, although I realize he probably initially regretted that the motion did not come forward at an earlier time and therefore had to seek the unanimous consent of the House to amend it and take out the reference to 1998.

It just so happens that in 1999 we are in a position where we can see the wisdom of the idea we find in the motion, that the world should be more focused on conflict prevention than it has been and that Canada should convene a meeting or act in other ways to bring together like-minded nations that would like to reform our international institutions in a way which would make this kind of conflict prevention more possible and more probable.

It is a timely debate. From my point of view and the point of view of my party, although I realize this is Private Members' Business, reform of our international institutions has certainly been a focus of ours for a long time. Just the other day, again in the context of Private Members' Business, the House unanimously passed a motion by the NDP member for Regina—Qu'Appelle on the issue of the Tobin tax, which in a way addresses itself to an element of what is wrong with the global economy and what is wrong with it in a way that has come to prevent or limit the actions of international financial institutions.

One of the problems we have with respect to the global economy and the international financial institutions is that they were designed for a global economy that was much less globalized and much more regulated. One of the problems we are facing now is the massive deregulation of capital and capital flows.

This has created a new opportunity for the destabilization of national economies, the destabilization of regions, and it is one of the reasons we need to work as an international community on what might be loosely called a new Bretton Woods or a new way of regulating the global economy, to do for the global economy what

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we once did for national economies; that is to say, to make sure in the way we once made sure national economies worked in the national interest, in the public interest for the common good, we now need to regulate the global economy to replicate in terms of global institutions those things we once did only at the national level.

Otherwise we would end up with this totally unfettered global marketplace in which we see what many have called a race to the bottom; that is to say, a bondage to a certain notion of competition. This means that countries have to cater in an uncritical way to the needs of foreign investment and international capital, which leads to a driving down of wages and a reduction in government revenues, which in turn leads to cutbacks in social programs and the ability of government to act on behalf of the public, both in terms of providing social programs and in terms of legislating in respect of labour and environmental standards or anything else that might be construed to make us less competitive.

• (1150)

We have a situation here which certainly calls for a more focused effort to reform our international institutions. I would say with respect to the IMF and the World Bank that in many respects now they are part of the problem rather than the solution. They make countries do things that countries should not have to do. Through structural adjustment and things like that they literally make countries, particularly the poorer countries, starve their own people in order to pay off debts either to the IMF directly or to banks or generally to their creditors. There is something desperately wrong about this.

It is why we have seen recently the call by the leadership of the churches in Canada for something that is called Jubilee 2000, which is an attempt to use the spirit of the jubilee proclaimed in Deuteronomy; that is to say, the idea that every 50 years the debt should be wiped clean and people should get a chance to—

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Leviticus.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** I am sorry, Leviticus, the hon. member says, a biblical scholar among the Liberals.

In any event the notion we find in the Hebrew testament about jubilee is something which I think more and more Canadians are certainly willing to consider. They do not see the point of driving these poorer countries further and further into situations which are in the final analysis destructive of their environment, destructive of the social fabric of their respective countries, and in the end destructive for all of us, to the extent that these countries are driven to convert their economies to export economies and to the extent that they have to destroy their own environment to do that. If they have to destroy their rain forest, for instance, to create pasture to grow beef in order to export it, that is the only way they can get hard currency to pay off their debts, instead of having an economy

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that might better service the food and the social needs of their own population.

We are not getting anywhere if in the end all the debts are paid and all the banks are happy but we cannot breathe the air and we cannot go outside because the ozone layer has been so depleted. What shall it profit us if the banks gain the whole world and we lose our ability to actually survive on the planet because we have driven all these countries into a way of behaving that is destructive, not just of their environment but of our common environment? That is certainly one of the concerns I have and one of the things we need to look at when we look at reform of international financial institutions.

Finally I will say a word on the United Nations. I do not think anybody would dare get up in the context of this debate and with what has been happening in the former Yugoslavia and suggest that somehow the United Nations is adequate to the circumstances which the world is experiencing. We have a very serious dilemma precisely because of the failure of the United Nations to be able to act in the former Yugoslavia. There is an inability of the security council to come to any kind of agreement as a result of the vetoes that exist there and the lack of any long term will at the UN to develop a capacity to react to these kinds of situations, even if there were agreement.

● (1155)

Even if the UN had been able to agree to do something in Kosovo, it would have had to depend on national military capacities and not on its own military capacity. One of the suggestions that has been made over the years is that the UN have this standing capacity in its own name.

We need to look at democratizing the United Nations so that we do not have the situation where those who were considered to be the great powers after the second world war still have exclusive veto over world affairs through the UN. A lot of things need to be looked at.

One of the problems in the current situation in Kosovo is that we have things being done in the name of the international community. I will repeat what I said the other night. Unfortunately the international community through the UN was not able to act, but that does not make NATO the international community.

It causes problems for people who may at some level want to support what is going on in Kosovo when they hear NATO setting itself up as the international community because it clearly is not. Not only that, NATO is being led in this case by a country, the United States of America, which has clearly done all it can over the years to marginalize the UN. It does not pay its dues. It has a

significant element within its Congress that regularly attacks the United Nations.

There is a lot to be further debated. It is regrettable that some of the countries which now hold up NATO as the international community are not doing more at the UN to make sure that the UN can become the authentic voice of the international community.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief because many members are here to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion on this opposition day.

The wording of the motion moved by the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is far from perfect. I agree and I think the member would too. Naturally, it is not just a matter of the date for the conference, 1998. I am going to take a look at the wording of the motion.

As other colleagues have pointed out, the motion says “like-minded nations”. Some caution is perhaps in order, because if only “like-minded nations” are going to be involved in changing international organizations, even if this is just the ground work for such changes, there must be a consensus of countries belonging to these organizations.

For all the fine speeches and meetings held with countries that share our thinking in certain areas, it is becoming clear that we are shooting ourselves in the foot, as it were, because we will not be able to make these changes and reach a consensus when it comes to international organizations.

My Reform Party colleague gave the example of land mines. This example can cut both ways. Why? Because there was no consensus among the countries most affected by the land mine problem. Those least affected, such as Canada, signed the Ottawa agreement.

The countries most concerned, those wreaking the most havoc with land mines, were not part of the consensus. The debate must therefore be extended to take in all countries belonging to an organization. This debate should perhaps first be held here in Canada.

Most people do not even know how many international organizations there are and which does what. It is becoming increasingly apparent that people are a bit lost and are no longer very clear on the distinction between the UN, the WTO, the former GATT, NATO and so on. There are so many names that people get mixed up. This is true for many parliamentarians, myself included. There are so many international organizations that is hard to keep them all straight.

In the motion, “international organizations” seems on the one hand to include all bodies, and on the other to exclude them.

• (1200)

The motion states:

--international organizations (e.g. International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations) so that they can identify the precursors of conflict and establish multilateral, conflict prevention initiatives.

I am not sure the WTO would play an important role in settling conflicts. Here again we do not know exactly what this is all about. Is it really a security issue, or a military, economic or humanitarian issue? We do not know, and it is unfortunate because, for the past few weeks, we have been hearing a lot about three major international organizations, namely the WTO, which got involved on the eve of the negotiations, the UN and NATO.

We might be well advised to make these international organizations better known in this parliament and across the country, inform Quebecers and Canadians and then ask them what their opinion is. If Canada can develop a national position, it will be much more credible internationally.

Canada has a leadership role to play nationally, but also on the world scene. For decades Canada has played a role in changing, improving, even creating international organizations. Unfortunately, over the past few weeks, Canada’s leadership has been tarnished by events in Kosovo. We asked what steps Canada took before the war in Kosovo, and we are expecting answers. What efforts has the Government of Canada made? What leadership has the Government of Canada shown in preparing for the possibility of an armed conflict in the Yugoslav Republic? We still do not know.

The UN has been replaced by the flag of war, a war under NATO. International organizations are changing, and NATO is the prime example. The purpose of NATO was preparedness if one of its member countries were to be invaded, and now it has become an international police force.

Is this grounds for criticism? For questioning, at least. Is NATO’s response in Kosovo not a sign of the UN’s weakness? Perhaps. Maybe this was the only approach or maybe others could have been considered. Perhaps the UN and leading members of the UN, such as Canada, have not done their job. There are a lot of questions that will probably remain unanswered, in the short term at least.

There are many negative aspects to the motion with respect to its drafting. We are, however, going to support it because it calls for examining all international bodies, and this is something that is needed.

At present, one committee will address the WTO, another some other body, but there is no overall picture. There is a shift going on within the international bodies. To take an example that is not a military one, an examination of international protection of intellec-

### *Supply*

tual property, we realize that the international organization has no teeth and is calling upon the WTO to apply sanctions.

It is clear therefore that a shift is taking place within the international organizations, which creates a need to analyse all of them. As part of this process, we should perhaps look here as well in Parliament at the way Canada joins these organizations and signs protocols and treaties without parliament having any say, or at least much.

A reform of international organizations should include a look at how parliament ought to be changed in order to become a stakeholder in these international organizations and be involved from start to finish. That is very important. The government should learn to use Parliament much more than it does at the moment.

We want to draw attention to the quality of the motion, perhaps not in its formulation, but in what it proposes, that is, an analysis of and profound change in the way the international organizations operate.

We will support it with pleasure and we hope that this will be the beginning of a review of this parliament and how it relates to international organizations.

• (1205)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The time provided for the consideration of Private Members’ Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—THE BALKANS

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

That this House demand that the government submit to a debate and a vote in this House the sending of Canadian soldiers to the Balkans who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations on the ground in Kosovo and the Balkan region.

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

I would draw to your attention the fact that the leader of the Bloc Québécois will be sharing his time with our honourable colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry. Later on, throughout the course of the debate, the Bloc Québécois members rising to speak will be sharing their time.

*Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, today, we are debating a motion that is very democratic, reasonable and responsible.

This motion is asking members of parliament to vote on the opportunity to hold a vote on the sending of Canadian troops to Kosovo and the Balkan region. The motion before us applies to both combat troops and peacekeeping forces.

Today's debate may help us find out a little more about the government's intentions, about what is really going on, about its military planning and diplomatic initiatives. Our main problem, and this is the primary reason behind this motion, is that we sorely lack information. In fact, the government is providing such limited information that we are better informed by Newsworld and CNN.

The purpose of this exercise is not academic or hypothetical, as the Prime Minister claimed last week, in reply to our questions. The legitimacy of our request is evidenced by the dispatches published in newspapers yesterday and today, including *The Sunday Observer*, and alluding to preparations for a ground invasion of Yugoslavia toward the end of May.

In the leaflets that it recently dropped over the Yugoslav territory, NATO itself stated that an invasion would take place if Serbian forces did not leave Kosovo.

We are not the only ones asking that members of parliament vote on this issue. Many editorials in the country's major dailies are asking for the same thing.

For example, in its April 14 issue, the Montreal *Gazette* said that our soldiers deserve to know that their elected representatives are supporting them, adding that the Prime Minister was "badly wrong" in not allowing for a vote in the House of Commons.

On April 13, the *National Post* said that only a parliamentary vote would give the Prime Minister the moral authority to involve Canada in a ground war in the former Yugoslavia.

That same day, *La Presse* said that the government's refusal to hold a vote was creating a democratic deficit.

On Saturday, the editorial writer for *Le Soleil* said that fortunately the Bloc Quebecois would be forcing such a vote Monday—today—in the House of Commons.

Susan Riley, a Southam columnist, said that it would be better to abolish Parliament than put it through the travesty of consultation to which the government is now subjecting it.

There is something strange and disquieting about this whole business. From the beginning, the government seems to have been swept along by events. It seems to be making it up as it goes along.

In fact, it is ironic to say the least that the Prime Minister, whose constant refrain has been the need for Canada to have a foreign policy that is separate from that of the United States, now seems to have fallen in completely with Washington.

● (1210)

We also have the right to wonder if Canadian troops might find themselves on the frontline because their humanitarian mission would be transformed into a combat mission. They could get involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia through the back door, without parliament having had a chance to vote on this issue.

Yesterday, the government announced that another six CF-18s would be sent to Italy, thereby tripling our initial participation.

This brings me to ask the Prime Minister a very simple question: how much will Canadian participation have to escalate before parliament is asked to vote on this issue?

Technically, Canada could be at war without parliamentarians having had a chance to vote on the matter. This seems rather inappropriate in a democratic society and a parliamentary democracy.

It seems even more inappropriate considering the fact that, in 1991, the Prime Minister, who was sitting on this side of the House as opposition leader, was clamouring for a vote in parliament on the issue of military operations against Iraq.

The Liberal leader said at the time that the government did not have, and I quote, "the moral authority to put this country into a war situation" since the House of Commons had not approved, through a vote, Canada's participation in Operation Desert Storm.

The same member, who is now Prime Minister, should be consistent since he is the one who said on January 15, 1991, and I quote:

The problem we all face is why the Prime Minister—

He was referring to Prime Minister Mulroney.

—has not chosen to ask the real question of the House today. This is the question with which the country is faced: Should Canadian troops participate in a war—

Today, the government is desperately seeking reasons not to have a vote on this issue and to object to our motion, which is totally reasonable.

For example, last week, we heard the Prime Minister say in response to our questions that he did not want to have a vote because it could show some dissension among us, which could be exploited by Milosevic's propaganda.

He used this ridiculous argument, knowing full well that almost all MPs support Canadian participation in an international intervention that will put an end to the crimes against humanity perpetuated by the Milosevic regime in Kosovo.

*Supply*

As well, a vote in the House, with the support of 90%, 95% or 98% of MPs, would lend far more authenticity to the government than the polls the Prime Minister refers to.

If there were any objections at all, they would be the normal outcome of a sound debate within a democratic assembly in which it is virtually impossible to achieve unanimity.

This House must hold a debate on this issue. We must set a democratic example for Milosevic, rather than an imposed and unverified unanimity. Democracy is our true strength, and Milosevic's main weakness.

I do not have much idea of what is going on within the Milosevic government, but I doubt very much that he is waiting anxiously on the outcome of a vote by the House of Commons in Ottawa to decide whether or not he will refuse to put an end to the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

Holding a vote on sending troops to the Balkans has nothing to do with a vote of confidence toward the government, as the Prime Minister was stating in his roundabout way last week, nor is it the nonsense the House leader was calling it. Such statements are not a very good example for the people of Canada or of Quebec.

It is also wrong to claim, as the government House leader did a few days ago, that the motion before us implies that any troop movement, even a normal troop rotation, would have to be approved by parliament.

This is a ridiculous argument, and it shows just how deep the government side had to dig to find an excuse to oppose our motion.

• (1215)

Members, the elected representatives of the people, must have their say. Citing polls, as the Prime Minister did last week, is a travesty of parliament. The House of Commons is the expression of democracy. We do not take polls, we were elected to represent the people.

It is all the more logical for us to vote since the deployment of troops on Yugoslav soil was predictable from the outset.

From the time it became clear that the NATO air strikes would not bring President Milosevic to his knees, the Atlantic Alliance had three options. The first was the German peace plan, the diplomatic approach we must build on. The second was to add ground intervention to the air strikes in order to carry out the mission of ending the crimes of Milosevic in Kosovo. The third was to drop our objective, abandon the Kosovars and let President Milosevic complete the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, if not genocide. This would reinforce the aggression of the Milosevic government and encourage all the other tyrants and despots in the world.

The situation is clear. For the sake of consistency with the statements made in 1991 by those who, today, are the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the democratic spirit the media have summarized so well and to act on the will of the people, the government must allow MPs to vote on this. Canada's position and its participation, if it comes to that, will be the stronger for it.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the leader of the Bloc Québécois and I have one simple question for him.

In the current state of emergency with respect to the conflict, would the will of parliaments not be the best means to counter propaganda and identify the democratic proceedings and action to be taken to find a solution to this crisis finally?

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, this goes without saying, and the Germans have shown us the way. It was Germany that proposed a peace plan and that same country also held a debate in its parliament. Germans acted in a responsible and consistent fashion, and they strengthened the diplomatic channels by acting in a democratic way. These two things go hand in hand.

A vote will also be held by the two houses of the Czech republic. They too are consistent. This is what must be done. We must get all members of this parliament involved, and make sure—and I think all the opposition parties agree—that our colleagues across the floor wake up, stop yielding to the Prime Minister and start remembering the days when they displayed some judgment, when they sat on this side of the House. It seems as though they have lost all critical judgment since moving to the other side of the floor.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to address this motion we have put forward in the context of the growing crisis in Kosovo.

Today's newspapers are reporting that Kosovo is becoming empty. Therefore, it is essential to continue the debate in this House, to give members an opportunity to address the serious crisis being reported by the television, the media and the newspapers. Quebecers and Canadians have been closely following this conflict, and there is evidence that ethnic cleansing operations are indeed taking place and getting worse every day.

Civilian populations are being displaced to neighbouring countries, including Albania, which is welcoming thousands of refugees—over 40,000 in the last few hours—Macedonia and Montenegro. These countries will have to share that task with other nations such as France and, some day, in all likelihood, Canada, which said it was prepared to welcome some of these refugees.

*Supply*

• (1220)

This is ethnic cleansing bordering on genocide, the most terrible of crimes against humanity, a crime which saw the creation, in 1948, of a convention whose 50th anniversary we celebrated last year. The convention provides not only that the crime of genocide is punishable but also that nations have an obligation to prevent it.

Today, as the century comes to a close, countries, including Canada, seem too little concerned with trying to prevent a genocide that echoes the genocides with which the century opened: the genocides of the Armenians, the Jews during World War II and, more recently, the Cambodians and Rwandans.

We must say publicly that we have an obligation to prevent a genocide. We must say it in parliaments, for parliaments have the role of informing the public, of presenting the situation and informing the public through its elected representatives. Until now, elected representatives have had the less than satisfactory task of receiving information and passing it on to the public that duly elected them.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is the primary spokesperson and we have had debates on this topic. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is the government's leading spokesperson on this issue, tells us that it is the government's prerogative to decide to send troops abroad, he is forgetting that, in 1991, this parliament voted in favour of sending troops to Iraq. There is a precedent for voting in favour of sending troops to Kosovo, whether to impose peace there or maintain it.

This is an important precedent. We invoke it, and continue to invoke it, because it belies any notion that the government does not have to consult parliament and put the question to a vote because its prerogative does not necessarily require it to consult that body.

The government should follow the lead of other parliaments. The Minister of Foreign Affairs himself, during a hearing of the foreign affairs committee, gave the example of Germany which, by the way, has proposed a peace plan that the Bloc Quebecois had asked the Government of Canada to sponsor.

Germany is not afraid of its parliament. There have already been two debates and two votes in the German parliament on this issue. The government cannot invoke what is going on in foreign parliaments to justify an opposition to a vote in the Canadian parliament.

Hungarian and Czech parliamentarians also had an opportunity to vote on this issue. The Czech constitution even provides that the deployment of troops in a foreign country must be debated and approved by parliament.

This shows that other NATO member states trust their parliamentarians and their parliaments, and I believe that the Canadian

parliament should also have a decisive role to play on this fundamental issue.

Apart from saying that parliament must have a decisive role to play, I cannot exclude dealing with other dimensions of this conflict which the Bloc Quebecois has been concerned with since the beginning.

There is a humanitarian aspect about which we must have the highest concern: there are too many refugees. There are now hundreds of thousands of them. Kosovo, as I already said, is being emptied and its people is the victim of ethnic cleansing and, likely, of genocide.

We must help. We must be generous and show solidarity in this terrible ordeal the Kosovar people is undergoing. The government must act in a more transparent way. It must share information. Militants of the Bloc Quebecois participating in a general council during the weekend asked the government to be generous to refugees and to spend the \$100 million committed to aid for the refugees in those countries where they have found refuge.

• (1225)

We must not forget the criminal dimension of this conflict. There are people, heads of state, politicians who are presumably taking part in crimes against humanity, crimes of genocide. They must not escape punishment.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia should one day soon, real soon, bring to justice the individuals who committed and are still committing crimes against humanity. As for the man responsible for such crimes, the head of the Yugoslav state, he should not be spared and escape punishment.

There is also a political role or dimension to this conflict that should not be overlooked. We in the Bloc Quebecois have always been concerned with the role the UN must keep on playing when it comes to putting an end to international conflicts, settling differences, in order to maintain international peace and security.

We still believe the security council should play a role, and Kofi Annan, who is very well received by the Europeans, should also be invited by Canada to play a more active role.

If it proved necessary, we could eventually ask the General Assembly of the United Nations, in keeping with the Acheson resolution, to play a role in maintaining international peace and security with regard to the present conflict. We think it is important for the United Nations not to be cast aside, not to be marginalized, to take part in the dispute settlement process so that it can maintain its role in the future.

I conclude by putting forward an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by replacing the words "debate and a" with the following:

"prior debate and"

Lastly, I would like to quote not Euripides like I did last week, but Victor Hugo. The celebrated poet once wrote that war is the clash of men and peace is the clash of ideas.

Let us restore peace in Kosovo through every possible means, so that one great idea, peace, can prevail and future generations of Kosovars can be spared the horrors of war.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The amendment to the motion is in order.

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before putting a question to my hon. colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry, who, by the way, is doing a great job as our critic for international affairs, I would like to say, with a catch in my voice, that I thought he made a very passionate speech.

Given what people are saying, what editorial writers are thinking, what headlines are saying, things like “Kosovo almost empty of its inhabitants”, I think it is very important that Canadian parliamentarians address the issue.

• (1230)

When newspapers and politicians use the word genocide, I think it is important for Canadian parliamentarians to rise in this House and exercise their responsibility. They must decide, based on their own conscience, whether or not their country should deploy peacekeeping forces or land troops, as the case may be, as mentioned by our leader, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

I would now like to ask the member a question. In his speech, he referred to a precedent that occurred in 1991, when the House had a vote on a similar issue. I know the government can make its own decisions with regard to international treaties and agreements. However, it often gives Canadian parliamentarians the opportunity to do so. Bill C-27 is a good example of that. This bill, which deals with the United Nations fisheries agreement, will be put to a vote on Tuesday. Fish stocks are certainly important to me, but life in Kosovo is even more important.

Would the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry tell us what role Canada can play within the UN security council and give us some clarification about that? I know the fisheries, but I would like the UN to take this thing seriously and I would like the member to tell us about the situation in this House.

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. While the government, in reviewing its foreign policy, proposed democratizing it by giving a voice to the people on the matter, we note that it does not seem to want to give a real voice to those representing them in parliament.

### *Supply*

We have proof of this from the many times it has rejected the idea that these parliamentarians should vote in favour of sending troops abroad, not only in this debate, but in other debates we have had on sending troops to Iraq and the central African republic. It has always rejected a vote following a debate on sending troops.

Since my colleague referred to the treaty, it is true that parliament may at times consider laws implementing treaties, because it is obliged to pass such laws. However, this same government will not let the House of Commons approve treaties before they are signed or ratified.

Here again, this is a great democratic shortcoming, which must be corrected and which was corrected to some extent in other Commonwealth parliaments, such as in Australia and New Zealand, and which the British government wants to correct.

This government and others before it have put an end to a former practice whereby important treaties were approved. I can give you one example, which is very important in the context of the present debate, since parliament, the House of Commons, approved it before Canada ratified it, and that is the treaty establishing NATO. The treaty was approved in the House before being ratified by the Government of Canada. There were others, but the practice was dropped, and for the past few months, with Bloc colleagues, I have been arguing that the practice should be reinstated in parliament.

It would be an element of real democratization, which the present government will no doubt reject, as we will see from the way it votes on today's motion, unless it considers that democracy is calling out to it today and is insisting that parliament also decide matters related to foreign policy.

[*English*]

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will begin by restating why Canada is involved in the action with NATO in the former Yugoslavia.

In Kosovo the Yugoslav regime has engaged in a campaign of brutal repression ever since it unilaterally stripped Kosovo of its autonomy and abolished its local institutions in 1989 and 1990.

• (1235)

The United Nations Security Council, acting under chapter VII, has issued several resolutions regarding the Kosovo crisis which identified the conflict as a threat to peace and security in the region.

These resolutions and the October agreements between the FRY, the former republic of Yugoslavia, and the OSCE and NATO, impose a clear legal obligation on FRY to respect a ceasefire,

*Supply*

protect the civilian population, and limit the deployment of a security force in Kosovo.

The FRY is in clear violation of these commitments which were accepted in October and is violating the obligations imposed by resolutions 1199 and 1203. The FRY has violated the ceasefire and has systematically violated international humanitarian law by launching a campaign of terror against civilians which includes killing and torturing, arbitrary detention and persecution, and denial of basic rights based on ethnicity.

Our preference has always been for a diplomatic solution to the problem of Kosovo. Diplomacy was given every chance to succeed. Numerous diplomatic missions were sent to Belgrade. The OSCE created a major verification mission. Finally the Rambouillet conference ultimately failed because of the consistent intransigence displayed by President Milosevic.

Only when these efforts had been exhausted and when all attempts to stop the regime's campaign of terror against civilians had failed did the allies resort to military action.

Clearly it would have been best if the UN could have facilitated an end to the conflict in Kosovo. When the security council is unable to reach consensus, however, we cannot remain passive in the presence of massacres and humanitarian disaster.

NATO's objective is to make the Yugoslav government end the savage repression of its own people, to degrade the military machine which supports this brutality, and to prompt Belgrade to negotiate an agreement with a just political settlement for the Kosovars.

The Yugoslav security forces and paramilitary organizations are now carrying out a campaign of terror and expelling large numbers of Kosovars. We have corroborated reports that they are implicated in summary executions and other atrocities against civilians.

Over one-third of the population of Kosovo has left the country. NATO is dealing with this humanitarian disaster, not only by stepping up the military intervention which is the only obstacle in the way of Serbian ethnic cleansing. It is also directly assisting the refugees, increasing its assistance to humanitarian organizations and supporting the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The criticism that NATO action is the cause of the current deterioration of the humanitarian situation is unfounded. Ethnic cleansing by the Yugoslav authorities has been going on for months with forced expulsions, destruction of villages, and massacres by the security forces in 1998 and early 1999.

The regime blatantly violated UNSC resolutions and other obligations, harassed international verifiers and built up its military

deployment in preparation for a massive spring offensive which started as soon as the OSCE verification mission was forced to leave.

This all happened before NATO began its military intervention. NATO responded to Milosevic's ethnic cleansing. It did not provoke it. The ideal course of action remains diplomacy. Any diplomatic overture must however open the way to a lasting solution.

Milosevic knows perfectly well what the conditions are for this to happen. He must immediately stop the campaign of ethnic cleansing and terror against civilians, withdraw Serbian forces from Kosovo, accept an international peacekeeping force which would provide the Kosovars with enough confidence to return home in safety and commit to a just political settlement.

I fully support Canada's participation in the NATO action precipitated by a humanitarian disaster. I also fully support our men and women in the Canadian forces who have responded so courageously to this situation.

• (1240)

I am not able to support the motion. The government is committed to consulting with parliament and has been doing so on an ongoing basis. So far there have been three separate debates on Kosovo in the House for a total of 26 hours in which almost 100 MPs participated. On the issue of deployment of ground troops, NATO has not so far requested Canada to provide ground troops to the action. Therefore the question remains hypothetical. If this request occurs the Prime Minister has committed to consulting with parliament.

On the issue of holding a vote I would argue that our system in which the government and not parliament is responsible for deploying troops needs to maintain its current flexibility. This ensures that if necessary the government can deploy troops as it at times has on an emergency basis.

Parliament is not always sitting and may not be in a position to respond to an emergency. In practice, when Canadian military personnel are called upon to support peacekeeping or humanitarian missions abroad, the need for their presence can be immediate in very real terms. A prime example is the disaster assistance response team which is designed to begin deployment of its 180 members within 48 hours. Therefore I believe it would be inappropriate to tie the hands of the government to respond quickly and effectively.

I reiterate that opposition to the motion does not mean the government is denying that parliament has an important role to play. Parliament has been engaged throughout this conflict, as have the standing committees on foreign affairs and defence. I repeat that the Prime Minister has made a firm commitment to consult parliament if the situation in Kosovo changes significantly.

*Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have listened carefully to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The only argument he appears to be using to justify this Parliament's not voting on this motion is that of flexibility. That is the only argument I heard.

It is not valid because section 32 of the National Defence Act gives the government that flexibility. I would invite the Parliamentary Secretary to read that section with care, as it provides that, when parliament is not in session, the governor in council may place the Canadian forces on active service and that it can, moreover, recall parliament within a certain period of time so that the matter may be presented and eventually discussed in parliament.

That is the only argument he used, and it is not convincing. What would be convincing, however, would be to hear the parliamentary secretary, and through him, his government, state a belief in parliamentary democracy. This is a parliamentary democracy.

My question is this: ought a parliamentary democracy not to give MPs a true voice when it comes to sending troops abroad, soldiers whose lives could be in danger, and to committing major funding for the purpose of ensuring international peace and security, as we have since the beginning of the conflict? Does a parliamentary democracy not require the government to accept, as a previous government did, our voting on a motion like the one to authorize sending troops to Kosovo?

• (1245)

[English]

**Mr. Julian Reed:** Madam Speaker, I also listened very carefully to my hon. friend's argument.

Historically, Canada has not voted on issues of this gravity. When there was a vote taken on the Iraq situation, my hon. friend will remember that it was taken months after the fact. The debate did not occur at the outset of the hostilities. I believe it was upwards of four months after the commencement of the hostilities that there was even a debate.

I suggest to the hon. member that the position of the government has historically been that yes, parliament must be consulted. Parliament in this case has been consulted on a regular basis, probably more often than at any other time of serious conflict. It must remain the prerogative of the government to make the instant decisions when they need to be made.

My hon. friend referred to the section in the defence act which gives flexibility to the government. Certainly that flexibility has to be maintained all the way across the broad base.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, certainly I have heard the parliamentary secretary say that the Prime Minister will consult with parliament before he commits to any ground troops. It still comes back to the very question today which is, are we going to have a vote on it?

It is pretty hard to justify to the Canadian public that the government would not vote on committing the lives of men and women in our armed forces. What is really wrong with that?

**Mr. Julian Reed:** Madam Speaker, I would point to the response I gave to the Bloc critic. Historically, successive Canadian governments have maintained that it is best to present unanimity from all sides of the House on a decision of this gravity and magnitude.

I appreciate the hon. member's position. It is another point of view, but it is not the point of view that has been held historically by the governments of this country.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, the motion before the House today is relatively straightforward. It calls on the government to commit itself to hold a debate and a vote prior to the commitment of any ground troops to the war in the Balkans.

There is really nothing odd about such a request. There is nothing controversial or partisan about this motion. It is consistent with the best democratic traditions this country can lay claim to.

What is odd is the fact that the government did not itself bring forth a votable motion on this issue. What is controversial is the government's repeated refusal to allow such a debate or vote to occur. That is what gets our constituents asking why the government will not let this go to a vote.

The refusal to allow the House to decide what the role of this country should be in a war is truly astonishing. Let there be no misunderstanding. The government does not have a mandate as a result of the three take note debates on Kosovo. Its claim that it has such a mandate are simply unacceptable and is certainly not why any of us participated in those take note debates.

In August 1914 this country was simply notified by the Governor General that it was at war. The decision was made in London. In September 1939 Canada waited 10 days to enter the second world war on the side of Britain and France, 10 days in which parliament debated and voted on the issue. On September 9, 1939 Prime Minister Mackenzie King accepted that the Commons should decide if Canada should go to war.

• (1250)

That has not happened in 1999. Our pilots have already flown more than 100 combat missions and the present government has

*Supply*

repeatedly argued that we are not at war. That position is simply a word game and would please many of the lawyers here, but it certainly does not please the Canadian public. The man on the street, the members of this House and our adversaries in Yugoslavia see things a lot differently. They are calling this war.

In 1991 when we supported the UN coalition, this House also debated and voted on a resolution concerning Canadian military involvement. At that time the current Prime Minister, then the Leader of the Official Opposition, criticized the Mulroney government. I quote: "Really Canadians have had enough of these ambiguities and playing the dice on the table without telling Canadians exactly what the situation is. Should we have Canadians involved in war, yes or no?"

The high-minded principles so strongly endorsed just eight years ago seem to have been mere words, nothing more. They have apparently been forgotten by the Prime Minister. They have vanished like smoke in the political wind.

The foreign affairs minister is no more consistent. Before this House in 1991 he said: "My deepest concern is that they, the Tories, will be simply using parliament to try to rubber stamp or ratify decisions already taken, as opposed to letting parliament be the forum in which those decisions are formulated". Last Thursday in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade he also appeared to forget his concern for this House. He argued that because this is not a republic, the crown retains the right to make foreign policy and to decide matters of war and peace.

Canadians might rightly ask what is the cause of this uncertainty? Why would ministers with such long parliamentary careers change their opinions so drastically? I will not try to offer any answers to those questions. Given this lack of certainty on the government benches, I would suggest we err on the side of democracy. It is, after all, what this country expects. We preach democracy abroad, we sell democratization to other countries, and we must practise it at home.

Eight years after the gulf war this country finds itself once again involved in a war. It does not really matter at this point in the debate that our current military intervention was not sanctioned by the UN. It does not really matter in our debate today if NATO's long term strategy is unclear. It does not really matter that we have no idea what the long term objectives of the current conflict are, beyond the basic moral considerations that my hon. colleague the Leader of the Opposition raised a week ago.

These issues are not the most pressing issues of the debate today. The government's arguments that we cannot debate something that has not yet happened is equally unimportant. This motion is to commit the government to a debate when and if the need to send ground troops should arise. A week, a month, whenever that should happen, we should have a vote in this House.

This motion is not about the war. It is about Canadian democracy. Because this issue is so important to our democracy is why I can strongly endorse this motion before us today. Despite the fact that I might disagree on many other Bloc ideas, certainly this is one we should commend it for.

This chamber is the House of Commons. It is the only place in the entire land that the elected representatives of the Canadian people can meet and debate the future of our country. This room, not the cabinet chamber, is the focal point for our democratic system of government. Here the government of the day must answer to the people through their elected members of parliament. Here the laws are made. Here the great issues that affect our people are supposed to be decided.

Before we send any ground troops to fight in distant lands, members of parliament must take a position. It is the only right thing we can possibly do. I do not want to ever stand accused by the parents, wives, husbands, children of our soldiers that I failed to take a stand in this House and ask all the questions that should be asked.

• (1255)

This government does not seem to want to understand these simple facts. The motion before us is not an attempt to embarrass the government. It is not about expressing confidence or lack thereof in the Prime Minister and his cabinet. It is quite simply a call for the government to respect the rights and privileges of parliament and to adhere to the most basic standards of Canadian democracy.

The precedents of 1939 and 1991 clearly and forthrightly demonstrate that matters of war and peace are not, I repeat not, the sole prerogative of the crown in this country. The Prime Minister and foreign affairs minister understood this in 1991. I am at a loss to explain why they have forgotten that fact in 1999.

The motion before us is several weeks overdue. The official opposition has been urging for some time the necessity of a vote in the House before Canada commits ground troops to the ongoing war in Kosovo. The other opposition parties have also agreed with us and have been urging the same thing. I commend my Bloc colleague again for having brought forward this motion today.

There is a saying that there is a time and a place for everything. The time for a votable motion on the deployment of ground troops to Kosovo is now and the place is in the House.

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member say that he strongly endorses this motion.

I would ask that the hon. member note that there was debate in the House in November and further debate in February. The minister appeared before the committee in March. Then there was a further debate last week which went through to the wee hours of

*Supply*

the morning. I thought that parliament had a strong attack of me-tooism in the entire debate. There was very little dissent from the position the government had taken.

I am a little hard pressed to know how the hon. member strongly endorses what is quite easily and arguably a vague and confusing motion. Is this a motion on a vote to vote, or is this a motion on a possibility or a hypothetical situation? Does the hon. member interpret this as a matter of confidence in the government?

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Madam Speaker, it is certainly not a matter of confidence. As I pointed out, it should be a non-partisan approach to the whole question when we are talking about the lives of our soldiers.

Regarding the take note debate, I cannot believe that anybody in the House would stand and say one, that that was a debate and two, that it was an opportunity to let every member in the House become informed on the issue. I do not need to talk about how many people are here when take note debates occur in the middle of the night, but certainly it is not many.

When we talk about lives, when we talk about something as important as war, we say that we should put it to a vote. We believe that most parties in the House would vote honestly and would vote for support of what is happening in NATO. I think that would be the case.

I do not understand what the government is so afraid of in putting this to a vote. Once that vote occurs and the majority position is held, then I would hope that 100% of us would support our troops in this war situation. But put it to a vote. That is politically such a wise thing to do I cannot imagine why the government is not doing it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Reform Party critic, who congratulated the Bloc Québécois for moving this motion. As we can see, and as the hon. member pointed out in his reply to the Liberal member, this is not a partisan issue. This is very clear in light of the position stated by the hon. member.

• (1300)

Earlier during the debate, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs said "Yes, but in 1991 we had to wait several months before being allowed to vote on the Iraq conflict".

Does the foreign affairs critic for the Reform Party think that a vote should take place after the conflict? Also, does he agree with the Liberals that this is a hypothetical issue? Considering that 43 mass graves with tens of thousands of bodies have been discovered, this is an urgent situation.

The parliamentary secretary said that a decision could be made at the last minute. Has the hon. member ever heard of the House being urgently recalled for a special vote?

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Madam Speaker, I have been talking about Kosovo in our caucus for at least a couple of years, so it is not a surprise this was going to happen.

Concerning 1991, I will go back to the outrage and total disgust the Prime Minister and the foreign affairs minister voiced for the then Conservative government for not bringing it to a vote immediately before troops were deployed. I have pages and pages of quotes from committee and the House of how upset they were because it was not put to a vote. They then condemned the government for putting it to a vote so late.

Now that the Liberals are thinking about doing the same thing, how can they speak with any conscience at all on an issue like this?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, since the beginning of recorded history the human race has faced crisis after crisis. The world today seems to be moving in a new direction, which history will undoubtedly see as the crises of our era. While wars between nations were the reality earlier in our century, this phenomenon now seems on the verge of disappearing.

I am not telling my colleagues anything they did not already know when I say that today's wars are increasingly taking place inside national boundaries. Pluralist countries, in the grip of extremist tendencies, see the various groups represented in their population shift from an attitude of peaceful coexistence to one of pure and simple belligerence.

When this happens, a great many of the victims are found among the civilian population. This is deplorable enough, but it is made more deplorable still by the fact that the worst violations of human rights occur in these internal conflicts. The principle of national sovereignty forbids any intervention from outside, so that the international community could justify its failure to intervene if it considered nothing but that principle. But do we understand the cost of failing to intervene?

There is one thing we should never forget about the sacrosanct principle of national sovereignty, and that is that a nation's sovereignty counts for nothing if it does not exist for the much greater good of the sovereignty of its population.

The roll call of these new-style conflicts is a long one. The names of a few countries will suffice: Algeria, Sierra Leone, Rwanda. They will forever be associated with the atrocities of

*Supply*

which they were the theatres and their populations the actors, the spectators and the victims. While our attention is turned elsewhere, some of these crises continue to rage. But no example is more striking by its immediacy and its scale than the crisis in Kosovo.

[English]

We are here today debating this motion for that very reason, the very seriousness of this crisis. The motion cuts to the heart of why I entered politics.

• (1305)

When I was campaigning, many people who came to the door, young and old alike, told me their concerns about politicians. They were very cynical about the political process. Many of them said that they were so discouraged they were not even going to vote. I told them not give up that basic right to vote because it is one of the basic principles of our democracy. The minute we give up that right to vote, we give up our opportunity to change what we are unhappy about. We give up the right to be a part of influencing decisions that affect our lives. The right to vote is a very important. I told them that I do not care whether they voted for me or for the next person as long as they got out and exercised their right to vote.

Today, in this particular situation, we need information. In order to assess this situation, it is important to have the proper information. We know that information is one of the first casualties of war. The difficulty we have today in assessing the crisis in Kosovo is that quite often we do not know if the information we are getting has been screened or if it is propaganda from one side or the other side. This creates difficulties in assessing the situation and making decisions. This is all the more reason why it is very important that this matter come before parliament. We need to become as fully informed as possible.

It is also important in this case to have a vote because we are, in fact, sending our men and women off to war. It is a very serious situation. When people are being sent off to put their lives and limbs at risk, it is important that we as Canadians have a say in that matter.

I was very concerned about a phrase used by the Minister of Foreign Affairs when he was discussing the involvement of a vote. He mentioned "cabinet government". We recognize cabinet government is important. We do recognize that government does have the right to govern and that it does have a responsibility that it cannot pass off to someone else. However, that responsibility does not mean that it cannot consult with, it cannot be guided by a vote or it cannot bring other input into the situation.

Flexibility to act was mentioned earlier. Flexibility to act comes when we have as much information, help and guidance as possible. That does not mean giving away the right of government to make

the final decision. It means that government makes its final decision based on all reasonable input, information and votes. It is therefore very important to not confuse the issue of cabinet government with the right of parliament to vote.

I feel it is very important to have adequate guidelines before committing our men and women to any kind of action on the ground, whether it be peaceful action or more aggressive action. We should know what is involved. We should know, for example, what kind of equipment is going to be used, how well the men are going to be prepared and what kind of support they are going to get. We also need to know what kind of support these people will get when they come home from missions because it has been an issue before.

Another concern I have is with reservists. We understand that reservists can be called into action to help defend their country but the government will not guarantee them their jobs when they return home from service. What would they be facing when they returned home? Would they be facing the same situation as merchant marines who, after serving their country well, came back to find themselves without jobs, without opportunities to advance themselves and with the government saying it had no responsibility for this?

These are some of the issues that have to be dealt with when we are talking about sending our men and women as ground forces into Kosovo. This is why it is all the more important that parliament be able to debate in a meaningful way and have a vote on the issue.

Quite often the government says that it has had debates and that opportunities have been given to express opinions. That is true. We have had debates and opportunities were given to express opinions. However, these were not punctuated with the right of parliament to then make this action concrete with a vote.

I would compare this to the people who talked to me at the door expressing their concern about politicians and about a having a say in society. Those people who expressed their views by saying they were not going to vote, are similar to the take note debates that we have. There are lots of views and opinions coming forward but no further action. However, the ones who went out and voted afterwards transmitted their views into action, which is what we need from this House of Parliament. We need to be able to transmit those views that are brought forth in debate into action by the very important democratic right to vote.

As members can see, I strongly support the motion that has been put forward. I feel that if, as a member of parliament, I am not given my right to vote on this issue, then all those people who elected me and who I represent have lost their right to vote and their say on this issue of very great importance to Canadians. The people's voices are heard are through their elected representatives. If we in the House of Commons do not have the right to vote on this important issue then we have deprived all Canadians of their say and their right to vote on this issue.

*Supply*

• (1310)

I urge all members to give this very important motion serious consideration and support.

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member will appreciate that some precision is needed before one can vote. He said that it is very important and he encourages his constituents to vote.

The real question is not whether we should or should not vote but rather what exactly it is we are voting on. Are we voting on whether we have the right to vote? Are we voting on a hypothetical situation? Are we voting on whether or not Canada should go to war?

I would be interested in the hon. member's interpretation of what this motion means? As I read the motion, that the government submit to a debate and a vote on the possibility of sending Canadian soldiers to the Balkans, it is, in my mind, a very vague motion. I would have encouraged the drafters to be far more precise in their motion.

Given the vagueness of the motion, what is it the hon. member thinks he will be voting on when he stands up and is afforded the opportunity to vote on the motion?

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Madam Speaker, I understand the hon. member's concern. People obviously do not want to deal with hypothetical situations. However, we are dealing with a principle. The principle is that we should have the right to vote on the very important question of sending men and women off to war. If it does not happen we will not have to vote on it, but if it does happen we should have that right.

The government has thus far refused to make the commitment that it will even guarantee us the right to vote on that issue. It has been indicated that it will be a cabinet decision or the Prime Minister will decide. We are simply saying that as parliamentarians we want to be able to decide. That is the essence of the motion. We can quibble with the wording if we want but I think every member knows within their heart exactly what the motion means.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I do not mean to blame you, but I rose four or five times to speak. I am very anxious to tell the House what our feelings are with regard to the conflict in Kosovo, but I will content myself with the one minute I am allowed to put a question to the member who just made some good comments.

Today I would like this debate to be non partisan. I would like to know whether we can co-operate. Just as we talk about globalized markets, could we not talk about globalizing peace, and work together with all concerned states at making it long lasting?

I would like to ask the member whether he shares our view regarding the globalization of peace.

I will have the opportunity to speak again during the course of the day.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Madam Speaker, I very much agree with the concept of globalized peace. I certainly agree with people getting together to do everything they can to bring this about.

I believe in my earlier remarks on Kosovo I said that it should not be a we and a they thing. I personally do not see it as us against the government or the government against us. I see it as people working together to try to bring about some peace to a very troubled part of the world. That is very important.

I agree 100% with the hon. member that when we are dealing with the lives of individuals we should be looking at issues in an non-partisan way.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his speech and support for the motion. I would like to ask him a question regarding the vote.

• (1315)

Everyone agrees that what is going on in Kosovo is barbaric to an extent rarely seen throughout the history of mankind.

We are wondering whether to send in troops to push the Serbs out of Kosovo. I would like to ask my colleague this: would he vote in favour of sending troops to Kosovo to force the Serbs out?

[*English*]

**Mr. Gordon Earle:** Madam Speaker, there is barbaric behaviour on all sides of this conflict. One could argue that what is happening is barbaric with respect to the Serbian action against the Kosovars, but it is also barbaric when poisonous fumes are being released into the air, destroying our environment. There is barbarism on all sides.

We are getting into the hypothetical, and I use it advisedly, when we talk about how we would vote on the matter. I would have to know what the details would be with respect to ground forces. That is what we are asking of the government, to commit to bringing these things before us so we can debate them fully and then vote on them.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Madam Speaker, it is no pleasure for me to rise today to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion on the war in Kosovo and the probable sending of ground troops.

*Supply*

We are, of course, going to support the Bloc motion, but not the amendment. Nevertheless, one can never say one rises with any pleasure in this House when the subject is war, when men, women and children are dying because of the actions of their regime, but also because of the actions of those who want to see the end of that regime, in other words NATO.

Yet this must be discussed, debated and indeed voted on. There has been reference in recent weeks to the gulf war. There is nothing perfect about war, certainly; in fact, war is imperfect. Yet, as far as information and consultation of parliamentarians and of the Quebec and Canadian public is concerned, it is important.

I will take a few minutes of the short time I have available to me to give a very brief overview of the events of 1990-91. But first I have two comments to make.

If there is one thing that is insulting to an MP—or perhaps I just lack experience—it is the take-note debates, as this is a way to cast aside the legitimate work of parliamentarians by invoking extraordinary rules, which means doing away with the traditional rules on which this parliament is built.

Since 1993, the government has made use of extraordinary measures, during debate, that go against the rules that make parliament run smoothly are concerned: no quorum calls, no votes, no amendments and so on. Since 1993, this government has, on several occasions, used extraordinary rules for essential debates, which makes the debates meaningless. I trust there will be no more of this.

It is true that the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave evidence before to committee. The last time, he stayed two hours and a half, and I salute him for that.

That was not, however, what we had asked for. We wanted a complete briefing for MPs, not the extension of Oral Question Period this turned out to be. Perhaps it was a bit better than nothing, but we did not get any information. We have been at war for one month, and there has never been any official briefing.

We have been promised one this week. The foreign affairs committee is going to meet and is supposed to get a briefing, a month after the war started. In the meantime, we have tripled our military presence, maybe even more than that. This is what we are being told here. This war was off to as bad a start as far as parliamentary rules are concerned as it was from the military point of view.

• (1320)

I am not an expert on military issues, but this seems to be an improvised war. The gulf war had all the negative characteristics of a war, but members will recall that all necessary preparations were made. Everything was there: aircraft, ships, ground forces.

We told Saddam Hussein: “Listen, either you leave Kuwait or we will take action”. We took action. We did not have to double or triple our initial commitment in the process. We were prepared.

Regarding the gulf war, on August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein tried to invade Kuwait. On the same day, the UN security council passed its first resolution. The UN does not exist for nothing. It is there to serve the international community. The first resolution urged Iraq to get out of Kuwait.

On August 6, in the middle of the summer, resolution 661 regarding economic sanctions was passed. On August 10, the then Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, made a statement. I am doing my best to make a brief summary of the sequence of events. He said in that statement that Canada was willing, if necessary, to support the deployment of troops. At that time, we were mostly talking about ships. The first ship left Halifax on August 24.

On August 25, resolution 665 said that we would use whatever means necessary to apply economic sanctions.

On September 14, the cabinet agreed to send CF-18s if necessary. The first debate took place on September 24. No guns, no shots had been fired. Not a missile had been launched. Nobody had died because of the allied forces. The first debate was held, a 14 hour debate.

The motion condemned the invasion of Kuwait and led to Canada's support for troops to be sent under the aegis of the United Nations, a multinational force. In September, we debated this, and a vote was held.

Another motion was debated on November 28 and 29. No missiles had yet been launched. We had a second debate. What was going on? We had a debate before anyone started shooting. We had a second debate, with a vote, to support resolution 660. A Liberal amendment, which we have talked about, was rejected by the House.

Once into January, things started heating up. There were cutoff dates for Saddam Hussein. On January 11, the Leader of the Opposition at the time, our current Prime Minister, as a member of the Privy Council, was informed by the prime minister of the time. No missiles had yet been launched.

The current Prime Minister, then Leader of the Opposition, was entitled to a briefing, because of his position. We have been waiting a month for such a briefing. The first official briefing for a leader of an opposition party was held this morning, one month later, because he is a member of the Privy Council. One month later. Missiles have been launched, our military involvement has tripled, but it took a month before there was a briefing.

In addition, the Leader of the Opposition at the time, the current Prime Minister, said on January 16, 1991, after being informed in detail:

*Supply**[English]*

“War in the gulf is useless and dangerous”.

*[Translation]*

I am not sure that he does not regret his words today.

In January, we had our third debate, and no missiles had yet been launched. We debated for 46 hours. On January 16, Operation Desert Storm started.

• (1325)

There were three debates and three votes on hypothetical questions. Were we going to war in the Persian Gulf or not? These were hypothetical questions. Those in the House at the time had the opportunity to debate the questions on three occasions. It is a parliamentary privilege to vote. But it was on a hypothetical question. Were we going to fight or not? It came up three times.

As I said earlier today, the government is going to have to understand that parliamentarians and this parliament are a tool. We need to have accurate information. We all know what is going on in Kosovo, or at least we know what the media tell us, because we cannot trust the government.

We know what is going on in Kosovo. We know that major crimes are taking place. What is the exact nature of these crimes? We have our suspicions. There is increasing talk of mass graves. We know that there are problems with Montenegro and Macedonia, and that problems with Hungary are not far off. Trouble is brewing over there.

One month after the first military intervention, we have still not had a vote. Could we at least have a real debate, a vote on what has gone on, and if we are officially sending ground troops, could that be debated and voted on as well?

Unfortunately, we have much to learn from wars. Nothing is ever perfect. The last time, parliamentary committees were put to work. I hope the government will understand that parliament is a tool. War is madness, but parliamentarians and the public can bring about peace.

*[English]*

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, earlier today the member for Red Deer reminded me that the present Prime Minister and the present foreign affairs minister rose in the House a number of times condemning the Conservative government for the lack of debate and the lack of a vote on the 1991 Desert Storm crisis. Today we see the opposite occurring. According to the Liberal government we are not to have a vote. We are not having the kind of debate we in the opposition would like to have.

The Conservatives are now attacking the Liberals for not doing exactly what they were attacked for in 1991. The whole process gets a little confusing.

I remember in the last parliament the debate on whether we should send troops to Bosnia. Much to our dismay, while we were debating whether we should send troops to Bosnia, we learned that the troops had been sent three days before the debate began.

I certainly agree with the motion. We should have a vote on the issue. However, would the member not agree that before we can accomplish anything legitimately in the House of Commons that we really need some serious changes in terms of open, honest, transparent debates and freer votes to vote the wishes of the people we represent and not the wishes of the party whips?

*[Translation]*

**Mr. André Bachand:** Madam Speaker, our role today is not to criticize and tell the government that it did not do a good job back then, but that it is doing better now. That is not the idea.

There is lots of time for partisanship. We wanted to respond to the government's statement that there has been debate. That is nonsense.

The member is perfectly right. It is time, and perhaps even a bit too late. At some point it will perhaps become clear that things have gone further than we think. We will perhaps find out too late that things have already gone too far and that we are in much deeper than we thought.

We agree that we must have accurate information and a genuine debate in accordance with the rules of parliament, but time is of the essence because the situation is changing very quickly.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to say that I agree with the criticisms the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska made about the briefings given by the government.

We learned earlier this morning that instead of being briefed tomorrow morning from 8 to 9 a.m., we would be called to a half hour briefing tomorrow afternoon, and we do not know yet if we will get the briefing we were promised for next Thursday.

• (1330)

The government is not forthcoming. They obviously have something to hide. They lack transparency and, throughout this debate, we have to blame the government as often as possible.

Our colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska indicated that there is a major precedent in this House that should govern us, that should inspire those who, for several years now, have been addressing the issue of sending troops abroad.

*Supply*

Our colleague said that his party will be supporting our motion, and we appreciate it. However, he also mentioned that he will not be voting for the amendment. Why will he not support the amendment?

In 1991, his party ensured that debates and votes would be held before troops are sent in. The Bloc Québécois would like the vote to be held before troops are sent abroad and that can be done, as we saw in 1991.

**Mr. André Bachand:** Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. The fact is there was a UN mandate in the case of the war in the Persian Gulf. The security council had agreed on certain resolutions and on the need for military intervention, and parliament was then consulted.

Now, if we use words like prior to the possibility of, this means that before we go to the UN, we need to reach an agreement here. The logistics of it all become a bit difficult.

However, I do understand my hon. colleague's concern, and after the conflict, we will eventually have time to review the whole matter and improve the system.

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, today, we are having another debate on the very important issue of Kosovo. This time, we wanted to make sure our demands would be crystal clear.

Over the last 20 days, in fact since the very beginning of the crisis in Kosovo, we have asked many questions. And each time, we have been given answers that were incomplete or evasive, answers that were not answers.

Today, we are asking the government to give us an opportunity to vote clearly. Obviously, this requires that the government give us the relevant information, because, before we can make an informed decision, we need to have all the available information.

The government still has a long way to go in that regard and this is why we ask the government, in the case of new developments regarding the commitment of ground troops to Kosovo, to hold a debate and a vote on this issue.

The government said no. This morning, its representative, the secretary of state, told us that the government's refusal was based on considerations of convenience and availability.

How can members of parliament officially express their opinions in the House and speak on behalf of their taxpayers and represent them well, if not by a vote?

In a democracy, the only way members of parliament can make their positions known officially and without ambiguity is by voting. Of course, we can always deliver speeches, which is what I am doing right now. That is what the government has allowed us to do so far on the issue of Kosovo. The government said it would consult parliament by giving members an opportunity to express

their views on the issue. So far, more than 130 members have taken advantage of this opportunity.

But a speech is quite different from a vote. In a speech, we can always qualify our statements.

● (1335)

We can always make sure there is a way out. But when time comes to vote, you either say yes or no. This is very clear.

I believe that the taxpayers each of us represents in our respective ridings have the right to know where their member of parliament stands. Does he agree or not with what is coming next in Kosovo? Yes or no, does he support ground military action?

In a speech, the member can always say "I agree as long as" or "I disagree because of such and such event or because such and such condition was not met". But this is not voting. You cannot vote conditionally. You either vote for or against a proposition. The taxpayers to whom we are responsible are entitled to know how we feel on the issue.

Why are taxpayers entitled to that type of respect? First of all, because it is the very essence of our democratic system. Taxpayers are entitled to know what we came here to say on their behalf. Secondly, because this Kosovo crisis is far from being over. It is not only about the actual crisis and its bombing raids that are not over yet. Besides, we do not know when all this will end. There might be ground attacks or not. We do not know. But what we do know is that it will be long.

And even when a peace agreement is reached, many weeks, months and even years will pass before the Kosovo problem is settled. Canadian taxpayers will therefore certainly be involved again.

They might be asked to make sacrifices to help the government respect the commitments that will have been made during the Kosovo war. Taxpayers are entitled to know right now what these commitments are, how far we are prepared to go, how far we are able to go, and what choices they will eventually have to face because of the decisions that we are making now.

Taxpayers are entitled to know if today in Canada decisions are made in the minister's office or the cabinet, without a vote in the House. Cabinet is ready to commit astronomical amounts. They were talking about \$100 million just to take in 5,000 refugees. That was simply for bringing 5,000 Kosovars here. Needless to say that has been put on the backburner for now, but the amount forecasted was \$100 million.

If it costs \$100 million to take in 5,000 Kosovars, how much more does it cost to provide 18 CF-18s, in addition to the troops already deployed and the humanitarian assistance already provided to the refugees still in Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and other adjacent countries?

*Supply*

We figure that several million dollars have been committed to date. We are asking that the government tell us the truth, be transparent and allow us to vote for or against this.

So far, we have not hassled the government too much. So far, we have supported its positions. We have supported them because we thought it was essential that help be sent to Kosovo, where children, women and entire families live under the threat of being killed, harmed or deported. These people are sick, they do not have a home or anything to eat.

It was therefore essential that we give our support.

● (1340)

But now that the process has been initiated, we can take the time to ask ourselves other questions. The decisions we make are made for humanitarian reasons, but they must be made by laying everything out on the table, so that we can all give to the taxpayers of this country, our fellow citizens and constituents, information about the positions we all agreed on.

The government has no reason to prevent us from debating this issue and voting on it. Why would it deny us this right? The readiness argument does not hold.

Armed conflicts do not break out every six months. And if ever there was another one, our motion is not asking the government to settle things for all times to come. It is asking the government to ensure that we will have an opportunity to vote on the sending of troops for peacekeeping, or for other purposes, in Kosovo and in the Balkan region. This is what we want to vote on.

We are not committing ourselves for other times to come. We are not asking the government to promise us anything for other times. We are saying: "We have this situation. In this particular situation, we are asking the government for the right to fully exercise democracy, for the right to be informed and, mostly, we are asking it to give us an opportunity to express our opinion, to give our approval with a full knowledge of the issue".

That is the least the government should commit to.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the government stands against the motion on the floor for pretty solid reasons. It breaks with Canadian parliamentary practice. It deals with a hypothetical question which is clearly stated in hypothetical terms. It would set an unworkable precedent in tying the hands of the government when it comes to the timeliness and effectiveness of future deployments of Canadian forces whether in a combat or peacekeeping role such as in the Balkans or anywhere in the world.

In the Canadian parliamentary system the responsibility for deploying Canadian forces lies with the government. For example,

there was no formal parliamentary resolution in our entry into the Korean war. Even in 1939 there was no specific resolution declaring war on Nazi Germany. Parliamentary approval for the government's policy was shown through support for the Speech from the Throne and the defence estimates. There was no vote at all in the declaration of war against imperial Japan.

Since 1950 there have been over 50 peacekeeping support operations of varying sizes. In many of these cases parliament was not consulted at all. In the case of roughly 20 major missions which were debated in the House, there were only five recorded votes and three motions were agreed to without a recorded vote. Only three of these occurred prior to deployment: the Congo in 1960, Cyprus in 1964 and the Middle East in 1973.

If the opposition party really disagrees with deployment it should not hide behind procedural motions. It should have the courage to introduce a motion of non-confidence in the government. Our government has delivered on its—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I am afraid I must interrupt the hon. member. We are on questions and comments and not on debate. I trust the hon. member is aware of that and can ask his question.

Does the hon. member have a question of the member who spoke?

**Mr. John Richardson:** I question my position to speak being given to the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Laurin:** Madam Speaker, I will comment on my Liberal colleague's comment.

We made comments because it was our turn to do so. We have not taken anybody's turn. We have 20 minutes to make comments but we agreed to share our time. My comments were of normal duration.

● (1345)

I will use the comment the member of the Liberal Party started making to tell him I find it surprising that he would invoke parliamentary practices to deny the House such a vote.

When it is time to send a delegation of 5, 6, 7, 8 or 10 members abroad as part of a parliamentary association or other group, the House is asked to authorize the required funding. It is deemed important for the House to vote on this matter.

Today, we are talking about eventually sending soldiers to risk their lives in Kosovo, and it is deemed not necessary for the House to vote on this. We are told that a cabinet decision will be sufficient. If it takes the approval of the House for 10 members to travel abroad, its approval should also be required to send hundreds or thousands of soldiers abroad.

*Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I followed with great interest the hon. member's presentation.

We have to remind the hon. member, as my colleague mentioned earlier, we have sent our peacekeepers overseas many times and we never had a debate. Over the last five years I can remember five or six debates and the hon. member participated in them.

Further, last week when the Minister of Foreign Affairs was asked the same question he replied that none of the European nations debated or discussed the issue. The U.K. is sending thousands of soldiers to Kosovo and has never debated it. The U.S. has sent many troops and aircraft and it has never had a debate.

This year we have had a debate. Everybody is free to express their opinions.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. René Laurin:** Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleague to check his information. A debate was indeed held in Germany, the country that put forward the peace plan. In the U.S. too there was a debate. The American government has been keeping its citizens better informed on these matters than we have here.

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau:** They are not on top of the situation.

**Mr. René Laurin:** It is obvious that Canada is not comfortable with its response. As I recall, since the last world war, Canada took part in military interventions on three occasions only—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I am sorry but the hon. member's time has expired. The hon. member for Mercier.

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I think it is extremely important to speak to the motion today, and I will take a few moments to read it again:

That this House demand that the government submit to a debate and a vote in the House the sending of Canadian soldiers to the Balkans who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations on the ground in Kosovo and the Balkan region.

The Bloc Québécois has been calling from the start for a vote in this House on the possible deployment of Canadian troops to take part in a peacekeeping mission, and even more so if they are to take part in a ground war which would certainly be a dirty war. The Bloc Québécois has not said that it is against such a deployment, but it wants to have all the information. It wants this issue to be debated by the representatives of the people.

We hear a lot in the news about what is going on in Kosovo. However, in the House we do not debate the issue with the benefit

of all the information available to the government. We had evidence of that on several occasions.

Even though we did not hear about the conflict in Kosovo until some time ago, it is not a recent one. Last year as representative of the Bloc Québécois at a meeting of the Council of Europe—where colleagues from other parties were also present—I attended debates on the crisis in Kosovo on two occasions. These debates were between parliamentarians from all European countries.

• (1350)

Those were disturbing and harrowing debates. Over there, there are many parties. Parliamentarians are divided in five blocs that have existed since the foundation of the Council of Europe in 1949. Europe has experience in this matter. The debates were disturbing and harrowing, because everybody wanted a peaceful outcome.

Calls for a peaceful settlement, for good will, for the intervention of observers, for third party negotiations were heard ad nauseam. However, what was mostly heard is that Milosevic could not have care less and was deaf to the pleas by the rest of Europe, which has had more than its fair share of wars.

I will quote only a few sentences, but I heard people like Lord Russell-Johnston, who is now the president of the Council of Europe, speak in the name of the liberal group and express his profound sadness and pessimism. This was on April 22, last year.

He said:

The Barsony report is a good report—

This report dealt with what was going on.

—but there should not be any preconditions to the negotiations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Kosovo. As long as both parties do not move in this direction, the situation will not change and violence will continue. In Northern Ireland also, problems were complex and the situation was serious, but external mediation proved to be useful. Nothing should be excluded from the talks. The Council of Europe does not have to choose between Albanian Kosovars and Serbs. Its only wish is that all citizens live in peace and tolerance. A Liberal is not *a priori* in favour of an ethnic state, but when the will of a people is so clear—

He was referring to the Kosovars.

—they are entitled to express it. This international principle is recognized in the Charter of the United Nations. Human rights affect everyone. Serbs should recognize the rights of those who have been living in Kosovo for centuries now. They do not have the right to impose anything on anyone.

Mr. Solé Tura, who spent many years in prison under Franco, said:

What is happening in Kosovo is definitely not a Yugoslav domestic problem. Nothing that affects human rights can be reduced to a mere domestic issue.

And I could go on and on. This was a year ago.

I took part in the other debate held in September. A lot was learned from that debate. The Council of Europe was concerned about the hundreds of thousands of Kosovars who had already been displaced and were bracing themselves for a harsh winter in the woods without enough support. Everyone was calling for pressures to be exerted so that peace agreements could be reached. It did not happen.

Finally, there were the Rambouillet talks, where NATO threatened air strikes, which many were already calling and wishing for. Many argued that NATO had to get involved. What did Milosevic do regarding Rambouillet? From what we were told, he massed 40,000 troops at the border.

We are now 26 days into the air campaign. Yesterday, we learned that 150,000 soldiers were fighting under Milosevic.

NATO got involved without waiting for the support of the United Nations for humanitarian reasons. We do not know what will come of this situation, but one thing is sure, we are far from a resolution, far from peace.

• (1355)

If, for the sake a consistency with our first campaign, which has been waged without a UN resolution—which is a first since the creation of the UN—and with our initial intent, which was to prevent the expulsion of the Kosovar people from its land, NATO should decide that ground troops are needed, hopefully with the involvement of the UN, we must hold a debate in the House, because this will not be a walk in the park. Other European countries have not yet decided to get involved. Only 19 countries are NATO members.

We do not know who would be ready to get involved. We need to know all the facts and have all the information. We need to know what the particulars would be. And the UN should be involved.

It seems that some pressure is being put on Russia. We should keep the pressure on. We know that Russia is in a very precarious situation.

Sending ground troops into Kosovo would not be business as usual. We certainly would not know ahead of time how long this operation would take. And there definitely would be some danger.

Our colleagues opposite should be in complete agreement with us on our motion that there be a debate in the House. If there is one important issue in this parliament, in the previous one and even in others before that, it is bound to be this one.

I have expressed my views with some feeling, but it is impossible to look at this issue objectively and not get emotionally involved. Soldiers are human beings, and when they go, there is no guarantee they will return. I am not saying we should not go, but the House should debate this issue as if it were the most important one to be put before us.

*S. O. 31*

**The Speaker:** We will continue with questions and comments after Oral Question Period.

It being almost 2 p.m., the House will now proceed to Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### ARTHUR MEIGHEN

**Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to announce that on June 16, 1999 the city of St. Mary's will be commemorating the gravesite of the Right Hon. Arthur Meighen, 125 years after his birth.

Arthur Meighen's political career began as a member of parliament for Portage La Prairie, Manitoba in 1908 culminating with his becoming leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. He went on to become Prime Minister in the years 1920-21 and again in 1926. He is best remembered in the House as one of its most brilliant orators.

Other major achievements include the participation and the creation of the Canadian National Railway, prominence in ending the Winnipeg general strike and passage of the Armistice Day Act.

He was a good Manitoban.

His legacy on Parliament Hill lives on through his grandson, Senator Michael Meighen.

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### FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Reform has been calling on the government to oppose the U.S. attempts to restrict the import of specialty wood products. My office has received over 400 letters from constituents who are afraid of losing their jobs as Nanaimo—Alberni is one of Canada's largest suppliers of cedar products.

My riding has already been hit hard by the mismanagement of the fisheries and we must not suffer further by the loss of jobs in the forest industry. If the U.S. restriction succeeds, Vancouver Island will be the hardest hit and stands to lose thousands of forest related jobs. If mill closures occur, many ancillary services such as truckers, machinery operators, engineers, accommodations, small companies and independent subcontractors will also be affected.

Canada must fight any negative reclassification by the U.S. at every step along the way. This government must not back down. It must fight to protect our forest sector jobs.

*S. O. 31*

• (1400)

### EARTH DAY

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is not much to celebrate on Earth Day in the Province of Ontario. Why? It is because the Ontario government has gutted its environment ministry, laying off over 700 employees. It has stopped enforcing environmental laws, thus allowing Ontario to become North America's third worst polluter.

It has failed to put into place a fair and effective car emission control program. It has allowed pollution from plants burning dirty coal to go up by 60%. It has cut spending on public transit causing the current TTC strike putting more cars on the road and generating more pollution.

In Ontario, Earth Day, rather than a celebration is a call to action as urged by the Ontario Medical Association which points to air pollution as the cause of 1,800 premature deaths every year in that province.

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### WAYNE GRETZKY

**Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Wayne Gretzky's retirement leads many Canadians to recall with fondness No. 99's glory days with the Oilers.

However, for people in Sault Ste. Marie the wonderful memories go back even further, to the year when Gretzky dominated the Ontario Hockey League and gave us the first glimpses of his greatness.

Drafted third overall by the Sault Greyhounds in the 1977 Ontario Hockey League draft, 16 year old Wayne Gretzky went on to have a phenomenal 1977-78 season. He dazzled fans with 70 goals and 112 assists in only 64 games. Regrettably, Saultites watched him move on the following year to the World Hockey Association.

To honour Gretzky's outstanding contribution to the Greyhounds and to the OHL, the great one's No. 99 hangs in the rafters of the Sault's Memorial Gardens.

Only now do we realize how lucky we as Saultites were to have seen Gretzky's magic develop before our eyes. Sault Ste. Marie will be eternally grateful for that one unforgettable season that started our love affair with Canada's most famous son.

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### VAISAKHI

**Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today a special stamp honouring the 100th anniversary of the Sikh community in Canada will be unveiled by the Prime Minister.

The stamp is in honour of the achievements of Sikh Canadians who have made their community such a valuable part of Canada's rich social fabric. As successful professionals, business people and political leaders, their contribution to Canada is an example to all of us.

I am pleased that Canada Post has chosen to honour them in this way in the year that also marks the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Sikh faith. On April 13 Sikhs in Canada and around the world celebrated Vaisakhi which commemorates the most central event in the Sikh faith.

Today, April 19, Canadian Sikhs can celebrate again as they receive this much deserved honour from Canada Post.

*[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Punjabi]*

\* \* \*

*[English]*

### CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, finally the Canadian Wheat Board has agreed to an audit of its books by the auditor general.

The Reform Party member for Portage—Lisgar has been calling for an open audit of the Canadian Wheat Board since 1993.

Farmers have a right to know how effectively the Canadian Wheat Board is marketing their grain. The audit will provide an independent and public opinion on the performance of the board.

In addition to examining the primary mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board, which is orderly marketing, the auditor general must also determine if the board is maximizing returns for wheat and barley farmers.

This audit must not be used simply to build a defence of state trading enterprises like the Canadian Wheat Board for the next round of World Trade Organization negotiations.

The Auditor General of Canada must be given the authority to audit the board on a regular basis. The Reform Party will continue to pressure for legislation that will allow this to happen.

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### RASHPAL DHILLON

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Mr. Rashpal Dhillon to the House.

Mr. Dhillon is a resident of Richmond, British Columbia. He was born in 1938 in the Punjab, India and came to Canada in the 1950s. He has a wife, Surinder, three children and three grandchildren.

Mr. Dhillon has a long and distinguished history in law enforcement, initially as the first Indo-Canadian peace officer in Canada.

He was a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police stationed in the B.C. interior. He went on to become a prison guard at Oakalla Penitentiary and then a deputy sheriff in Vancouver.

• (1405)

Mr. Dhillon is now the owner of several agri-food companies and a golf centre on the lower mainland. He also serves the community on many boards of directors, including the Farm Credit Corporation and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. It is for his work as a pioneer and a philanthropist that we honour him today.

On behalf of all members, on the day the Government of Canada officially commemorates the first 100 years of Sikhs in Canada and 300 years of the Khalsa, I would like to recognize Mr. Paul Dhillon as an outstanding member of the Indo-Canadian community.

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#### NATIONAL TEXTILES WEEK

**Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week marks National Textiles Week in Canada, which is organized by the Textiles Human Resources Council, to focus and acknowledge the innovation and excellence within the Canadian textile industry.

[Translation]

In my riding of Ahuntsic, there are two dozen textile manufacturing firms, including Silver Textiles, Doubletex and Montreal Fast Print, to name but a few.

Since 1988, exports have tripled, capital investments have reached unprecedented levels and, in the past five years, the number of jobs has increased steadily, from 53,000 in 1993 to 56,000 in 1997.

[English]

The programs established by Human Resources Development Canada such as the Canada jobs fund and programs aimed at youth as well as Industry Canada's initiatives focusing on science and technology and the federal guidelines defining professional standards are but another example of the way the government helps the Canadian industrial sector to compete on an international scale.

I would like to congratulate the Canadian textile manufacturers, especially those in my riding, for their important contribution—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

*S. O. 31*

[Translation]

#### VOLUNTEERS

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of national volunteer week, I want to pay tribute to all those who generously give some of their time for the well-being of our society.

While we acknowledge their contribution during this week, our volunteers do not make a contribution for a day or a week, but throughout the year. In an August 1998 study, Statistics Canada indicated that 16.7 million Canadians, or seven people out of ten, are engaged in volunteer work.

These volunteers are involved in every possible area, including health, education, co-ops, the poor, culture, sports, unions and even politics.

This year's theme in Quebec, "Building tomorrow together", accurately reflects what volunteer work means, and it is also fitting, as we are about to enter a new millennium.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I thank all the Quebec and Canadian volunteers for their invaluable contribution.

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[English]

#### WAYNE GRETZKY

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, like most Canadians, it is with mixed feeling that I pay tribute to Wayne Gretzky today.

Now that he has retired from our national game, it is time to celebrate an amazing talent, an incredible ambassador of hockey and a great Canadian.

Wayne Gretzky rewrote the hockey record book and literally changed the way the game is played. His Canada Cup achievements produced some thrilling moments. His 894 regular season goals and his 1,963 assists will never be touched.

A statue of Wayne Gretzky with the Stanley Cup hoisted proudly above his head adorns the city of Edmonton, which I proudly represent. It serves as a monument of Wayne's contribution to our city, our history and our eternal bragging rights of hockey supremacy in Alberta.

[Translation]

Wayne is retiring the same way he played: with class, humility and appreciation. Today, Canadians across the country are proud to see one of their own get world recognition.

Good luck Wayne, and thank you for the memories.

*S. O. 31*

[English]

### PERSONS CASE

**Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North—St. Paul, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 83 years ago today the Alberta Liberal government granted women the right to vote, joining Saskatchewan and my own province of Manitoba, which earlier that same year had that right of suffrage extended to women.

Much of the credit for ensuring that Canada led the world in women's suffrage must go to Nellie McClung, who headed the campaign. She, along with Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Edwards, known as the Famous Five, won legal equality for all Canadian women in the Persons Case of 1929.

May we in this House join today's generation of Canadians in saluting these early activists for their life-long determination to end discrimination in whatever form it takes.

What these visionary activists secured for Canadian women, they secured for democracy; indeed an historic legacy.

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### JUDY COOK

**Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in December last year, Manitoba lost a great person. Judy Cook died while awaiting a heart transplant. She had dedicated her life to social justice and to improving the lives of others.

In December a steelworker from Leaf Rapids was given a new lease on life when a friend from Leaf Rapids donated one of her kidneys.

● (1410)

It is well established that the organ donation situation in Canada is serious with our organ donor rate among the lowest in the western world. Currently, there are more than 3,000 Canadians waiting for solid organ transplants, yet less than half of these will get an organ they need before the year's end. Lives are being lost and the costs related to waiting are increasing, and federal regulations are at the heart of the problem.

The need to increase the organ donation rate in Canada is an urgent priority. It will not happen by focusing only on public education and improved hospital systems. It requires innovative and proactive approaches starting with a national registry of organ donors to increase the pool of potential donors and a clear simple mechanism for expressing wishes.

It is important to give Canadians the opportunity to say, "Yes, I want to donate".

[Translation]

### BLOC QUEBECOIS

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at its latest convention, the Bloc Québécois tried to redefine what a true Quebecker is.

What a discovery it made this past weekend: a Quebecker is a person who lives in Quebec; an Ontarian is someone who lives in Ontario; an Italian is someone who lives in Italy; a Spaniard is someone who lives in Spain.

So, once again the Bloc Québécois continues with its notion of exclusion.

Fine—vive le Canada.

\* \* \*

### BLOC QUEBECOIS

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois did indeed hold a general assembly this past weekend in Rivière-du-Loup, one which will mark a milestone in the history of our young party.

I wish to draw attention to the open-mindedness and vision of our leader, and to congratulate him for launching this exercise of direction-seeking and debate on the future of Quebec. I also congratulate the members of our four focus groups for the extremely high quality of their work.

The members of the Bloc Québécois will be involved in this vast undertaking of reflection in the months to come. I also invite all Quebeckers, and all Canadians as well who may wish to look into the matter of partnership, to peruse the documents we released this past weekend, for I am sure they will find in them valuable potential solutions for the political problems being faced by Quebec and Canada.

One thing is becoming increasingly clear in Quebec: the sovereignists are discussing fundamental issues that affect our future: partnership, globalization, citizenship, democratic practices—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

\* \* \*

[English]

### WAYNE GRETZKY

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Wayne Gretzky retired from the National Hockey League marking the end of an amazing era. While

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redefining the game using his skills to reach new heights, he brought teammates, fans and a nation closer together.

True to his roots, he represented his country in international play and made Canadians proud each time he donned the Maple Leaf. The Great One improved Canada's hockey image and shaped the game's style.

As an ambassador for hockey and for Canada, his class leadership defined a remarkable career.

There is an element of humility to Wayne Gretzky's stardom which sets him apart. His love for the game and commitment to excellence made him a true role model, a responsibility he never shunned. To the end, Gretzky downplayed his endless personal accomplishments and records.

Our hockey cards, the No. 99 and tucked in sweaters provide wonderful warm memories. Our parents had heroes like Joe DiMaggio. We had Wayne Gretzky.

In his last NHL game, the scoresheet will show one final assist, fitting, for he always emphasized team first.

In a complicated world he allowed us to escape for many precious moments.

The hall of fame and new challenges await you. We wish you and your family a lifetime of happiness. Thank you, Wayne Gretzky, for all you have given our country and our game.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report that the Prix Hommage bénévolat-Québec was awarded to the Société de l'autisme et des troubles envahissants du développement, T.E.D., de Laval as part of the National Volunteer Week.

The Société de l'autisme et des T.E.D. de Laval is a non profit organization for families of people with autism or severe developmental problems.

Thanks to the unstinting work of its volunteers, the Société provides a camp, "Le Chat botté", known for its programs of early, intensive and systematic intervention. "Le Chat botté" helps people with pervasive development problems improve their living conditions, often very dramatically. The devotion of the Société de l'autisme et des T.E.D. de Laval speaks of the best in every Canadian.

Congratulations and a vote of thanks to the volunteers.

• (1415)

[English]

**WAYNE GRETZKY**

**The Speaker:** Before beginning our question period today, I wonder if I might, in the name of hon. members and in the name of parliament, send our respects, our congratulations and our thanks to one of our outstanding citizens. I refer of course to Mr. Gretzky.

[Editor's Note: All hon. members rose and applauded]

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**KOSOVO**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday NATO Secretary General Javier Solana admitted that NATO was no longer ruling out the possibility of ground troops in a NATO offensive in Kosovo.

He said that if the moment came when it was necessary to invade Yugoslavia "I m sure the countries that belong to NATO will be ready to do it".

NATO says we should be ready for the ground offensive. Will the Prime Minister finally get approval from the House and consent to a vote to clarify Canada's involvement in any such offensive?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no request by NATO to send ground troops to Kosovo at this time. I said that if we were requested to make a move like that, there would be a debate on it in the House of Commons.

It is a hypothetical question at this time because we are not faced with such a request.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, with the secretary general asking for our involvement, will the Prime Minister agree to a vote? That is what we are here for.

We stand against the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. We stand with our forces that are already involved in the NATO campaign. Why will the Prime Minister not let us stand in the House and vote to establish the conditions for our future involvement? Does he really believe he has the right to ready this country for war without letting Canadians have their say?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, never has a government involved parliament in debate on foreign affairs and presence abroad as this government has done over the past four or five years. There have been more than two

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debates a year. The opposition agreed on a formula that it was to have more debates on a take note basis.

I said that if we were to be called upon or requested to send some ground troops there, there would be a debate. At that time, depending on the nature of the request, I will advise if we should or should not have a vote. We have—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Red Deer.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a vote and the Prime Minister should know that.

Over the weekend Canada added six more CF-18s to our NATO campaign, bringing our total commitment to 18 fighter bombers. The planes we have committed have taken over half of our combat ready pilots.

How big does the involvement have to become before the Prime Minister will think it is necessary that we have a vote on whether we should be involved further in Kosovo?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was in Aviano on Saturday. I was also in Brussels the day before and met with a number of NATO officials.

I must inform the House that General Short, the NATO air campaign commander, was praising our Canadian involvement. He said that they were top professional people who were doing an outstanding job and that they believed in the just cause NATO was involved in.

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**TAXATION**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** It sure would be nice if they would answer the questions, would it not, Mr. Speaker?

Nortel is one of the biggest companies in Canada and one of the best companies in Canada, in fact in the world. It employs 21,000 people in this country alone in some of the best jobs. Now it is hinting strongly that it might have to leave because of the high tax policies of the government.

I have a question for the Prime Minister. How many businesses, how many reports and how many of the Prime Minister's own family members will it take before the Prime Minister gets the simple message that he must cut taxes now?

• (1420)

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I took the time this morning to talk to the president of Nortel who in fact informed me, as it should be evident to the hon. member, that it is because of Nortel's allegiance to Canada, not a lack of allegiance

as the newspaper reports seem to indicate, that Nortel has the very strong presence it has in Canada.

The hon. member rightly cites the number of employees from Nortel that are here in face of the fact that about 7% of its sales are in Canada, together with a very important new investment that Nortel is making in the Kanata region for increased research and development. It is a demonstration of the continuing allegiance that Nortel shows to the country.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous answer. Nortel just finished saying that it does not owe allegiance to Canada and that it is considering leaving the country. Nortel has 56,000 people who work outside Canada.

My question is for the minister who seems to think that high taxes are good for business in Canada. Why is he not getting the message? Why is he continuing to make lame excuses for his government? Why are they not getting down to business and cutting taxes to attract investment to Canada?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unlike what Johnny one note seems to sing, the fact is—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I prefer that we refer to one another as hon. members.

**Hon. John Manley:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to always sing the same note no matter what the score seems to indicate. He is intent on constantly portraying the country in the worse possible light.

My point is simple. Northern Telecom, one of our foremost companies, continues to invest strongly in the country, demonstrating its confidence that Canada is on the right track.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**KOSOVO**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, the Pentagon called for the mobilization of 33,000 reservists. In recent days, NATO's secretary general has also taken a tougher stand on the crisis in Kosovo, as have the U.S. secretary of state and President Clinton in their statements.

Not long ago, the Prime Minister told us that it was impossible to predict how long this conflict would last. Does he not think today that these developments point to a conflict that could go on a long time, and perhaps a very long time?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the conflict could go on for a very long time. But there are people trying to come up with a solution.

*Oral Questions*

This morning, I spoke at very great length with Victor Chernomyrdin, the special envoy to the Russian president, about this issue. I was very pleased to note that the Russians are looking for a way to end the conflict so that the Kosovars can return to Kosovo, and so that we can stop the bombing.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in recent days, the Serbian population in Bosnia has questioned the Dayton accords, and there have been demonstrations by Serbians in Macedonia, raising concerns about the stability of that country. At the very beginning of the conflict, the Bloc Québécois pointed out the risk of escalation.

Does the Prime Minister not think today that escalation of this conflict is imminent and likely and that preparations must be made accordingly?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, clearly, there is always a danger that a conflict such as this could escalate. It would be unfortunate.

What is clear to the government and to the House of Commons is that, like the party in power, all opposition parties support Canada's participation in the current NATO bombing in Serbia because something must be done to help the Kosovars return to their homeland and to put an stop to the murders and other similar crimes now taking place.

• (1425)

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday NATO's secretary general, Javier Solana, and the U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, both stated that they were no longer ruling out sending ground troops to Kosovo.

According to some reports, these troops could be deployed in six to eight weeks and have a strength of 280,000.

Does the Prime Minister support the comments made by the NATO secretary general and by Mrs. Albright, and can he confirm the reports on the time necessary to send ground troops to Kosovo and on their possible strength?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at this point no decision has been made by NATO on issues relating to armed forces. However, on Friday the heads of government of all NATO countries will have an opportunity to discuss these serious issues. At this point in time, no decision has been made.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this shows once again that the government is providing information bit by bit.

Friday, something will happen and we will get information. This is something about which we were never told until now.

If NATO asks Canada to contribute to the sending of ground troops to Kosovo, will the Prime Minister pledge at last to seek the approval of parliament before sending such troops to the Balkans?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is surprised. Everyone, except the member, knows that a meeting of NATO heads of government will take place on Friday, in Washington. The hon. member should know that we are going to attend that meeting. He should also know that we are going to discuss the situation in Kosovo. We are not going there to talk about the weather.

He should not be surprised that we will discuss these issues on Friday. The hon. member should do his homework before rising in the House.

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[English]

**NUCLEAR WASTE**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The Americans and the Russians have a nuclear waste problem. Against every environmental principle, against the unanimous recommendation of a parliamentary committee, Canada now proposes to make the problem worse by transporting highly dangerous plutonium thousands and thousands of kilometres through Canadian communities.

Why are we risking Canada's environment? Why is Canada not telling the Americans and the Russians to clean up their own mess?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in all my years in parliament, I think that is just about the most foolish question I have ever heard, frankly. Trying to terrify Canadians based upon supposition and hypothesis is a very dangerous tactic.

My colleague the Minister of National Defence and I will be tabling this afternoon a response to the committee's recommendation. We have said so far there is no decision to make any transportation. Any decision will be made on the basis of all environmental safety standards.

Frankly, for a party that has committed itself over the years to nuclear disarmament, that was a shameful question.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I suppose we will now hear the same kind of unlikely excuses about PCBs. Canada is preparing to import PCBs from U.S. military bases in Japan, PCBs that the Americans have rejected as too dangerous.

How does this work? Clinton pulls the chain and buddy responds. Why is Canada becoming the dumping ground of choice for the world's waste?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe I can respond to the question about PCBs.

My department has had no request to authorize such a shipment into this country. If we were to get such a request we would review it and any action we would take would be absolutely according to the policy of the government.

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**KOSOVO**

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of National Defence confirm that Canadian forces personnel are now engaged in ground operations in Kosovo and or Yugoslavia?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the hon. member is referring to as ground operations.

• (1430)

We have personnel in Macedonia and Albania who are largely assisting with refugees and things of that order. We do not have troops. We indicated previously that under a peacekeeping force, which would come with a post-peace agreement, we would send 600 to 800 troops. Obviously those troops are not there at this point in time. What people we do have in the area are helping to assist in the overall effort with respect to the refugees.

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I was not talking about the surrounding areas.

I ask the minister, are members of joint task force two now involved in ground operations in Kosovo and Yugoslavia?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the operations that we have in Albania, in Macedonia or anywhere in the area have been previously well discussed and announced in the House. We made it quite clear that we would not be sending peacekeeping troops under a condition of conflict, or anything other than what we have agreed to already, without further discussion.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the industry minister talks about being on track. The track that Canada's brightest and best are on is straight to the U.S., which has a tax system that welcomes them with open arms, while Canada's tax system drives them out of this country. Now Nortel has joined other captains of industry in telling the government to clean up its tax act or they are out of here.

I ask the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, before the entire high tech industry logs off, shuts down and exits this government's odious tax program, will they bring in some tax relief?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the hon. member that he take a few minutes after question period today and drive west with his two-bit tavern taunter over there to Nepean to look at the skyline around the Nortel campus, count the cranes, and he will get an idea just how quickly Nortel is leaving Canada.

**Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Y2K bug has come early to the Minister of Industry.

The Liberal government's high tax regime is a threat to our current high tech industry, while the tax system in the U.S. is welcoming our brightest and best with open arms.

I ask the Prime Minister once again, before the whole industry logs off, shuts down and exits this tax program, will he bring in tax relief to keep our high tech industry in Canada, providing jobs for our brightest?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, year after year we see the Reform Party refuse to support the kinds of measures we are taking. I think we have seen the Y2K bug in action over there.

Again and again we invest in innovation. We invest in research and development. We support university granting councils. We support R and D tax credits. We hear nothing from the Reform Party except more and more criticism.

As we grow our high tech sector we see the success not just of companies like Nortel, but of the myriad of others which have started in this region and others.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**KOSOVO**

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Kosovo Albanians are being kept within the country because the Serbs have mined the roads leading to Albania, 43 mass graves have apparently been discovered, additional proof that the ethnic cleansing is turning into genocide.

Since the Serbs have mined the exit routes from Kosovo to Albania, in order to force the Albanians to remain in Kosovo, does Canada not fear that the objective of this operation is to purely and simply eliminate this trapped population?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that the fact that the Serbian regime is now engaged in massive land mine plantation in and around those borders only compounds the series of criminal acts that have gone on over the last couple of years.

• (1435)

I believe that one of the most important tasks we will face when we come to an agreement is to ensure that we provide real leadership in de-mining to save the lives of the innocent victims and civilians in that area. I am sure that the House, which so broadly supported the land mines treaty, will also support the Canadian government in that kind of initiative.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, is it not the duty of NATO countries to prevent genocide rather than to discover after the fact that there has been genocide. In this connection, what do they intend to do to follow up on the serious indications that there has been genocide in Kosovo?

*[English]*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last week the Government of Canada, as a member of NATO, has been party to an agreement with the international tribunal in The Hague which is looking into war crime issues.

It has already sent letters to the leaders of the Yugoslav regime and now we are actively engaged in the investigation and transfer of information so that the war crimes tribunal can build a case against those who are committing war crimes in that area.

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**TAXATION**

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's problem is taxes. Let us take a look at the government's priorities: billions lost on business subsidies, distorting markets; millions wasted on millennium schemes and parties; and hundreds of thousands thrown away on a rundown hotel in Shawinigan.

Are Canadians not getting real tax relief because the government just cannot spend enough? Is that its one-note song?

**Mr. Tony Valeri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. This government started cutting taxes a couple of budgets ago and it will continue to cut taxes. There have been cuts of some \$16.5 billion over three years and there has been a reduction in employment insurance premiums as well.

If the hon. member wants to talk about what the government is doing, then let us talk about economic policy. Let us talk about balanced budgets, which we have not seen in the country in 50 years. Let us talk about reduction in spending to 12% of GDP, the lowest in 50 years.

This government is on the track of ensuring that the country continues to prosper and we will stay on that track.

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, hurting companies know that is a lot of rhetoric. The government just does not get it. The minister thinks that companies can sit around and wait for the government to cut taxes.

The need is pretty clear. Why will he not act? Can the minister not see that tax relief delayed is tax relief denied?

**Mr. Tony Valeri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about delay. Let us talk about what we have done.

We have raised the basic exemption by \$675 for all taxpayers, removing 600,000 Canadians from the tax rolls. We have eliminated the 3% general surtax introduced by the previous government for all taxpayers. The last two budgets have provided \$16.5 billion in tax reduction. That is not all we have done. We have invested \$11.5 billion in health care.

The hon. member talks about investment. Let us talk about the increase in health research budgets.

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*[Translation]***KOSOVO**

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we learned on the weekend that Canada would increase its military effort by sending another six F-18s to Kosovo.

Without again raising the issue of the need for our participation, could the Minister of National Defence tell us what our involvement in this conflict has cost to date and what sort of budget the government has set itself for its current operations in Kosovo?

*[English]*

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are in the throes of putting together some figures that we hope to have later this week so that all hon. members will have an indication of the numbers involved.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we will have 18 planes taking part in the air strikes in Yugoslavia.

*Oral Questions*

Can the minister tell us whether this is the maximum number of planes Canada can make available to NATO and, if not, how many more operational planes does Canada have to respond to future such requests?

[English]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I could not tell the hon. member at this point. We have not been asked for any additional aircraft over and above the six, which, with the additional aircraft from our allies, will now provide for around-the-clock air campaign action.

Whether any further aircraft will be required beyond that, it is much too early to say. I talked with General Clark about it and he does not know at this point in time. If such a need arises, then we will consider the request.

\* \* \*

• (1440)

**NUCLEAR WASTE**

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in spite of what the Minister of Foreign Affairs had to say earlier, it has been reported that the cabinet has approved the test burning of plutonium from U.S. warheads in Canada's reactors.

If this is true, the decision directly contravenes an all-party committee that specifically ruled out such a test burn.

What part of no does the minister not understand?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the committee made recommendations, not decisions. It is up to the government to make a response to those recommendations and it will be tabling a response.

I go back to what I said in the House many times before. First, the test uses a minute portion of the fuel to determine its validity, its safety and its application of environmental standards. It comes down to a very central question because the committee also strongly recommended that Canada make a contribution to get rid of nuclear weapons, to de-nuclearize the world. We think it is up to Canada to make a contribution.

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that they will be burning this stuff in Canada. The committee has listened to expert witnesses and concerned Canadians. It unanimously rejected the test burn idea, but the government is going ahead with it.

This is the start of a small test of a large problem. Will Canada become the nuclear waste dump of the world?

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman may be confusing two things. With respect to the testing of a minute amount of MOX fuel, that is

already covered under the existing licence of the Chalk River facilities. If there should be any consideration in the future to a full MOX program in Canada it would require not only those successful tests, but also the complete environmental review of the proposal in compliance with all federal and provincial laws to ensure that all environmental health and safety factors in the country are taken into account.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the President of Bell Canada, Mr. Monty, already has his hands full with the operators he wants to lay off. His shareholders will certainly not appreciate his spending all his time negotiating for the federal government on the millennium scholarships.

Given that the matter is totally stalled and that students could be penalized in this new federal flag war, could the Minister of Human Resources Development shake off the cobwebs and meet in Quebec City with Minister Legault, who has been waiting for him for weeks to come and resolve this?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I regret the situation in which Quebec City appears to want to refuse to commit to the Gauthrin resolution.

This resolution, unanimously approved by the National Assembly, had identified certain criteria to permit agreement between the millennium scholarship fund and the Government of Quebec.

I can assure you that the legislation this parliament passed would readily enable the foundation to meet the objectives of the Gauthrin resolution, which the Parti Quebecois itself adopted at the National Assembly.

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[English]

**KOSOVO**

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Bombings and violence in the region of Yugoslavia have already created many thousands of refugees. Can the minister assure the House that refugee applicants will be treated equally, regardless of their ethnicity?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada offers protection based on persecution, not on ethnicity.

Right now we accept the cases referred to us by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and I must say that the

priority is for Kosovo refugees of Albanian origin. However, on the other hand, at our office in Vienna we process on a priority basis sponsored Yugoslav family class applicants.

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### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, RCMP officers are being turned into bureaucrats. Instead of responding to calls and investigating crimes, the minister and RCMP brass think that in order to cut expenses an officer's time is better spent logging mileage and pushing paper.

● (1445)

On Friday in response to my concerns about inadequate funding for the RCMP, the solicitor general referred to an ongoing resource review. The RCMP do not need another study, they need adequate funding.

Is the solicitor general proud of the fact that under his government the RCMP's proud tradition has been reduced to that of the Kmart of policing?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I told my hon. colleague that the budget for the RCMP is \$1.2 billion. The increase in the last budget was \$37 million. There is a resource review in place. Is my hon. colleague telling me that he is not concerned at all how federal dollars are spent in this country?

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, of course we are concerned. But perhaps the hundreds of millions of dollars that the government is spending on gun registration could be better spent fighting crime. B.C. RCMP are understaffed to the point of 400 positions, underfunded by millions of dollars, and the Liberals need a task force to decide why the west feels alienated.

I would like to inform the solicitor general from P.E.I. that two issues paramount on the minds of British Columbians are organized crime and drugs. Yet according to the RCMP themselves, the crimes that are put on the shelf due to inadequate funding are, surprise, organized crime and drugs.

Will the solicitor general today commit to adequate funding to fight organized crime and drugs?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer the question. I want to strongly object to the member describing a member of the cabinet as a minister from one province. Ministers of the government represent all Canadians from all provinces.

### Oral Questions

#### KOSOVO

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Foreign Affairs which does not presuppose a seeming inevitability to the deploying of ground troops but which rather focuses on the need for a diplomatic solution and for people getting back to the table.

In that respect, I am sure the minister is aware that President Clinton has reiterated that President Milosevic has to meet NATO's five points. Given the minister's support for the German plan which has a different threshold for getting back to the table, is the government prepared to politely disagree with President Clinton with respect to the threshold for getting back to the table and say that NATO's five points are themselves negotiable, with the exception of course, of—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would look at the declarations by the UN secretary general, by NATO ministers at the last meeting, by the president and by the German plan, they all contain the basic essentials. There has to be a withdrawal of Serbian government troops. There has to be a stop of the exploitation and violence against the refugees. There has to be a peace agreement. There has to be real protection of the integrity and human rights within that area. It is on that basis the negotiations are going ahead.

I would like to mention that as part of that process the Prime Minister spoke this morning to former Prime Minister Chernomyrdin of Russia. It is all part of the dialogue that is going on to see how we can begin to engage the—

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

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has talked about the essentials. I want to ask the minister if one of the essentials continues to be the use of a NATO force post-settlement. That was obviously one of the stumbling blocks at Rambouillet. It is in the five point plan. Is the Canadian government prepared to say when it talks about essentials, that element of the five point plan is no longer part of the essentials. That would considerably change the threshold for getting back to the table and we think increase the possibility of a diplomatic solution which I think—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I refer the hon. member back to the debate we had in the House last week. The Prime Minister did indicate that we could have a broad international force applying the verification and monitoring inside Kosovo. That is the basis on which the discussions are now proceeding, to determine what would be the composition but most importantly to get Milosevic to agree to something so we can start serious negotiations.

*Oral Questions*

• (1450)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of National Defence confirm that Canadian forces personnel are already engaged in operations in Kosovo and in Yugoslavia, more specifically as part of joint task force 2, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all I can confirm is a list that has been provided for all members of parliament. It indicates the various forces personnel that have been involved, such as the verification mission, those involved in the air campaign out of Aviano, those who were involved in the extraction force in Macedonia, the NATO airborne and our early warning force out of Germany. Of course we are preparing under a peace agreement to send peacekeeping troops in connection with the effort. There are quite a number of personnel but it is in those capacities.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question.

I am asking the minister whether or not it is true that Canada, like other countries, but specifically Canada, has armed forces on a mission inside Kosovo and Yugoslavia? It would therefore appear that we already have ground troops there. True or false?

[English]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no. We do not have ground troops in the area. We have only people there on the basis I enunciated a few moments ago.

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## AGRICULTURE

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Today in Ottawa agri-food leaders are delivering their vision regarding the crucial next round of WTO negotiations. Can the parliamentary secretary assure Canadians the government will fight to protect our farmers and ensure the views of this industry will be part of the negotiations?

**Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 1996 at the fed-prov meeting it was agreed there would be a conference prior to the negotiations beginning this fall for the next round of the WTO.

As the member knows, the House standing committee has held hearings across the country. People have come from across the country for take note hearings at the committee. The minister has held bilaterals for the past number of months with associations and national committees. Today a group 500 strong of processors and farmers is meeting in the congress centre to ascertain what Canada's position will be going into the negotiations. This is not a final position but it is one that will evolve over time. These producers and farmers will be in the loop.

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## MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the trade minister is out looking for a new job. Word has it he is out getting endorsements for one of those prize patronage plums in the other place. In the good Liberal tradition, he is not looking to get elected, he is looking to get anointed. Are things getting so bad over there that cabinet ministers are looking for any way out?

**Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought question period was to be a serious form of engagement. Perhaps the member might have a serious question.

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[Translation]

## CANADIAN PRODUCTIVITY

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today there is a front page story in the *National Post* about a troubling PMO report establishing a direct link between Canada's flagging productivity and worsening social inequality.

My question is for the Minister of Industry. Does the minister dispute the conclusions of this report, and if not, what does he intend to do to break the spiral of flagging productivity that leads to poverty?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of productivity is an important one. It is vital to the Canadian economy.

We have already invested large amounts in the research and development sector, in innovation, in education, and in the millennium fund, which will help Canada prepare for the 21st century.

This is how we can prepare for the changes which are already beginning.

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## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal members are finally realizing that the employment insurance program is not generous enough.

• (1455)

The Liberal caucus just set up a committee to look at the problems caused by the employment insurance reform. This a noble but partisan effort.

Does the Minister of Human Resources Development agree that it would be more productive to have this review conducted by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, since members from all parties would then be able to express their views and make this issue a top priority?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 108(2) is very clear. The committee makes its own decisions and reviews the issues that it chooses.

When we undertook the employment insurance reform, we were very sensitive to its impact on communities and people across the country. I am extremely grateful to my Liberal caucus colleagues for wanting to help me understand the employment insurance reality through their own reality. I can assure members that I will listen to them very carefully, so as to help our fellow Canadians.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### KOSOVO

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of National Defence confirm that Canadian forces are on the ground in Kosovo doing targeting and KLA support work?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no.

**The Speaker:** In case *Hansard* did not get that, the answer I think was no. Is that correct? I did not hear the answer of the hon. Minister of National Defence. Could he repeat what he said?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** Mr. Speaker, no they are not.

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#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we asked the government several times why it is agreeing to ratify a Nisga'a treaty that will effectively give the Nisga'a the right to ban trade unions in the Nisga'a territory.

I ask the minister again, why is she prepared to diminish the rights of Nisga'a people by accepting a treaty that will allow the Nisga'a central government to ban trade unions in their territory?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should take

#### Oral Questions

the time to read the Nisga'a treaty. He will find that what he is purporting is absolutely not true at all.

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#### VOLUNTEER SECTOR

**Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

This week is National Volunteer Week. The volunteer sector in this country is an indispensable part of Canadian life. It deserves the gratitude of all Canadians, but it also deserves recognition from the government for the important role it plays.

What specifically is the Government of Canada doing to encourage and support this most valuable element of Canadian society?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his very interesting question.

I could not agree more that the voluntary sector deserves much gratitude from Canadians and from the government. We want to enable them to play an even greater role in Canadian life.

The Minister of Health, the Minister of National Revenue and I are working together with voluntary sector representatives to develop ways to support and strengthen their capacity to continue their good work. On another front, this Wednesday I will also be launching a voluntary opportunities exchange, a national Internet application that matches volunteers with voluntary organizations.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### KOSOVO

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a member of parliament stated in the House that Canadian troops were currently positioned inside Kosovo's border.

I am asking the Prime Minister to tell this House whether or not, and regardless of the role to be played by these soldiers, there are, as we are speaking, Canadian troops on the ground, inside Kosovo's border.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple: it is no.

[English]

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I asked the foreign affairs minister the other day about a uniting for peace resolution. He indicated that this resolution would not be appropriate unless there was an agreement by Milosevic. He talks about getting the agreement first. Perhaps the reason Milosevic is refusing to agree is because of the venue by which the agreement is being sought. That is NATO, the party that is bombing him.

*Routine Proceedings*

Would the minister not agree that it would be worth trying another venue and seeking a uniting for peace resolution through the general assembly of the United Nations?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I just told the hon. member's colleague, the secretary general has taken a series of initiatives this morning, establishing a special representative, undertaking a series of negotiations that is designed to get a security council agreement to a peace plan, a peace agreement. This would include the mandate of article 7 which carries with it a series of requirements of all countries in the world to live up to those obligations.

• (1500)

As I said to the hon. member, while these important negotiations are continuing and while the uniting for peace resolution is an option, the way we should explore right now is to see how we can support the secretary general's efforts.

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, why will the government not inform Canadians and parliament of the real involvement of our Canadian forces in Kosovo?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we do inform Canadians. We do inform parliament.

I went through a list previously that indicates exactly what our people are doing in the area and connected with Kosovo.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the hon. Robert Hill, Minister for Environment and Heritage of Australia.

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109 I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the government response to the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade entitled "Canada and Nuclear Challenge: Reducing the Political Value of Nuclear Weapons for the Twenty-First Century".

Members of this committee, directed by the chair, Mr. Bill Graham, heard from hundreds of Canadians on the issue, experts and concerned citizens alike, to assemble a very thoughtful report. I commend them and thank them.

In addition to the government's response to the report, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I am pleased table, in both official languages, the government's policy statement on Canada's nuclear policies entitled "Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Advancing Canadian Objectives".

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sure the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs meant the hon. member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale when he referred to the hon. member by name and I am sure he would not want to do that again. I know he is as familiar as we all are with the hon. member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[English]

Pursuant to the order of reference of Thursday, October 22, 1998, your committee has considered Bill C-251, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act on cumulative sentences, and agreed on Wednesday, March 24, 1999, to delete the clauses and the title of the bill.

• (1505)

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 69th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the associate membership of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 69th report later this day.

*Routine Proceedings***WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM ACT**

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-494, an act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a related and consequential amendment to another act (protection of spouses whose life is in danger).

He said: Mr. Speaker, first I thank my hon. colleague for Langley—Abbotsford for seconding my bill today.

I rise to introduce my private member's bill that I call the new identities act. If passed, the bill will serve to formally protect those persons whose lives are in danger because of acts committed by their spouses, former spouses, common law spouses or former common law spouses, by bringing them into the witness protection system.

Currently there is an ad hoc program within the departments of Human Resources Development Canada and Revenue Canada to help these people create new identities in order to protect them and their children from potential harm and even death.

Unfortunately the program is without legislated mandate or adequate funding. We as parliamentarians have the obligation of doing everything we can to help these people. I hope members on all sides of the House will give the bill the non-partisan support it deserves.

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move:

That the 69th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[English]

**WAYNE GRETZKY**

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend Canadians lived a historic day. Based on that historic day it is my pleasure to introduce a motion for which I hope I have unanimous consent:

That the House request Canada Post to issue a commemorative stamp in honour of Wayne Gretzky in recognition of his unique contribution to Canadian sport in general and hockey in particular.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Brampton Centre have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** No.

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I spoke to all the House leaders and they all agreed. Maybe, if you ask the question again, they could clarify their positions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair is reluctant to continue putting the question. I am sure the Chair heard a no. I do not think it is a matter for House leaders to make a blanket decision on a matter of this kind. It requires the consent of all hon. members, not just House leaders, and I do not believe there was consent.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I believe consent was unanimous.

• (1510)

The no you heard had nothing to do with the question you had asked.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will then put the question again to the House.

The House heard the terms of the motion moved by the hon. member for Brampton Centre. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[English]

**PETITIONS**

## RIGHTS OF GRANDPARENTS

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many constituents requesting that the House ask the government to amend the Divorce Act to include a provision as supported in Bill C-340 regarding the right of the grandparents of spouses to have access to or custody of children without having to go to court.

## CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of signatories from all across British

*Routine Proceedings*

Columbia, I would like to present a petition which requests and prays that parliament will take all measures necessary to ensure that possession of child pornography remains a serious criminal offence, and that federal police forces be directed to give priority to enforcing this law for the protection of children.

**Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present three petitions from constituents of the great riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

The first one contains several hundred names of people who are very concerned about the growing trade in child pornography. They are very concerned about the lack of government action on curbing child pornography.

These petitioners plead for the federal government to do whatever is in its power to uphold the current provisions of the Criminal Code against the possession of child pornography.

## ABORTION

**Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is also from citizens of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

They are very concerned about the practice of abortion in the country and the taking of over 105,000 innocent human lives every year. Therefore the petitioners call upon parliament to enact legislation against causing the death of an unborn human by abortion at any stage along the continuum of prenatal life.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my third petition is from constituents of Prince George—Bulkley Valley as well.

They are concerned about the misunderstanding of the act of marriage which is clearly defined by government acts. They pray that parliament enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Act and the Interpretation Act, so as to define in statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female.

## SUMAS COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in a period of only 10 months four sexual assaults took place in the Abbotsford area and all four were committed by residents of the Sumas Community Correctional Centre. The last sexual assault was committed by a dangerous repeat offender with 63 prior convictions.

The petitioners call upon parliament to enact legislation to ensure that Sumas Community Correctional Centre officials have the right to refuse violent, repeat and dangerous offenders who

could pose a danger to society and that habitual offenders and sexual perpetrators not be allowed to reside at the Sumas Community Correctional Centre any longer.

This petition raises the total to over 30,000 people, without a response from the government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: question No. 221.

[Text]

Question No. 221—**Mr. Rick Borotsik:**

What is the total number of agriculture and agri-food businesses in Canada that have declared bankruptcy since the start of the 1996-97 crop year as a direct or indirect result of the falling commodity prices during the farm income crisis, listing the names of those businesses?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.):** Bankruptcies are caused by a combination of factors that can include declining prices, production problems, marketing problems, and high debt levels. Loss of off farm employment can also be a contributing factor for some farms. Attributing a bankruptcy to one factor would not be accurate. Further, most agri-food businesses such as restaurants and grocery stores would not be dramatically affected by swings in the price of farm commodities and it would be inappropriate to include them with farm bankruptcies. The total number of farm bankruptcies from the beginning of the 1996-97 crop year to the end of 1998 was 596. From January 1, 1996 to the end of 1998, there were 762 farm bankruptcies. This represents the lowest three year average of farm bankruptcies for the last two decades. In the 1980s the three year average ranged from 1,013 to 1,547 and has been declining since 1992 when it reached 1,231.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada does not have a listing of the names of agri-food businesses and farms which have had to declare bankruptcy. Additional information on bankruptcies may be available from the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy at phone number 613-941-1000.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I suggest the other questions stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*English*]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—THE BALKANS

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

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech. I am a bit concerned about the phrasing of the motion, which is vague to say the least and creates a bit of a precedent. It is an area of precedent that the hon. member needs to think about very carefully.

We entered into World War II without the resolution of this parliament. We also declared war against Imperial Japan without the resolution of this parliament and we entered into the Korean conflict without the resolution of this parliament. The motion appears to imply that before we enter into war in this instance the government must get a resolution from this parliament.

Given that this motion is imprecise at best and is really on whether we should have a vote, and given that it talks about possibilities and a variety of things which could be interpreted in a variety of ways, I wonder whether the hon. member is concerned, given the precedential nature of this matter and the foundational aspect that it has to our democracy, namely the right of parliament to direct government. Is she at all concerned that this motion is not nearly as precise as many members would like it to be before voting on such a foundational issue of our democratic process?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member. I am sure that, in giving the example of the resolution by which our country got involved in the second world war, he was not suggesting that it would have been better for Canada to agree to go to war without having a resolution from parliament. I will not remind the House of the painful memories Quebecers have of that.

I do not understand why the government is saying our motion is vague. What we see right now in the news is the possibility of sending ground troops. If this is not necessary, that is good. But a solution is not in sight right now, despite the weaker and weaker reminders that air strikes would be sufficient. We do not see how NATO could succeed, how the countries that decided to take on this humanitarian cause could succeed without sending ground troops.

I repeat what I said before. If troops were sent, it would not be for a parade. This parliament has to vote on it, has to decide, with all the information available, if it should maintain troops within a framework that would be uncertain and that could also deteriorate. This is true not only for members on this side, but also for members

### *Supply*

on the other side, because we will live with this decision for a long time. A vote must absolutely be taken in this House.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have an excerpt from a letter sent to me by a constituent. There is a poem in it which talks about the day the war started. I thought the poem very eloquently summarized the need for a vote in this House. It states:

The day the war started  
the first green shoots of spring  
pushed through the thick carpets of leaves  
into mid-afternoon sun.

The day the war started  
a Norfolk and Southern diesel  
pulled cars of immaculate pine  
destined for hundreds of new homes.

The day the war started  
couples were married at city hall,  
school children learned the beauty of prairies,  
the beauty of snow on faraway mountains.

And on that day, too far away to notice,  
other children learned the beauty of flames,  
the beauty of the planes so high in their white sky  
that no one aboard could notice  
—that no one could even hear—  
the roar of wind drawn into  
vast fields of immaculate flames  
that once were schools, homes, families.

Does the hon. member not feel that this is a cause which gives support to having a vote on such an important issue?

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague expressed in a different way the answer I have just given the member opposite.

The international situation is serious. It would have been preferable to have this vote before the air strikes began but, in the name of democracy, we must have it now, before getting ourselves into something that we do not know how and when it is going to end. No other decision will be more important, for all kinds of reasons. The situation will never be the same again. It is the first time NATO does such a thing.

Important changes will have to be made to international institutions. We do not have time to debate this issue any further right now, but this dirty war—because if there is war it will indeed be dirty—requires a vote before any final decision is made.

[*English*]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mount Royal.

I would like to begin my remarks today by advising the House of my meetings in Brussels and London over the last three days.

*Supply*

While in Brussels I met with NATO Secretary General Solana, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Clark, and the Chairman of the NATO Committee, General Naumann. I also had the opportunity to consult with my Belgian counterpart, Mr. Poncelet, and in London I met with my British counterpart, Mr. Robertson.

On each occasion we discussed the full range of issues pertaining to NATO operations, both the air campaign and efforts to address the dire humanitarian situation that continues to unfold.

I want to assure the House that NATO's resolve remains unshakeable. NATO's steadily intensifying military operations are destroying, step by step, Yugoslavia's military capabilities. The air campaign supports the overall political aims of NATO countries; objectives which are widely supported by the international community, by this parliament and by the citizens of Canada.

On the weekend I also had the opportunity to visit our men and women stationed in Aviano, Italy. I am pleased to report that their morale is high. They understand the importance of the mission they have been given and they are proud that Canada has acted. They are a long way from home and they appreciate the support they have from the government, from parliament and from their fellow Canadians.

The air campaign is now in its 27th day. Progress has been steady and as each day passes the cost Mr. Milosevic is paying for his policy of humanitarian degradation rises. His military forces are being hit around the clock and their losses are mounting.

As each day passes the infrastructure that supports his forces of oppression is diminished. There is less fuel, fewer bridges and more broken lines of communication.

NATO is again intensifying its air operations by adding more aircraft. As I announced on Saturday, Canada will make available six more CF-18s, bringing the total in Aviano to 18.

[*Translation*]

This new contribution shows our government's firm commitment to this operation. We will continue to exercise the necessary leadership to ensure its success.

[*English*]

Good government requires many things. Strong leadership is one of them. Another is the will to make choices based on the understanding of what Canadians need and want.

Before being elected, the government spelled out its commitment to increase consultation with parliament. We were determined to offer Canadians strong leadership, informed by the views of their elected representatives in parliament. We have done just that. Since being elected, time and time again we have consulted the House on

major decisions concerning the Canadian forces and national defence.

• (1525)

The House has debated Canadian commitments to the Central African Republic, Haiti, the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia. Since this government came to power the House has held seven debates on Yugoslavia alone. Parliament has held three debates in recent times on the very important issue of Kosovo.

The motion before us today completely ignores the relevant debates and decisions of this House. The question of Canadian participation in a Kosovo peacekeeping operation has already been debated.

On February 17 the House debated Canadian participation in a force to verify and enforce compliance with an agreement we hoped would result from the diplomatic talks held in Rambouillet, France. All parties agreed that Canada should participate in that kind of peacekeeping force.

During the debate I announced that Canada would be prepared to contribute 500 to 800 personnel. Although we are currently engaged in an air campaign, our objective is to bring about conditions whereby the Yugoslav government will allow for the deployment of an international military force.

Since then the 500 to 800 strong force, including an armoured reconnaissance squadron and a helicopter unit, has completed its training and is now preparing for possible deployment. Debating this again would be a step backward. In a crisis like this, when grave human issues lie in the balance, moving forward is the kind of leadership which Canadians expect.

This government's record of consulting parliament speaks for itself. We are determined to exercise the kind of decisive leadership in crisis that Canadians expect. Canadians would not accept any measure that undermines the authority of the government they elected to take quick action to protect Canada's humanitarian and national interests.

This motion, aside from ignoring the actions that have been taken and the many debates, appears to suggest that without the very precise vote which it suggests the voice of parliament will not be heard. Kosovo illustrates the falsehood of that argument perfectly.

In the three debates on Kosovo, 131 members of this House have spoken. Many voices have been heard and the consensus has been striking. Clearly, parliamentarians have expressed their views and given legitimacy to Canada's actions. Parliamentary debate is an important tool, but it should be used to facilitate action, not to undermine it.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. minister. The minister indicated that the House has debated the question of Kosovo seven times.

*Supply*

The question that we are asking today is very simple. The Canadian people elected members of parliament to this place. Why are the Liberals afraid to put the question when we commit ground troops to a fighting force? Why are the Liberals scared to put the same question to the House of Commons?

The minister said that good government should lead. I would remind the minister that the Liberals were elected with approximately 38%. Therefore, my question to the minister is: Why not let the Canadian parliament vote on the question?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** Mr. Speaker, whatever percentage we received was a lot more than members on the other side received. We have a majority government in this House and that is the will of the Canadian people. Canadians elected a government to make decisions.

• (1530)

This parliament has every opportunity to express no confidence in the government if it does not think it is making the right decision. Members opposite have not moved a motion of no confidence. No, because they know Canadians believe in what we are doing. Canadians believe we should be doing all that we can to save those people who have been pushed out of Kosovo, those people who have been subject to ethnic cleansing. People believe that is the right and humanitarian thing to do, so we are doing it.

I do not hear people disagreeing with what we are doing. In all these debates, seven on Yugoslavia and three of them specifically on Kosovo, I have heard general agreement from all sides of the House. What is the problem? If hon. members do not think we are doing the right thing, if they do not think we are making the right decision, move a motion of non-confidence. But I do not think that they will. I do not believe they will because they know that we are reacting to what Canadians feel is the right and just thing to do.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister two questions.

First of all, he is right when he says that members have had ample opportunity to express their views in the House and that over 130 members have already done so. However, when we have a vote, it is not 137 members out of 301 who express their views. When we have a vote, it is 301 members out of 301 who take part in that vote.

Every soldier in Kosovo can say that his or her member in the House of Commons has supported our involvement or not. Every soldier supports his or her MP and is ready to do the job he or she is asked to do.

My other question is this: can the minister tell us whether or not troops are engaged in a ground operation in Kosovo at the moment?

[*English*]

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton:** Mr. Speaker, parliament should have every opportunity, has had every opportunity, and will continue to have every opportunity to express its views.

When I visited with our troops in Aviano, I told them that the government of this country, the parliament of this country and the people of Canada were behind them. They believe that and they believe they are doing what needs to be done in the name of all three of those entities. I believe that to be the case.

We are taking this decision in a responsible fashion. The government has to be able to do these kinds of things, to take quick action when these dangerous situations arise.

There are no ground troops being deployed to the region. We have said before that the only troops we are preparing for deployment to the area in terms of ground operations would be peacekeepers. That still stands. We have said that if that changes in any way, then we would come back to this House again for further debate and discussion.

**Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is a very important day in the life of Jewish people. Today is Yom Ha Zicharon, the day of remembrance. It starts tonight and continues tomorrow. It is a day to remember what took place in Europe from 1933 on and in particular Yom Ha Shoah, the Holocaust that took place. Last week was Yom Ha Shoah at which time the survivors told their stories. This week is Yom Ha Zicharon which is a remembrance of our soldiers who perished during that time.

As I have watched this whole question of ethnic cleansing, genocide and crimes against humanity, I can only say that we all watched with wrenched hearts and with an unfortunate reminder that this world has not learned. Following the end of the second world war in 1945 we said that never again would anything like this happen and passed a law on genocide. It is very unfortunate that the never again has not been realized.

I have heard criticism here of the United Nations. I would suggest that there is something wrong in the security council and with the way the veto vote works, but there is not something wrong with the UN itself.

We all know there have been approaches time after time in the security council for action to be taken and for the United Nations to become involved. It was turned down each time. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs has raised the issue on at least three occasions. There was a prior vote that indicated that the world approved of what we were doing but there were internal interests that prevented a move forward. The Russian vote or potential veto was a very important factor.

*Supply*

• (1535)

I have just returned from a week in Brussels. We devoted our time to issues about nuclear weapons and about the problems that confront the major cities. The major concern and attention was on Kosovo. Over 130 nations expressed their concerns. Yes, there were a few that supported the Yugoslav position, Mr. Milosevic's position. For the most part there was unanimous agreement that this war must stop. Not once was there a call for ground troops at this time.

This is such an evolving situation and it is a very difficult one. I heard the remarks made by Mr. Stroyev, the leader of the Russian delegation who suggested a joint commission for refugees and a special role for the parliaments of the NATO countries. He also said that the Yugoslav people should not be punished for the actions of President Milosevic. But if Mr. Milosevic is not stopped, the people of the region will continue to be punished by him. We cannot stand by and let this happen. The NATO action is not designed to punish Milosevic according to the Russian speaker, it is designed to put a stop to his abhorrent policy of ethnic cleansing.

I am sure we all recognize the major role Russia has to play in reaching a settlement to the crisis. We hope it will play a major peacekeeping role in the area when the fighting is over. We share a common interest with Russia in reaching a political solution to the crisis, and the sooner the better.

When I listened to the discussions, there were many expressions of serious concern. Why are hundreds of thousands of people, old men, women and helpless children fleeing in terror from Kosovo? Are they fleeing from the NATO bombs? I would say no. They are fleeing from President Milosevic and his ethnic cleansing.

Young male Kosovar Albanians are being forcibly separated from their families. This is a cause of great concern. Where are they? What will happen to them? What are they doing? Some of us have just seen that they are digging graves. That is quite disturbing. We know what happened when similar events occurred in Srebrenica. All the men were massacred. This question demands an immediate answer from the Yugoslav authorities.

Some parliamentarians say that a terrible human tragedy has been inflicted upon the people of Kosovo and Yugoslavia due to the brutality of their leader Milosevic. This was a situation that could not be tolerated and indeed demands were made for a resolution to the plight of the Kosovar people.

I think we all know as the debates in the House have demonstrated, that the Canadian people, Canadian parliamentarians and the Canadian government, as well as all NATO partners, would have preferred that the conflict be resolved through dialogue and negotiations. But President Milosevic has frustrated every attempt to find a solution.

There are no quick fixes in Yugoslavia and in Kosovo. We know that. NATO's air campaign will continue until Milosevic agrees to an international military presence in Kosovo that can ensure the safe return of the refugees created by his program of ethnic cleansing. He has systematically violated international humanitarian law by launching a campaign against civilians which includes killing and torturing, arbitrary detention and the denial of basic rights based on ethnicity. That is what happened in 1933. The world did not react then. We have evolved. We are in a position to see change. For that we should all be grateful.

Milosevic is also contravening two security council resolutions, resolutions 1199 and 1203 which impose a clear obligation on the Yugoslavian federation to respect a ceasefire and protect the civilian population.

• (1540)

Canada has lobbied intensively over the past year for greater United Nations Security Council engagement in Kosovo. Clearly it would have been best if the UN could have facilitated an end to the conflict in Kosovo. However, the Russians have made it clear that they would have blocked any UN Security Council's condemning of that ethnic cleansing.

And so NATO moved ahead, and thank God it did for the ethnic Kosovars in Yugoslavia. NATO was able to save at least most of that population. The refugee situation is very disturbing. That is true. That country was challenged by a misguided leader. We know this is not his first attack on the people there. Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia; a lot of history has gone on in that area.

I would sincerely hope when this government comes to a conclusion that it has no choice but to consider those ground troops and it asks for our opinion on that matter, we will all be of one voice and support that move in the interest of the ethnic Albanians. With respect to the plight of the Kosovar Albanians, please note that the overall Canadian policy and goal is a negotiated settlement based on the Rambouillet agreement and that our overriding concern is humanitarian.

In the interests of international humanitarian law, the right and the obligation to go into a country not because it has its own sovereignty but because its population is at risk is an issue we must support. This world over the last generation has been one of serious problems whether we are looking at Africa, Asia, Latin America or right now as we see in Kosovo.

NATO's role was a vital one. I am most pleased we have supported it to date. I sincerely hope the wish of Kofi Annan, the wish of this parliament, the wish of our minister and the wish of our Prime Minister is realized through negotiation, and that if we do

*Supply*

send ground troops that they will be peacemakers and peacekeepers. I hope we do not have the kind of intervention that is so dramatic, so dangerous and so costly both to our own people and to the people who are suffering right now as ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, in Albania, in all the countries in that area.

I hope this parliament and its members will understand why we are not taking a vote right now. The situation changes daily. The promise of the Prime Minister is one I know he will respect and keep. Let us hope for a peaceful solution.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's speech. It was very well put. I certainly agree with the contents of what she said. A drastic thing is going on. Let us all hope it comes to an end soon.

I am concerned when it comes to the debates that take place in the House. I have expressed this before and I will express it again. Does the hon. member agree with me that debates should be open and transparent and that they should be used to help make decisions regarding issues? If she does agree, could she explain why in the last parliament when we were debating whether or not to send troops to Bosnia we learned that the troops were already on their way, that the decision had already been made? Does she agree that sometimes these decisions are made without the debate? Does she agree with doing that?

**Hon. Sheila Finestone:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question and it presents a dilemma. I do believe in transparent and open democracy and I do believe for the most part that has been the history of this government.

The exception is in circumstances of the nature the member was talking about, when it involves serious ground troops and the lives of our men in the air, on the land and on the sea. That is a very heavy responsibility cabinet must look at, evaluate and weigh.

• (1545)

For the most part the changes we have made recently to have open debates have been a demonstration of a great step forward. Perhaps it is not to the degree some would have liked, but every statement that has been made in the House has been looked at by cabinet and has been evaluated by the Foreign Affairs Department. Good overviews of the views of the House are presented for their consideration. That is a big improvement over what we had in the past.

I have been in the House when we had a different story during the course of very serious interventions and fear on the part of the people who were at risk, and we did not say anything. It is time now to never again be silent and to know what is going on.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what the hon. member had to say. I want to tell her that, in this area, it is important that we have all the information available before making decisions and that we use every means to restore peace as soon as possible.

In her speech, the hon. member said something like "We need to be able to influence what is going on". Would a vote in parliament not be a way to support the position taken by the government, to show that this is no longer just a partisan position, not only the position of one party, but of the entire House of Commons, where hon. members have the opportunity to vote, while keeping in mind their responsibilities?

Would it not help to ensure that the peace plan put forward by Germany, but that could become everyone's peace plan, is approved as quickly as possible? People from our ridings could be involved in this war. Would it not be helpful for them to know how their members of parliament voted on this issue? On such an important and serious matter, would the influence of parliament not help to restore peace in Europe?

**Hon. Sheila Finestone:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. If there is one thing that has changed a lot in the last hundreds of years, it is that we now have television. We can watch hour after hour, day after day, what is going on in Kosovo and, more importantly, in all of Yugoslavia.

When I was in Brussels, at the meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I asked why the Yugoslavs blocked access to television so that the Serbs were unable to know what was going on. It is sad. When people do not know the truth, it is difficult to know what to do.

That is why I believe we know what we are doing. Members from this side of the House are just as interested as the member and all other parliamentarians. I am convinced that we will make an open and transparent decision in due course. I hope the hon. member will be satisfied, because the conditions we are setting are very clear and obvious.

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to again rise to speak on this, our opposition day.

The war in Kosovo is now in its 26th day. Who would have believed that the conflict would have gone on this long? With NATO and all the new military technologies involved, we might have expected it to be over in a few days at most.

Unfortunately, we underestimated Milosevic and the Serbian government. In particular, we had not predicted how fast and

*Supply*

efficient that government would be in its ethnic cleansing operations against the population of Kosovo.

The Bloc Québécois has always regretted this war, and all war moreover, yet intervention in Kosovo was necessary, unfortunately. Necessary because Milosevic and the Serb army are engaged in literally depopulating Kosovo.

The latest figures on the massive exodus of the Kosovar population are terrifying. The UNHCR is now talking of some 400,000 Kosovar refugees in Albania, 150,000 in Macedonia, 75,000 in Montenegro, and 32,000 in Bosnia.

• (1550)

This is not taking into account the 260,000 Kosovars refugees within Kosovo itself, nor those who have taken refuge in the mountains. To date, NATO estimates that this war has claimed 3,200 lives. NATO also believes it has found 43 mass graves. This is not even taking into account the rapes, the physical atrocities and the psychological sufferings of an entire people.

For all of these reasons, all available resources must be deployed in order to relieve the sufferings and improve the living conditions of the Kosovar refugees in Bosnia, in Macedonia, in Albania and in Montenegro. It is therefore important to provide the High Commissioner for Refugees with all the humanitarian aid and logistical support appropriate.

To this end, we are still awaiting a clear response from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to the question I asked here in the House last week. Members will remember I asked her if the government was prepared to commit to using the \$100 million set aside to take in the refugees here in order to provide additional support to the NGOs on location in the Balkans.

The minister responded at the time with banalities such as “the situation is stabilizing at the borders there”. However, according to the HCR, Macedonia alone expects an additional 100,000 refugees in the next few days. No need to point out that the needs are urgent in the various refugee camps.

When will the minister be announcing that this \$100 million will go to refugees in the Balkans? It is a matter of life and death, and the money is available here and now.

I would hope that the minister and the government will show compassion as soon as possible, before it is too late.

It is very clear that we are now facing new realities and that the NATO forces should reassess their strategies in this war.

That is where the problem lies. The Government of Canada's haughty attitude toward the members of this parliament, drawn, it must be said, from the Liberal leader's arrogant treatment of the opposition members, prevents us from having a clear picture of the

situation in the Balkans. This deplorable attitude is reflected in this government's lack of transparency in releasing information on this war.

As a member of this House democratically elected by the people of the riding of Laurentides, I am very frustrated by the Prime Minister's refusal to allow a debate followed by a vote on the possibility of sending Canadian troops in the Balkan region or on any other initiative, whether military or diplomatic.

Yet, according to an Angus Reid poll, 59% of Canadians would be willing to support the deployment of ground troops, and 61% would agree to the involvement of Canadian soldiers in this ground operation, if it became necessary.

Why is the government still stubbornly refusing to allow a vote on this issue here in the House? Considering the Angus Reid poll results, it would be in the best interests of the government to vote on this issue. The government would then come out stronger in its support, as would the Canadian democratic system.

Let us remember the Gulf war in 1991. At that time, Liberals were in the opposition. Despite the three votes taken in the House of Commons about that war, the hon. member for Shawinigan had openly criticized the government for its lack of willingness to fulfil its duty of having a consultation and a debate.

Eight years later, the Liberal government is trampling not only on Canadian democracy, but also on its own ideas. Even Yves Fortier, the former Canadian ambassador to the UN, publicly blamed the Prime Minister for his lack of transparency regarding Canadian positions and actions in the Kosovo crisis.

Since the beginning of the war in the Balkans, the government has been providing information on the conflict in dribbles. It is time the government stopped acting that way. Quebeckers and Canadians as well as members of parliament have a right to know the different military or diplomatic options to which the Canadian government and NATO are giving priority.

To this day, the Bloc Québécois and other opposition parties have all supported the decisions of the government, but this does not mean that the Bloc Québécois is ready to sign a blank cheque. We demand a substantial debate followed by a vote, to allow members of parliament to take a just and informed decision on the opportunity to send ground troops to Kosovo.

Why such lack of transparency compared to other governments? Germany has voted twice on the advisability of air strikes in Kosovo.

• (1555)

The United States will also vote on the granting of additional funding requested by the Pentagon to increase the American

participation in Kosovo. The Hungarian parliament also voted to allow NATO aircraft to fly over its territory. The Czech Republic voted on the same issue. What is the Canadian government waiting for to show the same openness?

The lack of democracy created by the silence of the Liberal government could have a negative impact on the consensus we now have in this House. Indeed, how are we expected to be able to assess NATO's diplomatic or military initiatives if the government does not think of providing us with adequate information, which would encourage this House to debate and vote on these initiatives?

Eventually, the Bloc Québécois might be forced to raise serious concerns on the advisability of those initiatives, which could bring the present consensus to an end.

In 1991, during the gulf war, members of the House received excellent information on the state of the conflict and governmental initiatives but this time we are better informed on the crisis in Kosovo by the medias. This is not right.

In closing, I remind all members of the House that the Bloc Québécois is deeply disturbed by the atrocities and ethnic cleansing activities directed against Kosovars. To put a stop to such atrocities, all diplomatic and military alternatives, including sending ground troops to Kosovo, must be debated in this House and approved through a vote. What is at stake is the health of our democratic system, the legitimacy of this government, and perhaps even the survival of a people.

I would like to conclude with a short poem written by a pupil at the École des Ursulines de Québec. Her name is Sarah-Émilie Mercier. Her poem is about peace, and I will read it now:

Why does peace elude mankind?  
 Why not put our hate behind?  
 With fighting and poverty all round the earth  
 Peace has retreated for all it is worth  
 And though I seek it near and far  
 It has become like a distant star  
 What is so hard to comprehend?  
 Love one another, and wars will all end.

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, that was a very nice poem and I commend the Bloc member for reading it to the House.

What does the hon. member feel is the reason that the government is not willing to put this debate to a vote for the members of parliament? Is it afraid at this point that we will be questioning its

*Supply*

commitment, or does the member think the government will bring the debate forward after it is committed, should it ever come to that situation? Hopefully it will not? What would be her opinion?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Monique Guay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I think that in any parliament democracy must rule. What is happening in this parliament is worrisome for the future and the decisions that will have to be made, especially when we are asked to send in soldiers to defend the interests of people who are at war and in a desperate situation.

As I indicated in my speech, even opinion polls are in favour of sending troops. Therefore, I do not see why the government would not consult members from all parties. The House could reach a consensus, which would provide stronger moral support to our troops who would be deployed over there.

This is disappointing because we are here to represent the people. I represent every single constituent in the riding of Laurentides, and these people might have liked to see me take a stand here in this House on sending troops to Kosovo.

• (1600)

I sincerely hope, because I doubt the government's decision is final, that the government will make the right decision in letting us debate the issue in the House so that all parties can eventually vote on this decision.

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after question period, many questions were raised on the opposition side, mainly by the Bloc Québécois and the Progressive Conservative Party. We are concerned, and rightly so, that the national defence minister may have already committed ground troops.

My question to the hon. member for Laurentides is this: could the government act in secret and deploy troops in Kosovo without consulting parliament and without a vote in the House?

**Mrs. Monique Guay:** Mr. Speaker, the government could certainly send troops without consulting the House. However, I think it would be ill-advised. The government would have a heavy price to pay for making decisions without consulting the members of this House. It would be undemocratic to send in troops without informing us. This kind of decision should be discussed and made in the House. Members have views they want to express. There are members from all over Canada who also have an opinion on the matter and who are certainly getting phone calls at their riding or Ottawa offices from people who take a stand and want to know

*Supply*

what their member really thinks of this war, but who may not have all the information.

We have a role to play, and we should be allowed to play it in the House. Otherwise, what is the use of electing members of parliament? To act like a bunch of yes-men and women just supporting the government? That is not what we are here for. We are here to represent our constituents and vote on important issues like sending in troops to participate in the ongoing war in Kosovo.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, early last Tuesday morning, I had the opportunity and the privilege to speak in this House to explain why I am personally in favour of the current military intervention in the former Yugoslavia.

Why do we have to debate this issue again today? I would say or I would be tempted to say that it is because of the government's bad faith. But I will not talk about bad faith, but rather about clumsiness. I do not want to presume right from the start that the government is acting in bad faith, so I will say that it is being clumsy. Why is it being clumsy? Because, despite the consensus that was expressed spontaneously regarding the intervention in the former Yugoslavia, despite the fact that all parties in the House have spontaneously supported the government in its intervention, the government is acting in a mean-spirited way toward the opposition parties by giving them very little information, voluntarily creating confusion and giving an impression of improvisation. I think shows the government as well as Canada's and NATO's intervention in the field in a bad light.

I can only hope that there is no such improvisation in reality. I would even go as far as saying that I am convinced there is no such improvisation, which leads me to think that the government is indeed hiding information from the House. We only get spurious answers to our numerous questions. We are being told that the question is hypothetical, that NATO officials have made no such request, that the question is premature. In fact, we have been given that type of answer at virtually every stage of the conflict since the beginning.

● (1605)

The defence minister insidiously stated that we had to consider sending ground troops, then backed down a few hours later, saying: "We have yet to reach that stage". When we enquired about the opportunity of sending peacekeepers in Kosovo we were told that "the situation is hypothetical, we have not received any request so far, we have yet to reach that stage". However we learned a few days later that the government was preparing to send 600 troops for a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia.

The same thing happened when we heard that additional CF-18s could be sent because the U.S. president wanted to double NATO's air capability. We asked: "How many additional aircraft will be

sent to satisfy this request?" The government replied: "We have not received any request so far, we have yet to reach that stage, this is a hypothetical question, it is premature". At last, we learned that 6 additional CF-18s have been sent or are about to be sent to the theatre of operations.

Now we learn that Canadian troops are probably already in Kosovo. Again, we ask the same question and we are told once more that it is a hypothetical question and that we are not at that stage yet. We got the same old answers we have been getting for some time now.

We recognize that in a conflict situation, strategic constraints prevent us from disclosing the details of operations and preparations. This would certainly be against the national interest and that of the allied forces.

In that case, why not be a little more open and frank and say "As things now stand, we cannot, for strategic reasons, give the House a clear answer to this question". This would be better than misleading the House and its members by stating "It is a hypothetical question. We have not received any request to that effect. We are not there yet. It is premature".

Somebody famous once said that war was too important an issue to leave it to politicians. I believe this saying applies to the government and the military staff that stands behind it in this conflict. Indeed, it seems universally recognized that members of parliament are not knowledgeable, credible or serious enough to be able to deal with matters as important as wars and conflicts.

By its mean attitude, the government is jeopardizing the strong consensus that had spontaneously formed around him on the issue of the military intervention in the former Yugoslavia.

The government is taking this consensus for granted, as the Prime Minister made very clear today. He allows himself to treat the opposition in a very condescending way by saying "Anyway, they all agree". We are not throwing back into question our position on the intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, some kind of mistrust of the government is emerging and that is unhealthy during a conflict.

As I said earlier, the government's attitude could give the impression that it is improvising to some extent. This improvisation takes many shapes, including that of appearing to let others take the lead. We could have expected that Canada, with its long peacekeeping and peace-seeking tradition and its seat at the UN Security Council, would have shown leadership in trying to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Instead, Canada kept silent. It embarked in military operations without necessarily looking for a political solution or giving the impression it was looking for one. Our German friends have come up with a very detailed peace plan, which, of course, we support, but Canada seems to be dragging its feet.

*Supply*

• (1610)

It was also said that, as far as military operations are concerned, Canada was trailing behind NATO and the USA. On that point, allow me to put into perspective this so-called submissiveness to American interests.

I remember that, in 1991, during the Gulf war, many of those opposed to the conflict told us that it was somewhat shocking to see the USA, and the international community behind it, launch military operations in Kuwait while doing nothing about the conflict that was breaking out in Bosnia at that time.

These bleeding hearts were saying “Of course, there are economic interests at stake in Kuwait; there are oil fields. If there had been oil in Bosnia, they would have intervened”. Now, these same people often wonder why Canada is following the United States. The same people who criticized the United States, NATO and the international community for not intervening in Bosnia are now condemning this intervention in Kosovo. I think the situation must be put in perspective.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and myself have explained at length why it had become absolutely necessary to intervene. At the end of World War II, we believed that mankind had changed, that it had learned from its mistakes. Unfortunately, the tragic events in Rwanda showed us that this was not the case, that we had not learned from our mistakes, that we had not changed as much as we thought we had. At that point we told ourselves that we would never again let the situation deteriorate to the point of witnessing such mass killings.

Therefore, we intervened in Kosovo. The former Yugoslavia refused the German peace plan, and the United Kingdom’s defence minister, the NATO secretary general and the U.S. secretary of state are suggesting that Milosevic must be removed from office in Belgrade. This leads us to think that the conflict will be a long one and that it will probably require the sending of ground troops. Should this be the case, it would be totally unacceptable for the government to decide to send Canadian troops to the theatre of operations without first consulting this House. We are talking about the lives of our fellow citizens, and we are accountable to them.

Earlier, I heard the minister say “We have the support of Canadians”. This government seems to be governing by polls. It should remember that its legitimacy lies only in the general election that led to this parliament and that, consequently, it must consult the House before sending ground troops.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to call on the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes, who has been sitting in this House for six years and who has a masters degree in political science.

I would like him to tell us why parliament should really have to deal with an issue such as this one? Why is it not enough to let the

government decide, on such an issue? Why is it critical to call on parliament, as other parliaments have done—and my colleague could provide examples of other parliaments that debated the issue and voted on it—to have a decisive say on this issue?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit embarrassed at having to answer such a relevant question by my hon. colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry, an eminent law professor. Such a question risks leaving me stunned and incapable of responding.

However, despite all, I will try to respond and trust my answer will find favour in the eyes of my colleague.

It is true that, under Canada’s Constitution and its National Defence Act, the government is not obliged in theory to seek the approval of the House before acting in such matters. However, it goes, I would say, a little beyond the legal principle.

• (1615)

There are moral principles. There is the government’s right to send soldiers to take part in an armed conflict that puts their lives at risk, without first taking a vote in parliament.

Earlier, my colleague from Joliette said appropriately that we did indeed have debates in this House. It is true that many parliamentarians have had the opportunity to speak on this important question, but what Canadians and Quebeckers want to know is whether their particular MP is in favour of sending ground troops and this they can know only if the government takes the trouble to consult this House.

My colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry pointed out rightly that, among the NATO member states, a number of governments have had the decency, drawing on this principle of legitimacy and on these moral principles, to consult their parliament.

Today in fact there is a debate in the British House of Commons, and there have been two votes in the German parliament on the issue of intervening in the former Yugoslavia. The two houses of the Czech Republic are preparing to vote today on such intervention.

I would remind the members of the government, that at the time of the gulf war in 1991, the official opposition at the time called for a vote in the House on an armed intervention. I call on the government majority to recall the remarks it addressed to the government in 1991 in calling for consultation of this parliament.

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Mississauga West.

I feel it is essential for me to address the House and comment on the critical issue we are grappling with today.

*Supply*

Certain members of this House seem to feel it would be appropriate for the government to allow not only a debate but also a vote on the decision to deploy Canadian ground troops to the Balkans who might become engaged in military operations and/or peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and the Balkans.

First of all, I would like to say that I am opposed to this motion, just as I was when we debated a similar motion on three occasions during the past year.

We remain convinced that by adopting such a motion we would paralyze the government for no good reason in the midst of situations which often require a rapid and effective response. We also believe that in adopting this position we are respecting the wishes of the Canadian people. Finally, we persist in our belief that parliament is capable of making an important contribution under such circumstances through the process of consultation.

I would point out that the government is taking into account the vital role played by parliament in this crisis. We obviously feel that obtaining the support of all members of this House is essential. Government decisions can only gain further legitimacy in the eyes of the international community when they receive the unanimous support of parliament. And it is in this spirit that we have decided to hold three debates on this issue thus far.

In October 1998, the House held a special debate on the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo and the special measures the government planned to implement in concert with the international community in order to resolve the conflict.

In February 1999, when we were hoping to see a peaceful end to this crisis, we held another debate, this time focusing on the possible deployment of Canadian troops to Yugoslavia.

And last Monday, April 12, we again debated the issue, allowing every MP who wished to comment on this serious humanitarian crisis to do so.

I would respectfully point out that on every one of these occasions we fortunately saw our policy receive unanimous support from members of every party.

• (1620)

As the Prime Minister himself has pointed out several times, it is critical that we speak with one voice and that Mr. Milosevic be in no doubt as to the position of the Canadian government. Peace, respect for human rights and democracy constitute values that are unanimously respected and supported by the Canadian people and their parliament.

The current situation is so serious and so important that we must not allow him any openings whatsoever. Mr. Milosevic must understand that our position is unwavering. This is no time for

playing political games. To act otherwise would only display a lack of respect for Canada's democratic institution par excellence, the House of Commons.

The government remains committed to consulting parliament. It has undertaken to ensure greater parliamentary involvement in reviewing major issues relating to foreign and defence policy, and it has held a significant number of parliamentary debates.

Since 1994, the government has consulted parliament regarding many of the international missions carried out by the Canadian forces. For example, we held two debates, in April 1998 and February 1999, regarding the deployment of a peacekeeping force to the Central African Republic. We held a debate on potential military action against Iraq in February 1998.

In November 1996, we debated Canada's role in alleviating the suffering in the African Great Lakes region. We also held more than one debate on Canada's role in implementing the measures taken by the international community to maintain stability and security in Haiti, in 1995 and 1997.

With respect to our involvement in Yugoslavia, we have held seven parliamentary debates so far. I will not list the innumerable sessions of the House of Commons defence and foreign Affairs committees at which Canadian participation on a wide variety of peacekeeping forces was discussed.

In 1994, a series of joint committees were specially organized to take an in-depth look at Canada's foreign and defence policy. These committees held unprecedented and comprehensive public hearings. Their work has led to the adoption of a new defence policy and the review of Canada's foreign policy.

Parliament has also played a major role in many other aspects of foreign and defence policy. For example, the expansion of NATO, the renewal of the NORAD Agreement that provides for the security and defence of North America, and Canadian policy on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, arms control and disarmament have all been the subjects of consultation with parliament.

In 1998, the Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, which I had the honour of chairing, carried out an unprecedented study on the social and economic challenges confronted by Canadian Forces members. This study contributed significantly to the development of a government quality-of-life program designed to meet the challenges posed by military life. Furthermore, this committee is currently examining the federal government's procurement policy and holding hearings with the defence industry across Canada.

All these measure testify to the government's willingness to consult parliament in shaping Canada's foreign and defence policy.

*Supply*

I would like as well to reaffirm the position taken by the Minister of National Defence: the government is fully committed to consulting with parliament and, as I have shown, has proved repeatedly that it has kept its promises in this regard.

• (1625)

However, the Canadian government, which is duly elected by the Canadian people, must not relinquish its ability to govern responsibly and to make hard decisions where necessary. To do otherwise would be irresponsible and would be viewed as such by the Canadian people.

Any additional steps in the deployment process would undermine Canada's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to international crises. Requiring a vote on the deployment of Canadian forces abroad could even impose pointless delays.

Once again, I must underscore the fact that the situation is so serious and the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo so great that it cannot be used as a pretext to serve political agendas. Even if we were to agree to consult the Canadian people and the members of this House, we would still be as determined as ever to do whatever possible to maintain, and in some cases to re-establish, peace and freedom. We have listened to Canadians and we have consulted parliament.

Our government and the Canadian people are proud of the role played by Canada both as a world leader in peacekeeping and as a faithful partner in times of crisis. We will continue to consult parliament, both through debates in the House and through the testimony of ministers and other spokespersons before standing committees. Anyone who wants government to remain sensitive to the opinions of the elected representatives of Canadians will understand that this must be the case.

But those same Canadians will understand how misguided it would be to adopt a motion that might compromise Canada's ability to respond when events call for immediate intervention.

[*English*]

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I find the words of the parliamentary secretary interesting when it comes to pointing a finger at the opposition. When I say the opposition, from one party to the other, they are actually supporting the government on this issue. They are actually supporting the government on this Kosovo crisis and our involvement with NATO.

The accusation coming from the parliamentary secretary is accusing the opposition of political jockeying. Because the opposition has basically unanimously sought to have a vote on a very important issue it is being accused of political manoeuvring or political jockeying.

I believe it is incumbent upon this House to show unanimously that Canadian troops have our total support, that we stand behind

them morally and that they know this from their elected representatives right across the country. What is happening now is that the Liberal government is accusing the opposition of the very opposite, which is not true.

I am curious as to why the parliamentary secretary would use such damaging words about the opposition and its support for our troops.

**Mr. Robert Bertrand:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I have mentioned on a number of occasions that opposition parties support the government in sending our troops. I mentioned that I appreciate that. However, what they also seem to be saying is that we are closing off debate.

I know it has been mentioned before, but I am going to mention it again. This is the fourth debate we have had on Kosovo. According to the Minister of National Defence, over 131 parliamentarians have spoken on the subject.

• (1630)

I would also like to point out that this afternoon a few of the members, and I know it was probably done accidentally, seemed to be suggesting that we have soldiers in Kosovo right now. I would just like to mention that as the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence have said, we have no soldiers in Kosovo right now.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The matter before the House and part of the debate of course centres around the vote as the Bloc motion clearly indicates. It has nothing to do with what question period information was brought forward about troops burying some—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry, but I do not think the hon. member is raising a legitimate point of order. He asked a question and he is getting an answer. While he may not agree with the answer, I am afraid he is stuck with it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Your arguments are not convincing, sir—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon member for Beauharnois—Salaberry must address his remarks to the Chair.

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's arguments are no more convincing than those of his counterpart at foreign affairs.

One of the reasons they are even less convincing is that this morning one of his colleagues reminded us that this House had voted on several occasions on sending troops, not only to Iraq, but also to the Congo, Cyprus, and the Middle East.

*Supply*

There are examples when the House voted. Why is the government refusing to change the practice it brought in when it came to power, according to which it refuses to hold a vote after a debate?

The government should learn something from this war, a lesson in democracy.

**Mr. Robert Bertrand:** Mr. Speaker, I do not understand at all the attitude of the members across the way.

I said it over and again in my speech as well as before when I answered the question put to me by my colleague from Calgary North, I know neither how many debates were held nor how many members rose in this House to discuss the issue.

We should not forget either that every day, technical briefings are given at National Defense Headquarters by people from DND and the Department of Foreign Affairs. There is an awful lot of information out there. People only have to go and get it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Halifax West, National Defence; the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, The Budget; the hon. member for Markham, The Economy; the hon. member for Frontenac—Mégantic, Black Lake BC Mine.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, hon. members know I do not believe in fighting.

At the outset I would like to congratulate the Bloc for using this opposition day in a constructive manner to put on the floor of this place an issue that really should be debated.

I said last week that I thought the opposition day was misused by the official opposition when in fact Canada is at war. If somebody wants to put an issue forward to discuss a vote, why not do it this way? Why not use the opposition day which is parliamentary tradition and put this issue to a vote instead of standing up and saying one thing in question period and doing another at a time when the opportunity presents itself to have an opposition day?

● (1635)

While I can say that I congratulate the Bloc, which is not something I would do often, for taking the opportunity to put forward this motion to allow for constructive debate, it would probably not be surprised to find I cannot support the motion as it stands. But I do support the concept of having debates in this place,

particularly when it involves the three words we have heard in the media lately that really are foreign to this country. Canada at war. Those are the three words. I believe there is a show on CBC tomorrow evening. It is an astounding thing to think about in 1999.

**An hon. member:** Are we?

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, clearly we are. We are involved aggressively with our allies in a war to try to resolve a problem.

I do not think anyone in this place would question the intentions or the desire to bring peace to that region. Part of the reason I have difficulty with the concept is that we would have a debate in here about whether or not the next step in our military deployment should be this or should be that.

Think about it. There is a potential of putting our armed forces at risk. We are going to say to Mr. Milosevic “Hold on. We are going to have a debate in parliament. Don’t do anything. We will get back to you. We have all our men lined up and ready to go with weapons cocked but we have to have a debate in this place called parliament in Canada and then we have to have a vote and we will decide whether or not we are going to deploy our troops”.

Never before in the history of this country would that kind of process have been undertaken. It was not undertaken in 1939 when this country joined forces to fight the Nazis. It was not undertaken when we declared war against imperial Japan. It was not undertaken when we declared war on Korea. It is unbelievable to think that a responsible parliamentarian would want us to have some kind of debate and a vote. Imagine what would happen.

What kind of message would we be sending if for some reason the vote was extremely close? We know with a majority government we could carry it. I do not believe that the official opposition or anyone in opposition wants to send a message of instability or mixed messages to the people who are putting their lives on the line. I just do not believe it.

I will read a quote and then say who said it. “It is also our view as I wrote the Prime Minister on March 31 that once the decision was made to commit Canadian air forces to the NATO effort in Yugoslavia, we in this parliament should not engage in second guessing the mission when it has scarcely begun. Rather, we should offer our steadfast support, our political support, our moral support, our vocal support to those brave Canadian personnel who are involved”. The Leader of the Official Opposition said that on April 12, 1999.

We would have to say that is a responsible position to take. Once again it is not often I throw accolades to the official opposition. I think it makes sense to take a position such as this when people are putting their lives on the line.

This is another quote which was made in this place. "I would say right up front on behalf of the NDP caucus that we certainly support the idea that Canada should fulfill its international obligations and should take every measure possible to try to end the suffering, to end the senseless bloodshed that occurs in a lot of these countries and to bring about some humanitarian efforts and to try to stabilize the countries".

• (1640)

That was said by the New Democratic Party critic, the member for Halifax West. Again, I think that is a responsible position that an opposition party should take.

To politicize this war into the opportunism we hear during question period or that we hear members opposite making is frightening. Frankly it is dangerous. We are not going into a war by committee. We are not going into a war where we have to say "Hold on, we will get back to you. We have not had a vote yet. There are 301 people in our parliament who need to vote on this". We would be tying the hands of the military leaders. We would be tying the hands of the government to require such a thing to occur. I do not think Canadians are fooled by the rhetoric which would suggest that somehow we should do it that way.

I have a couple of points about what is going on in the region. Many will recall a debate in this place that was somewhat rancorous. It was about whether or not members of parliament should have a small Canadian flag on their desks. I recall it rather well. There were cars painted with the Canadian flag driving around Parliament Hill; all kinds of my nationalism is bigger than your nationalism; all kinds of attempts at one-upmanship. Frankly, I think we were as guilty as some members opposite who engaged in that debate.

My colleague, the member from Owen Sound, made a very interesting remark to me. He said "What really bothers me about this is it is nationalism and it is dangerous". There is a difference between being proud of our country and standing up and shouting and yelling we are the best or we are the strongest. What we are seeing in Kosovo and in Yugoslavia is nationalism and tribalism gone mad.

In 1990 as a member of the provincial legislature I was part of a parliamentary delegation that witnessed the first free elections since the second world war in Croatia. I spent time in Zagreb and went down the coast and met with many Croatian people. I remember on election day people queuing up to vote with tears in their eyes because they had not had that freedom under Tito. This was their opportunity to say "*Zivjela Hrvatska*". This was their opportunity to vote for independence, to vote for a strong Croatia. We are in the same region.

The other night when I was watching a newscast I heard one of the commentators, I think it was Henry Kissinger say that what we

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have in this part of the world is irreconcilable hatred. We have to think about that. It is absolutely true. I do not know how we resolve the hatred and the passion that people feel. I am not sure we could even understand it, never mind resolve it. I do not know how we can suggest that we are going to magically sit down at a peace table and resolve a conflict that is not 10 or 20 years old but hundreds of years old, perhaps thousands of years old. That conflict is there in such a personal fashion it is hard to conceive.

In no circumstances could I support putting our soldiers at risk in that theatre. To suggest that we have a vote on this issue would do that and it would send the wrong message. We should be supporting our personnel. I support them as I hope all members will.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

Maybe he does not know it, but there have been votes in the House to decide whether our troops would take part in military missions abroad. I will not give a list of these votes since somebody else did it in a previous speech.

• (1645)

So there is a precedent in the House where parliament was used as an important tool in the area of foreign policy.

I want to ask the member if he thinks that, considering the seriousness of the current situation in Kosovo and in the Balkans, a vote in parliament would be an important tool that should be used by the government to tell the international community that not only do the Government of Canada and the parties represented in the House of Commons agree on this issue, but that all members of the House of Commons share the same position with regard to the need to send in ground troops.

Would it not have some political weight and would it not advance the cause of democracy if we showed all Canadians that the members they elected to represent them in parliament had the opportunity to vote on this most important issue?

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, the sentiment, the principle or the idea that the Canadian parliament should vote on matters of national and international interest is valid. However the practical reality of having a vote and having some kind of potential for the opposition perhaps to use it for political statements, or for an opportunity to try to somehow embarrass the government, is the wrong kind of issue to do that with.

The member knows that what they are doing is absolutely appropriate. They are putting forward a motion that will generate a vote on an opposition day so that we all have the opportunity to

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stand in the House and put our position forward as to whether or not we support the government on the actions that are being taken.

I think we have to be careful and we have to depoliticize as much as possible the issue of whether or not ground troops are sent in. I pray to God that will not have to happen, but I fear that looking at the situation that it might well have to happen. We have to give them flexibility and the ability to deal with that at the military level.

**Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment or two followed by a short question. It seems like the member for Mississauga West often engages in demagogic attacks at important times when we should be discussing matters of national interest. We are not under any imminent threat of a strike by Serbians or anyone else, so there is lots of time to debate the issue.

The House has not been given the full opportunity to debate it. No opportunity for a vote was given. His own prime minister, his own leader, when the war was going on in Kuwait accused the previous prime minister of being an American stooge for not bringing the issue before the House for a vote when he supported the Americans in that.

What does he think of the situation now that his party is in the position of being the governing party of the country? Do they want to be thought of the same way, or will they allow a vote finally to take place on the issue because there is time and a real need?

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I will accept the fact that I have stood from time to time in this place and thrown castigations at the opposition parties. I did not do that in this speech, precisely for the reason that the hon. member mentions. This is much too serious an issue for us to be worrying about partisan shots at one another. We can live to fight another day on those issues, and I am sure we will.

I even quoted the Leader of the Opposition in a positive light from *Hansard* and congratulated him for his statement. I quoted the New Democratic member for Halifax West. I congratulated the Bloc for using an opposition day in what I view to be an appropriate manner.

This is much too serious an issue for us to be politicizing it and taking cheap shots at one another. I certainly did not do that and have no intention of doing that.

• (1650)

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to address the motion proposed by the Bloc Quebecois. It does not happen often on this side of the House that the Bloc would receive congratulations from the official opposition.

I believe the debate is certainly well timed. It could be carried a bit further, but so be it. The fact of the matter is that it is before the House for debate and actually for a vote to encourage, if nothing else, the government to take the right steps, that is to take a vote on the issue of entering or escalating our presence in the Kosovo crisis.

I have been listening to some of the comments on the issue of voting on this motion. I will read the motion again for anyone who may be viewing or listening:

That this House demand that the government submit to a debate and a vote in the House—

I also include the amendment of the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry: “prior to the possibility of”.

—the sending of Canadian soldiers to the Balkans who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations on the ground in Kosovo and the Balkan region.

Over the short time I have been sitting in the House listening to the debate, the comments from that side of the House toward the opposition or toward anyone seeking to have a vote on the issue are amazing. It has nothing to do per se with the events happening over there.

First, alarm bells have been sent out: “We will not have time for a debate in the House on this issue because it could be an emergency”. It is not an emergency. There is ample time to debate the topic about sending ground forces in. There is plenty of time for the government to prepare and for the opposition to receive pertinent information so that all hon. members of the House could be well informed about a vote. As well there would be a substantial show of support throughout. There is no way out once members stand in the House to take a vote on an issue as important as this one.

The opposition has again been accused of trying to turn the House into a congressional system. What on earth does that mean? To have a democratic process involved in the sending of troops, or whether or not one supports sending troops or escalating our presence in the Kosovo crisis, what on earth does that have to do with turning the House into a congressional system?

**Ms. Val Meredith:** It means where one person does not make all the decisions.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Yes, as my hon. colleague said, it means that one person does not make all the decisions. That is what seems to be the point of greatest fear on the other side of the House and the government has clear support, if a vote is taken, even from the opposition members.

In this case I inform the other side of the House that the Reform Party, the official opposition, supports the government’s role and the troops in NATO thus far.

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The hon. member for Mississauga West made a very accurate statement about our leader and his position, that we did in fact support the government. He could have continued on to inform the House and those viewing the debate that our leader also advised the Prime Minister and the House that if any escalation were contemplated which might require ground troops being sent in, the Leader of the Opposition clearly stated that we would seek to have a vote in the House on the matter and another debate. That is the conclusion of the opposition leader's statement.

There was also a statement from the Liberal side relating to the issue of the vote, that to vote on this issue would put the troops at risk. Can anyone on the other side of the House tell me how a vote would put our troops at risk? I cannot understand that.

• (1655)

How would we be jeopardizing their safety by having a vote on this issue? I would like to be shown how we would place our troops at risk by the mere fact that we would be debating and voting on the issue.

I can tell members that our troops would feel very supported if the majority of members in the House rose in support of their action over there. I believe they deserve our support.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence brought forward a statement accusing the opposition of political jockeying. What are we jockeying for? The majority of opposition members support our role and the government's role in this NATO crisis. Where is the political jockeying?

All we are seeking is to have a vote on the issue in parliament. It is that simple. There is no political jockeying involved. It is a simple declaration that we support this initiative but we want a vote on it in the House. That is democracy.

All these matters have been raised in the last few minutes. Another statement was directed from the Liberal side toward the opposition, that the opposition was using this issue and this motion for political statements and posturing. Is this the actual view of the Liberal government of the opposition that has claimed time and time again that we are supporting the action over there just because we are asking for a vote?

There are some other underlying reasons the Liberal government is accusing the opposition of all these things. The parliamentary secretary to the foreign affairs minister stated, as reported in *Hansard*, that historically successive Canadian governments had maintained that it was best to present unanimity from all sides of the House on a decision of this gravity and magnitude.

How would it even know that? Since when has the government side been speaking for every member in the House? It is not

speaking for every member in the House. There is an opposition here which has a role to play in the parliamentary system. It is not speaking for every member in the House, in spite of what the foreign affairs parliamentary secretary had to say.

Those are all the reasons brought forward in the last two hours of the debate. The accusations have been plentiful on that side trying to discredit or put down the opposition.

I am not speaking for every party but I certainly am speaking for our own. We support the government action in NATO on the Kosovo crisis. Why would the government side continually want to shut down the issue of a vote? There is only one reason I can think of. It does not want votes on important issues to take place. It does not want the democratic process to actually—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I am sorry to interrupt, but did the member for Calgary Northeast indicate he was sharing his time with the member for Fraser Valley?

**Mr. Art Hanger:** I am.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The member has one minute to go.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker, for not letting you know earlier.

Obviously the government does not want votes on important issues, even if it means having to send ground troops into Kosovo and place the lives of men and women in the military in possible danger. It does not want to vote on it.

• (1700)

That is the history. We could go through a list of other things like hepatitis C compensation. There was no vote on that issue and it was an important issue. The issue of APEC funding consumed much debate in the House. There were many questions from the official opposition and other opposition parties to the government, but there was no debate.

We could also talk about the issue that brought some infamy to the secretary of state for financial institutions, which is the taxing of single parents or single income families. It is shameful. We could talk about the banning of kiddie porn. The list goes on and on. That is the real reason this government does not want to have a vote on the issue of Kosovo.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain to people watching that this is an opposition day. Each year each of the four opposition parties receives a certain number of days on which they can pick any topic they want to debate. Today we are debating a motion by the Bloc which has to do with Kosovo.

*Supply*

We just listened to the third speech made by a Reform member. In that speech, as in the ones we heard this morning, there was the usual criticism of the government and much sanctimonious talk about democracy and how we should be dealing with Kosovo. By the way, this is our fourth debate on Kosovo. What people watching may not realize is that the Reform Party had an opposition day on which it could choose any topic it wished. That opposition day followed the all-night debate on Kosovo. The Reform Party picked a Mickey Mouse motion. It was a tragicomic, partisan motion about alienation.

My question to the Reform member is this: If he is so keen on this issue, as he purports to be, why is it they picked the comic strip motion the day following the Kosovo debate instead of supporting the Bloc motion today? That is not a party which normally supports the Bloc. It is the party which says "No more prime ministers from Quebec".

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member, up to a point. I think he has been rather unduly critical of our party; in fact, very much so in his statements. I believe that nothing is comic in the House, including our opposition day motion.

However, the issue of the vote is clear. We asked for unanimous consent to have a vote on this issue the day it was debated in the House. We had an all-night debate on the issue. What happened? The Liberal side said no. The next day it was the same thing; the Liberal side said no. We asked for that vote and they would not agree to it.

I encourage the hon. member not to hurl these kinds of statements back to the opposition.

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Reform member undoubtedly heard the hon. Liberal member who spoke before him quote my words, in which I indicated that we felt very strongly that every avenue should be pursued to try to bring an end to the useless bloodshed. One of the avenues we have been pursuing quite rigorously in light of that is the uniting for peace resolution. We feel that it is important to get this issue before the general assembly of the United Nations. That seems to be constantly shoved aside by the government. It is almost as if it does not want to bring the matter before a larger international body other than NATO.

I would ask the hon. member what his views are with respect to that suggestion.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that every effort should be pursued diplomatically while the issue of this attack is ongoing. Diplomatically it is incumbent upon our government to pursue it at great length. I applaud the member for taking that initiative. I will tell him personally that I will support the initiative to see that it

does go to the UN as one more step in attempting to bring a reasonable resolution to the crisis in Kosovo.

• (1705)

**Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, whether we have the United Nations or a united nation, I believe that a vote in this House would mean that we would be speaking with one voice. We would be a united nation, uniting behind our troops for their morale and our allies for support. It would be more than just the largest party in this House—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The member for Calgary Northeast has 15 seconds to wind up.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that question. That is exactly what it shows, that this House, on a standing vote, with everyone being accounted for, is supportive of our troops and the initiative we have embarked upon with NATO. I agree with him and I thank him for the question.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to debate this very important issue. A very important motion has been brought forward by the Bloc Quebecois today. It basically boils down to whether the House of Commons should not only be consulted but also have an opportunity to vote on any deployment of troops, especially ground troops, in the Kosovo region.

I will take the House back to 1995 when I brought forward Bill C-295. That bill would have provided an approval process for any deployment of troops overseas in a combat role. I was on the foreign affairs committee at the time. What triggered this bill was an all-party defence committee report which was tabled in the House in the fall of 1994. Part of that report stated that defence policy cannot be made in private and the results simply announced. Canadians will not accept that, nor should they. Nor should the government commit our forces to service abroad without a full parliamentary debate and accounting for that decision. It is our expectation that, except in extraordinary circumstances, such a debate would always take place prior to any such deployment.

That was the unanimous decision of an all-party defence committee report of 1994, which followed the major defence and foreign policy review. I see some members here who took part in that report. One of the conclusions they came to was that not only should parliament be consulted, but that consultation should take place, except in extraordinary circumstances, prior to any deployment of troops overseas.

The all-party committee which recommended that would be saddened, as I am today, to see that six fighter bombers went over to Kosovo, then twelve and now eighteen. We do not have any idea of what other commitments the government will be making

because we take note in our debates but we never vote and we never know before the government acts. This is in complete contradiction to an all-party decision, which I think is even more powerful than the government, which says that is not the right way to do it, and the government does not enjoy broad Canadian support when it acts unilaterally.

I brought up other things that are very germane to the debate we are having today. If this bill had been adopted we would not be having this debate because it would not be necessary. The member for Red Deer brought forward two similar motions since Bill C-295. They were all along the same line and all of them were defeated by the government.

The benefit of having a vote in the House of Commons is that through this political process Canadians would decide Canada's role. Our reason for sending ground troops must meet the satisfaction of the Canadian people. Many people in this debate and in the previous take note debates have talked about the necessity of military intervention. On this side of the House we are not denying that it is a necessary role and that Canadian troops need to be and are a part of it. However, the political process, the approval of the House before those troops are actually deployed, is the very least that the opposition demands on behalf of Canadians. We all should be involved in sending troops overseas when they are put in harm's way.

• (1710)

Second, I believe that asking for that vote, not just the debate but the vote, would allow the government to gauge support for the mission before Canada actually commits troops. I think it would be unanimous. I have not heard a single member stand to say that we should not be over there doing what we can to stop the ethnic cleansing. I think it would be a unanimous vote.

This an opportunity for the government to gauge the level of support. Parliament should be the instrument. We should not be reading the *National Post* or the *Globe and Mail* and waiting for Léger & Léger to do a poll. That is not the way to do it. If the government is as sure as it says it is, and in this case I think it is reading the tea leaves pretty well, it should put it to parliament, let all of us vote, and go forward with the confidence of knowing that the House and not just the government supports the move.

Third, a vote would strengthen the ministers' hand. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs goes to Brussels and enters into negotiations with our NATO allies, and when the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence deal with cabinet, it strengthens their hand to know they are going forward with the confidence of the House behind them.

This an opportunity for them to say to cabinet "We have to move and this is why we have to move. You saw the vote. You saw the House. The House brought its decision down and we had better

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listen". It is not just us, it is the Canadian people who are represented. This is an opportunity to strengthen the ministers' hand by having a vote in this place.

As a corollary to that, I have some fears with the government having made this decision. What would happen if sometime down the road one of the parties opposite started to criticize the decision? What if, heaven forbid, someone was killed? It could happen. It is a war zone. If someone was killed, a member on this side of the House could get cold feet and say, "I sort of supported it in my speech, but I sure never would have voted for it", which is probably malarkey. However, by asking members to stand and vote, to actually stand in their places and tell us what they think, there will be no turning back. They would be saying "I supported the decision. We sent our men and women overseas and I am behind them all the way".

This brings me to my fourth point. A vote sends a message to the troops like nothing else can. We bring forward motions. It was tried last Friday to bring a motion forward regarding Wayne Gretzky. There was a member today who talked about Wayne Gretzky. We bring forward motions of support about things which, frankly, are not terribly life threatening. I am a great hockey fan, but it does not stir me like the very deep, troubled emotions I have over what is going on in Kosovo.

We could send a message to our troops by standing and voting in support of a measure that the government could bring forward. Then we would be sending a message to our troops that not only did we stand here literally, but we are standing with them symbolically as they do Canada's work abroad, putting themselves in harm's way, to who knows what kind of detriment in the months to come.

The last time I spoke to this topic I told the story of a person from my riding, Mark Isfeld, who was killed in a land mine accident in Bosnia. It was a very sad moment in my community. There was a huge funeral and a terrible outpouring of grief that followed in our community, which is not that large.

Heaven forbid that would happen, but before it could happen I would hope that members of the House would be able to stand and say "We are with you, members of our armed forces. We are standing here, and by standing here we are standing with you. We appreciate what you are doing for peace, what you are doing to prevent more slaughter and more ethnic cleansing. We are with you as you stand to represent the values that Canadians hold dear about truth and peace and trying to do the right thing in a very difficult situation". However, we cannot do that in the same way unless we vote.

• (1715)

I am happy to support the motion. It is a half measure, given that we are already involved in the Balkan conflict, but I think all Canadians would like to see their members of parliament stand and

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be counted. I for one would stand and say "Ready, aye ready" along with our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, just as the Reform Party did, we have many criticisms of the consultation and discussion process. This process will not end in a vote as it should. This should have been voted on long time ago, especially since the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs has recommended it.

I just received a document that shows how little the government wants to inform us and how much it lacks transparency. I have just received a note by a person responsible for the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade that informs us that the briefing on Kosovo that was scheduled for 10 o'clock tomorrow at National Defence Headquarters will not take place.

I would like to ask my colleague of the Reform Party what he thinks of the last minute cancellation of this briefing. Also what does he think about the meeting tomorrow at the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade. That meeting should last all of 30 minutes, and that is going to be the only briefing the members of the House will get. Will we have a briefing on Thursday, as promised? Maybe it too will be cancelled. So, can my friend from the Reform Party say what he thinks about these cancellations and this lack of transparency on the part of the government?

[*English*]

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I can sympathize with the member who brings up the problem of trying to get all the information on the table in a short, 30-minute briefing in a formal committee structure.

As we have seen so often, a minister might make a 10 or 15 minute presentation which leaves other parties—not to mention government members who may or should have questions about the same issue—with maybe two three-minute questions, maybe the same amount of time for answers and then no follow-up. It is a very inadequate briefing for something that appears to be escalating quite rapidly.

We sent six fighter bombers, then twelve and now eighteen. Negotiations are taking place in NATO circles regarding numbers; 50,000 to 100,000 ground troops. It is a huge discussion and should be part of a huge debate that should, I would argue, eventually lead to a vote, and not a vote just in committee where eight or ten people might be well informed for 30 minutes.

A motion should be brought forward by the minister with a proposal in hand giving the House the situation and the military and political objective. We all know the moral objective is to stop the ethnic cleansing. However, the minister should come to the

House and let all of us be briefed, not just the few who are fortunate enough to attend committee.

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has been following the debate in the House. I am sure he is aware that over the course of the past century we have entered into quite a number of conflicts all of which have primarily been done without a resolution of this House. We entered into the second world war, the Korean conflict and so on without a resolution of this House.

Has the hon. member read the resolution? I am curious as to what it is he is actually voting on. The resolution states that this House demand that the government submit to a debate beforehand with a vote in the House of the possibility of sending Canadian soldiers to the Balkans who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations on the ground of the Kosovo and Balkan region. Is he voting on whether we have a vote? Is he voting on whether we are hypothetically sending troops? Is he in effect sanctioning what the government is already doing, namely having already committed airplanes to the conflict and to bombing missions? Is he sanctioning a military operation, in which case is he prepared to—

• (1720)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I am sorry, I need to interrupt. The member for Fraser Valley has 60 seconds for a response.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I do have the motion in front of me as amended. It is pretty straightforward. It says that this House demand that the government submit to a debate and a vote in the House prior to the possibility of sending Canadian soldiers to the Balkans who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations.

From my point of view and taking this at face value, we are asking the government, prior to sending people in as peacekeepers or into combat in a military zone, to submit a proposal to the House for debate and a vote. It is straightforward, it is the same in both official languages and it is easy to understand. I encourage all hon. members to support the motion. It is a step forward for democracy.

**Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the debate today.

The proposition before the House today is very interesting. It is as if there was not already precedence in the House of Commons. The House of Commons works on the concept of precedence.

This government and governments before it have allowed soldiers, sailors and airmen to go offshore, either to act on behalf of the United Nations in peacekeeping or peacemaking; or, in the case of the second world war, to go to war; or, in the case of the Korean conflict, to go into another area of live fire and face death. These

conflicts were not voted on and have never been voted on in the House of Commons.

We are looking at a precedence. We have given this subject many hours of debate. As a consequence, we keep hearing "Why do you not do this?" We are following the practice of the well-worn and well-tried system of the British House of Commons theory which is to practice by precedence.

This breaks the parliamentary practice. The proposal put forward by the sponsoring member is hypothetical. If we ask a hypothetical question it is generally turfed out. We do not work on hypothetical situations in the House of Commons. We work on real situations.

In looking at the situation as presented, it would and could be unworkable. I do not want to get into a debate on it. I feel it is ultra vires because it breaks the precedence in the House. We believe the energies of the House are best directed toward considering ways of resolving the crisis in Kosovo not engaging in procedural wrangling like this.

The Canadian parliamentary system responsible for deploying the Canadian forces lies with the government. It is the responsibility of the government, through the Speech from the Throne, through the empowerment of the defence minister and through the government as such. We should not go off trying to invent a new form of style in the government at this time.

The opposition should remember that we sent troops to Cyprus, to the gulf war and to the Golan Heights. We have sent troops offshore and many of them at the request of the United Nations. In this case there is an explicit commitment involved. We are a member of a security alliance which has asked us to participate in the action in Kosovo and thereabouts. As legitimate alliance members, we are being asked to participate on that team and we are doing that. As members of this group, and through information from our foreign affairs committee and defence committee, we know it is our solid commitment to take part.

• (1725)

I do not know why we are coming up with all of this cobweb stuff, with a little bit of angel dust on it, when it is not the reality. The reality is that we have a commitment in writing to participate with our defensive alliance. We should make that commitment and we will make that commitment.

I should mention at this time that I will be splitting my time.

The government delivered on this and we said it would have taken note debates and have an airing. If there was an airing where we were doing something wrong, it would have been picked up sufficiently by the opposition and the opposition's commitments would be there. However, there has been no such identification of somewhere that we are off on the wrong track. We are on track by

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being with our allies. We are on track by trying to bring peace to a bewildered and beleaguered country.

We have no plans to deploy any armed soldiers on the ground in Kosovo at the moment. That does not eliminate the possibility of this happening. We always have to keep paratus in front of us as the model of readiness in the infantry.

Very few of our NATO allies have put the Kosovo incident to a vote. The United Kingdom has not voted nor debated this issue. France has not voted. President Chirac decided to intervene and consult the legislature but has had no vote. We are not off centre with our allies.

The motion before us could be a very unworkable precedent if it passed. It suggests that it would be appropriate for the House of Commons to micromanage the aspects of troop deployment in the Balkans, even on simple housekeeping items.

Canadian forces members are currently deployed on nine missions of varying size in the Balkans, each of these managed on a day to day basis by established Canadian forces policies with respect to personnel rotation and replacement. Under the terms of the motion, all of these decisions would be subject to House approval.

The BQ would have the House convene to vote on whether a cook could be dispatched to Croatia. Even deciding to dispatch a rescue team for a downed Canadian pilot could be subject to a House vote. The motion would slow down Canada's ability to respond swiftly and flexibly to the kind of rapidly developing humanitarian crisis that has become so much the norm in the past. The cold war conflicts, of which Kosovo was just the latest example in the Balkans, would draw us in.

None of our current missions in the Balkans were voted on by the House. There is no question that the swift deployment saved innocent lives and, for us, saving lives will always be the priority over procedural wrangling.

Mr. Milosevic's unacceptable conduct predates the current crisis in Kosovo. His use of the Yugoslav army to support fellow Serbs during the war in Croatia and Bosnia materially contributed to the ethnic cleansing that occurred during those conflicts.

Prior to Mr. Milosevic's rise to power, Kosovo was made up mostly of ethnic Albanians who had a constitutional autonomy within Yugoslavia. This right was stripped away by Mr. Milosevic in 1989 and from that point forward he has deliberately worked to impoverish the oppressed Kosovars.

Since early last year his security forces have mounted a campaign in which innocent civilians have been subjected to ethnic atrocities similar to those we witnessed in Croatia and Bosnia. We

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were part of the European community monitoring mission for the United Nations protection force from 1992 to 1995. More than 1,300 Canadian forces personnel remain in Bosnia at this time as part of the NATO led stabilization force.

• (1730)

Our commitment to peace and stability in the region is well established. This commitment is a logical extension of Canada's longstanding policy of promoting international peace and stability.

A diplomatic solution to the Kosovo conflict has always been the course preferred by Canada and its allies. In March 1998 the United Nations passed resolution 1160 calling on all parties to reach a peaceful settlement. This was followed in September 1998 by UN resolution 1199, that both sides cease hostilities and improve the humanitarian situation.

Regarding parliamentary consultation, on October 1, 1998 all parties agreed that Canada should join our NATO allies on air operations. They proved necessary. We had a second meeting on February 17, 1999. There was hope that a peace agreement could be signed and that our involvement would be consistent with that of a peacekeeping force. On April 12, 1999 when the House once again discussed the events in Kosovo, all parties supported Canada's position to participate in the NATO led air operations.

In addition, both the defence and foreign affairs standing committees held a number of meetings on the developments in Kosovo. There was a joint meeting on March 31 of the ministers of foreign affairs, national defence and international co-operation and they outlined the government's response to these crises. On April 15 the Minister of Foreign Affairs appeared before the foreign affairs committee to discuss the developments in Kosovo. All interested members were invited.

That is involvement of the whole House at all levels.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague and I hope he will stay with us to answer a few questions.

I do not believe that Canadians and Quebecers see any procedural wrangling, as the hon. member said, in the fact that we not only want to debate the deployment of troops but also to vote on the issue. This is the purpose of our motion, which does not appear excessive to me, and which would not bind the government in the future, although it might be interesting that parliament be called upon to debate and vote on the issue of sending large contingents.

The member's other argument, actually the second argument I heard today, is that we should not change the established practice, based on the British House of Commons' model.

First of all, this practice has not always been followed, because there have been votes in the House prior to sending troops abroad. If the hon. member had listened to the speech of the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska, he would know that votes have been asked for by his party, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who was the foreign affairs critic at the time his party was the official opposition, and that this practice had been changed from time to time.

Therefore, practices can be changed and I would add that it is even advisable to do so. I would like to know what the hon. member across the way thinks of what Mr. Clinton said today, when he asked Congress to unanimously and immediately support a supplementary budget bill authorizing additional funds for the American action in Kosovo. President Clinton said that these funds are required urgently and immediately by necessity and that Congress would clearly serve national interests by dealing with the issue.

Why would the Canadian parliament not vote on this issue, like the U.S. Congress?

• (1735)

[*English*]

**Mr. John Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, first of all the proposition put before us is not in line. It is a hypothetical situation which the hon. member should know well.

Second, the Americans have often gone back to congress when they need more money for offshore fighting. There is a precedent. This is nothing new. It is a typical redressing and refuelling of the number of people they will send over there by making a budget increase.

A hypothetical question is something we should not vote on. Also the American analogy does not work. That is a precedent, an American practice in their politics when the president asks for more money to aid in a situation such as has taken place with the NATO operation in Kosovo.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the member had to say. His contributions to this debate on the opposition motion by the Bloc were very useful.

We have heard the Reform Party vigorously support this motion. We know that the Reform Party has had its own opposition day since the all night debate on Kosovo. Does my colleague have any thoughts on why it is the Reform Party chose to debate a very trivial motion for an entire day following the Kosovo debate, rather than put a motion of this type forward itself?

**Mr. John Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party does a number of things that do not always make sense. I was not here when that motion was put forward so I cannot speak with any

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authority upon it. I would just say that I cannot answer that question with qualified authority.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, very briefly I would like the member to explain why his colleague asked him to state the Reform Party's intentions and positions rather than asking the Reform Party. Can he explain that?

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I realize the member has only just joined us, but I did ask the same question of the Reform Party earlier this day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not think that is really a point of order, but perhaps the hon. member for Perth—Middlesex would care to respond.

**Mr. John Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, again I do not feel I am in a position to make a response to that question. I would be working in the dark on that one.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that excluding the last several hours of debate, this House has already had the opportunity over the last couple of months to have 26 hours of debate on the important issue of Kosovo. Over 100 members have participated. There has been 20 to 25 hours of work in committees. There has been a major examination during the study of the estimates by the committee to determine the responsibility and accountability of the government on this important issue.

It is a little strange that there has been these great calls about lack of information, lack of consultation. In fact if we look at the record of many of the other countries in the NATO organization there has been no debates, no votes whatsoever.

I point that out not for reasons of comparison, but simply to point out that in this parliament we have established very important advances in engaging members of parliament in the decisions relating to foreign policy and international activities.

For example, I heard the previous question to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary. I want to point out one thing. I was here during the time of the gulf war. The warships were sent from Canada in August. Parliament was not even reconvened until the end of September, almost five weeks later. There was not any parliamentary involvement whatsoever. There was not even a debate for another month beyond that. We went almost two and a half months without any kind of parliamentary consideration, even though Canada had committed itself to a major enterprise in the gulf war.

• (1740)

When the vote did come a month or two later, it was not to authorize troops or ground involvement, it was simply a vote to

endorse a UN resolution. That was the vote, pure and simple. All precedents that have been cited by hon. members opposite simply do not conform with the parliamentary history or the parliamentary facts.

The fact is important. I always pay great deference to my predecessors. I point to the statement made by the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark who was the Minister of External Affairs at that time. I notice that he took occasion this morning to talk about parliamentary responsibility. On September 25 he said that we cannot always wait for deliberative bodies to deliberate and act, which is why he said he would not guarantee a vote in the House of Commons on the use of Canadian forces.

When we go back and cite history and precedent, it is important to get the facts right. What we decided when we became the government was to change all that, to open up the format so that parliament would have the opportunity to be heard, to hear the voices. We already have. Over 100 members of parliament have expressed themselves very clearly on the most unmistakable commitments.

I want to acknowledge the fact that the House has made itself unified on the question of the reprehensible terrorism that is being wrought on the people of Kosovo by the Milosevic regime. We have made ourselves heard on the need to come to the aid of the hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Indeed I would say we have recognized that as we go through a transition in world affairs, we are also making a very major statement as Canadians toward the acknowledgement that new humanitarian standards are being established in the world. We are establishing new norms of behaviour which say that even the so-called sacred altar of national sovereignty should not stand in the way of protecting the lives of innocent human beings, of civilians who are being repressed and terrorized by their own government.

I acknowledge that that is a change. Just as the world has changed in geological terms, there is a shifting of the plates of international relations. I am pleased to say that as Canadians over the last several years we have increasingly been on the forefront of establishing a need for new standards and new norms.

We say innocent people should not be killed by those weapons. Whether it is the land mines campaign, advancing the work of the international court, or standing up against the trade in small arms, it is all part of the same fundamental, elementary process. This is to say that we now must begin to provide higher levels of protection for the safety and security of individuals, of human beings, of people.

That is why it strikes me as somewhat curious that the House would spend so much of its time on the question of a vote as opposed to getting down to the essentials, which is how does this country prepare itself to take the action required for that protection

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of human life, of individual security, of human responsibility and safety? That is what Canadians are interested in.

As the Prime Minister said in the previous debate last Monday, each circumstance will present itself. The government will make a choice as to what the nature of that parliamentary consultation and that parliamentary role will be. But to insist now on a vote on something that has not happened yet simply runs contrary to the very essence of relevance of the House. Please do not expect us to vote on proposition, speculation, what might be, what could be, what should be.

We want a government to make a decision and bring it to the House. That is what it is about. Under the cabinet parliamentary style of government, we assume that we give responsibility to confidence of the House, of parliament to a government. If the House does not like it, then it has every right to take that confidence away. It can put a motion of non-confidence in the government.

• (1745)

As my hon. friend pointed out earlier, there have been occasions when the opposition has done that. The Reform Party did not do it in the last motion, but it had the opportunity to do it as it has done in economic matters and other matters. That is the way parliament works. Those are the fundamentals of parliament. It is not to suggest that somewhere, someplace down the road, there may be a commitment and that we should therefore tie our hands.

In the incredibly fluid situation that we are in, we are finding out that a decision one day may not be what we need the next day. Changes have to be made. There has to be a flexibility of response. There has to be the capacity to make judgment calls because we are also working inside an alliance.

Canada is not acting as a sole agent. We are not in this by ourselves. We are members of a broad alliance of a wide range of countries. We are engaged on a number of fronts. There is the military campaign and the incredible commitments to humanitarian assistance that we are making. There is active diplomacy going on. That requires the responsibility and capacity to be able to make those judgments, to be able to make those assessments, and to be able to try to respond to the circumstances as they are.

I do not think that any hon. member of the House would want to provide a handcuff on the capacity of the Government of Canada, representing Canadians, to make those judgment calls and to be able to respond, but to do so in the full recognition that parliament has a role.

There is no other place in the world in which governments show up every day to be questioned by members of the opposition. When we talk about accountability, where else would it take place as it does here every day? President Clinton does not show up in Congress every day. The British Prime Minister goes once every

two weeks. Our Prime Minister is in his seat every day to answer questions on where they come from and who provides them.

When we talk about the role of parliament, I suggest to members opposite that it is a vital role, a critical role, and a role that is being exercised very well by parliament. Hon. members on both sides of the House are deeply engaged in this critical issue. Whether it is through caucus meetings, their questions in the day, by showing up for briefing meetings or by making their commentaries known, parliament is engaged on behalf of Canadians.

It would be a serious mistake if we all of a sudden tried to put a restraint or limitation on what parliament can do, adapting day by day to the changing circumstances. We have had the opportunity to debate the principles, the fundamental objectives that Canadians do not want to see a government repress its own people and deny them the dignity of their rights. It is prepared to take action necessary through a broad based alliance to establish a new standard of human security which provides the sense that individuals in the world, someday, somewhere, will know that they can count upon the international community to protect their integrity as human beings and their rights as members of the human family.

**Mr. Lee Morrison:** Mr. Speaker, before I proceed with my intervention, in recognition of the minister's appearance in the House this afternoon I wonder if we could seek unanimous consent to extend the period for questions and comments by 10 minutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** No.

**Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, if anybody from any other democracy, I might say any real democracy, were to read the motion, it would give him or her cause to pause and reflect that we would actually be debating in the House a motion calling upon the government to let us have votes on matters of grave national importance. This is unheard of.

I have lived in countries where parliaments always operate this way, where the government puts forth legislation and it is immediately approved by all and sundry because that is the only choice they have. I would really hope for something better in the Parliament of Canada. As I read this motion, what is being proposed is simply that this House have a voice—

• (1750)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, if he wishes to respond.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy:** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to use this opportunity to respond to my hon. colleague. He asked what people in other democracies would think. In the United Kingdom, the mother of the parliamentary system, there were no debates or votes; in Belgium, no debates and no votes; in France, no debates

and no votes; in the Netherlands, two debates and no vote; and in the United States of America it is a decision made by the president.

Under the circumstances there is the Canadian record of coming to the House for debate which authorized the mandate to participate in the Kosovo mission; a debate which authorized, through the expression of views of members of the House, a peacekeeping implementation; and a debate last Monday night that went into all hours of the morning. We had these briefings. I think Canadians can stand proud.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs minister has mentioned countries where there has not been a vote. I could mention one where members voted twice, and that country is Germany, the peace plan sponsor.

Canada could have shown leadership and put the matter to a vote in the House.

When members change sides in the House, they tend to forget certain things. I wonder if the minister will recall the following statement "As we now stand, in the present situation we are looking at very long-protracted sanctions in the gulf—which could take months. We are looking at a very major military build-up. . . and we are looking at a potential military option. We would like to get some assurance specifically from the government that we will not engage in any offensive action in this region unless there is a consent of parliament". This is a quote from the current foreign affairs minister.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy:** Mr. Speaker, this is what the parliamentary process is designed to do: to give parliament an opportunity to state its position and consensus in debate.

I repeat that 100 members of this House have expressed their opinion, and that we have had a 26-hour debate and three briefing sessions for members. It is a great example of what I said 10 years ago.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister mentioned that the only vote before was to endorse a UN resolution. We would certainly welcome that. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I would ask the minister if he would use Canada's seat on the security council to formally present a uniting for peace resolution to get this matter before the General Assembly of the United Nations. Then we might have something to vote on by way of endorsing that resolution.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I have had some very good exchanges about this matter over the last week or so. That is a demonstration of how parliament can work,

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of how members of the opposition can make their contributions and recommendations known.

I simply point out to the hon. member that today the secretary general appointed a special representative. He has been working assiduously to try to develop a resolution of the security council. Why that? It is because under the charter an article 7 resolution does carry a broad mandate that will apply to all members. If we can achieve that, and there is a lot of work going into it, it would clearly be the preferable option. That is what we are backing right now. That is why we are working so hard along with the secretary general.

As I said to the hon. member, if it does not work then the kind of recommendation he is making should be actively considered. Let us give the best shot we have right now to help the secretary general.

**Mr. Lee Morrison:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if you would be kind enough to define for us the meaning of the term rubber stamp parliament. I think the hon. minister might like—

• (1755)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands knows that the Speaker does not offer definitions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the foreign affairs minister for being in the House to listen to my speech. I know that he came straight from his office specially to listen to me. I am glad he did because I will remind him of some of his famous statements. I quoted one a few minutes ago but I will repeat it for him.

I ask the hon. members to identify who made the following statements. The first statement from the minister that I would like to quote was made on September 24, 1990:

As we now stand in the present situation, we are looking at very long, protracted sanctions in the gulf which could take months—

He was talking about the gulf war.

—We are looking at a very major military build-up . . . We are looking at a potential military option.

And most importantly, this last comment:

We would like to get some assurance specifically from the government—the Progressive Conservatives were in office at the time—that we will not engage in any offensive action in this region unless there is a consent of Parliament.

That is what the present minister stated.

The same minister, who was in opposition at the time, also wanted—I will quote him, if I may, and he can say so if he

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disagrees—to propose an amendment to have the House reconvene earlier than it was supposed to after the Christmas break. He said:

This is a way in which parliament will be allowed to present itself as the forum for decision making, not the Cabinet, the ministers or the Prime Minister but the people of Canada, through their elected representatives.

The present minister of Foreign Affairs introduced that motion on January 15 1991.

Further, speaking of Canadians, he said:

They know that there are no decisions more crucial for a government than those concerning war and peace. It is up to each state to make its own decisions. They want to make sure these decisions are made by all Canadians and that this forum, the Parliament of Canada, is respected.

The distinguished author of this quote is the current foreign affairs minister.

I will go on as the members opposite had some good ones. On January 15, 1991, they said, still concerning the Persian gulf war:

I maintain that the government does not, in the circumstances, have the moral authority to put this country into a war situation.

It is not the foreign affairs minister who said that, but the current Prime Minister of this country.

Still regarding members of this House, and chastizing the government for recalling the House too late, that is two days before the beginning of air strikes, and for asking the wrong questions, a Liberal member said:

However, just like the voters, I was entitled to being consulted on this fundamental question, which would have enabled all us to vote on the issue.

It was the current government House leader, a member with a lot of experience, who asked in 1991 for the right to vote on the issue.

My last quote concerns a Liberal amendment to the government motion.

This support shall not be interpreted as approval of the use of Canadian Forces for offensive action without further consultation with and approval by this House.

In particular, can we get assurances from the minister in the spirit with which we have been approaching this to have Parliament consulted before any final decisions are made as to these plans relating to our forces in the gulf area?

This was a question asked by the current Minister of External Affairs on October 23, 1990, which was before the start of the conflict.

Whether it is the Prime Minister, the Minister of External Affairs, the government House leader or other members who unanimously supported a report from the national defence and veterans affairs committee, they were all requesting, when they were in the opposition and even before the start of the conflict, that

members be allowed to vote. How can we explain this about-face in the Liberals' position?

We heard a lot of nonsense. I will quote a few of those comments. One of the last Liberal speakers before the Minister of External Affairs was saying "We will vote against the Bloc's motion because, for example, if we want to send a cook to Kosovo to prepare food for the soldiers sent there as peacekeepers, we will have to submit the question to a vote in the House".

• (1800)

They also said "We will vote against this motion because if CF-18 pilots are killed, we will need a vote to send a rescuer to retrieve their bodies".

The Liberals said "We will vote against this motion from the Bloc because we have to act quickly to send ground troops to Kosovo to fight for us, without the proper training". They might decide during the night that 1,000 soldiers will leave for Kosovo tomorrow morning at 5.15 a.m. Nobody will have been able to vote then.

The Liberal government has not given any good reason to oppose the motion. It has not given any good reason that would invalidate the position taken by the Minister of External Affairs when he was in the opposition. It has not given any good reason that would invalidate what the present Prime Minister said when he was the Leader of the Opposition.

We can ask why the government absolutely refuses to vote for this motion. We were also told that no vote was ever taken in the House concerning the deployment of ground troops. However, we know that a vote was taken in the case of the gulf war, another during the 1970s and yet another during the 1960s.

The minister mentioned earlier a few countries where no vote was taken. I answered that votes have been taken in Germany, and that two votes have been taken in the Czech Republic to determine whether the country ought to get involved in such a conflict.

A vote was taken this afternoon in the United States for the granting of several billion dollars to continue to defend the interests of Kosovars in this conflict. It is interesting to recall that a vote was held today in the United States concerning the budget.

Twice, last week and this week, we have asked the Minister of National Defence to say what the estimates are, what it would cost Canada, at this time, to take part in this conflict.

At the time when the U.S. Congress is voting on a budget that could amount to \$4 billion or \$6 billion, the two answers that my colleague for Joliette got from the Minister of National Defence were the same "We do not know". We asked how many planes have been kept in reserve. At present, we have 18 planes over there. How many do we have left, if NATO calls for more? We were given the following answer "We do not know".

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We are entitled to wonder about the apparent improvisation by the Liberal government with respect to this conflict. How much is it costing? We do not know. How many more planes can we send? We do not know. Are these state secrets? Is it a secret for national defence not to know, not to disclose, a budget like this one? That would be surprising, however, when at the same time the Clinton administration is voting on a budget for this same conflict, while the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister are telling us "It is a national secret, whether this will cost Canadians \$40 million, \$50 million, \$100 million or \$200 million". We ask these questions but we cannot get any answers.

The opposition parties are unanimous, a rarity in the House, on the Bloc Quebecois motion concerning a vote in the House. This is one of the constructive and positive things the Bloc Quebecois has undertaken. We asked—

**An hon. member:** One of many.

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau:** Yes, one of many. There are others, including asking the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take advantage of Canada's position as chair of the security council to co-sponsor the peace plan presented by Germany. The response we got was: "We do not know. We will look into it. We are waiting". Just like the answers on the aircraft and the budget.

In a speech, the leader of the Bloc Quebecois proposed that a conference of the European Union be held in order to define the future of small nations, those in the Balkans in particular. The Liberal side turned a deaf ear.

My colleague from Joliette ironically referred just now to the fact that, if we want to send a parliamentary mission of 5, 6 or 7 MPs outside the country, to Geneva for instance, in order to discuss the future of the WTO, we need unanimous consent in order to free up a budget of \$25,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000. That is a rule currently in force in the House.

Yet if they want to send 2,000 or 3,000 soldiers to fight in Kosovo, there will be no vote in the House because parliament wants this to be decided by the PMO and the cabinet, while 9 years ago we were told that was not the right way to make a decision.

• (1805)

We have perhaps half or three-quarters of an hour left, and I beg my Liberal colleagues to open their minds, to think things through properly, to look at precedent and to support this motion by the Bloc Quebecois.

**Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, the hon. member for Repentigny has quoted the constitutional example of the United States.

We should not forget that, ever since the declaration of war on Japan, in 1941, the U.S. Congress has never used the rule set out in the U.S. constitution. Committing U.S. troops is always left to the president, to the executive branch.

In a way, Canadians have borrowed the British system inherited from the past.

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Vancouver Quadra, a leading constitutional and international relations expert, is probably at least partly right.

However, I can say that his colleague, the foreign affairs minister, when he was sitting on the opposition benches, did ask for a vote on the sending of troops.

Moreover, a vote has been held on this in the House. I was not referring to the United States.

Furthermore, as late as last year or two years ago, Bob McNamara, a former adviser to John F. Kennedy, apologized for the tragic mistake of the Vietnam war.

Do we want the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Prime Minister to be in a position, after the conflict, of having to apologize to the Canadian people? We are asking that members of parliament be allowed to exercise their responsibilities and to vote in the House.

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

Does he agree that, in our democracy, what the government is suggesting here is that we democrats not use the most powerful tool we have to express our democratic views, namely our right to vote?

The government is saying "You can talk all you want, we will allow that, we will organize debates. We will allow you to talk, but when the time comes to really say what you want to say, you will not be allowed to do it". A parliamentarian expresses his or her point of view by using his or her vote. What the government is proposing is the opportunity to speak.

Does the hon. member agree that the government is violating our most sacred right, the right to vote?

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Joliette for his question.

In 1993, the Liberals' red book talked about restoring public confidence in the institution of parliament. One of the ways to achieve that is precisely to respect this historic right, the right to vote. It is difficult to understand why the Liberals want to violate such an important right as the right to vote.

In every riding, there are voters who are fed up with politics. They often tell us "Canada is a dictatorship elected every four

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years. We vote for a prime minister and a parliament, but after that we have no decisions to make. Everything is decided by the prime minister and his cabinet”.

Unfortunately and ironically, with the example it is giving to Canadians, this government is proving these voters right.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the consent of parliament was requested by the former foreign affairs critic, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, as my colleague mentioned earlier.

However, any consent must first and foremost be an informed one. One must be well informed before one can give consent and, on matters of such importance as the deployment of troops abroad, in countries such as Kosovo or Yugoslavia, the consent must not be implicit. It must be quite explicit, and it will be only if we vote.

I would like to ask my colleague if he considers, in this case, that the consent to which the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and even the Prime Minister refer is an informed consent, given that the meeting scheduled for tomorrow, where we were to be briefed on the situation in Kosovo, has been cancelled?

• (1810)

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has told us that 130 members have spoken on the issue of Kosovo. I do not believe that constitutes explicit consent on the part of members of parliament. The consent must take the form of a well informed vote, taken after meetings with the main stakeholders, that is the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Too often, they announce at the last minute that a briefing has been postponed or cancelled and, as my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry said earlier, now these briefings will last only 30 minutes. With all the small talk, we will not even have time to ask questions.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as I speak in this House, NATO planes are carrying out air strikes against Serbian military targets in Yugoslavia and Kosovo.

At the international level, diplomats from around the world are trying to find a negotiated solution to Serbian attacks on Kosovo's Albanians.

In neighbouring countries, the staff of non governmental humanitarian assistance organizations are doing everything they can to facilitate the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees, whose numbers have been rising since the beginning of this crisis.

Here, however, no one can or wants to tell us whether or not the Canadian armed forces are getting ready to send ground troops to the Balkans.

Once again, this afternoon, the Minister of National Defence refused to indicate if senior officers were planning Canada's involvement in ground operations. These statements were not made a week ago. They were made today in answer to questions put by opposition members to the minister.

Earlier today, during question period, the Minister of National Defence said and I quote “The only thing I can confirm is the breakdown of Canadian troops already in the Balkans.”

When a minister refuses to provide clear answers to questions put by the opposition and uses carefully phrased statements—and that is a rather strong word—such as “the only thing I can tell you is”, one has to wonder if the government is not about to make a far reaching decision behind closed doors, without consulting parliament.

This is exactly what we want to avoid in this motion. The motion is clear. It says, and I quote:

That this House demand that the government submit to a debate and a vote in the House the sending of Canadian soldiers to the Balkans who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations on the ground in Kosovo and the Balkan region.

Our goal is simple: we want such a decision, which may put the lives of fellow citizens at risk, to be taken in a transparent and democratic manner. Because the government has so far refused to commit itself to holding a vote before sending ground troops to the Balkans, we have no choice but to bring forward this motion, which asks this formally.

It is astounding that we have had to go this far something that just makes sense. A few people cannot decide alone to send Canadian ground troops to take part in a conflict that could still last for months.

We think that parliament must have a say in the Canadian policy regarding Kosovo. So far, the opposition parties supported the government's decisions in favour of air strikes against the Serbian aggressors in Kosovo, but that does not mean—

• (1815)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appeal to the diligence and indulgence of my colleagues so that the hon. member for Rosemont may finish his remarks and be followed by the usual period for questions and comments.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to permit extension of the debate?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6.15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt proceedings and put forthwith any question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

*Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Bob Kilger:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I understand that before I found my way back to the House there was a request to extend the sitting by approximately five minutes to allow the last spokesperson to complete his or her remarks. I know that unanimous consent was sought.

I wonder if there might be a willingness on behalf of the Chair to ask one more time for that unanimous consent with the condition of course that there be no question or comment period following that five minute conclusion of the debate?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to continue the debate for five minutes to permit the hon. member for Rosemont to complete his remarks?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*[Translation]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** But there will be no questions or comments.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, I also thank my colleagues in the House for allowing me to speak to this important issue.

The decision to involve ground troops can be heavy with consequence, and I think we must also not ignore the fact that it could well lead to loss of life. There is no doubt that parliament must be much better informed than it is at the moment before it makes a decision. A true debate must be held before parliamentarians can make an enlightened decision on such a serious matter. Then this debate must necessarily be sanctioned by a vote, which will give the government a clear mandate on the relevance of sending ground troops.

The purpose of the motion put forward by the Bloc Quebecois is not to take a stand on a possible military engagement on the ground in Kosovo, but rather to force the government to have a debate and a vote on this issue in the House should this possibility arise. To avoid thinking about it right now would just postpone a problem we will have to face sooner or later.

It is clear to us that the government cannot claim to have firm democratic approval if it does not have a vote on this issue in the House of Commons. Moreover, without a vote, the position of the various parties carries no real weight. All day, government members avoided taking a stand on this issue claiming it is only a hypothetical question.

First of all, I want to say that, as the situation progresses, the chances of a ground intervention becoming necessary are increasing constantly. Also, even though it is just a hypothetical question, nothing prevents the government from making a commitment today to consult parliamentarians before sending in ground troops. In fact, to us, it is impossible to justify the government's current position, which is simply undemocratic.

• (1820)

Moreover, the government is probably worried that some members or some parties may express their opposition to the deployment of ground troops, which would be perceived as dissension and would send the wrong message to the Yugoslav leaders.

In fact, by acting the way it is acting now, that is by keeping information from the House of Commons and by refusing to let it play an important role, the government forces members and parties to be more and more critical.

If, in fact, members of the House are not informed of diplomatic or military initiatives and if the reasons for decisions made by NATO or the Canadian government are not explained and discussed in the House, this casts doubts in the Bloc members' minds as to the appropriateness of these decisions.

For the government to refuse a vote for misleading reasons would send a negative signal to all members of parliament. That would be denying the House the possibility to play its role and would jeopardize the present consensus.

The government should not be afraid of having a real debate and of answering certain critical questions. It would be stupid to act as though 100% of Quebecers and Canadians agreed with Canadian participation in the present NATO operation.

In fact, it is important to stress the fact that many Canadians are concerned and critical of the situation. The government must be accountable to them. Taking a serious decision without the consent of parliament would amount to a denial of our democratic system.

I will conclude by saying that our riding offices receive many calls from citizens asking questions. They want their elected representatives to debate the question. They also want their member of parliament to represent them well and, for that, there obviously must be a democratic vote.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6.22 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt proceedings and put forthwith any question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

*[English]*

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*Adjournment Debate*

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the amendment 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.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** At the request of the chief government whip, the vote on the amendment stands deferred until tomorrow at the conclusion of the time provided for the consideration of Government Orders.

Is it agreed that we proceed with the adjournment proceedings?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Halifax *Herald* ran a cartoon in February 1999 of a T-shirt with a slogan "I survived Buchenwald and all I got was this lousy T-shirt". The caption below refers to the latest efforts from veterans affairs.

Although the experience of 26 prisoners of war is certainly no laughing matter, their treatment by this callous Liberal government is a joke. On February 12, 1999 I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs to offer these survivors of Buchenwald concentration camp a just and honest settlement. I pointed out to the minister at that time that the compensation paid by this government of barely over \$1,000 each was an insult in itself.

The pathetic inability of this government to succeed where others have failed in securing just reparations from the German government is a testament to this government's misplaced priorities.

The minister had the gall to respond that these survivors were delighted. Then he seemed to contradict himself with the next

statement, saying that the Canadian government had raised it again with the German chancellor.

● (1825 )

A constituent of mine who survived the horrors of the Buchenwald concentration camp sent the cheque back to the Liberal government with the word "refused" across the insulting payoff of \$1,098.

The governments of Australia and New Zealand reached a satisfactory settlement with their veterans who faced similar horrors.

These veterans were interned in the Nazi Buchenwald concentration camp instead of a prisoner of war camp where they should have been sent under the Geneva convention. Other governments have had the ability to convince the German government to provide an appropriate reparation. Our government has failed itself and failed these brave Canadians miserably.

I do not understand the inability of the government to secure a just settlement for these Canadians. Is it a matter of incompetence or simply that the government cares little for the plight of a small handful of 26 veterans?

The Government of the United States recently arrived at an enviable settlement with Germany for United States veterans in a similar position to our veterans. In his letter to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, my constituent William R. Gibson expressed the following sentiments:

I am hopeful that the Government of Canada can still come up with a just and honourable settlement. You may be interested to see that the American government has negotiated a settlement with Germany for its veterans ranging in benefits from \$10,000 to \$200,000.

Perhaps even more insulting than the cheque to these Canadians from the government were the words of the Minister of Veterans Affairs in his accompanying letter. He said: "I am delighted to be able to close the chapter on this longstanding issue".

Delighted indeed. It is now over eight years since the plight of these veterans was discussed in the January 1991 report of the subcommittee on veterans affairs entitled "It's Almost Too Late". Over eight years later I should say that it is almost too late.

This issue was raised again in committee in August 1994 and in letters to the ministers of veterans affairs, defence and foreign affairs in 1997. I have raised this issue time after time for over a year now and the government still admits defeat where other governments have succeeded.

A letter from the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to my office admits failure with these words "Canada has embarked on several démarches requesting prisoner of war compensation from Germany, but we have had no success".

*Adjournment Debate*

When I attempted to get to the root of the matter in the interest of these veterans, I was told that the Liberal government abjectly refused to make public its correspondence with Germany on this issue. Why is the government afraid of exposing its ineptitude where others have succeeded?

The Liberal government should take this opportunity right now to do the honourable thing and agree before the House and all Canadians that it will immediately begin to negotiate a just settlement with these veterans and commit to succeed in finalizing appropriate negotiations with the German government.

**Mr. Bob Wood (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am astonished that the hon. member for Halifax West wishes to condemn the government's action on behalf of Canadian veterans held at the Buchenwald concentration camp. Let us get the facts on the table right now.

Some countries, Australia and New Zealand in particular, opted in the 1980s to make a one time payment of \$10,000 and \$13,000 respectively to their Buchenwald veterans. Canada had already chosen a different path in the mid-1970s.

We opted for the payment of monthly compensation for life with a continuing benefit for the veteran's surviving spouse. Those indexed payments are equivalent to a minimum of \$45,000 in today's dollars for each veteran with at least 89 days of captivity. Compensation payments, as in the case with all veterans benefits, are not subject to income tax. If the veteran incurred any disability as a consequence of the imprisonment, that is separately compensated for through disability pension awards which again are tax free.

In terms of the compensation payment announced on December 11, that arose because attempts in the 1980s and 1990s to gain compensation from the German government did not succeed. The Government of Canada therefore decided that these veterans had waited long enough and decided to pay compensation on exactly the same basis as was awarded to the Hong Kong prisoners of war, namely \$18 per day of captivity in Buchenwald, although the payments to our Buchenwald vets were considerably less than the payments to our Hong Kong veterans who suffered three and a half years of unspeakable captivity.

A final point is the Minister of Foreign Affairs made it clear on December 11 that the government payment of compensation to the Buchenwald veterans did not close the door for further representation on their behalf to the German government. Those representations were made by the Prime Minister personally to the new chancellor of Germany. The chancellor agreed to look into the question and the Department of Foreign Affairs has been following up on that commitment.

In short, everything has been done that there is to be done right here. I think the hon. member should acknowledge that.

• (1830)

[Translation]

## THE BUDGET

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on February 17, 1999, I asked the following question in the House:

Mr. Speaker, this budget confirms the Minister of Finance's continuing dependency on the EI fund. He is using the surplus in the EI fund to fill his coffers and line the pockets of millionaires. While the minister is paying off his debt on the backs of the unemployed, there is nothing in his budget for those who do not qualify for employment insurance.

I put the question to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Human Resources Development was the one who answered. I asked what was the amount of the surplus in the EI fund.

The minister told me it was \$4.9 billion. He went on to add:

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

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

When it comes to dependency, it is the Minister of Finance who is dependent on employment insurance. Workers who have lost their jobs can no longer rely on it.

Even the Liberal member for Fredericton was reported in *Time Transcript* as saying "We want him to be generous with the EI system". The Liberal members said that, after April 12, they would meet with the minister to tell him how badly the EI program was hurting Canadian workers.

They know it hurts and they are even discussing the issue, but they are not ready to discuss with members of the opposition and try to find solutions.

Even the bishop of Moncton said last week in *L'Acadie nouvelle* that the so-called black hole could not be allowed any longer in southeastern New Brunswick. Across the country, everyone knows that changes to employment insurance have hurt people.

I will briefly give an example. I got a call from a voter in my riding who was part of the Atlantic groundfish strategy. He had accumulated more than 850 hours. He made an application for employment insurance because representatives of the groundfish strategy had told him he was eligible for employment insurance benefits. He was told that, no, he was not, and that he would have to go back on the groundfish strategy. He appealed the decision, but he lost his appeal.

*Adjournment Debate*

When he returned to the groundfish strategy, he was accepted. Later, he made another application for employment insurance benefits with the number of hours supposedly needed, and was told that there had been a mistake the first time and that he would receive employment insurance benefits. So he received his money, plus the benefits of the groundfish strategy. But he had also worked a certain number of hours.

He found himself in another income bracket, so he now owes Revenue Canada more money than usual.

He tried to have the problem settled at Revenue Canada, but he never succeeded. He was not able to obtain a solution from Human Resources Development Canada nor from anybody else. The system no longer works.

[*English*]

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the money of which the member speaks belongs to Canadians. Canadians expect us to make intelligent choices in deciding how to spend their money effectively.

We are working to help the unemployed, but we are also committed to investing in health care, skills and higher education, job creation and helping young families through such measures as the Canada child tax benefit and changes to the Income Tax Act.

As well as spending wisely, Canadians want us to report clearly on how their money is being handled. That is why EI funds are tracked openly in a separate column in the government's books, just as the auditor general recommended.

While the EI program covers most people who recently lost their jobs or quit with just cause, there are also many unemployed people looking for their first job or those who have been out of work or out of the labour force for a long time. For these Canadians EI is supported by a number of other programs to help them get a job. For example, there is \$2.1 billion for those who need help re-entering the workforce; \$155 million to help youth obtain experience; \$110 million every year in communities with high unemployment; and \$430 million a year with the provinces to help Canadians with disabilities find work.

• (1835)

The careful management of public funds is important, but getting the government's books balanced is just the starting point. Our goal is to help Canadians achieve secure futures through good jobs.

I must remind my hon. friend that unemployment is at an eight year low, at 7.8%, and that the deficit has been eliminated. I hope most Canadians will say that we are going in the right direction.

## THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberal government continues to be the number one obstacle to growth in this country. Today we were reading about the latest evidence of Canada's weakening economy. According to an internal federal report, hikes in personal incomes taxes have contributed to a significant decline in the after tax income of Canadians. Stagnant family incomes, a poor middle class and rising poverty were identified as the consequences of Canada's high tax policy. In short, the report concluded that Canadians on average have become poorer in the 1990s.

One of the lesser told stories is the negative impact on the economy brought about by the Liberal government's cost recovery program. There is nothing wrong with a cost recovery program based on reasonable fees, increased efficiency and smarter performance, but credible evidence suggests that the present program is the Liberal government's latest attack on the private sector.

A recent report prepared by the Business Coalition for Cost Recovery, which represents small, medium and large size firms that employ 2.2 million people and contribute \$330 billion to the national economy, detailed the devastating impact the federal cost recovery program has had since 1994. Canada's manufacturers have been subject to a massive 153% increase in regulatory fees. User fees charged through cost recovery are among the fastest growing costs of doing business in Canada. The \$1.6 billion in regulatory fees charged to businesses in the 1996-97 fiscal year cut Canada's GDP by at least \$1.3 billion and cost at least 23,000 Canadian jobs.

The cost recovery fees, as currently structured, are undermining the productivity and international competitiveness of Canadian businesses. For of all the problems caused by cost recovery the government is only gaining 20 cents in revenue for every dollar in fees charged to businesses.

As I have noted on numerous occasions in the House in recent months, if the Liberals were truly concerned about productivity and increased business investment they would have used this budget to place an immediate moratorium on new or increased regulatory fees until a complete overhaul of the cost recovery program were complete. Instead they chose this complicated and inconsistent cost recovery structure that unduly interferes with the very private sector we need to grow for a stronger economy.

These regulations and fees comprise a hidden form of taxation and their excesses need to be curbed to guarantee sustained growth for Canada's economy. I challenge this government to start addressing the root causes of low productivity such as the heavy regulatory burden of the federal cost recovery program.

**Mr. Walt Lastewka (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the hon. member's question concerning productivity.

The available evidence shows that Canadians can improve their productivity performance relative to other major trading partners.

Improving our productivity performance matters because the more efficiently we can combine our resources to produce goods and services, the more easily Canadians can use some of those resources in other areas of endeavour they believe are important to improve their standard of living, including health, education and the environment. For this reason the government is committed to building a stronger, more innovative and more productive economy.

Budget 1999 underlined this commitment by continuing to build the fiscal base for long term growth. It also provides for substantive new investments undertaken in partnership with the private sector in the creation, dissemination and commercialization of knowledge. Just a few examples of these investments are: \$200 million for the Canada Foundation for Innovation to build research infrastructure; \$60 million over three years to establish smart community demonstration projects that will broaden access to the information highway; and \$90 million over three years for the networks of centres of excellence to support partnerships among world class researchers in the private sector.

• (1840)

These and other investments will help improve foreign activity and ultimately our standard of living. They are vital at this time, but they are not the complete answer.

Together we must tackle the multifaceted elements of the productivity challenge, such as strong business investment, research and development performance, the commercialization of innovation and encouraging higher levels of training in areas appropriate for the demands of the new knowledge based economy, and improving our trade performance. We must work together on productivity in the House, in the committees and in our constituencies.

[Translation]

BLACK LAKE BC MINE

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to condemn an injustice with respect to the former BC Mine workers of Black Lake.

When the BC asbestos mine was closed, on November 1, 1997, 300 workers lost their jobs. Two thirds of them were over 52 years of age.

The Minister of Human Resources Development reacted very timidly to support Quebec asbestos miners with only \$4 million, whereas the same minister finds considerable amounts for the miners from Cape Breton in Nova Scotia.

### *Adjournment Debate*

On behalf of the Minister of Human Resources Development, the Minister of National Defence answered this to the question I asked on this issue on March 19, 1999:

In this case a workforce adjustment package of \$111 million will be provided to workers with fair severance and early retirement packages.

To the generous \$111 million compensation package I just mentioned, \$148 million will be added by two other departments, apparently to accelerate Cape Breton's economic expansion.

I condemn this double standard. The people in Black Lake feel the Minister of Human Resources Development is treating them unfairly. The Thetford Mines region feels unfairly treated by the Liberal government of Canada. Quebec is not getting its fair share.

To the \$111 million have been added \$68 million from economic development and \$80 million from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, for a total of \$259 million to the miners of Nova Scotia, while hardly \$4 million has been provided for the people of Black Lake, in Quebec.

That is the fairness of this Liberal government. Four million dollars for Quebec, and \$259 million for Nova Scotia.

I urge the Minister of Human Resources Development to correct this injustice by reopening the file on the BC Mine workers. Everyone in Canada must be fairly treated. Why \$259 million for coal miners in Nova Scotia and only \$4 million for asbestos workers at the BC Mine in Black Lake? There is the injustice.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, in response to a question from the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, said earlier that the surplus from the employment insurance fund, which exceeds \$20 billion, belongs to everyone, and not only to millionaires. If this money belongs to everyone, a good share of the \$20 billion should be given back to the BC Mine workers. That is—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

• (1845)

[English]

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government shares the hon. member's concern for the workers affected by the closure of the British Canadian mine operation at Black Lake, Quebec.

He compares the situation of the BC mine workers to that of the Phalen mine workers in Nova Scotia. While the workers in these two cases faced different circumstances, the government treated both groups with equal fairness and equal consideration.

*Adjournment Debate*

Let me explain the measures we have undertaken to help the 300 BC mine workers in Quebec. We reacted quickly and, in total, provided some \$4 million.

As early as September 1997, close to \$3 million was set aside to help the 300 workers quickly re-enter the labour market and this help is showing some signs of success: nearly 70 workers have found work; nearly 60 are pursuing training and skills development to help them find different work; and half a dozen are trying to establish their own businesses. We know these people want to work and we hope our assistance will continue to help them.

In addition, in June 1998 the government also announced \$1 million in funding intended to help workers between the ages of 55 and 64. The Government of Quebec gave its approval to move forward and put this program in place for older workers from the BC mine last fall.

Meetings were held with former workers and representatives of Emploi-Québec and federal officials to exchange information and accept applications.

I am happy to report that eligible workers will begin receiving early retirement benefits, cost shared by the two governments, in the upcoming months. The government will continue to offer support to all Canadian workers through programs to help them participate fully in the Canadian labour market.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.46 p.m.)

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