



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, April 9, 2003**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

[English]

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

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

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### MIDDLE EAST

**Hon. Art Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the anti-Israel petition that was filed in the House on March 31 by the member for the riding of Quebec.

There is no connection between Israel's struggle with suicide bombers and Saddam Hussein's many years of non-compliance with UN inspections. Israel is a democracy and an ally in our campaign on terrorism.

The fundamental cause of the ongoing crisis in the disputed territories is the reluctance of the Palestinian side to accept Israeli existence, to renounce a strategy of terrorism and compromise, something that I hope will happen with the new Palestinian prime minister.

Israel has the responsibility to protect its people from suicide bombers. It is careful to minimize civilian casualties, and the allegations of Israeli massacres are fabrications.

Israel proved its commitment to peace at Camp David in July 2000 when it put forward a two state solution. Yasser Arafat responded with a strategy of violence. Terrorism cannot bring peace to this region, and Canada must stand by its Israeli allies in our campaign against this global threat.

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### SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

**Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have been warning the Liberal government for six years that its policies were hurting the B.C. softwood lumber industry. Unfortunately, the situation has not changed. Thousands of

softwood lumber workers remain unemployed in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan because the government has allowed the softwood lumber crisis to drag on and on and the export of raw logs continues to take jobs with them.

Meanwhile, our neighbours to the south in the Pacific northwest who want our raw logs continue to ban log exports from their own lands.

Recently the federal government raised the possibility of removing restraints on the export of even more raw logs. Canadian Alliance members of Parliament on Vancouver Island have taken a firm stand against this because of the loss of more jobs that would go with them.

I have stood at the gates of the Youbou Mill and talked with employees who lost their jobs when a profitable mill was being shut down. Meanwhile, the highway running past the mill is a continuous convoy of full logging trucks moving raw logs down to the dumping grounds to be mainly towed to American sawmills.

Shame on the government for even thinking of exporting B.C. jobs with B.C. logs. Shame on the Minister for International Trade for allowing his deputy minister to even contemplate the possibility.

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• (1405)

### CANADIAN SIKH COMMUNITY

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to join with the Sikhs in Canada and throughout the world in marking the 304th anniversary of *Valsakhi*.

I encourage all Canadians to join with Canadian Sikhs in a wonderful celebration of faith and pride in their culture. From its origins in the Indus Valley, the Sikh faith has spread throughout the world.

The first Sikh pioneers settled in Canada over 100 years ago. Today Sikhs are represented in every occupation and facet of Canadian life, including being elected as members of the House, provincial parliaments and municipal governments.

I wish to congratulate the bustling Canadian Sikh community in my own riding of Brampton Centre as well as Canadian Sikh communities throughout Canada on the 304th anniversary of *Valsakhi*.

*S. O. 31*

### VIMY RIDGE DAY

**Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 86th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and today is the first official Vimy Ridge Day.

This day commemorates a massive offensive attack by the allies in the first world war. The Battle of Vimy Ridge was one of Canada's most famous military engagements of the 20th century. Vimy has become synonymous with sacrifice, with heroism and with heroes. It has become known as a nation-builder for Canada, as well as a major step toward the end of the first world war.

On April 9, 1917, the allies, for the very first time, had all four divisions of the Canadian corps attack this German site under unified Canadian command. The Canadians were met with great resistance but after three days of heavy fighting, the Germans realized the loss of Vimy Ridge was permanent and retreated.

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial, which includes preserved battlefield terrain, provides a lasting and tangible reminder of Canadians' sacrifice. The memorial honours the capture of Vimy Ridge and is a monument to all Canadians who died in France and have no known grave. Cut into the stones on the sides of the platform of the memorial are the names of 11,285 Canadians.

We honour those Canadians today. It is part of our—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Brampton West—Mississauga.

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### CUSTOMS OFFICERS

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West—Mississauga, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, government critics have been twisting the truth in order to promote the arming of customs officers. They have consistently misquoted the Minister of National Revenue in a sorry attempt to promote a pro-gun lobby.

Let us set the record straight. The minister has noted a number of times that customs inspectors do not need to carry handguns to carry out their jobs. In fact, an independent study has shown that most customs inspectors agree with that position.

The minister has noted that in the unlikely event of armed confrontation at the border, the minister wants the confrontation to be treated in a similar fashion to bank robberies or police hot pursuit policies, and avoid a dangerous situation. The minister does not want customs inspectors to put themselves or the public at risk. The health and safety of officers and the general public is a priority.

Furthermore, it was not the minister who said that arming customs inspectors was simply giving accidents an opportunity to happen. It was an independent study.

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### BERNARD GOODEN

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Bernard Gooden was a Canadian, born in Jamaica, serving in the American Marine Corps and fighting for democracy and freedom for the Iraqi people. He was killed in action last Friday.

On behalf of all members of the House I want to send our sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Gooden.

Corporal Gooden took his oath and became a Canadian citizen only last summer. He loved this country, its way of life and its values. He served in defence of those values, first in the Canadian army and then in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Many Canadians are serving this same cause in Iraq, including the son of the member for Wild Rose, who also serves in the U.S. Marine Corps.

I ask all members of the House to join me in honouring the sacrifices made by men and women like Corporal Gooden in defence of the values that we as Canadians share with our American neighbours and with freedom loving people everywhere.

May God bless and protect them all.

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### PEACEKEEPING

**Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the gallery today are two outstanding Canadians: Carolyn McCool, a public interest lawyer; and filmmaker Moira Simpson, both of Vancouver, who are here for the Ottawa premiere of a National Film Board production, entitled *Kosovo: Fragile Peace*, to be hosted tonight at the National Archives by the World University Service of Canada.

Carolyn McCool recently completed a Government of Canada sponsored secondment as a director of democratization in Kosovo for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and her work is featured in the film. She is one of over 140 Canadians who have been involved in a program administered by WUSC and funded by CIDA working toward lasting peace in the Balkans.

For over 60 years, WUSC has been active on campuses across Canada and communities around the world. I am delighted that through the work of the NFB, Canadians from coast to coast will see that Canadians are making a difference in peace building and strengthening democracy.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[Translation]

### VIMY RIDGE DAY

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is strongly opposed to Canada's participation in the war that is currently being waged against Iraq by the United States and Great Britain, because a military intervention was totally unjustified.

However, we do recognize that the participation of the Canadian Forces in an armed conflict has been, at certain times in our history, perfectly legitimate.

Such was the case with World War I, in which Canadian troops played a key role. Today we want to mark the 86th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge. In capturing Vimy Ridge, the Canadian Forces won an important victory that changed the course of the war.

On April 9, Vimy Ridge Day, let us all remember these acts of bravery, and the dedication and courage of our officers and troops, almost 3,600 of whom gave their lives on the battlefield.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### FORUM FOR YOUNG CANADIANS

**Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, each spring Forum for Young Canadians organizes a study tour of Canada's system of government for 600 high school students from across the country.

Students interact with parliamentarians and take part in simulations of question period and federal-provincial conferences. Through this program the future leaders of Canada gain a deeper insight into the governance of our nation.

This year Megan O'Neil, Anthony Pereira, Andrea Hunniford, Bethany Suzanne Maus and Taylor Selig from my riding of Cambridge are taking part in this incredible learning experience.

I join all members in welcoming these young Canadians and I wish them success as they gain insight into our system of government.

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#### VIMY RIDGE DAY

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, 86 years ago today Canadian soldiers took Vimy Ridge. Today, for the first time, we officially celebrate April 9 as Vimy Ridge Day.

Canada came into its own at Vimy Ridge. Our men went in as British and came out as Canadians. It is said that nations are born of war and, if that is the case, the death of nearly 4,000 men gave birth to Canada.

Vimy Ridge marks our birth, but it did not end there. My friend, Michel Gravel, reminds us that our brave Canadian soldiers kept going strong. The liberation of the village of Cagnicourt by Canadians months afterward, signalled to the Germans the beginning of the end of the World War I.

Our soldiers were there at the beginning and they stayed and fought until the end. That is what has made Canada great then and that same courage will make Canada great today.

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#### VAISAKHI

**Mr. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this month Sikh communities around the globe are celebrating the 304th anniversary of the founding of the Sikh nation, the Khalsa. The founder of the Sikh nation, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, preached equality, truthfulness, tolerance, honesty, brotherhood and human rights.

S. O. 31

Members of the Canadian Sikh community are deeply grateful to the Prime Minister and all members of Parliament for their continued involvement at *Vaisakhi* celebrations on Parliament Hill.

I am sure all members will join me in congratulating the Sikh community on the birth of the Sikh nation and in recognition of the tremendous contributions to our country.

I would like to encourage all members to attend this reception, immediately following question period this afternoon, in the Commonwealth room.

I thank the House for its continued support and involvement since 1993.

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#### VIMY RIDGE DAY

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the first official Vimy Ridge Day, although Canadians have been marking this day ever since the first anniversary of April 9, 1917, the day that Canadians all fought together under Canadian command for the first time, and in so doing achieved a victory that had eluded other armies.

To paraphrase a hymn often sung on Remembrance Day, time's ever rolling stream has born the Vimy vets away, but time should never take away the pride that Canadians feel in what their fellow Canadians did that day. Nor should we ever forget the carnage and horror of World War I.

May I also say, on a personal note, that my grandfather, Robert Blaikie, fought at Vimy Ridge with the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles, a regiment raised in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Coincidentally, the tunnels that are preserved at the Vimy Memorial are the same tunnels through which my grandfather moved that morning, as part of the 8th Brigade, 3rd Division, the same tunnels in which some 80 years later, his great granddaughter Rebecca Blaikie, would act as a young Canadian guide explaining the significance of what happened on that unforgettable day.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

[Translation]

#### FISHERIES

**Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on April 1, I welcomed, here in Ottawa, a delegation representing the Lower North Shore fishery. Together, we met with officials from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Secretary of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, who was accompanied by his team.

All these government officials are now well informed about the situation of fishers, since it was explained to them in detail. Therefore, they are fully aware of the urgency and seriousness of the economic and social situation. This situation is such that the federal government must urgently provide the funding necessary to come to their assistance.

*Oral Questions*

The government must also quickly give its approval so that the various projects in the recovery plan submitted on that occasion can be implemented at the earliest opportunity, because these people will not have any income as of April 15.

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[English]

**VIMY RIDGE DAY**

**Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with the adoption of Bill C-227, today, April 9 is the very first Vimy Ridge Day. On this day I wish to express my gratitude to everyone for their support of this initiative, including parliamentarians in both the House of Commons and in the other place. In particular, I wish to express my appreciation to Robert Manuel, a Korean veteran and constituent of mine from Elliot Lake, Ontario, who initially inspired this idea and provided many letters and petitions of support throughout the process.

With the passage of the bill, the Parliament of Canada is honouring all veterans, those who lost their lives or were wounded in past wars or peacekeeping missions, and those who now serve or are retired from active service. We thank and honour them all.

The spirit of remembrance is alive and well in our nation but can always be made stronger. Vimy Ridge Day will help us remember the heroism, the tragedy, the valour and the loss associated with war so peace may be our constant goal. Let it be the greatest gift of our fallen soldiers that for us peace be our future.

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**CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY**

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, April is Daffodil Month and the peak fundraising period of the Canadian Cancer Society. Thousands of volunteers will be knocking on doors and organizing events across Canada. The goal for this year's campaign is \$18 million.

The Canadian Cancer Society uses the funds it raises for research in all types of cancer. The society supports healthy public policy promoting strategies for reducing cancer risk, providing comprehensive information about cancer care and treatment and supporting people living with cancer.

Last year, an estimated 137,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Canada and 66,000 Canadians died from the disease.

On behalf of the members of this House I extend heartfelt thanks to all Canadian Cancer Society volunteers, and I urge all Canadians to give generously to the Canadian Cancer Society.

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**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**IRAQ**

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask about the government's position on regime change in Iraq, but whether or not the

government has made up its mind, it is apparent that with the support of the Iraqi people the regime of Saddam Hussein has fallen.

We know that although our government sat on the sidelines, we join with the silent majority of Canadians in congratulating our American and British friends in celebrating with the Iraqi people on the day of their liberation.

Has the government now informed Saddam's front man in Ottawa that his services are no longer required?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** This matter will of course, Mr. Speaker, be dealt with in accordance with the traditional way in which the international rules apply to changes of government. The government has often dealt with this type of situation and we will continue to do so in the normal way.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I think that was less than a yes.

The government was a spectator to the diplomacy before the conflict. It was a spectator to the war. To ensure it is not also a spectator to the peace, has the Prime Minister been on the phone to President Bush and Prime Minister Blair to say that Canadians will help with reconstruction in Iraq, regardless of whether it is under the auspices of the United Nations or the allies?

● (1420)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week we announced in the House of Commons that we had, after cabinet last week, put \$100 million for aid for the people of Iraq.

I have said that I talked with the Secretary General of the United Nations and with many leaders. We have said that we are willing to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq.

We are very happy that the war was a short one and that everything will be completed normally and quickly in accordance with all the international rules.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, if I heard correctly, I heard the Prime Minister speak of the United Nations but I did not hear him speak of whether he had indeed talked to our allies.

Whether it is civil order, humanitarian aid or economic development, the Iraqi people do not care at this point about process. They do not care about UN process. They want help.

Will the government tell them that Canadians will be there to help regardless of whether the UN is there or not?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, whenever there was a humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world, Canada was always there among the first, and we intend to do the same thing again.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable to hear this response. This is the anniversary of Vimy Ridge. Iraqis will always remember April 9 as the day that a U.S.-led coalition liberated them from a monstrous tyrant. The Prime Minister has not been able to say whether we would be there in the fight and we were not. Now he cannot even say if we will be there with humanitarian aid regardless of what the United Nations says.

With or without the UN, we will be there. Is that a fact or not?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, out of \$100 million, which was allocated last week, \$25 million is already being spent. We started before because we knew there were problems with water, food and medication. We moved very quickly. We were one of the first to make the money available to the international organizations, which are not all necessarily under the United Nations.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, on the question of political reconstruction with or without the UN, the Prime Minister is still not there.

Could he tell us this? He did not say anything about joining the allies to topple Saddam Hussein's regime. The statue has been toppled. The citizens of Iraq are dancing in the streets on that broken statue.

Will the Prime Minister tell us, because elements of the regime could still be there, does he still recognize the regime that is there or not?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have to see what will happen. At this moment there is some fighting that is going on. We are happy that the war is almost over. We are happy that the misery of the people of Iraq has been terminated. We have always said that Saddam Hussein should disarm.

However on the question of change of regime, we have always been very clear on that. That is a policy which is a very serious one. If we start, where do we stop?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, with the changes that have occurred in the past few hours, a statement made by Canadian Commodore Roger Girouard, the commander of an international fleet in the Persian Gulf region, is taking on increasing importance. What he said was that he had no orders about what to do with any Iraqi dignitaries whom he might take prisoner.

Will the Minister of National Defence acknowledge that this admission that he would have to contact Ottawa to find out what to do if he takes prisoners demonstrates an unusual degree of improvisation?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the statement by the commodore indicates that he is doing an excellent job for Canada and that, contrary to what the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party believe, there are two separate missions. That is what his words indicate.

[*English*]

If the Bloc does not understand that, let me quote an American. When asked by a Canadian reporter why would this key task force remain under American command, Brigadier General Brooks responded, "It's a different coalition and a different operation, and we always respect the prerogatives of countries involved".

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is the one with the problem. When he does not understand that a commodore in charge of a fleet is concerned about the lack of orders in the event that he should take Iraqi prisoners, there is a problem somewhere.

Does the minister not understand that his attitude is one of ambiguity and is unacceptable in circumstances as tragic as those we are now witnessing?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the Bloc Québécois has never understood—but now we have the commodore and the American general to back this up—is that there are two separate missions. Canada is involved in the war against terrorism; Canada is not involved in the war against Iraq.

Now, with verification of this by the commodore and by the American general, the Bloc Québécois should finally get it, after all these weeks.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the Minister of National Defence says, by keeping ships in the Persian Gulf region, Canada has put itself in a situation of war and if Iraqis were to be taken prisoner—not Afghans, but Iraqis, as was the case in Afghanistan—the minister has told us, "we will see". That is what I call improvising.

Will the Minister of National Defence tell us what orders he has given the Canadian military, particularly Commodore Girouard, with respect to the treatment of any prisoners of war the Canadian military might take in the war on Iraq?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps this is yesterday's question, because I just answered in light of the situation today, to the effect that it has now become very clear that Canada is not now, nor has it ever been, involved in the war on Iraq.

Therefore, the whole argument of the Bloc Québécois has disappeared, and the question for today is not the question he just asked.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the argument of the Bloc Québécois remains valid. We are saying to the minister that if Iraqis are taken prisoner, if our military stops a ship with Iraqis on board, Commodore Girouard has said today that he would not know what to do.

We are asking if these prisoners will be turned over to American or British authorities. Will they be sent to Guantanamo Bay or will they appear before an international criminal court, as we are proposing? If prisoners are taken, where would he have them brought to justice?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member may be aware that the House passed a resolution stating that the government should endorse international efforts to bring to justice Saddam Hussein and the other Iraqi officials responsible for these crimes.

Second, he should understand that it is a supremely hypothetical question in that the navy of Saddam Hussein was never much. It has virtually ceased to exist. Our ships are hundreds of miles away. The odds of this happening are extraordinarily low, and I can only conclude that this is the mother of all hypothetical questions.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with the fall of Baghdad, we are wondering what comes next. The Bush administration is already sending troubling signals to other countries. Several times, the Prime Minister has said that his position on the war in Iraq has been clear for a year now.

Will the Prime Minister be clear today in saying that Canada will oppose another pre-emptive war?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member should wait for this war to be over before talking about another war. Canada's position has always been very clear on this issue: in order for activities to be considered legitimate, it is important that there be a resolution from the Security Council. However, the question is very hypothetical.

*[English]*

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Prime Minister should tell Mr. Rumsfeld that hinting about other wars is out of order.

We want the Prime Minister to state that nobody is next. We also want the Prime Minister to say that he sees a role for the UN in the reconstruction of Iraq that is more than just providing food and medicine. We want the UN to be involved in more than that. Is that the Canadian position?

● (1430)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is our position. It is a position that we have discussed with the United Nations and with all of the governments involved, including the American government. I discussed that personally with some of the leaders as well.

We want the UN to be part of the reconstruction. I said that it cannot be done only by the UN. It does not want to be forced to do everything. There would be a role for everybody. All countries know that in terms of humanitarian services and reconstruction, Canada will always be pleased to play a positive role.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, on or about March 23, Canadian Armed Forces were involved in searching the Iraqi ship *Proton* in the Persian Gulf.

While it was determined that it was not involved in smuggling oil or carrying al-Qaeda terrorists, gas masks and nerve gas antidotes were found on board. After the Canadians released the ship the Americans seized it and arrested its crew.

Can the Minister of National Defence confirm these details and will he table in the House today a copy of a situation report he would have received?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will have to get back to the hon. member on the specifics of that case.

What I can confirm in the House and as I have said before, if the navy suspects that any ship carrying whatever flag might be carrying mines, let alone chemical weapons, that could put in harm's way any of our allies, the navy will board that ship to prevent any damage taking place to the ships of any of our allies.

That is what it has been doing and that remains the position of the government.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, given United Nations resolution 1441, has Canada followed through on its responsibilities and reported to the United Nations that its naval forces had discovered nerve gas antidotes and chemical masks on the Iraqi ship at sea? If not, why not?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just said in my answer to the previous question, I will have to get back to the hon. member on the specifics of that case and I will do just that.

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**BORDER SECURITY**

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue has repeatedly attacked the integrity of customs agents.

She calls them bank tellers and says they are nothing more than 3,000 accidents waiting to happen. She charges them with enforcing the Firearms Act, but refuses to arm them in order to carry out their duties.

Why will the minister not do what is right for the protection of Canadians and our border, and make security the priority of customs agents and not revenue collection?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while there may be a few gullible people who would think the member opposite is saying something accurate, those who look at the record would know that the facts are as follows. I have enormous respect for the integrity, confidence and dedication of our customs officers, and I have said so at every opportunity.

I have also said that their health and safety is a priority for us. I have talked about the policies of hot pursuit police chases as well as bank robberies, and that the common policy of putting safety first is the policy of CCRA.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, actions speak much louder than words. The minister has had a lot of time to give the resources to customs agents. She has failed on all counts.

CCRA policy is a flat refusal to engage in border security as the minister is more interested in having customs agents collect revenues. Customs agents are still advised to smile and wave at high risk travellers entering the country, and then call the police.

When will the minister reverse this short-sighted policy and pledge to make customs agents a proper security force with peace officer status?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Commissioner Zaccardelli has said very clearly that customs officers do not need guns. We have a report from the job hazard analysis where an independent expert has concluded that customs officers do not need guns.

If the member understood the important role that customs officers play, he would know they have the tools to do that job, and they are highly competent and respected. The member opposite would do well to stop acting as a lobbyist for the right wing gun—

• (1435)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Mercier.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### IRAQ

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Baghdad find themselves in an increasingly dramatic situation. The number of civilian victims is still unclear, but casualties are arriving by the hundreds in Baghdad's overflowing hospitals.

The World Health Organization has reminded the parties to the conflict of their obligation to avoid civilian casualties.

Is the government going to join with the international community in urging the coalition to do something about the serious humanitarian situation?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are in regular contact with all of our allies. I was in Europe last week precisely to discuss the situation in Iraq.

Obviously, we all take the position that the number of innocent civilian victims should be kept as low as possible. We congratulate the Americans and British on the efforts they have made to reduce the number of innocent civilian victims in this conflict. They have made great efforts and we commend them for that.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it will be a long time before we find out whether or not there have been such efforts. Enfants du Monde, an NGO that has been working in Iraq for a number of years, had this to say:

The key United Nations documents protecting civilian populations are being swept aside, ignored, violated. The entire world is a powerless witness to these crimes against defenceless human beings. Who can speak of victory in such circumstances?

Is Canada going to join with all those who are troubled by the violation of the Geneva conventions?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has indicated, Canada will be joining with those who intend to move on, now, to the phase of humanitarian aid and reconstruction, rather than hurling recrimina-

#### Oral Questions

tions, which will do nothing for the people of Iraq. We want to move on to a positive phase. We will be providing aid to the people of Iraq.

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[English]

#### IMMIGRATION

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration claims security is his top priority. Yet, figures from the Auditor General tell us the minister has lost track of 36,000 deportees.

How can the minister bluster about the importance of security when he fails to ensure the deportation of these individuals?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we must be very careful here.

First of all, as I said before, our country does not have an exit control program. At the same time, we have a policy for the integrity of documents. We issue a new permanent resident card which is 20 point fraud resistant. We now have a new computer system that will integrate all offices at the enforcement level.

The bottom line is that we are more secure and we are doing what we have to do. We need that balanced approach between openness and vigilance.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this problem did not show up overnight. We are talking about 36,000 cases.

We heard the minister's plans to eventually reduce the backlog of deportees. How does he intend to do that? How does he intend to find them? When will he deport these individuals?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, immigration is an ongoing issue. We implemented new legislation last June 28. We have provided our agents better tools to work with and they are doing their job.

We have also great potential. We are working closely with my colleague, the Solicitor General, on a special task force with the RCMP and law enforcement. We are doing what it takes.

Our policy is not about building walls. It is about controlling doors.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### AIRLINE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Air Canada's recent decision to file for protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act deepened the crisis in the airline industry in Canada, and this is likely to affect the economy in the regions.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Minister of Transport tell us if he has an action plan in store to alleviate this crisis in the airline industry, and special measures to help the regions that might find themselves without regional air carriers?

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are currently assessing the impact of our policy on small airports across the country, as well as Air Canada's situation. We are looking for a solution that will be fair to all Canadian travellers.

• (1440)

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the airline industry has been crippled by an incredible number of taxes and charges of all sorts, such as the security tax, the airport tax, the fuel tax and charges paid to NAV CANADA.

Instead of managing by crisis, does the minister intend to take advantage of this exceptional situation to review the tax structure for this industry, as the Bloc Québécois and the industry have been requesting for over a year now?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as members are well aware, we have already announced in this year's budget a reduction in the air security tax. While it is always necessary to consider the structure of our tax systems, I do not think that the situation of one specific corporation should determine our tax system.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AUDITOR GENERAL**

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The Auditor General receives operational funding through the Treasury Board, the same entity which comes under scrutiny of the Auditor General. The Auditor General has been quoted as saying this arrangement is uncomfortable, perhaps even a direct conflict of interest, and potentially threatens the Auditor General's parliamentary independence.

How does the government defend having the Auditor General asking for operational money from the very department she has to audit?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we address the funding of the Auditor General in a fair and responsible manner. I do not think we are in a conflict of interest.

I encourage the member to look at all the reports tabled by the Auditor General in Parliament and he will see that she did criticize the Treasury Board Secretariat. I am referring to the one tabled yesterday. She criticized us for many reasons. Despite that, last year we gave her \$9.2 million more to do her job. I do not think we have a problem here.

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General must audit the books of some 70 departments, 40 crown corporations, 10 department corporations, and 60 other entities, with new duties

added every year. Additional duties require more money beyond just an annual appropriation, money that is currently granted by government rather than an independent Parliament.

Does the government not see the potential for a loss of independence when the Auditor General must go cap in hand to the Treasury Board?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member seems to forget that according to the Auditor General Act, she can report to Parliament that she thinks the money we are giving her is not sufficient to fulfil her duties.

Last year we gave her \$9.2 million, a 13% increase in her budget. I know some of my colleagues in this place would be very happy to receive the same increase.

\* \* \*

**TRADE**

**Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to enhancing the ability of small and medium sized businesses to compete by helping them develop and expand their export and trading activities.

Would the Secretary of State for Rural Development and FedNor please tell us what the Government of Canada is doing to encourage trade relations between the United States and northern Ontario?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of developing strong economic ties with the U.S., and that is why, unlike members opposite who spend their time denigrating the Canada-U.S. relationship, we are spending our time developing a strong trading relationship with the U.S.

I am pleased to announce that FedNor will be sponsoring a trade mission to Detroit, Michigan, from June 7 to June 11. We understand that increased trade will create an environment which will lead to increased economic activity and increased jobs.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a critical shortage of housing on reserves in Canada. The Auditor General says it is a crisis: substandard housing, overcrowding, mould contamination, and a shortage of 8,500 homes. All this and what do we get from the government? The Indian and northern affairs minister says that first nations want a market process, that they want to have mortgages on their homes.

First nations do not want mortgages with huge interest going to banks. They need homes built to the same quality that all Canadians expect and deserve. When will the minister understand that he needs to listen to first nations, not dictate to them?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since 1996 when we brought in the new policy dealing with aboriginal communities vis-à-vis housing, we have built some 2,600 new homes in the communities. Yes, it is true we are concerned that because of the population growth we are having difficulty keeping up.

Part of the new strategy in working with the AFN and the funding we have given them to work with us on housing was to develop the kinds of programs and services where first nations, through land use planning and community planning, would be able to develop their own housing stock. Of course that housing stock would be part of their equity so they could buy and sell—

• (1445)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Palliser.

\* \* \*

**STEEL INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, low priced steel coming into Canada from several countries is resulting in downsizing and threatens the future of the entire Canadian steel industry.

Both steelworkers and producers want Canada to impose significant tariffs on underpriced imports just as the American government did one year ago. Instead, worried yet again about possible WTO repercussions, the government's only response is to shuffle responsibility back and forth between finance and international affairs.

Would the finance minister tell us when the government plans to galvanize itself into action on this important issue?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have taken time to consult with the industry very extensively on this matter. Quite frankly, we have tried to develop a common position that we could take forward. It is important to note that the U.S., in taking this action, has in fact lost an action before the WTO. We need to take into account international trade rules in deciding what steps we will take.

\* \* \*

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, along with the 36,000 persons awaiting deportation, the Auditor General's annual report states there is no coordination between the immigration lookout system and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency at Canadian border points.

The last study on the issue was in 1991 and showed that customs officers missed up to 80% of those who should have been referred to secondary inspection by immigration officers. When will the minister instigate action on the blatant shortcomings of his department?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it could have been also my colleague who answered that question. Why? Because a few weeks ago we signed a memorandum of understanding to promote exactly that policy based on coherence. That is exactly what we are doing from the primary line to the secondary line. At the same time, we have some immigration agents who are there, just before the people disembark,

to make sure that we check the integrity of documents. We are doing exactly what the Auditor General is asking for.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a start, but not only is Canada unable to deal with thousands of individuals who should be deported, apparently we have a revolving door policy that lets them walk back in.

Recently in Toronto, two known Jamaican career criminals were charged with armed robbery and hostage taking. With fingerprints on file and extensive records of over 20 years for similar offences, both had been deported to Jamaica three times, accompanied by immigration escorts.

Would the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration indicate how he plans to tighten the entry points to stop the revolving door policy of deporting criminals so that they are thrown out and stay out?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would say again because of what we are doing with customs right now, it is important to control the doors. That is exactly what we are doing there. We cannot comment on the specifics. I do not know specifically about those cases.

What we need to do is focus on the integrity of documents. We have to make sure that we have a management system that, with customs and other agencies and our department, will be able to do their jobs. That is exactly what we announced a few weeks ago.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the trial of Robert Sand is set to begin in a few days time. Mr. Sand is accused of gunning down RCMP Constable Dennis Strongquill.

If convicted, Mr. Sand, who is aboriginal, may benefit from Criminal Code provisions put in place by the government that instruct judges to pay "particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders".

Could the justice minister verify that if convicted, Mr. Sand's aboriginal heritage could now be a factor in his receiving a more lenient sentence?

• (1450)

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple. I cannot comment on a specific case while it is pending before the courts.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians that we know do not support inequality in the justice system. Race should never be a factor in sentencing.

*Oral Questions*

Constable Dennis Strongquill was an aboriginal man. The consequences of his murder are that his wife and his children lost a husband and lost a father and Canadians lost a hero and a role model.

Justice is something we all deserve. In particular, the families of victims deserve it. Justice is supposed to be blind, so why should justice be peeking out from under a blindfold to see if someone is an aboriginal, or if someone has a—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** I am very sorry, Mr. Speaker, but the hon. member in the first question referred directly to a very specific case. As that case is pending before the courts, we all know and Canadians know as well, that it is impossible for me to comment on a specific case when it is before the courts.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when we raised the cheese stick problem with the Minister for International Trade, he told us we were wrong. When he finally opened his eyes, he was obliged to acknowledge that what we were saying was true. The same thing is happening now with imports of butter oil-sugar blends.

The minister keeps on telling us that action will be forthcoming. But will he admit that his inaction is depriving Quebec and Canadian dairy producers of millions of dollars and a sizeable market share?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no connection between these two things. As far as the cheese sticks were concerned, it was a matter of ministerial import permits issued to allow imports in excess of the allowed quotas.

In the case of the butter oils, the hon. member is well aware that this matter has already gone before the courts, and that we lost.

We are working with industry to find a solution and to use the recommendations made to us to determine what would be the best way to gauge how much harm has been done to the Canadian industry. We are going to work in conjunction with that industry.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the difference between the two, but what is identical in both cases is the minister's attitude and approach.

Last August the Minister for International Trade promised prompt action. Eight months have passed and the dairy producers are still waiting. They find that the minister's "soon" is far too long in coming.

The minister claims to have a report and recommendations in hand. So what is he waiting for?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have indeed received a number of recommendations and these of course involved four ministers, since they involve four departments. We are looking at the recommendations proposed to us.

There are economic and legal implications. As well, international obligations must also be taken into consideration.

I can assure you that the work we are doing has a serious impact on the future of supply management, which is something we as a government have committed to and consider very important. We are therefore taking all the major international negotiations we are involved in at the present time into consideration.

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[English]

**POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING**

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, all of the funding scandals which preceded the introduction of the political financing bill were on the government side of the House. No wonder most Canadians think they have to be donors to the Liberal Party in order to get a government contract. The Canadian Alliance would have been happy to stick with the existing rules, even though we stand to gain the most if Bill C-24 passes.

Why can the Liberals not do as we do, scrap Bill C-24 and raise the money they need from their supporters instead of fleecing the Canadian taxpayers yet again?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is a very strange question if I have ever heard one.

The hon. member is telling us that he is against Bill C-24 that gives greater transparency in the electoral process. He is against transparency. He is against those measures by which we register constituency associations. He is against banning corporate contributions. He is against banning labour contributions.

Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of transparency and four out of the five parties in the House agree with us.

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the House leader does a great job of feigning outrage, but the fact is that every bill he has sponsored for the past 10 years has ended up costing taxpayers a fortune.

He has wasted tens of millions of dollars trying to shut down third party advertising during elections. Now he wants to force taxpayers to spend at least \$30 million a year to fund political parties.

Why will he not do the right thing for the taxpayers of Canada: scrap Bill C-24 and show us that his party can raise the money it needs from the people it claims to represent?

● (1455)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, now we really know what the question is about. The hon. member's leader was in an action in the courts in order for the National Citizens' Coalition to be able to advertise without disclosure, without transparency, and to fund campaigns without giving any information, and he has now admitted that is really the motive of his question.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

**Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a well-known fact that the country of Ukraine requires assistance to strengthen the country's agricultural infrastructure. Could the Minister for International Cooperation give us an update on CIDA's agricultural technical assistance with the Ukraine?

**Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian International Development Agency will be contributing \$6 million over five years to a Saskatchewan-Manitoba-Alberta government partnership to help provide technical assistance in agriculture for the Ukraine. One of the common themes that came out of our new policy on agriculture, released last week, is that we need to harness Canadian expertise. It is a good example of how Canadian expertise in agriculture will help another country like Ukraine move forward.

I want to thank the member for St. Catharines for his diligent hard work in working with the people from Ukraine.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, John Schneeberger continues to terrorize Lisa Dillman and her two little girls.

For seven years he deceived police DNA tests by implanting another man's blood in his arm. That is how he fraudulently got Canadian citizenship. Why does the immigration minister find this so difficult to understand? Will the immigration minister fight to keep John Schneeberger in prison until his term is up and then deport him?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on that specific case, but I will say this. We believe in the rule of law, there is a process, and when the process is over, then I can act.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is not before any court. On March 31, I wrote the minister a letter about Schneeberger. I talked to him last year about it. I have talked to him in the House many times about it. I called his office on Monday and got no return call. Immigration has been investigating it for two years.

Schneeberger has a parole hearing next Friday. He is demanding that those girls come to that prison on April 27. Why will the minister not do something and stop this injustice?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member of Parliament told me that I was doing a good job, that I was open and that he had great communication with my staff. So I say keep your powder dry: I am not going to comment on the specifics. There is a process that we have to respect. On this side of the House we believe in the rule of law and in the process.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TOBACCO FARMERS**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as a result of the decision by Rothmans, Benson & Hedges to stop purchasing

tobacco grown in Quebec, suddenly more than \$2 million worth of sales for flue-cured tobacco farmers has disappeared. Almost all of these farmers are located in the Lanaudière region.

Unlike the federal government, which has yet to make any announcements, Quebec has already set up a task force to come up with solutions.

If it turns out that no existing federal program allows for the conversion of tobacco farms, will the minister make a commitment to create such a program to switch production from flue-cured tobacco?

[English]

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the tobacco industry has approached the federal government to discuss this with them and to talk about how we might be able to assist the tobacco growers in transitioning out of the production of tobacco. We are working on that. There is an interdepartmental government group that will be looking at it to see whether there is any way in which we can assist.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Cuban dissidents have been taken before the courts and sentenced to lengthy prison terms following trials that some people have described as a farce. We know that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has already expressed Canada's great concern regarding this to the Cuban ambassador.

Will the minister tell us what he intends to do to follow up on this troubling situation?

● (1500)

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, I asked the Cuban ambassador to meet with me. I also sent a letter to my Cuban counterpart expressing Canada's disappointment as well as our complete disapproval of the policies that led to these unreasonable and unacceptable sentences for journalists and others who work for freedom in Cuba. We will continue to remonstrate with the Cuban government in order to have this practice abolished.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TRANSPORT**

**Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday the transport minister met with his advisory committee on accessibility and they talked trains. They talked about how he broke his promise to this group by allowing VIA Rail to purchase and put on the tracks used rail cars that are not accessible to people in wheelchairs.

*Points of Order*

Even more surprising is the fact that the minister admitted that these rail cars fail to meet Transport Canada's own safety standards for new rail cars and that he has known that since last October.

Why has the minister allowed rail cars into service that he knows are unsafe for Canadians with disabilities, for railway workers and for all Canadians?

**Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that is currently before the Canadian Transportation Agency. It could be the subject of appeal. Certain recommendations have been made by the agency, and VIA has been asked to respond to the particular questions at hand. The assurance I gave is that these cars certainly would comply with our accessibility standards and I maintain that position.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Minister of Agriculture said recently that the federal government is letting down Ontario farmers. The province's farmers are left worried and uncertain about the future of their income stabilization program and are without adequate protection from economic hardship.

It seems the government needs an election or a byelection in order to make a policy announcement. With a byelection in Perth—Middlesex, can we now expect the agriculture minister to say something, anything, that is going to be acceptable to Ontario farmers?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have informed all the ministers of agriculture that I now have the authority to sign the implementation agreements to put in place the agriculture policy framework and all the funding that goes with it to all the provinces. The Minister of Agriculture has the opportunity to sign that for her farmers in Ontario if she wishes to do that for them.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has stated that parents have no rights, only responsibilities, but he fails to understand that stripping parents of their rights also takes away the rights of children.

The Canadian Alliance, however, believes children do have the right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents following divorce. Why is the Minister of Justice ignoring the rights of children by refusing to enshrine the principle of shared parenting in the Divorce Act?

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have said many times following the tabling of the amendments to the Divorce Act that the notion that has been chosen by me as justice minister is the notion of parental responsibility, and of course the cornerstone of the legislation as well is the best interests of the child. When he refers to the question of the maximum contact, he should read the bill that we have tabled. He will find under section 16(2) exactly that very principle, which reproduces what was existing. That principle as well is in conformity with the international convention that we are part of.

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, during question period the government House leader referred to a court action involving my leader and the Government of Canada. I simply want to note that my leader won that case and kicked the government's rear end very badly.

**The Speaker:** I am sure the House appreciates the hon. member for Medicine Hat's colourful language. I do not think it was a point of order. It sounded like a matter of debate.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday in question period the Prime Minister informed the House, and I quote from page 5247 of the *House of Commons Debates*:

We are the government that proposed and passed legislation to authorize four reports a year [from the Auditor General]. Nobody can say that we do not want the Auditor General to do her work. We proved that we were more open than any other government when we gave the authority for four reports a year.

That statement was made in response to a question from the member for South Shore.

In fact, there were at least 17 requests over the last years, beginning in June 1980, to allow the Auditor General to report more frequently. The bill that authorized the Auditor General to deliver her annual report, plus up to three additional special reports in any year, was Bill C-207. It was a private member's bill introduced on February 1, 1994, by the member of Parliament for Ottawa—Vanier. It was not proposed by the government, as the Prime Minister claimed. It was proposed by the member for Ottawa—Vanier. It was not the government which gave the authority for four reports a year; it was Parliament which did so.

Not content with the few accomplishments of his government, the Prime Minister now finds it necessary to lay claim to one of the rare measures—

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** I do not think the hon. member really has a point of order here. It sounds like a matter of debate. I think there is no question; I personally remember that the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier introduced the bill, and I heard the statement, but I suppose the government can claim credit for it anyway because at some point they must have voted for it to have it pass. Some did, anyway; I do not remember who voted which way, but it did pass.

I know the hon. member may have a technical argument on the matter, but I do not think it is a point of order. I know that if he disagrees with the answer that was given, he of course can raise the matter in other ways, and I invite him to do so, but I think a point of order is inappropriate.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the 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 eight petitions.

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[Translation]

### EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2002 annual report of Export Development Canada, which is entitled "Canada's Bridge to Global Trade and Investment".

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[English]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the House the report from the Canadian Branch, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, concerning the 52nd annual Commonwealth seminar, which was held in London, United Kingdom, from March 3 to 15, 2003.

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[Translation]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which was adopted unanimously.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) and to its mandate to monitor the administration of the Official Languages Act, your committee has conducted a study on concerns expressed by the francophone community in Alberta and New Brunswick about proposals for readjusting federal electoral boundaries in these provinces, and about the concept of community of interest stemming from the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, and agreed on Tuesday, April 8, 2003, to report to this House.

I wish to add that the intent of the act permits a difference of 25% either way. In Alberta and New Brunswick, the commissions did not follow the intent of the act with respect to the 25% limit. This is why the committee is reporting to the House and to the commission.

[English]

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, in both official languages, regarding

#### Routine Proceedings

the membership and associate membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 26th report later this day.

\* \* \*

● (1510)

### WILD ANIMAL AND PLANT PROTECTION AND REGULATION OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE ACT

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-427, an act to amend the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we know, Canada is a major conduit in the trafficking of endangered species. For years the government has not lived up to our obligations under the convention on international trade in endangered species, also known as CITES.

Bill C-427 would strengthen the ability of our country to allow the import and export of species in a fair and safe manner. It would also ensure that the export and import of those species would be done in a manner that is fair and safe to those animals; as we know, a vast majority of them actually die in transport. It would also ensure that the government lives up to its commitments under CITES so that we would no longer be a country that is ashamed of our international reputation with respect to the international trade in endangered species.

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

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### CANADA PENSION PLAN

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-428, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan (adjusted pension for persons with other income above the level at which the second percentage of income tax applies).

He said: Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest issues affecting Canadians that the House has not dealt with is demographic impact upon our social programs. As our population ages, the demand that will be placed on social programs will make many of them unsustainable in the future.

One of those areas is the CPP. Bill C-428 would enable individuals to work after the age of 65 and collect a graded percentage of their CPP. In other words, at the age of 65 they would collect 40% of their CPP, at 66, 50%, and all the way up to 69, if they so choose to also work and earn money.

In other words, this would encourage people to stay in the workforce. It would encourage them to work and make money, but also would enable them to collect a percentage of that CPP. The benefits? Increasing our workforce and decreasing demands on our CPP, a win-win situation for all concerned.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

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**PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT**

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-429, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Canada Elections Act (fixed election dates).

He said: Mr. Speaker, simply put, this enactment would provide for fixed election dates, so that federal elections would be held on the third Monday of June every four years.

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

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-430, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (record of employment).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill is directed toward every employer who fails to provide a record of employment to an insured person in accordance with the regulations and who then would be guilty of an offence and liable upon summary conviction to 10 years and a fine of not more than \$5,000. This is to ensure that people will get their record of employment in due time so that they can claim EI.

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

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**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-431, an act to amend the Criminal Code (probation order).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the effort of this bill is to force judges, prior to sentencing offenders, to determine whether offenders have ever been on probation and how well they have conducted themselves during the period that the order was in force. This would assist in keeping the offenders, who tend to violate probation orders, off probation and onto other forms of sentencing available to the judges.

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

\* \* \*

• (1515)

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-432, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and the Old Age Security Act (seniors' windfall exemption).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill would provide a once in a lifetime exemption with respect to an insurance policy or an RRSP payout that is received by a senior who is receiving income from the guaranteed income supplement or the old age security program.

The payout would be subject to income tax but would not be considered an increase in the annual income of a senior and therefore would not result in a clawback of income received from the guaranteed income supplement or old age security.

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

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, presented on Tuesday, March 25, be concurred in.

There is a reason we ask that the report be concurred in. It was a unanimous report presented to the House by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Actually it was a second round of such a report.

The first one that was presented six or eight months ago was rejected by the minister within minutes of presentation. However, afterward I think the minister wished he had not said some of the things that he had said at the time and has discussed the contents of that report quite openly with the members of the committee and others.

However there is one crucial element in the report with which the minister and the government, apparently, have now agreed and that is dealing with the management of the transboundary stocks on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and in the area we call the Flemish Cap.

I can list a number of reasons for it being necessary to bring this second report to the House. First, it was recently tabled. It is perhaps one of the first times that a committee felt it necessary to come back to the House with a second report on the same topic, mainly in response to the minister's reaction to the original one.

The committee, which is made up of representatives from all parts of the country, from the far east to the far west and all points in between, unanimously thought that it was time for Canada to take control of its resources.

In the meantime, we have a crisis in the groundfishery in Atlantic Canada, particularly as it pertains to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but not exclusively. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island to a degree, and certainly Quebec are all affected by the downturn in the groundfishery, the lack of scientific knowledge in relation to such a fishery and the complete lack of government action in addressing the concerns. One of the main concerns is the overfishing.

The minister, within hours or days but certainly within a week or so, will be making announcements on the government's plan to address the declining stocks and the state of the fishery in Atlantic Canada.

*Routine Proceedings*

Before that happens I think it is only right and proper that we emphasize to the House generally the importance of dealing with such a major issue in a responsible and positive way, and not just reaction. We have to be proactive and look ahead to the future of the fishery if there is going to be such a thing. If we follow past examples and past practices, there will not be a future for the groundfishery in Atlantic Canada.

Some of what I am saying could be true if I were speaking about the fisheries on the west coast. Many of the reasons our stocks are down are similar to the reasons the stocks are down on the west coast of Canada and in other parts.

The minister will be making an announcement based on whatever scientific information he has. The minister and others will admit that they do not have a lot of information, mainly because our scientific base within the department has been cut to the bone. At a time when scientific advice and research are so badly needed, we do not have the resources nor the personnel to do that all inclusive research.

Having said that, I certainly want to pay tribute to the few scientists who, through the horrendous burdens placed on their shoulders, continue to do their best to present logical information upon which the minister will base his decisions. However, because that scientific information is so limited, the minister must look elsewhere for some guidance.

● (1520)

The all party committee from Newfoundland and Labrador again presented a unanimous report. If there is one province in this country that plays politics it is Newfoundland and Labrador, and never the twain shall meet. That has been the past practice in our province.

The Liberals, the Conservatives and the NDP all came together, all seven members of Parliament, irrespective of their political stripes, the full membership of the House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador, the senators, again representing both parties here in Ottawa, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, the leader of the Conservative Party and the leader of the New Democratic Party, unanimously submitted a report making suggestions as to how to deal with this crisis.

The minister met with the committee and accepted the report. To his credit, he said that he would look carefully at it and use whatever recommendations he could, hopefully all of them, to address this serious situation which we find ourselves facing in Atlantic Canada.

As we talk about this and as time drags by, the small amount of cod fish that is left in Atlantic Canada is disappearing bit by bit. If we compare today's biomass to that of 15 or 20 years ago, we are at about 1% of the total biomass.

Those of us who have studied history know that John Cabot was one of the first Europeans to come here. I will not say that he discovered Newfoundland, but it was the start of the settlement of the new world. John Cabot came here in 1497, five years after Christopher Columbus. He went back to his homeland with stories that the fish were so plentiful that baskets could be put into the sea and fish would be caught.

In my own day I have seen fish that plentiful at times. I could look into the ocean and see fish swimming all over the place. When we

were catching fish in cod traps, quite often the minute we dropped the traps we could start dipping because the traps would be full. Caplin were coming ashore with fish basically chasing them. If we stood on the shore nowhere near the fishing grounds, we could see the cod fish swimming around. That is how plentiful they were.

Those fish have disappeared and there are several reasons: climatic change to some degree, but nobody believes that any more; an increase in the seal herds from under one million to seven or eight million chasing fish, not only cod fish but salmon and other species, all over the place; the imbalance of nature; the lack of scientific research; and heavy overfishing outside our 200 mile limit on our continental shelf, which Canada should be protecting.

People have said that Canada cannot on its own go out and declare custodial management. Why not? Little Iceland did. Other countries threatened Iceland's fish but it sent out its gun boats, fired a shot or two and Britain and all the other countries disappeared. They understood how important the fishery was to Iceland and they eventually worked in co-operation.

The stocks that are abundant on our continental shelf are shared by many nations. Seventeen of those nations belong to an organization called NAFO, the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization. Many of those countries have had allocations and fishing rights on the continental shelf for centuries, as long as we ourselves have had them.

● (1525)

Nobody is saying we will not recognize their historical rights nor will we take away quotas they get. We have been saying that with our best scientific knowledge, unless we use and adhere to the quotas set by NAFO, these stocks will disappear. They are just as concerned as we are. Why does somebody not decide to manage the stocks? Right now if NAFO sets quotas, the countries involved say that they do not agree and they set their own. It cannot work that way. There has to be a proper management regime which has to be enforced. That is the problem with NAFO.

Does Canada have to move in, take over and run it all itself? That would certainly be what we have been asking for and would be ideal. However if we had some leadership, our minister would approach the NAFO countries. Many of them are concerned and would support us because they have the same concerns in their own regions and also want to protect the stocks in our areas. They share in the harvest legitimately. Some adhere to the quotas. Others do not. However we have not seen that leadership.

We should tell NAFO, while we are waiting for it to perhaps appreciate this, that as the adjacent state we can be the best managers on the grounds that we will look after the rights of all NAFO countries the same as our own. They would be protected, quotas would be adhered to and enforced and we would deal with offending nations. What happens now if a nation offends, overfishes or catches species under moratorium? They are rapped on the knuckles, warned and sent home to their own country for retribution. Many of these boats are flying flags of convenience. Nobody even knows who owns them. Nothing happens and they come back here again the next day. That cannot work.

*Routine Proceedings*

Leadership at the NAFO meetings could start the ball rolling. At least there should be a stronger management regime with an enforcement mechanism set up within NAFO until such time as some country, Canada being the ideal country to do so, can properly manage and enforce management regulations in the area. It is not rocket science. It is simply a word called leadership, and we have not seen it.

In two days time the House will take a two week recess. By the time we get back, the minister undoubtedly will have made his announcements. He will probably make them during the recess so he will not have to face questions in the House. On top of the all party report, there is the second report by the committee which tries to emphasize the fact that it is so important to deal with this issue.

This is not an issue that just affects a handful of fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is an issue affecting all Canadians. It is a Canadian renewable resource, and we do not have a lot left. I was going to say oil is not a renewable resource, but over several generations or centuries it is. Minerals are not renewable for several millions of years. However the fishery is a renewable resource. Properly protected, we can not only preserve what we have at present, we can enhance it for the benefit, not only of a few fishermen but for all Canadians. The spinoff from a resource is tremendous and the amount of work and money that moves through the country because of that resource would astound people.

There is a book called *Newfoundland at the Crossroads* written by a great friend of mine, John Edward FitzGerald, a former page in the House of Assembly in Newfoundland. He is one of Newfoundland's greatest historians. He talks about Canada's bid to suck Newfoundland into Confederation. Why did Canada want us? It wanted us because of our great resources.

• (1530)

Many people across the country today who do not know Newfoundland and Labrador would laugh at that and ask, "what resources does your province have"? We have half a million people and we have more raw resources than any province in Canada. We should all be driving Cadillacs and spending our winters down south but as it is, we do not benefit from our own resources, and the fishery is one of them. It has been badly mismanaged since we came into Confederation.

However, even though there is only 1% of the biomass left, the biomass can be revived with proper measures. Just a few days ago we all read stories about thousands of dead cod fish coming ashore in Smith Sound, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador. They were huge cod fish, just like the old ones we used to hear stories about, which we have not seen in a long time. Why would dead cod fish be washed ashore? The scientists say that perhaps it is because they came in contact with super cold water.

There is no doubt about it. The shallow water in Newfoundland and Labrador at this time of the year, because of the ice surrounding the province, is super cold. However fish are sensitive to changes in water temperature. That is why they migrate. If that is what killed them, and that analysis is probably legitimate, they did not swim in there intentionally. They were driven there by the thousands of seals that were chasing them. It is almost like watching sheep dogs rounding up sheep out in the pasture. The seals work, co-operate and

herd fish into little nooks and crannies and then they can go in, scoop out the underbellies and kill the fish.

We have a number of major issues and the seal herd is certainly one. The other is the overfishing. Both these can be handled but again the word leadership has to come to play. Our minister should go to NAFO, stand up and say that we as Canadians want to protect this resource, not for us alone but for all NAFO members because they have a share in it. Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland openly have discussed the same concerns as we have ourselves.

Some of them, and maybe all of them, would be silently onside in protecting that resource if there were a fair and proper mechanism. Nobody has openly discussed that prospect. We have a few fish and each year there are fewer and fewer. The only thing they do is decide how much we will get and how much they will get. The greedy ones say that they will take more. Then they go out and do whatever they want to do, load and go with whatever species they can get at.

It would not happen anywhere else in the world. It probably would not happen anywhere else in Canada. However it is happening off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are sick and tired of it. It is about time we saw some leadership. If the government does not provide it, then we have no other opportunity except that the people themselves will start doing whatever has to be done to ensure we preserve our resource. That is number one.

We would involve those who are part of the fishery. We would not tell them to forget it. We not tell them that we would close the fishery and that they could go to Alberta to work in the meat packing plant. I like Alberta. They are great friends of ours, but our fishermen would rather fish than work in the meat packing plant. I am sure those who work in the meat industry or the oil industry in Alberta do not necessarily want to come and fish off Newfoundland and Labrador. However when their oil dries up, if we look after our fishery, they might be able to do just that.

We have a chance to do something about this. It is called leadership. There is a standing committee, and I give all the credit in the world to my colleagues, like my colleague from Grand Bank. We have members from the Alliance Party, the NDP, the Bloc and other members of the Liberal Party, all of whom sit on the Standing Committee of Fisheries and Oceans. They have a variety of backgrounds, from farmers to Ontario lawyers, as our chair is, all who have come to understand what it means to preserve our resources.

• (1535)

Let me stress again, we are down to 1% of our biomass of a few years ago. We have a chance. If we lose that, there is no hope. We have a small window and the only chance is to address all the factors: the seal herds, overfishing, bycatch, gear types, and I could go on and on.

Those involved in the fishery are willing to play their parts. All we need is the leadership, and that is why we are asking the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and government generally, please, before it is too late, let us go to work.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for a great speech. There is a similarity between from where I come and about what the hon. gentleman talks. He talks about two main issues which have ruined the livelihood of Newfoundland and Labrador. He is right. All it takes is leadership. Leadership could chase those two issues that have ruined his industry if we would only take it.

Canada is a huge nation. The hon. mentioned that because of no leadership, if Newfoundland and Labrador is to be kept poor, that will affect everybody. I would concur with the hon. gentleman. It was a great speech. The scarcity of the cod can be corrected. We can bring it back but we will not bring it back by sitting on our hands. It will take action by the government, and it is time that Canada said "Let us restore an industry before it reaches a point where it can never be restored".

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Mr. Speaker, let me thank the hon. member for his interjection. It was about a little over a year ago that I first introduced this resolution to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, asking it to deal with the overfishing issue. At the time, originally I just gave notice and talked to a number of our members who began to understand something about what it involved. However as they began to understand it, they began to support it.

Last March the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans came to Newfoundland and Labrador. We had meetings in St. John's and we had presentations from every agency involved in the fishery. We also had presentations from the mayors of a couple of communities, Trepassy and Burgeo, that had been affected by the downturn. They told stories of the people who lived in their towns heading off to the mainland looking for work.

My hon. colleague from Grand Bank represents the area of Burin—St. George's. His area was affected the same way. Our young people are heading off somewhere else to look for work. Fish plants have closed down. People have been left with no resource, no work and no income. We have lost 10% of our population in 10 years.

The members heard these stories and realized that we were talking about a major renewable resource that brought millions and millions of dollars into the province and consequently into the country, and we were doing nothing about preserving it. We have had solid support from every person on this side of the House and a lot of people on the other side. What we have not had is leadership from the very people who can really do something about it. I guess we have to keep pushing the issue until they also learn and appreciate, as the rest of us have done.

• (1540)

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, again I would like to applaud the member for bringing this up. It is such an important issue for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I was on the fisheries committee that travelled to Newfoundland and Labrador and we heard very compelling testimony. It was in the town of Trepassy where they dismantled the plant and moved it off to Japan.

Of course the government's answer in response to the depleted stocks was to throw a bag of money at the people there to try to reinvent why they lived in their locations. However many of these communities are isolated. They exist because of the one time

abundance of those Grand Banks. Now of course, there they are with these glossy brochures trying to attract business to their communities which are removed from market. They exist because of the abundance of the sea, and with proper management it is possible, we believe, to bring back the stocks.

There are two primary issues, which the member has addressed very adequately, where we need leadership. One is on custodial management of our Grand Banks. The Grand Banks, with the nose and tail, where there is overfishing by foreign fleets in the area just beyond our 200 mile limit, is part of our continental shelf. Of course the fish do not stop at the 200 mile limit. When an abundance of fish are extracted from there, the ones from inside simply move outside, where the abundance of food is, and they get captured by the foreign fleets.

We need to take responsibility, and also with the seals. Does the member have a comment on that? We certainly concur with him on the motion.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Alliance. He is a typical example of a member in whose district we went last year as part of the committee and assisted him in some of his issues.

Perhaps a year ago he knew little about Newfoundland and Labrador, certainly nothing about the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. He now understands the resource. We have heard him clearly debate and talk about a Canadian resource that needs to be preserved for the people of Canada. That is what this is about. It might be ours today, but it may be someone else's tomorrow.

It is about the fish stocks in the Great Lakes and the concerns about invasive species. It is about the hake fishery on the west coast and the salmon in the Fraser. They are renewable resources that we are losing because of cutbacks, lack of leadership, lack of science, and lack of caring at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It is not too late to stop. While we have two fish left there is a chance if we believe the old story of the ark. All the animals went in pairs. They say worms went in apples.

We can rebuild the resource and we see other Canadians starting to understand. We are all in this together. A rich Newfoundland and Labrador is a contributor, not one that is perceived as having its hands out. Some day we will have a good debate on what we are contributing so people will really understand, but it is to everyone's benefit to create wealth in different parts of the country. We dig out our minerals and they are gone, we pump our oil out and it is gone, but the fishery can be renewed over and over and enhanced. What a tremendous food resource for the world.

*Routine Proceedings*

That is why we are pushing it. The member mentioned the seal herds. When we had a biomass 100 times greater than we have now, we had fewer than a billion seals. Now we have 1% of that total amount and we have perhaps a 700% or 800% increase in the seal herds. I know there are nature lovers out there and everything else, but surely everyone must respect the fact that there must be a balance in nature. There is an imbalance right now. These things must be controlled.

Leadership can be done simply. It takes a bit of leadership and intestinal fortitude and we are there.

• (1545)

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member for St. John's West in this debate and I appreciate his sincerity. He has made a significant contribution to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and to this particular issue of custodial management outside of Canada's 200 mile limit.

Quite often I tell the member, and he is aware of this from certain sources within government, that we hear the opinion that there is no international appetite and we will not get any international support on the issue of establishing a Canadian custodial management regime.

In the hon. member's experience, from some of his recent travels, I wonder if he could inform the House of his experience and, indeed, what some of those foreign countries are saying about custodial management, and the need to protect and regenerate those fish stocks?

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Mr. Speaker, before I answer the question, the hon. member for Burin—St. George's who just spoke represents what used to be the greatest deep sea or offshore fishing district in the country. There were major plants that worked not for a few weeks a year, as a lot of people think happens in the fishery, but year round. There were boats arriving day after day providing work for thousands of people. He saw it all disappear, as I did in my area.

I have discussed this issue with other countries, specifically Norway, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and even Russia. In Russia's case, it is trying to find out more about management and scientific knowledge in order to find out where more fish will be so its fishermen could catch more. The other countries, specifically Norway and Iceland, have real concerns about what is happening to our stocks.

I am sure that with the proper approach countries like that will be leaders with us in pushing toward the proper management and enforcement of our laws and rules.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this is an example of how the House does work at its best when members can debate, free of the restraints of various positions that the parties have taken over the years on important issues. I want to thank the member for St. John's West for truly one of the best speeches I have heard him give in the House on an issue that is important to him and to all Canadians.

We are talking about areas beyond Canada's 200 mile zone. International waters would be the term that we would use to define those areas. One of the things which I have witnessed since being

around this place—I arrived in 1988, Mr. Speaker, along with yourself—is that on this issue it takes not just one minister of the Crown, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, to make this happen, when we are looking at NAFTA and what we would like to see in terms of custodial management of a resource which is disappearing before our eyes. It takes the leadership of the entire government and the Prime Minister to make this happen

We have been here when various ministers of the fishery have had to take some tough decisions, some of them unpalatable back home, and they required the support of the entire government and the Prime Minister of Canada. There is no question that one of the departments that drive the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in relation to issues like this is the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has a lead role to play in this as does the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

It seems that the policy on this is more dictated by external affairs than it is by DFO. Former ministers have alluded to that, including Mr. Crosbie when he was minister of fisheries. He always talked of the support that would be required from the Prime Minister of Canada and the entire government to do this and he did recognize that relationship between DFO and external affairs.

I am hoping that the member can respond to that.

• (1550)

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Mr. Speaker, I will reverse roles and ask the hon. member a question.

The big problem we have in dealing with international negotiations is not with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. That is the problem with governments and bureaucracies. We all have a certain role to play and we must live within that role. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans cannot take a lead role internationally because he has to kowtow to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

We have had submissions to our committee from the department. I do not know whether other members ever felt like getting up in a meeting and catching somebody, and just throwing them through the window. That is the way committee members felt, especially those representing our province, when we heard people telling us we could interfere with these other countries because we might disrupt some trading relations. We make sure that people in France can sell their wine, and we do not want to disturb that, while people who live around the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador go without because foreigners are destroying our resource.

I ask the member, in light of his involvement, and he has been around federally a lot longer than I have, has he found the same thing, that one department that might be willing to do something has been stymied by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade?

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, that is the point I was making, the reversal of roles. This is the importance of a debate like this because there is no question it has happened before and it is happening now.

*Routine Proceedings*

We have a minister of the Crown, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, who is captive to the chemistry between these various departments. He named the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade who tries to delicately work its way through diplomatic channels. We have seen a breakdown of diplomacy at the highest levels in the world in recent months, and it is not unlike what is happening with this issue as well. Therefore, we are a bit hostage to that whole process.

The point that the member for St. John's West made, and the one common theme throughout his speech, dealt with leadership. This is the point where the Prime Minister of Canada must speak out and might have to take a risk in terms of international diplomacy with those other countries, but doing it in a way which probably would not be as risky as we might think.

We could draw on some of that international capital which Canada has legitimately built up over the years with successive governments. It is not like we are an outcast in the international community. Canada has a high ranking despite some of the shortcomings of the present government. It is time to draw on some of that political capital and for the Prime Minister of Canada to take a lead role, along with his other ministers, to ensure that this happens.

We have a renewable resource that is on the brink of extinction and we can legitimately ask the rest of the world to help us preserve those species that are at risk which is costing this economy, this country, and the future of areas like Newfoundland and Labrador and other parts of Atlantic Canada, including my own area where we used to have a very vibrant ground fishery. That ground fishery has virtually disappeared in the last number of years.

We can do it, and it is up to the government to show leadership. Again, going back to the speech made by the minister. I have made a psychic slip and already have him as minister of fisheries. That might happen some day and I hope it does.

The common theme throughout the member's speech and what we are all echoing in the chamber today is the theme of leadership. The Prime Minister has a perfect opportunity. If he is talking about leaving a legacy, this would be a lasting legacy because we are talking about the future generations of our country. We are hoping the Prime Minister can and will do that.

• (1555)

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to go to New York City a number of years ago. At the time, Brian Tobin was the minister of fisheries and he had invited me to go with him. The government was looking at what to do with regard to the fishery, the cod situation and so on. I had an opportunity to speak to officials as well. I was really impressed while I was there.

There were two things that bothered me. This was a number of years ago and there was a problem with the cod fishery. It had to do with the seals and no one would address it. The seals eat tonnes and tonnes of cod each day, more than anyone realizes. There are a lot of people who do not want the seals touched, but I can say that my mother always had a seal fur coat and that was a good business as well.

I wish to say also that large ships from foreign countries dragged the bottom of the ocean and took up baby cod. They are still doing it. They have hurt the cod fishery dramatically.

The people who earned their living in the cod fishery when I was a little girl would catch the cod by putting a hook on the end of a fishing rod.

There is a way in which we have to move. As has been stated by my colleague from St. John's, Newfoundland, we have to protect the fishery. We truly do. That is a livelihood.

What I have seen since I have been here in the House of Commons is that Canada, according to the government, seems to stop at the Quebec border. The rest of us in Atlantic Canada, the rest of us in Newfoundland do not even count any more and that is not right.

I say to my hon. colleague that I am glad he has brought this issue to the floor of the House. We have to do something. We have to come up with a policy to protect the cod not only in Newfoundland but all across the nation.

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, how could one possibly disagree with the member for Saint John? I do not think any of us could.

The member for Saint John used to have some fishing villages in her riding which are now part of my constituency. We are going to be in a little place called Chance Harbour on Saturday. The member for Saint John does not know this yet, but she is coming down to pick up a picture from me in Chance Harbour, so I will tell here on the floor of the House of Commons. It is that sort of cooperation we have between members.

The hon. member speaks well to the point that the member for St. John's West was making. We have an opportunity to protect those future generations of fish stocks, the custodial management of a resource. The responsibility is upon us to do it. Once those species disappear, they will have disappeared forever and it will be too late to do anything about it.

It is scary when we talk about the biomass which is down to 1% and 99% of the biomass has disappeared. We are down to the last remaining 1%. It is on the verge of collapse. More important, it is at the point where intervention by the Government of Canada could make a huge difference in the international world.

We focus on Canada from coast to coast to coast with regard to the oceans from which historically we have made our living but even the west has a vibrant inshore fishery. There is a chance that we in this place can make a difference. Again, I call on the Prime Minister of Canada to make that difference, protect those stocks and present our case to the international court.

• (1600)

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in participating in this debate. I commend all who have spoken before me, particularly the member for St. John's West, the member for New Brunswick Southwest and the member for Saint John for their interesting comments.

*Routine Proceedings*

Issues come and go. When we look at the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, its economy and other parts of Atlantic Canada and the fisheries issue, its time has come. I listened very closely to the member for St. John's West when he talked about the issue and his emphasis was on leadership. I listened intently to the member for New Brunswick Southwest and his comments about former minister Crosbie and so on. To date, no one has seized the opportunity to deal with the issue and that is what worries us all.

It worries us because of the situation which once again is occurring in Newfoundland and Labrador and other parts of Atlantic Canada. There are a number of reasons that the situation is so grave. The need for custodial management outside Canada's 200 mile limit is certainly one of the factors that has to be dealt with by the government in order to find a solution and to regenerate and rebuild fisheries resources. There is no question about that.

The member for St. John's West talked about the all party committee and the recommendations in its report that it presented a couple of weeks ago to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. In my view, it is the first time that such a comprehensive fisheries management plan has been presented to any fisheries minister in the history of this country. It was a very comprehensive fisheries management plan made up of a number of components which, if dealt with, in the humble opinion of the all party committee would cause an improvement in the situation, would lead to a regeneration and rejuvenation of different species of fish, particularly cod, and would make a brighter future for our people.

Custodial management is certainly a very important part of that puzzle. For too many years there have been contracting partners of NAFO who have not conformed to regulations. They have violated and have used the objection procedure of NAFO to catch and harvest at will even though the scientific advice to NAFO has been to set a total allowable catch at a certain level. Under the objection procedure all countries have to do is object to that total allowable catch and then they can fish and catch what they want. These are some of the problems and weaknesses of NAFO.

In the wisdom of the standing committee, after extensive consideration and after extensive evidence was presented by witnesses, it presented a unanimous report. The unanimous report called upon the Government of Canada to serve notice that it will establish a Canadian custodial management regime to manage those fish resources not only for the benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic Canada but for the benefit of the entire world. As other members have said, if we as a government and as a people neglect to deal with this very important issue, then we are failing not only ourselves and our people, but we are indeed failing the world. This is an important protein resource that should be looked after, managed and controlled for the benefit of the world.

Countries from all over the world have been harvesting this resource for some 400 or 500 years. As the member for St. John's West said, we are not saying that others cannot have any of the fish. What the committee is saying is that based upon traditional fishing practices, harvesting practices, traditional rights to fish in those zones, that would be protected under the management regime. Of course it would be in accordance with the total allowable catch and based upon the traditional percentage of that resource. It is a very reasonable proposal. Again, all we need is for someone at the upper

levels of the government to take this issue and run with it. That is basically what the member for St. John's West has said.

● (1605)

I am not here today to be critical. I am trying to be constructive. I want to see that this issue gets the proper attention and that we start moving in the right direction on it. We could go back in time to when we started to experience problems with our fish stocks, and our cod stocks in particular. There is enough blame to go around this place and other places besides but that is not a solution.

The solution is to develop a willingness to move forward on the issue of custodial management and I hope we will see that. The committee brought the custodial management report back to the House for a second time, which was an unusual move. The committee felt so strongly about this issue and had such confidence in its recommendations that it would not accept the original government response to its report. It saw fit to bring it back and table it in the House a second time.

That clearly demonstrates the committee's commitment to this issue and how serious it is about getting the issue dealt with. As a member of the standing committee, I participated in the writing of the report and its recommendations and I want to go on record as fully supporting it.

Members have mentioned a couple of other issues. We are expecting the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans within the next few weeks to make a very important decision about our gulf cod stocks and our northern cod stocks. It is very disconcerting to us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and as members of Parliament who represent different regions of our province, to anticipate what the minister may do. If he reduces or closes the cod fisheries, it will once again spell devastation for the people we represent. It will be another severe economic blow to hundreds of our rural communities.

We had one such closure in 1992 and it was devastating. We saw out-migration from our communities and our province of unequal proportion. People had to leave their communities and the province to go to other places in Canada to seek a living. We are facing that reality again.

There were a number of components in the report which the all party committee presented to the minister. One of them was the important component of custodial management. Another important component was the issue of the seal population and how to deal with it.

As a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, there is no way I can accept the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans closing the gulf and northern cod stocks without taking some measures to reduce the ever exploding seal population. The minister will tell the fishermen to take their boats out of the water and find a job in some other part of Canada. He will not allow them to catch those fish, but the fish will be left in the water so the seals can consume them. One seal consumes approximately one tonne of fish resource a year which means that 7.5 million seals consume 7.5 million tonnes of fish resource.

**Mr. Roy Bailey:** That is a lot of fish.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** It is a lot of fish.

*Routine Proceedings*

We would not have to worry about people leaving their rural communities to go to Toronto, or Alberta, or anywhere else out west if we had some of that resource for our fishermen to catch and our fish plant workers to process.

It is going to be difficult for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to accept another closure of the fishery if we are not going to implement some other measures that hopefully would see a regeneration and a rejuvenation of the biomass. As sure as we are standing in the House today, if we close the fishery and do nothing else, the biomass will not rebuild. We have seen it before. We went through 11 or 12 years of a moratorium before. The scientists who advise the minister have told him that if he closes the fishery, there is no way they can guarantee any improvement in the biomass. There has to be more than a closure or a reduction.

● (1610)

Custodial management has to be implemented. There has to be a significant reduction in the seal population. There is no question that we had to go to more conservation friendly gear types. Right now we are using a range of gear types from hook and line, gill nets and so on. The all party committee of the province recommended very strongly to the minister that a commercial fishery continue but that it continue only with a hook and line fishery because gill nets are very destructive. Gill nets ghost fish. If they are lost at sea they continue to fish for years and fish get caught in them.

There is another downside to gill nets. In my area of 3PS where, thank God, there still is a commercial fishery and where they use gill nets, the only fish that are reported as caught are the fish landed at the wharf.

If we have a total allowable catch, which for the last couple of years has been 15,000 metric tonnes, I can assure members that there was twice that amount of fish that was caught in those gill nets. At least one-third of the fish caught in a gill net and left in the water for any length of time has to be discarded because the fish in the bottom one-third of the net are destroyed before they are taken aboard the boat and taken into the plant.

I am sure that the total allowable catch in 3PS is 15,000 tonnes but, as sure as I am standing here, there has been at least 30,000 metric tonnes of fish caught in that zone. However all that is reported are the fish landed at the wharf by the dockside monitor. What is thrown out of the gill net is never recorded.

For hon. members who are not totally familiar with gill netting, I think that will illustrate the destructive practices of gill netting. That is why the standing committee, on which the member for St. John's West is a member as well as a member of the Newfoundland all party committee, recommended, in its wisdom, of going to hook and line.

● (1615)

Harvesters should not have a say in it. I have talked to a lot of fish harvesters over the last while. I have tried out the gill net and the hook and line fishery on them. There are some who right now are using gill nets. They should be told what gear types they have to use. If they want to continue in the fishery it should be hook and line. If they are not willing to abide by and obey those regulations they should not be in the fishery. The one thing we have to remember here is that the fish stocks we are talking about are a common resource, a

people's resource. It is not owned by any one, two or a dozen harvesters. It is not owned by the fishermen's union or the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a common resource and that resource has to be protected for future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, future generations of Atlantic Canadians, future generations of Canadians and future generations worldwide.

If the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans were to accept the majority of the recommendations of the all party committee, it would be a major step forward in bringing some hope for our people. It would be a major step forward in causing a regeneration of those important fish stocks.

This will not happen overnight, and we know that, but our fear is that we are already past the brink. Our fear is that it is already too late.

If the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the people involved in the fisheries industry, the harvesters and the processors, are not willing to buy into the all party committee report of Newfoundland and Labrador on a comprehensive management plan for our fishery, then I would say, and I am sure the hon. member for St. John's West would agree, because he is not a pessimist but an optimist, a realist and he is sincere, that unless we implement the measures of the all party committee, very soon we will be facing a total destruction of those fisheries. I think we can forget about a future for those fisheries. We all know the consequences of that.

I want to say a few words on the custodial management issue, which is what we are supposed to be debating today. It is difficult to talk about only one aspect of the fishery because it is so complex. It is such a mixed bag that if we do not do a number of things together we will not get the desired results.

● (1620)

However I agree with the member for St. John's West that the Government of Canada has to take some leadership on the issue. It is responsible for foreign and international relations and negotiations. It is the custodian of the fishery resources on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Atlantic Canada. We brought this resource, the most abundant fishery resources in the world, into this great Confederation, .

We want to see the fisheries rebuilt but they will not be rebuilt unless some bold decisions are made. That will take some courage because some decisions will have to be taken for the first time.

Some of the recommendations in the report of the all party committee in Newfoundland and Labrador will not be very politically popular. However, the committee, because of its concern for the issue and for our people, decided to go with the recommendations of the all party committee because we believe in the report and its recommendations. If the report is implemented, we have hope that it will cause an improvement in and a rebuilding of our fish stocks.

*Routine Proceedings*

The custodial management issue is another integral part of the plan, as is the reduction in the seal population an important part of the plan. More conservation friendly gear types for use in the fishery is an important part of the plan. If we were to take three of the recommendations and prioritize them, the following would probably be the top three: custodial management, dealing with the seals and the gear types.

Let us imagine what it is like to be a fisherman in Newfoundland and Labrador today or in some other part of Quebec, seeing as my colleague from Quebec is here and he has a region that will be impacted by this decision as well. Let us imagine being fishermen for the last 30 or 40 years and being told by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans that we cannot fish in a certain zone any longer because he will be shutting it down. He tells us that the resource is so fragile that he cannot allow us to bring in one pound of the fish to make a living.

In the meantime, he announces that he will allow the seal population, which is now at 7.5 million, to continue to grow by about 1 million seals a year. Of the 7.5 million seals that are now in the area, it is estimated that the herd will grow to about 1 million seals a year. When we think about a seal consuming approximately one metric tonne of fish a year, it is kind of hard to accept that I cannot go out and catch my fish to make a living but the seals will be allowed to eat the fish that are in the ocean.

I do not know if I have made myself understood but hopefully someone is listening and by listening they will understand the problem with shutting down the fishery. It is not the answer. There have to be other measures.

By the way, I do not believe we need to shut down the fishery. I believe that if we were to implement the measures recommended by the all party committee, we could still have a commercial fishery and still give our resources a chance to regenerate.

If we were to take out the seals, go to more friendly gear types, implement custodial management and some of the other things we have recommended, then I think we have a chance of rebuilding this resource and a chance to keep our people living in the communities where they want to live making a productive living. All they want to do is harvest the fish, process it and make a living.

Let us look at the very alarming situation that the member referred to in Smith Sound, one of the last few congregations of healthy northern cod. From all reports, it sounds like they were driven into shallow, icy cold water by seals that prey upon them. What happened, of course, is that the water crystallized in their gills and, consequently, they could not get any oxygen and died. It is unfortunate that we would have one of the few healthy populations of cod left in the whole north Atlantic that is now running into this unfortunate situation in the last 48 hours.

I thank hon. members for participating in the debate. I know they are all as sincere as I am about it. What we want is to find solutions to this very serious problem on behalf of the people we represent.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member from Newfoundland takes this matter very seriously. His constituents are very much affected by the issue.

He talked about the seal issue and pointed out that they eat about a tonne of fish each per year. They do not eat the whole fish. They tend to eat just a bite out of the belly. That is 7 million in a herd, about 2.5 million for a sustainable herd, which is a huge seal population. If that were sheep and wolves were taking a bite out of their belly, I wonder if people would be outraged and be calling for a wolf cull.

We heard at committee that there was another concern with the Atlantic salmon potentially being placed on the endangered species list for the same reason, that the seals are in fact trapping the Atlantic salmon as they come and go from the mouths of the rivers and are even being found miles upstream from where they usually would be found, and Atlantic salmon themselves being also put at risk because of the huge seal population.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. The west coast has its problems as well because of an exploding seal population and of course seals are not unwise. They congregate in the mouths of rivers and in the bays and wait for dinner to come along most times. The salmon of course go on their runs up the rivers so the seals, being pretty astute, just sit there and wait for dinner.

The hon. member is correct. It is not that they consume the whole fish. They just eat the underbelly of the fish. What they are interested in is the liver and so on. That is what they feed on.

However I understand that there has been some action in some places on the west coast to deal with the seal situation. It probably is not as adequate as one would expect, but I understand there have been some measures in the last couple of years to cut down on at least that predator situation in river mouths and so on and cut down on the amount of salmon that is being intercepted by seals and consequently destroyed.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's comments. Although I come from an area that is not a fishing area, we do have one thing in common so I can appreciate the member's dilemma.

I phoned home today. The temperature is plus 20. In a couple of days out from the ground will come these cute little animals, Richardson's ground squirrels, or gophers.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am the official gopher herder. The Saskatchewan Federation, a wildlife conservation group, has organized again this year, along with the Alberta people, gopher derbies. We must keep that population down otherwise they could eat us out of house and home.

However public opinion and the bleeding hearts say that they are cute and that they cannot be killed. The member has faced the same thing. However, because of the government and lack of it, we have allowed the bleeding hearts, the phoney television programs and the national do-gooders to ruin the fishery all because of somebody who does not know the first thing about fishing.

The reason I received the title of gopher herder was because a lady phoned me and asked why I did not herd the gophers, and everybody roared. They go three feet and they are down their holes, so I can sympathize with the member.

*Routine Proceedings*

•(1625)

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** That is an interesting comment, Mr. Speaker, and I can sympathize with the gopher situation.

Something that most members would not know is that in other parts of the world and even in this country, decisions have been made to reduce certain species. Someone informed me today that over the last few years 2.5 million snow geese have been eliminated because they were causing some problem with vegetation in some area of this country.

As the hon. member said, there is an imbalance in the ecosystems in our area. Eventually some disease will set into the seal population or they will consume all the fish resources and starve to death, which is probably where they are headed because not only do they consume cod, they eat caplin and herring. I guess if they were hungry enough and you were in their way, Mr. Speaker, they would probably take a bite out of you as well.

What is happening is that it is throwing the food chain completely out of whack. Over time caplin has been the main dietary source for cod. There is a lack of caplin for a number of reasons, one being the consumption by seals. There still are commercial caplin fisheries in some areas, which I believe is wrong. The all party committee recommended that be ceased too.

Scientists tell me that because of the lack of caplin in the cod diet the cod are not in very good shape. When they examine the liver in cod, it lacks certain ingredients. Consequently, it takes the cod longer, if ever, to reach a mature enough stage to reproduce. The old food chain is out of sorts and it is having a devastating impact on cod and other fish stocks. It is a very serious situation and we think it is time to deal with it.

I understand the concerns of some environmental groups. I also understand that a seal in Brigitte Bardot's arms looks very attractive, although Brigitte looks far more attractive than the seal, but we know what it does to public opinion. We know that people taking pictures on the ice floe years ago influenced public opinion worldwide. We received all kinds of threats about boycotting our fish exports. There is still a fair amount of it around today. I can tell by what the hon. member said that he knows full well that the situation still exists.

There are those who, for some reason that I do not understand, have chosen to be more concerned about 7.5 million seals than they are about 500,000 Newfoundlanders, and that is the truth of it. As a Newfoundlander and Labradorian I cannot help but say that there is more concern right now about an exploding seal herd of 7.5 million. The population of the herd is not endangered. A little over 2 million is a sustainable seal herd and we are at 7.5 million. Yet we have 500,000 Newfoundlanders who want to make a living but there are still those factions inside and outside the country who care more about 7.5 million seals than they care about 500,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned during his debate the future of the fishery. A well-known Newfoundland philosopher once said that the future of the fishery is a thing of the past. I am afraid we are nearing that point.

In my own speech I mentioned that the hon. member represents what once was one of the greatest fishing districts in the country. I would like him, not for our sake but for the sake of the thousands of people who are sitting down to supper enthralled by what they see on CPAC—at least I hope they are watching and listening—to tell us in the brief time he has about the effect of the decline of the fishery on his own area, because in all parts of the province the greatest devastation was probably caused to his own district.

•(1630)

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. The area that I represent was, not all that many years ago, the most prolific fishing area in the whole of the country. In fact, I would not be surprised if it was in all the world. We were founded on the fishery. We had a deep sea fishery which fished year round. We had I do not know how many deep sea trawlers that fished the Grand Banks and the northern cod stocks for years and years. They fished 12 months a year. They brought the fish back to shore to the processing plants.

If my memory serves me correctly, there were in excess of some 6,000 people employed in the processing plants; maybe some from the hon. member's area, somewhere around Trepassey, and down across the south coast. In excess of 6,000 were employed in the processing plants, in addition to hundreds of deep sea trawlermen. The only time they got off during the year was a couple of days through Christmas. They would come in the day before Christmas Eve or thereabouts and by New Year's Eve they were on the water again. There was no such thing as vacations, and those working in the plants did not have any vacations. All they did was go to work to make a good living, and that is all they want today.

It has been total devastation. The hon. member mentioned Burgeo. I could name seven or eight communities along that coast that were 12 month operations, vibrant, wealthy, well managed and productive, with happy people. They hardly exist anymore. It has been very devastating and we do not want more devastation. What we want now are some measures to be implemented by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, by the government, which will give us some hope and some chance that those fish stocks will regenerate, but unless it is a multi-measure decision that encompasses the things I have talked about, I am afraid that we will just be wasting our time again.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, before I begin, I would like to correct an impression left by my hon. friend from Saint John a few moments ago. She said that people in the Maritimes have the impression that Canada seems to stop at the Quebec border. I would like to reassure her: Canada stops at the Ontario border and begins again in the Maritimes. There is a vast space in between, known as Quebec, which, one day I hope, will become a country. I simply want to reassure her.

I would also like to reassure my hon. friend from St. John's West and tell him that in fact we did support the report and we support the motion he is presenting here today.

*Routine Proceedings*

Perhaps I should say that we supported both reports. There was one in May 2002 on foreign overfishing on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, and another in March 2003 regarding custodial management outside the 200-mile limit.

We have to back up here and take a brief look at what has happened, especially with groundfish management around Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The people of Newfoundland are not the only ones seriously affected by the reduction of fish stocks and by the systematic destruction of this resource caused by the federal government's total neglect.

We must understand that since 1949—since Newfoundland joined Confederation—the management of this resource has been the responsibility of the federal government. And what has the federal government done? It has let things go and over the years the resource has been wiped out.

But how can an essentially responsible government be permitted to let things get to the point where a resource is on the verge of disappearing and eventually destroying the economy of a region? The destruction of the resource may destroy the economy of Newfoundland, the Gaspé and the lower St. Lawrence region.

In May 2002, the committee asked that the Government of Canada do something with respect to what was happening outside the 200-mile limit, and with respect to NAFO countries that were fishing outside the limit. We were hoping that the government would manage the resource, that it would take a custodial management approach outside the 200-mile limit.

From one NAFO meeting to the next, the government tells us that there have been improvements and that progress is being made. However, if we look at the reality of the situation, that appears to be completely false. In actual fact, the resource continues to dwindle. Once again this year, it is highly probable that there will be an almost complete moratorium on cod and groundfish in our region.

What does this mean for communities? It means that there will be more jobs lost and that plants will be closed, putting people who are not necessarily trained to do other jobs, out of work in a region hard hit by the moratorium in the early 1990s. This means that the economies of my region and of a province like Newfoundland will decline even faster.

We know that starting in 1990, the moratorium caused people to leave Newfoundland and the Gaspé Peninsula. The impact of what happened in Newfoundland is still felt today. People leave because there are no more jobs, plants close and, in the end, there is no future in the fishery. People see no future in the fishery in these provinces and in the region I come from.

My colleague spoke today about a problem specific to fishers on the Lower North Shore. Once again, based on the simple principles of sound management, the government needs to realize that fishers in a specific situation should receive assistance.

• (1635)

This does not seem to be the case with this government, nor with the federal government over the years.

The response to that statement might be “Yes, but in the early 1990s the federal government invested \$2 billion to sustain the economy of regions affected by the moratorium”.

Had \$2 billion been invested to protect the resource, we might not be confronted with this problem today, and would certainly not have had to confront the one that occurred in the early 1990s. Had resource management really been focused on conservation, and on protecting the resource, the problem would not be with us today.

Instead, there is a serious problem, as we were told by the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans when we travelled to Newfoundland and eastern Quebec. They told us that the catastrophe was of nearly unimaginable proportions, biblical proportions as one of the witnesses, Mr. Cashin, put it. He said:

We are dealing here with a famine of biblical scale—a great destruction. The social and economic consequences of this great destruction are a challenge to be met and a burden to be borne by the nation, not just those who are its victims.

Since the resource belongs to the community as a whole, this means that the community as a whole has had, in the end, to bear the brunt of the poor resource management by the federal government over the years.

Today the committee is calling for a unanimous report, as has been said. Everyone says it is a unanimous report. It must be kept in mind that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has produced two unanimous reports on the subject.

These both call upon the government to take forceful and firm action so as to protect the resource, and to take steps to ensure that the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO, respects the rules and conservation-based resource management. In particular, it must ensure that the NAFO member countries take into consideration the scientific opinions provided to them. These, of course, call for reduced fishing, and for the fishing restrictions to be respected.

As regards the main problem with NAFO, another observer, someone who was taking part in one of NAFO's meetings and who, of course, is not an official from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, testified before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I will read the testimony that he gave to the committee.

When it comes to sharing the resource, to set quotas, to allocate quotas to NAFO's member countries, the Government of Canada comes back and says, “Yes, but we made some gains”. Here is what Early McCurdy, the president of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union, thinks about this, and I quote:

Many of the points that were mentioned as gains or achievements on the part of Canada at the meeting simply maintained the share we have always had. There has not been any real breakthrough or success regarding compliance with the scientific recommendations. Whenever a large quantity of fish is involved, I can tell you that conservation comes second to appetite.

What does this mean? Let us not forget that the Government of Canada provides almost 50% of NAFO's budget. We are the ones supporting an organization that is not working. We are the ones supporting an organization that is stealing our resource and depriving us of our livelihood. That is what we are doing.

*Routine Proceedings*

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is asking the government to react strongly in order to protect the resource, not just for the people of Newfoundland, because, as I said, there are also problems over the whole territory, that is in the Gaspé and elsewhere.

Earlier, the hon. member referred to the seal issue. As we know, and the hon. member mentioned it, each individual seal can consume about a tonne of fish per year. Imagine what happens with seven million seals, a figure that may reach eight million next year.

Imagine the pressure these little predators are exerting on the resource, particularly cod, which is of course their main diet. One can imagine the damage caused by such a large and growing number of seals; they are completely destroying the resource.

• (1640)

A journalist once asked me why I was in favour of increasing the seal hunt. I replied that I prefer humans to seals. It is as simple as that. I prefer people to be able to live without destroying the resources. I prefer people to continue to make a living honourably instead of living on welfare or employment insurance.

It is true that this year a slight increase in the number of seals that can be harvested has been allowed. There is talk of 350,000 out of a herd of 7 or 8 million. This will not prevent the herd from maintaining its numbers and continuing to increase.

We must also consider, as I said to that journalist, that we should not destroy the seals as a resource. Because it may be a resource that ought to be used, that we should continue to harvest, and into which we should put some effort. What we are asking for, in fact, is that some effort be put into marketing this product.

We have also asked some effort be made to export this resource to countries like the United States, which, at present, are not allowing us to export products derived from seals. That is totally unacceptable. The Minister for International Trade tell us, "Yes, but we are negotiating". Negotiations have been ongoing for years, but nothing has changed. This reminds me of the softwood lumber issue. We hear that things are going well. It may be so, but this has been an issue for a long time and yet things are going so well that nothing has been settled. The crisis continues, and our plants are closing.

There is a very similar problem on the seal issue. The minister has told me repeatedly, "We are negotiating; we are going to Washington". He is telling us that they will come to an agreement in the end, that the negotiations will yield results. But when? When will we be able to sell our products to the U.S.? As we have been hearing recently, the AMERICANS apparently need us, they must respect us and they are our closest friends. When will our closest neighbours and friends open their door to us, so that we can offer them this worthwhile product from our region, from Newfoundland and the Magdalen Islands in particular?

To conclude, it is important that the government react quickly. The resource is disappearing. Unless the government takes firm action, this resource will disappear, and this government will be to blame for it.

As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans indicated, for once—and this was quite unheard of—the members of

a House of Commons committee, on which all parties were represented, managed to agree unanimously on something. I do not think this will ever happen again at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. If it does, it will be under different circumstances and on different issues or topics.

Twice, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans submitted to the minister a unanimous report, asking that he take action, and firm action. The first time, we did not get a real response. This time, we want a real one. In conclusion, we are asking that the government take action, firm action, as soon as possible.

• (1645)

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the problem with the fishery has been identified. The problem is not overfishing. The problem, whether it be on the North Shore, the Magdalen Islands or the Gaspé Peninsula, is a predator that has been identified quite clearly: the seal. Each seal consumes one tonne of groundfish per year. This is causing problems for fishers and the resource is disappearing.

I have a question for the Bloc Québécois fisheries critic. A program has already been established, the Tobin plan. The problem of the predator was identified. And, on the North Shore, there are processing plants, seal hunters were hired, tanneries were set up. There are systems for cleaning pelts. The meat is saved and sent to zoos in Granby and Saint-Félicien. Tanned seal pelts are processed. I think that we could be onto something. It would eliminate the predator and create jobs. It would solve both of the problems.

Is the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans planning on creating a specific program and compensating seal hunters by giving them a price per pound of seal that is caught and processed?

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Charlevoix for his question.

I would like to remind him—for he was not a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans—that this committee has already issued a report on seal management.

We do come back to it over and over; he is perfectly correct. In his region and in the neighbouring riding, people are interested in developing seal processing plants. But in addition to processing the seals, there has to be some effort made by the government to develop markets. We know that there are markets, in Asia for example, but we also know that the American market is closed to us. We shall have to remove the barriers to this market in order to develop processing industries.

Of course, we have a market, but at any one time there is a limit on the market's ability to absorb a product. It is possible to increase quotas, but only if the markets can absorb the product. It is a case of supply and demand. But the federal government, along with the provincial governments, absolutely must make the effort to develop the markets.

*Routine Proceedings*

In the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I put this question to officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. They spend a few thousand dollars on their efforts to promote all our sea products, not just one product, the seal. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not even spend \$100,000.

One of the officials told me that other departments, for instance, International Trade and Agriculture were providing funding. But the question I then asked her was, "How much money is the federal government spending on promoting the products we manufacture?" She could not tell me.

[English]

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you may think it a little unusual that a member of Parliament from southern Ontario should want to take part in this debate but a problem in one part of this country, a serious problem, is and should be of concern to all of us. I do not see any fences between provinces or between areas of the country that prevent one MP from one region engaging in a debate about a problem in another region.

In fact I took a very active part in trying to come to grips with the disappearing fish stocks on the east coast in particular because soon after I was first elected as MP in 1993, the major issue of the day was the effects of the cod moratorium that had been brought down by the previous government and was affecting the east coast fishery. One of the first things that the Liberal government of the day did was bring in an Atlantic assistance program aimed at the fishermen who had lost their livelihoods and who required some kind of financial assistance.

Also, that was the time of the famous Spanish fish war where this government seized a Spanish trawler on the high seas and towed it into port because it had been overheard through our intelligence services, in fact, that the captain of that ship had been on a radio telephone to his home port in Spain and had been heard to mention that he had undersized fish behind false bulkheads. That Spanish trawler was seized on the high seas and taken into port.

This is relevant to the subject under debate. I remember vividly meeting the Irish ambassador at a reception soon after Canada had seized that trawler. That particular diplomat was quite outraged at the thought that Canada, or any nation for that matter, should seize a ship on the high seas because it was apparently violating the conservation measures with respect to a resource that was shared by the world, and that particular trawler was on the high seas.

As the cod war, so-called, unfolded and public opinion around the world latched on to what the Canadians had done, it was interesting to see the way public opinion did change. Six months later, around the world it was acknowledged that states did have a need and a right even to protect international resources because the destruction of a food stock fish in international waters was exactly equivalent to dumping pollution in the high seas.

We went through a period at the end of the cold war, with the collapse of the former Soviet Union, when there was an attempt to dump nuclear waste. Even now today there are companies in various countries around the world that specialize in collecting all kinds of dangerous garbage and taking it on the high seas to dump. This of course endangers a resource of the planet.

We have here an issue which is actually a revisiting of the problem of the cod wars of 1995. We have this issue again where it is perceived that international fishing fleets are over-exploiting the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. Just as eight or nine years ago, the assumption, the connection is that by exploiting the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, they are adversely affecting the total fish stocks, not just cod. As has been mentioned many times, fish swim and they swim in circles, and while fish may be off in the nose and tail at some time, they will be within the 200 mile limit as well, so it is the total stock of fish that is at risk.

● (1650)

So here we have a report of the fisheries committee that suggests as a solution to this problem, instead of sending in one of Canada's frigates and shooving everyone away, that we make amendments to the appropriate legislation and attempt to achieve some kind of custodial control over the nose and tail of the Grand Banks.

Custodial control basically means extending the state's jurisdiction beyond the 200 mile limit and enforcing conservation measures, again in what are seen to be international waters. I should note in passing, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of Canadians think the 200 mile limit as we know it is some sort of absolute zone of control belonging to nations. In fact, it is merely a zone of economic control that, by consensus in the United Nations, and I suppose now under the UN convention of the law of the sea, represents a zone of economic control of nations. It is not territorial waters in the most strict sense. I do believe territorial waters are only about three miles offshore, a very short distance, and a lot of Canadians do not realize that.

With the fact that nations around the world do generally respect the right of countries to oversee and police conservation measures within the 200 mile limit, we have an international consensus that has been arrived at, but obviously in this particular case we have to go further. We have to try to get control of the nose and tail.

Here is the dilemma, and it is very relevant to what is happening in the world today. Canada has for many years been committed to multilateralism to try to solve problems through either the United Nations or suitable international bodies that are set up to meet and agree to try to come to some kind of agreement on how to manage what is essentially an international resource. The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization is the particular organization involved here, and not just the committee but the fishermen of Newfoundland have for a long time now been expressing a lot of concern and even despair that the members of NAFO are not respecting the agreements, even the agreements that are brought together by the various memberships. The memberships of NAFO, of course, are the various countries that are coastal to the Atlantic, on both sides of the Atlantic, and have an interest in the fish stocks.

There certainly are situations where small countries like Estonia are on the nose and tail and taking fish in a way that, according to NAFO, they should not be. It is ignoring the regulations.

*Routine Proceedings*

It is very hard to police that kind of thing, because we do not have the ability to implement meaningful trade sanctions on a country like Estonia or any of the other small countries that are exploiting international waters adjacent to our 200 mile limit, so the question becomes, what do we do? The reason why this question is so pertinent now, and I hope people do not feel this is too much of a stretch, is that we have a situation in Iraq where a decision has been made to act unilaterally because of impatience with the process of multilateral agreements.

I suggest that in regard to the difficulty of trying to get custodial control there is a genuine block here, because Canada's long tradition of respecting multilateral solutions does make it very difficult for us to impose a solution on the nose and tail, particularly in the current international climate where there is a lot of criticism against international institutions and, even worse, outright attempts to dismantle international institutions, including the United Nations.

● (1655)

I can only speak for myself, but I cannot see the solution, quite frankly. I think we have to take this as a nation to the very highest level. We certainly have to take it to the United Nations. I cannot see any unilateral solution that works, but I really do think that in this particular international climate this is the time to put severe pressure on the United Nations to adopt enforceable conservation measures, which would affect not only the nose and tail of the Grand Banks but other areas of the world where there is incredible destruction of fish stocks in boundary waters and on the high seas.

All kinds of things are going on now. They are taking shark in the Far East. Shark is a higher order animal on the food chain in the oceans. Sharks take a long time to mature. They are selling shark for peanuts in comparison to the sophistication of the animal that is being destroyed.

At the other end of the scale, and what really disturbs me, is the fact that countries around the world are destroying the food stock fish like caplin. I have heard various comments from members here who have alluded to the fact that here in Canada we still maintain a commercial fishery of caplin. I deplore that. It is one thing to say, and I agree, that we have to cull the seal herds because of the pressure they are putting on all fish, but to be taking caplin is equivalent to cutting a person off at the ankles. These are the fish that feed all the other higher order fish, going up to the very top of the chain, which of course is the seal.

I find it incredible that the government has not acted to close down that industry. Even if it does not take a high proportion, there is the very principle. If we are going to talk conservation, I would think no one on the east coast would argue that taking caplin is in the interests of conservation. I would suggest that the fisheries minister could begin there. I know he might not be popular in some areas of Newfoundland and in other areas of the Maritimes where there are caplin plants, but again this is a food stock fish that is being taken and sold for peanuts. It is extremely destructive.

This debate gives me a chance to also talk about a few other things pertaining to conservation in the waters off the east coast. I should tell the House that after the cod wars, when the Liberal government put out what I think was about \$1 billion to assist the east coast fisheries industry to help it ride through the period of the cod

moratorium, which was thought at that time would be of very short duration, my wife and I travelled to Newfoundland for a couple of weeks for three consecutive summers. I did not go as a member of Parliament but just as an ordinary person. We travelled around the various coasts. I have been all around the coasts of Newfoundland and to Labrador.

We stayed at the bed and breakfasts and talked to the people there. We went down to the docks as well and talked to people there. One of the things about the people from Newfoundland is that they must be one of the friendliest groups of people on the planet. They always welcomed strangers. It was a wonderful experience.

But some things came clear to me as we travelled around. One of the interesting things, and it is as an aside to this debate, was that much of the money going to help the jobless fishermen in Newfoundland was not reaching them. It was going off to other people.

The people I talked to in Newfoundland were themselves critical of the way that money was dispensed. The problem is that one cannot address the collapse of an industry by giving people money. The fishermen themselves wanted to fish. They did not want to sit there and receive money. In the end, what was happening was that a lot of that money was going to plant workers and the periphery of people associated with plant workers. It went on and on.

● (1700)

The point of it all is that it was not a program that I thought was working very well. If we do have to go that way, I hope we manage a program much better than that.

One of the things that struck me, and it may be controversial for my colleagues who are from Newfoundland, one of the things that struck me historically is that it was not just a problem of the nose and tail, as I saw it, as I came to learn it, it was also a problem of the way the inshore fishery had developed. There had been huge government subsidies over the years. What was originally a fishery, which was a small operation with open boats and hook and line, had been developed because of government funding. Through loan guarantees and various other government incentives, there was a huge expansion of people going from open boats to powerful trawlers and to fishing vessels that enabled them to take enormous amounts of fish and sell it. There is very clearly a bulge in that people did get more affluent in Newfoundland, these fishermen who were able to take advantage of these programs.

It is only a theory, but it made me wonder, though, whether or not part of the problem is not just the overfishing of the international fleets but overfishing on the inshore.

One of the things that struck me, and I could never understand it, is that we could go around Newfoundland and it was very hard to get local fish in the restaurants, because what was happening was that people would go out and fish the fish, the fish would go to the fish plant and the fish plant would send the fish to Toronto somewhere. They would send the fresh fish or they would send the fish in cans to Toronto. There is hardly any fish to be bought by tourists roaming around Newfoundland.

*Routine Proceedings*

One of the things that struck me, and it still strikes me today, is that I can never understand why the Newfoundland government did not attempt to marry the food fishery with tourism. It is one thing to go to Newfoundland and look at whales jumping and that kind of thing, but the fact of the matter is that the only way my wife and I could actually try the famous dishes of Newfoundland was to go to a bed and breakfast where the host of the particular house would make these dishes for herself. In the restaurants, we would get food that we would find in Toronto. I have never understood that. But I digress.

The other area that I think we should look at very carefully with respect to what may be happening to the collapse of the fish stocks on the east coast, which I think has so far been overlooked in this debate, is the dumping of chemical warfare munitions during the second world war. I have some familiarity with that, because I did some research on Canada's role in chemical warfare weapons development during the second world war. After the second world war, a lot of these munitions, a lot of mustard gas, a lot of nerve agent that had been brought over from the Germans, was then taken out to sea and dumped. Also, for the ships returning from the war theatre at the end of the second world war, almost all of them that were carrying munitions also carried chemical munitions, again usually mustard gas. All this material was dumped at sea, much of it in the shallow water of the Grand Banks, but some of it, perhaps, in deep adjacent water

I have wondered for a long time whether or not after 50 years the containers are secure. They were just simple oil drums that the mustard gas was contained in. There were thousands and thousands of tonnes of it, many thousands. I think we are looking at maybe about 30,000 tonnes, much of it produced here in Cornwall, Ontario, some of it produced by the Americans as well, who also dumped it at sea.

The question is whether this mustard gas is finally getting into the water after 50 years. If I understand it correctly, we are not entirely certain of the life cycle of the cod. If that life cycle in some way intercepts something like mustard gas being released into the deep water of the ocean, or even the shallow water, that may be one of the reasons why there is such a crisis in the cod all along the east coast. I would suggest that it is very suspicious that the cod disappeared almost simultaneously all along the maritime seaboard, including offshore Maine. I would suggest that this may be the problem.

• (1705)

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments. The hon. gentleman from the Liberal party is well respected for his thorough knowledge and research on issues that affect the country and, as illustrated tonight, a good grasp of issues affecting the fishery.

I do not agree with everything he said. I could probably argue with some of his observations on how the fishery changed over the years, how the funding changed the fishery and whatever. There are elements of truth in everything but there are arguments that can be made on some of the points. However these are insignificant at the present time.

A number of factors have brought us to where we are. Some of them we know, some of them we do not. I was impressed when he raised the issue of the munitions dumps off our coast. Are they

having an effect, we do not know. However we know they are out there and they have been kept under wraps for a number of years. It is only now we are starting to understand that they could be having an effect.

One thing we do know is, whether it be inshore, offshore, foreigners or locals, it does not matter, over the years the fishery was completely, utterly and poorly managed and everybody contributed to the decline. Having said that, we are at a crisis situation right now. The member has visited the province on a number of occasions and I thank him for his kind comments about our great province and the people. He is so right, as others who have visited our province will attest.

However, at the present time, one of the issues that has to be addressed is foreign overfishing. I tend to agree with him. Even though I would like to say, "Let's go out there and take over control", we know that is easier said than done. It is pretty easy to be political and say that the government should do it.

He used the word "unilaterally". I use the word "management" of the resources. Perhaps management of the resources in that area could be done in conjunction with other people who are participants in the harvesting of that resource, who share in that resource through legitimate quotas. Many of them, because of no proper management and no enforcement regime, do whatever they want to do. There are a lot of conscientious countries involved, such as ourselves, in harvesting that resource and sticking to the rules, regulations, quotas, et cetera.

Could we, through the leadership of our government and our minister of fisheries, bring inside others who recognize the fact that there has to be a management regime and an enforcement regime, regardless perhaps in the beginning under whose auspices it is created? Maybe it could be through NAFO.

If the resource is managed and we have the proper enforcement surveillance, our problem is solved. It would be nice and we as the adjacent state should be the custodial management. We also are the main contributor to NAFO and we also are the main beneficiary, on paper at least, of the resource.

With the proper leadership, it will not have to be a unilateral decision. It could be a strong collective decision to set up the proper mechanism desired. Does the member think something like that could be possible or practical?

• (1710)

**Mr. John Bryden:** Madam Speaker, I think so. The suggestion I would put out, and I would love to see explored, is not to take away from the United Nations because I remain a very ardent supporter of that institution.

However because it is a question of surveillance and enforcement, I wonder whether we should be having talks with NATO. NATO is a body that was created to look after the North Atlantic security interests. I would suggest that NATO's role as a defence and security international organization has diminished. The threat that led to its creation has disappeared.

*Routine Proceedings*

The very real threat that has emerged is the threat of international destruction of the environment. When we talk about the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, what we are really talking about is something that is a microcosm of an enormous worldwide problem that in the end could cost far more lives than most wars would cost.

When we think of NAFO and when we think of the countries that are ignoring the regulations, we have to remember the countries that have so little. I mentioned Estonia. We have to remember that it is a country where its opportunities to bring home any kind of income for its people is extremely limited. As time goes on, more and more states will be tempted, because they are impoverished, to exploit the international resources.

I suggest that this debate is not simply about the problem of the fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is a far larger debate. This is a debate about the planet.

While we respect the United Nations, we have to also acknowledge that the United Nations is only one international organization. I would suggest, and perhaps it is a recommendation the House could make to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to take to cabinet, that maybe what we ought to be doing is talking with NATO as well.

• (1715)

**Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the issue of custodial management outside of Canada's 200 mile limit and the response to the committee's request and suggestion that the government exert custodial management over that part of the Grand Banks and the Flemish cap which lie outside our 200 mile limit.

The underlying issue we are talking about is the concern about fish stocks. In the committee report we note that the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization reports that 47% to 50% of commercial stocks are fully exploited, 15% to 18% are over exploited, 9% to 10% are depleted or recovering from depletion and that only 25% to 27% of stocks are moderately fished or under exploited.

We have a problem of over exploited of fish. The issue of over exploited is especially pronounced when one looks at the issue of cod and the Grand Banks. The fact of the matter is that since the moratorium was imposed on cod fishing and the Grand Banks in 1992, there are less cod now than there were at the time the moratorium was brought into place. That is a horrific statement.

As many members in the House have alluded, the cod resource provided and was the economic engine of many communities, not only in Newfoundland but in other maritime provinces and in Quebec as well on Canada's east coast. The fact that the resource has depleted so drastically to the point where a moratorium had to be imposed in 1992 and the fact that the stocks have failed to recover since 1992 is a tragedy of epic proportions.

The question we want to ask is, why has that happened? Why have the stocks not recovered? Why did a moratorium have to be imposed in the first place?

The first issue I would like to address on that is the issue of science. Has science failed us or has the government refused or ignored the science that is available? Part of the issue which has

driven this debate today and part of the reason that my colleague from St. John's West has been so insistent that this matter be debated before the House today is the incident that happened just a few days ago off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. Essentially cod were driven inshore by a herd of seals and because the water temperatures were colder inshore, it caused their gills to freeze up and the fish to die.

There are many who will doubt that could happen, but many of the fishermen in the area say that is their assessment of the issue. Let us face it, these people have lived on that coast for their whole lives. They have listened to their parents and grandparents talk about these matters. I would say their evaluation of it is worth paying attention to. The scientists say that it is impossible to say what caused the cod to leave their traditional wintering spot in deeper waters and come ashore. I think the assessment of the fishermen fills in that gap of the scientists who were not there but who know a great many things.

• (1720)

Science is an interesting thing. The government gets a lot of good scientific advice. Unfortunately, one of the bits of advice that it has not responded to is advice about seals and the impact that they can have on the recovery of the cod stocks.

I want to refer the House to the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council "2003/2004 Report on the Conservation Requirements for Groundfish Stocks on the Scotian Shelf and in the Bay of Fundy". This report was presented to the minister in January 2003. The substance of the report is not much different than what we would find in other areas of the coast. On page 7 of the report it states:

It is clear that seals have had and are having a significant negative impact on some species such as cod.

On page 12 of the report it states:

The models of cod consumption by grey seals imply between 5,400t to 22,000t of cod being removed by seals. These are high removals compared with the estimated 5 + biomass of less than 2,000t reported above, and relative to the cod by-catch in other groundfish fisheries.

In other words, the report is warning of a huge number of cod being caught in this area by grey seals. Further the report states:

The mean percentage of cod (mainly of younger ages) in the grey seal diet has remained at about 12%. Given that the grey seal population has apparently continued to increase at the same rate as previously measured...

There is a huge problem. At page 15 it states:

At consultations, the Council heard from fishermen that there were still many grey seals around the Bird Island area and that they feared that the juvenile groundfish in the immediate area were being consumed at an alarming rate. This cod stock, not unlike many cod stocks Atlantic wide, experiences high natural mortality.

It goes on to recommend:

Last year's recommendation of evaluating Bird Island as a seal exclusion zone for the protection of juvenile groundfish is still deemed necessary.

In other words, the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council made a recommendation about a seal exclusion area in the particular area where cod spawn and its recommendation was not listened to or considered by the department.

That is a sad commentary on the ministry and its failure to listen to good scientific advice from the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, which gives good and reasoned advice.

*Private Members' Business*

In the “2003/2004 Conservation Requirements for 2J3KL Cod Stocks” report, the conservation council states that old harp seals are now present year round near the cod concentrations suggesting that this is a huge problem for the cod. It talks about seal predation. It cannot get much more specific than this and it was bold faced in the report so that even with a quick reading the minister should have noted it. It states:

The SSR has concluded that seal predation is limiting cod recovery.

It states further:

That seals should be able to feed on and molest the last remaining large aggregations of northern cod is unconscionable and unacceptable to the FRCC. The FRCC is also concerned about hooded seal numbers and the lack of adequate diet sampling on harp and hooded seals on the banks and shelf. This lack of information is not satisfactory in this time of crisis.

• (1725)

It is pretty clear that the FRCC feels that the seals are a huge problem for the cod. It goes on to state:

Fishermen believe that older harp seals are reducing the spawning potential of stock, and are recommending that seals be controlled in areas where seals are destroying cod in large numbers.

It talks about the next five years and states:

Of prime importance is that the mortality from seals must be curtailed.

It cannot get more straightforward than that. On page 11 it states:

The FRCC recommends that to reduce natural mortality, that areas where cod are aggregated during winter (e.g. Smith Sound) or where seals are inflicting high mortality on cod, be designated as seal exclusion zones.

It suggests that seal exclusion zone teams should be established immediately to keep seals out of Smith Sound year round. The FRCC makes it clear that in its estimation seals have posed a huge threat to cod stocks and it is a threat that has been ignored by the government.

There is another failure of the government and that is the failure of science. I reference that failure largely to the issue of seals. We could go on and talk about the failure to try to understand what in reality is happening to the cod stocks, in other words, directed science on the cod stocks themselves. That is sadly lacking. There is the issue of science but the other issue is the one of enforcement. That reflects directly upon the custodial management report of the committee.

Enforcement is a huge issue. If there is no enforcement, it is a wild west show. Certainly the government's commitment to enforcement has been lacking. Just last fall Coast Guard vessels were tied up on the east coast because they had insufficient fuel. If the Coast Guard vessels are tied up, that means that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans lacks a platform from which to operate. They cannot go out there and keep track of foreign vessels which may be operating in our territorial waters or which may be abusing the resource in the international zone outside the 200 mile limit. The issue of enforcement and the failure of the government to commit to enforcement is a huge part of the problem that we are facing.

The solution is many faceted but as a first priority part of the solution must be a commitment to manage the resource adequately to restore funding to science, and certainly a commitment to listen to fishermen. The second part must be international leadership and when we—

• (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** I apologize to the hon. member, but it is 5:30 p.m. It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance)** moved that Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place between all parties as well as the member for Nanaimo—Alberni concerning the debate on second reading of Bill C-420. I believe that you would find consent that should the debate on the second reading stage of Bill C-420 collapse later this day and if a recorded division is requested, the said vote shall be deemed deferred until 3 p.m. on Tuesday, April 29, 2003.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to introduce Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act. This is an important bill to Canadians. It is also a simple and clean bill.

Bill C-420 responds to the requests of Canadians, beginning with attempts by Health Canada to regulate natural health products and to put them under a drug directorate that started in the nineties. In 1997 there was a huge outcry from the public in response to this over-regulation of natural health products. Over one million people communicated their displeasure to the government that natural health products such as vitamins, minerals, and amino acids, were harmless vitamin compounds with low adverse reactions. People did not want them to be brought under the onerous responsibility of a drug directorate.

In the 36th Parliament, the minister of the day called on the health committee to look into this. The health committee heard from Canadians and listened to witnesses from across the country. The committee tabled its report called “Natural Health Products: A New Vision” in November 1998. It contained some 53 recommendations. The provisions of Bill C-420 are taken basically out of the committee's recommendations and out of the subsequent work that was done.

*Private Members' Business*

## Recommendation No. 36 stated:

Health Canada, subsequently, conduct a study with the participation of representatives from consumer groups, the food, natural health products and pharmaceutical industries, and health practitioners to determine whether subsections 3(1) and 3(2) of the Food and Drugs Act or all of the diseases listed in Schedule A should be deleted.

## Recommendation No. 53 stated:

The Minister appoint, immediately, a transition team responsible for ensuring that the new framework is established quickly.

Bill C-420 addresses these recommendations. Subsections 3(1) and 3(2) and Schedule A would be deleted.

A transition team was assembled and it carried the ball a little further by creating the Office of Natural Health Products. The final report of the Office of Natural Health Products transition team was tabled on March 31, 2000. The report was the culmination of a response to the outcry from more than one million Canadians. We know that those concerned are even greater in number today.

The transition team recommended that Schedule A of the Food and Drugs Act be removed. It lists a number of diseases, disorders or abnormal physical states for which treatments, preventions or cures cannot be advertised or sold to the general public, and in particular, makes reference to subsections 3(1) and 3(2) of the Food and Drugs Act which state:

3. (1) No person shall advertise any food, drug, cosmetic or device to the general public as a treatment, preventative or cure for any of the diseases, disorders or abnormal physical states referred to in Schedule A.

(2) No person shall sell any food, drug, cosmetic or device (a) that is represented by label, or (b) that the person advertises to the general public as a treatment, preventative or cure for any of the diseases, disorders or abnormal physical states referred to in Schedule A.

With regard to Schedule A, the transition team recommended that "more importantly, the schedule does not reflect contemporary scientific thought. The weight of modern scientific evidence confirms the mitigation and prevention of many diseases and disorders listed in Schedule A through the judicious use of NHPs. It is time the regulations and legislation reflect the prevailing science".

A recommendation was made to remove all diseases listed in Schedule A and that subsections 3(1) and 3(2) should be revoked through legislative renewal initiatives.

My bill addresses the concerns of Canadians and the concerns identified by the health committee in the 36th Parliament. It implements the recommendations in the final report of the Office of Natural Health Products transition team.

● (1735)

There has been quite a lot of interest in the bill since its first reading in the House on March 20. There have been responses from across the country already because Canadians are concerned.

Frankly Canadians feel betrayed by what has happened in the interim. The good consultative process was moving in the right direction and Canadians were satisfied that the government had listened. However the *Canada Gazette* part I came out with the consequences of the implementation.

Canadians were led to believe there would be three categories: food, natural health products and drugs. We are finding that in fact

there are only two categories: food and drugs. Natural health products have been put under the drug directorate as a subclass of drugs with the attendant responsibilities for clinical trials prior to any claims being made. This is a betrayal of all the consultation.

The bill seeks to address the concerns of Canadians. These products are ones that have traditional uses and have been in use for many years. The adverse reaction rate is very minimal, hardly measurable compared to drugs.

To put the onerous burden of a drug directorate on this industry will drive the costs up and will remove many products from the market. In fact under the existing regime many very good products have been withheld from Canadians. I will mention a few of the ones that are restricted.

This morning as part of my nutritional supplementation I took chromium picolinate. As a health care practitioner for many years, I recommended that my patients take chromium picolinate. It is essential because chromium is essential for the glucose tolerance factor and that is important for the metabolism of sugar. There are dozens of studies in the medical literature about the effectiveness of chromium and the importance of chromium as a trace mineral in the metabolic pathways of sugar. That product is technically illegal to sell in Canada because there are health claims made by it and of course scientific literature to support it.

L-tryptophan was taken off the market. It is an amino acid. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein. There are some 22 amino acids. L-tryptophan has a calming effect. It is like a sedative. When we feel sleepy after a turkey dinner it is because there is a lot of tryptophan in turkey. Unfortunately it was taken off the market, a simple building block of protein, because it is effective in calming people down. What is wrong with this picture?

Then there are products like melatonin and stevia, a sweetener that the member for Macleod prefers to use and he is a surgeon.

I would like to compliment the members on the health committee during the 36th Parliament who heard from Canadians. The members for Macleod, Nanaimo—Cowichan, and Saskatoon—Wanuskewin represented the then Reform Party. They did an excellent minority report.

My bill calls for the deletion of subsections 3(1) and (2) which are antiquated and the deletion of schedule A. These are recommendations which the minority report supported, which the committee basically supported, and which the transition team definitely supported.

I am hoping that all members will want to get behind the bill. I know they are going to hear from Canadians. Canadians are concerned about this issue and the tremendous benefits that are being withheld from them for very poor reasons, or no reason at all.

*Private Members' Business*

Some communications have come in recently. Martin Hanle from Vancouver wrote, "Safe products do not need undue regulation and my right to make choices without unwarranted and unjustifiable restrictions needs to be permitted". Alexander from Penticton wrote with similar concerns, as did Grant from Kelowna. Doris Hall from New Brunswick wrote that she is upset that natural products have been withheld while pharmaceutical products such as acetaminophen, which can have drastic drawbacks, are seemingly allowed to roam unfettered.

Inga Hanle from Vancouver wrote, "Please, please vote for Bill C-420". Lois Flett, a registered nurse from Prince Edward Island, wrote in support of Bill C-420.

Petitioners from Nobel, Orangeville, Burlington, Toronto, Brampton, North York, Goderich, Aurora, Concord, Bobcaygeon and New Hamburg, all in Ontario, are asking for support for Bill C-420. People from Parry Sound, Ontario and from Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Vancouver, Errington, my own communities, are sending in petitions.

• (1740)

Jeremy Duggan from Belleville wrote:

—be assured I am in 100% agreement with the majority of my fellow citizens in demanding that our representatives represent us.... Listen to the people that elected you. Allow us the choice - we are intelligent, informed people living in the 21st century, no longer willing to tolerate 19th century politics.

Chris Gupta from London, Ontario wrote:

Like so many Canadian citizens, we have lost trust and respect in Health Canada officials.

He asked that Bill C-420 to be supported.

Trueman Tuck from Belleville said:

Please, help us change the modern medical paradigm from one addicted to pharmaceuticals and surgery, to one focused on treating and preventing the underlying causes of disease—

He supports Bill C-420.

Michael Chamish from Vancouver wrote:

As Canadians we view it as our fundamental constitutional right under the Canadian Charter of Rights to have unrestricted access to these types of products, including information.

A lawyer from Ontario wrote to express her concern. These are all just in the last few days.

Wendell Wamboldt from the Healthwise Wellness Centre said:

Ottawa just slapped our food supplements with GST/HST [according to] policy statement P-240 because of representations of the drug companies. This is a new tax as these things have never been taxed and Ottawa is trying to say it is a "policy clarification" - more government doublespeak.

People are concerned when all of a sudden companies that produce natural health products are being slapped with GST retroactively. One company is facing a half a million dollar penalty from CCRA. It seems that Health Canada has turned CCRA loose on these industries to try and shut them down, or that is the way it seems to them.

I could go on. Many other people are communicating. I expect that members will be receiving a lot of communication on this file. It

is something Canadians have been asking for. It is not a question of safety.

I want to mention an excellent report done by the Fraser Institute. The institute published a report in February 2002 on its analysis of the regulatory framework. It is called "A Cure Worse Than the Illness: Canada's proposed regulatory framework for natural health products in light of international evidence".

It is a 50 page report and I recommend it to anyone interested in this issue. It is a great overview of the proposed regulatory framework for NHPs. It compares the adherence of proposed NHP regulations to the government's own regulatory policy. These overregulations do not appear to be justified according to the government's own policy.

The Fraser Institute compares the regulation of prescription drugs vis-à-vis natural health products and it makes some very significant recommendations.

One of the things it draws attention to is worth mentioning. It talks about part 4 of the proposed regulatory framework which deals with clinical trials. According to the NHPD this component has been developed to recognize the generally accepted principles of good clinical practice. There was no mention in the regulations in any of the NHPD's public consultation documents in 2001 of clinical trials before any claims could be made for effectiveness.

There is a problem. I asked a question of Mr. Romanow because he is considered to be the champion of health care in Canada. He was at committee a little more than a week ago. I asked him about his own report because billions are going in and depending upon who is talking it is \$17 billion over three years or \$35 billion over five years. There is a lot of money going in but it is all going in on what we call a disease management model of health care.

There is an inverse relationship between a disease management model and a remediation and prevention model of treatment. The more we invest in remediation and prevention, the less we will have to spend on disease management.

Sadly it seems that the whole system has been preoccupied with funding an increasingly failing disease management system. We need to invest in wellness and prevention. We need to allow Canadians the freedom of choice in health care products. It is what they want. It is what they are asking for. It is what they were promised.

• (1745)

The bill addresses the concerns of Canadians. It is my hope that all members of the House will support the bill and will give Canadians what they are looking for.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague from Nanaimo—Alberni could let the House know about the correspondence he has been getting on this issue, the volume and the kinds of concerns he has been hearing from Canadians.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. James Lunney:** Madam Speaker, we have been hearing from Canadians across the board. We have had communications from Prince Edward Island. We have had petitions from Vancouver Island. As a matter of fact we have almost 33,000 signatures on petitions that are at the clerk of petition's office right now. Unfortunately it does take time to process so many and they were not ready to be presented in the House today. Those largely came from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. I know that more are coming. As news of this initiative spreads, I know we will be hearing from more Canadians across the country.

I am hearing impassioned responses. I even had one call from Virginia. People are concerned about this issue. It is Canadians I am concerned about because they deserve the right to be well. The products that are being withheld from them by the directorate are products that build healthy Canadians.

Healthy Canadians are not the ones who fall victims to diseases. If they have a strong immune system, they are not the ones ending up in the emergency wards. They are not the ones who are developing the chronic degenerative diseases. They save Canadians money.

I have a little anecdote in talking about the two models, the disease management model and the remediation prevention model. A physician in my riding spoke to a rotary club and I happened to be in attendance. It was during the rotating strikes in medical offices.

The first remark he made stuck in my mind. He said that physicians are tired of being accused of not being more proactive in wellness and prevention. He said that they are not trained for that, that they are trained to fight sickness and disease and there is lots of it out there. That is how he started his presentation. It made an impression on me. If I could have, I would have liked to interrupt him to say, "But Doc, do you not get it? All the early interventions gag the signs of failure in the early stages".

If we have a fever we take an antipyretic. If we have a pain we take an analgesic. If we have a muscle spasm, we take a muscle relaxant. All of the early interventions are designed to gag the symptoms. What has become of us as Canadians is that our health care system has become a school of firefighters specializing in smashing alarms rather than addressing the real problem.

Unfortunately the remediation and prevention side of treatment is largely outside the public financing domain. People have to pay to see chiropractors for their back pain, which by the way, health care economists tell us could save about \$2 billion annually rather than looking to drugs and surgery to solve a problem that is largely biomechanical. Canadians are paying to see naturopaths. They are paying to see massage therapists. Sadly, it seems the remediation and prevention side of things is largely outside the disease management system of payment.

We need to see a genuine synthesis of treatment options. Canadians need the right to get treatments that work. They need access to simple, natural health care products that ameliorate their condition, that build healthy bodies and keep them well. That will significantly relate to the health care expenditures we have.

Frankly, Mr. Romanow did not have an answer when I asked him the question. He basically said that he had heard that from Canadians but that it is really up to the provinces to decide how to spend their

money. My point is that the provinces are so strapped feeding a disease management model they have not got the money to invest where the savings are in prevention and remediation. We need to reconsider what we are doing in Canadians' interest.

• (1750)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, there is a great concern the government will get so involved in the classification of drugs that something as simple as garlic, for instance, could be classified as a drug as opposed to a food. Could the hon. member explain to us what kind of concern that really is?

**Mr. James Lunney:** Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the very good question. Simple natural products should not be classed as drugs because they have a physiological effect. Whether it is garlic, L-tryptophan, chromium picolinate or melatonin, these simple natural health products should not be restricted from Canadians because they have a physiological effect, as they have been to date. It needs to change and we are hoping that Canadians will have access to the health products for which they are looking.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, under the Food and Drugs Act, Health Canada is responsible for developing policies, standards and programs that are based on science in the areas of food, drugs, cosmetics and instruments. This is also the approach used by the department regarding the related issues of advertising and labelling.

I would like to say a few words on section 3 and schedule A of the current act, which Bill C-420 seeks to abrogate.

In 1934—this goes back a long time—when section 3 and schedule A were first adopted, there were no known treatments for many diseases. There were no drug prescription systems in existence. In fact, people could get powerful drugs, including barbiturates, freely. Moreover, in the absence of a universal medicare system, people often could not afford to consult a health professional. Such was the reality of the time.

Originally, the sections of the act sought to protect the health of Canadians in various ways, including by preventing fraud, by prohibiting public advertising regarding the treatment of diseases for which there were no treatment, by prohibiting the advertising of treatments when self-treatment was not deemed safe, and by encouraging individuals to consult a health professional for serious problems.

However, the context has obviously changed since then. While we should still support some of these principles, over time, consumers, industry officials and health professionals have made the following statements, among others, regarding the initial objectives of the policy that underlies schedule A and their place in the current context.

These statements include the following:

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—the prevention of fraud should be part of the provisions relating to fraud that are already included in the act, instead of being an outright prohibition. However, the current provisions relating to fraud should be strengthened to deal appropriately with fraud, which would require an amendment to the act;

It was also said that:

—numerous diseases can now be treated, even though there is no known cure. For example, a product can alleviate the discomfort caused by a certain condition, or slow down the deterioration of a person's health;

As well:

—there is now a prescription system to control access to drugs for which the intervention and supervision of a physician is required;

Also:

—consumers want to make choices where their health is concerned, and want access to the information needed to make those choices. It must not be forgotten, however, that informed choices must be based on truthful and not misleading information;

Finally:

—Canadians now have access to a health care system and are better informed about their health. As a result, Canadians know they can actively seek medical assistance and are encouraged to do so.

Nevertheless, many stakeholders suggested that schedule A may still be useful and ought therefore to be preserved but—and this is a point they stress—in a clarified and modernized version.

As for the Standing Committee on Health's examination to which my colleague has just referred, the matter of section 3 and schedule A was examined by the Standing Committee on Health during its study of the regulation of natural health products in Canada. The Standing Committee on Health was presented with a variety of views.

In its final report, the Standing Committee on Health made a number of observations and recommendations, as our colleague has already said.

First, it was of the opinion that the provisions as they stand might unduly limit access to health promotion documents that might be helpful for consumers. At the very least, the list of schedule A diseases ought to undergo a thorough review so that only appropriate ones would remain on it.

As well, the Standing Committee on Health commented that a number of the diseases were listed in schedule A in broad terms. It was therefore suggested that specific diseases be exempted by regulation from the broad terms found in schedule A and thus from being banned under subsections 3(1) and 3(2).

Moreover, the committee felt that Health Canada ought to subsequently conduct a study to determine whether subsections 3(1) and 3(2) of the Food and Drugs Act or all of the diseases listed in schedule A should be deleted.

This should be done with the participation of representatives from consumer groups, the food, natural health products and pharmaceutical industries, as well as health practitioners.

The committee therefore recommended that Health Canada undertake a review of the diseases listed in schedule A in order to ensure that it only contained relevant diseases, and that specific diseases be exempted by regulation from the broad terms found in schedule A.

● (1755)

The committee also recommended that Health Canada conduct a study, along with representatives of consumer advocacy groups, and representatives from the food, natural health products and pharmaceutical industries, and health care professionals to determine whether subsections 3(1) and 3(2) of the Food and Drugs Act or all of the diseases listed in schedule A should be deleted.

Health Canada accepted these recommendations and is about to follow up on them. In response to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health, Health Canada set up an internal committee to review schedule A with departmental program representatives.

This committee drafted a policy paper that clarifies the purpose and the scope of the current application of section 3 and schedule A. Based on its review, the internal committee also recommended that Health Canada invite an external working group to review the diseases listed in schedule A.

As a result, Health Canada has already undertaken a review of section 3 and schedule A of the act through the external working group that was announced on February 14, 2003. This working group will be made up of representatives from consumer advocacy groups, patient groups, universities, industry and professional health associations.

The mandate of the working group will be to submit proposals concerning criteria that could be used to identify illnesses to be included in schedule A and possible changes to the schedule. The working group's final proposal will be the basis for public consultations. The working group on schedule A will be holding its first meeting in the spring of 2003.

While great progress can be achieved through the regulatory approach that the working group will be using, there is no doubt that an indepth schedule A review of the scheme, like the one proposed in Bill C-420, requires the scrutiny of other aspects of the Food and Drugs Act. These other aspects will be examined as part of the review of health protection legislation under the Legislative Renewal Program.

As you can see, the principles behind section 3 and schedule A remain relevant in the current legislative context, to help protect the health of Canadians.

Considerable work has been undertaken and must continue to ensure that the issues related to section 3 and schedule A of the Food and Drugs Act undergo rigorous and appropriate scrutiny.

Repealing subsections 3(1) and 3(2) and schedule A of the Food and Drugs Act, as proposed in Bill C-420, should not be considered for the time being, and until such time as Health Canada has had ample opportunity to follow up on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health in the very spirit in which they were made.

A comprehensive response to the issues related to subsections 3(1) and 3(2) and to schedule A requires an indepth evaluation. It also requires public consultations on the policy directions of the government on this important issue.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1800)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today on Bill C-420, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

First, I was pleased to learn that my hon. friend from the Canadian Alliance had proposed a bill to amend the Food and Drugs Act. Why? Because one of the major recommendations of 1998 report of the Standing Committee on Health was that this act should be amended. It is important to understand that one of the purposes of the amendment proposed by my hon. friend is to ensure that natural health products are no longer considered drugs but rather foods. That is my hon. colleague's major recommendation.

Except that, unfortunately, my colleague is mistaken, because a natural health product has a nature all its own. That was one of the conclusions of the Standing Committee on Health's report. In the report's words, "NHPs [Natural health products] are different in nature from and must not be treated strictly as either food or pharmaceutical products".

My colleague's bill would mean that a natural health product would no longer be considered a drug, which I would support. Why? Because we cannot impose the same standards of evidence on natural health products as we do on pharmaceutical products. However, at the same time, we cannot say that a natural health product is a food.

Therefore, what should my hon. colleague have done and what does the Bloc Québécois intend to do? Present a private member's bill that would create a third category, that of natural health products. That was one of the recommendations in the report by the Standing Committee on Health. We take note of the recommendations of the committee, which stated that natural health products were neither drugs nor foods and that therefore it would make regulations concerning natural health products.

These regulations have now been published in the *Canada Gazette* and have been the topic of cross-Canada consultations.

However, the committee also said that we should not merely adopt regulations and that this must not delay amending the act. This is why we had to create a third category for natural health products. Herbs can be deemed to be food. A drug can be a homeopathic preparation. A vitamin supplement is considered to be a drug under the Food and Drugs Act. Food is dealt with under sections 4 and 7. Drugs are covered by sections 8 and 15. Section C deals with drugs, while section D deals with vitamins. A majority of witnesses told us that a natural health product is neither food nor a drug. I think it is fundamental that we create this third category.

Why is it important to raise this issue? Because a Health Canada survey conducted several years ago showed that 56% of Canadians had consumed natural health products in the previous six months. So, this is a major concern, because natural health products are being used.

It is also important to remember what the report said, namely that, contrary to pharmaceutical products—and that includes drugs—the requirements in terms of evidence that apply to certain claims made regarding natural health products should be more flexible. It is not

true that we can require the same evidence for a natural health product as we would for a pharmaceutical product.

•(1805)

Why so? As I have said, natural health products have their own specific nature. There must not be exclusion of the fact that other elements must be taken into consideration, including certain more traditional approaches.

I think that, in the three claims of concern to the Bloc Québécois, both of structure and of function, this flexibility must be ensured, a flexibility absent from the present legislation. There is one thing that is stated in the legislation: a natural health product is considered a drug. It is dangerous.

The approach taken by the government over there is dangerous also, since it proposes regulation of these natural health products. In Quebec, naturopaths and others tell us that this would mean that certain products that do not comply with the registration criteria could end up excluded.

The dissenting report by the Canadian Alliance, which I read in 1998, is clear and I support it. It says that consumers must be allowed to choose. It is my impression, however, that the government across the way is more concerned with protecting the drug companies' interests than in leaving the real choice up to the consumer.

So I believe changes need to be made to the legislation and I thank my colleague for introducing this bill. In my opinion, however, he is merely exchanging an identified problem for a new one, because natural health products are not foods. I would therefore have liked to have seen—and I make a commitment today to do so myself—the introduction of a private member's bill to create this third product category. It will define a natural health product so as to make it possible for consumers to have access to a certain number of such products.

When it comes to natural health product registration, as well, as I have said, pharmaceutical criteria must not be used. What should? The Standing Committee on Health has enlightened us on that. It has said that the evidence referred to must be based on a broad range of sources, both ancient and recent, on traditional knowledge and contemporary science. This is why natural health products have their own specific nature and are not considered drugs.

Another important aspect is the committee's recommendation asking that Health Canada, together with a new natural health products expert advisory committee set out an appropriate definition of NHPs and amend the Food and Drugs Act accordingly. Therefore, contrary to what my colleague wants to do, which is to use the food definition to include NHPs, the committee said that an appropriate definition had to be established and that the Food and Drugs Act had to be amended to reflect it.

Naturally, the report also added that Health Canada, in conjunction with the new NHP Expert Advisory Committee, examine the status of bulk herbs for legislative purposes. So, in effect, there is total confusion.

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On Monday, I met with Health Canada officials in Montreal to talk about this very issue, natural health products. They told me that I was right, that the act needed to be amended to establish a distinction between NHPs and food and drugs. However, they also said that it was not their job to do so. They said it was up to legislators to assume their responsibilities.

In closing, I would like to thank my colleague for introducing this bill. I think that he is starting quite a debate.

● (1810)

However, as I said, I would have liked it if he had created a third category for natural health products and established a clear and precise definition for NHPs, as the Standing Committee on Health recommended in 1998.

[English]

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Madam Speaker, it is an interesting debate tonight. I will make reference to some of the comments made by my Bloc colleague as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and also the member for Nanaimo—Alberni, who I think has to be given a lot of credit for addressing this problem.

We may disagree on some of the finer points of Bill C-420, but I think there is an opportunity here for the House and all parliamentarians. Obviously if we can agree that the bill is worthy of our support it would move on to the committee stage where it could be examined. Some of the difficulties that have been addressed by some of our colleagues here could be addressed at the committee stage, because I think the bill is doable.

With this bill, the member is attempting to allow Canadians easier access to the natural health products that they desire. I will read from the news release of March 20 from the member for Nanaimo—Alberni. I do not think we disagree with this either. It states:

Canadians deserve the freedom to make their own health choices, and not to have those choices randomly curtailed by bureaucrats in Ottawa.

The news release continues:

Bill C-420... an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, would define dietary supplements, herbs and other natural health products as food products, ensuring that natural health products are not arbitrarily classed as drugs and denied to Canadians without the scientific evidence to justify it.

When my colleague from the Bloc was speaking, he identified a problem with the word “food”, but I think that can be addressed and changed at committee, to fine tune the bill, to get around what he observed as a problem.

We have to remember that in 1997 over one million Canadians sent a message to the government demanding that government restore their freedom of choice and access to natural health products. Of course this bill addresses their concerns. The bill also repeals outdated regulations that prevent the advertising of natural products that could address some of the diseases and disorders that we have today. There is no question that they can, that they would and that they have in the past.

There were a number of recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Health in 1998. Recommendations 19, 35 and 36 of the report recommended that:

19. [Natural health products] be allowed to make health claims, including structure-function claims, risk-reduction claims and treatment claims.

35. Health Canada immediately initiate a review of the diseases listed in Schedule A to ensure that only appropriate diseases are included and, where relevant, specific diseases be exempted by regulation from the broad terms found in Schedule A.

● (1815)

36. Health Canada, subsequently, conduct a study with the participation of representatives from consumer groups, the food, natural health products and pharmaceutical industries, and health practitioners to determine whether subsections 3(1) and (2) of the Food and Drugs Act or all of the diseases listed Schedule A should be deleted.

The interesting thing is that the then minister of health, the member for Etobicoke Centre, accepted the report's recommendations on March 26, 1999. The government then set up the Office of Natural Health Products, ONHP, transition team and accepted its clarification and expansion of the 53 recommendations, some of which I mentioned, of the health committee. In its final report, the transition team stated:

Sections 3(1) and 3(2) and Schedule A of the Food and Drugs Act are no longer relevant. They do not serve any purpose that cannot be accomplished adequately by other sections of the legislation or regulations.

More importantly, the schedule does not reflect contemporary scientific thought. The weight of modern scientific evidence confirms the mitigation and prevention of many diseases and disorders listed in Schedule A through the judicious use of NHPs. It is time that the legislation and regulations reflect the prevailing science.

One of the points that the member has made, again taking a look at changes to the act, is that all Canadians are concerned with the safety of herbs, dietary supplements and other natural health products, and Canadians want to ensure that there is accountability in any health claims made by the sellers of natural health products. He is suggesting that these safeguards already exist in the Food and Drugs Act. He quotes section 4 of that act:

No person shall sell an article of food that

- (a) has in or on it any poisonous or harmful substance;
- (b) is unfit for human consumption;
- (c) consists in whole or in part of any filthy, putrid, disgusting, rotten, decomposed or diseased animal or vegetable substance;
- (d) is adulterated; or
- (e) was manufactured, prepared, preserved, packaged or stored under unsanitary conditions.

The member, I think rightly so, tells us that under the existing act consumers would be protected. In regard to packaging, the act also protects consumers.

I think there is a way that this can be done. The point made by the Bloc member in terms of identifying it as a food may be problematic, but I think if we look at what the member is doing and how he is trying to make these products available to all Canadians for particular reasons, for wellness and prevention of disease, so to speak, I think it is laudable and doable. I think it is up to us as parliamentarians to find a way to make this possible and make this happen in the House.

Again, the Bloc member mentioned that there has to be another category, a category of natural health products. Perhaps that is the avenue we can do it in. He did suggest that he himself may want to bring in a new piece of legislation or introduce a private member's bill that would in fact do this. I do not think that is necessary. I think this bill can be fine tuned and address that very problem.

Again I want to thank the member for Nanaimo—Alberni for this thoughtful and considerate piece of legislation. I think he truly does reflect the recommendations that the committee made back in 1997-98. We are in a position to support this with the sole purpose of moving it on to the committee for further investigation.

• (1820)

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to stand and speak to Bill C-420. Going back to the election campaign, I had a number of people ask me about my support for natural health products. Since that time I have had a number of constituents write to my office or call to ask what has happened with this or why have we not moved on it. I have been asked what we are doing and whether we support natural health products.

I would like to get on the record today to ensure my constituents understand that I support this. The bill is an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act. It seeks to bring herbs, dietary supplements and other natural health products under the purview of Health Canada's food directorate by amending the definitions of both "food" and "drug" in the Food and Drugs Act and to implement the recommendations the transition team of the Office of National Health Products by repealing sections 3(1) and 3(2) in schedule A of the Food and Drugs Act.

Let me go to a personal experience before I come back to the details. With an agricultural background, one may know that when an animal on the farm becomes ill, the first and main treatment veterinary medicine uses to treat that animal is proper nutrition. Usually minerals, vitamin supplements and that sort of thing are recommended to bring the animal back to a proper condition of health.

I believe over the years we have learned that this is a very good practice for us as human beings, to first look after our nutrition and perhaps to go so far as to take supplements, like they do on the farm to supplement the natural food available to those animals and to guarantee their health.

Years ago I was introduced to a natural health product. After having knee surgery, three or four months later my knee was still sore and swollen. There was a goose egg on top of my knee that was like a golf ball cut in half. I was told about a natural health product but I could only be told that it might help because it had been known to help some other people, not because there was something in it that would help.

Recommendation 19 says that natural health products should be allowed to make health claims including structure, function, claims, risk reductions, claims and treatment claims. That cannot be done right now. It cannot be said that this is usually good for arthritis or it is usually good for swollen joints. However people who sell these natural health products can legally say that they knew old Joe over there, that he had an operation on his knee, that it was swollen and that it did not go away for four months. However when he started to take that natural health product and before the week was over, his knee was well, the swelling gone, the lump gone and the limp gone. Those kinds of things are happening with some of the natural health products. However it is against the law to say on the label that this may or may not happen.

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I am very concerned that we make a move to have more accurate labelling on these health products to inform people what the products might accomplish for the human body. Right now there is a total lack of labelling on them. The label only says what is in the bottle. No kind of directions or claims can be made other than a recommended dosage. Any move to clarify the labelling and make even better suggestions to that would be welcome.

• (1825)

We always seem to worry. We find the bad news in every situation and we worry about would happen if somebody misused some of these natural health products. The question I would ask is what happens if somebody misuses the doctor's prescription. I believe that is a problem that we need to look at.

We understand the misuse of prescription drugs in North America is rampant and people are dying and yet we act worried because somebody might take a little sampling of garlic or onion in a concentrated dose.

Medicine in this century and in this nation needs to be administered by more than simply drug pushers. I am concerned that when we go to a doctor, we are pointed to one drug but if that does not work we are pointed to another and another until one works, and we call that science. Yet we worry when we are told to eat lettuce or garlic. We worry about the natural products when it is the drug products that are killing us. The misuse of drugs is the problem, not the misuse of natural health products.

My colleague in the Bloc suggested that there might be a third category. That is true, we might use a third category but we might have to go at it a little more scientifically. However we may want to take this baby step first before we get to that point.

I understand in the United States there is a third category being developed. I do not know how far along it is or if the legislation has passed, but the third category is called a nutraceutical. This is where the nutrients are tested scientifically so the health product can then receive a label and be recommended for some very specific health benefits to the body. Perhaps that amendment may have to go to that.

We have the observations that even under the labelling of being a food, we still have protections under the Food and Drugs Act. I think my colleague mentioned those.

He said that it could not be a harmful or a poisonous substance and that it could not be unfit for human consumption. He also said that it could not be filthy, putrid, disgusting or rotten, which I think are things people regularly eat and use. I could put some things, which people pay good money for, into that category right quick, but that cannot be in a nutraceutical or adulterated. It has to be manufactured, prepared, preserved, packaged and stored under sanitary conditions. No person shall label, package, treat, process, sell or advertise any food in a manner that is false, misleading, and on and on they go. So there are protections there.

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I believe it is time that we understand that health is more related to what happens and what goes into our body ahead of time than what goes into our body when we go to the doctor and he gives us a prescription of drugs.

I think we need to open this up. We need to allow our people to take responsibility for what they eat and what they choose, whether it be off the grocery store shelf or off the health food store shelf. I think we are headed in the right direction by making this baby step for this natural health product.

**Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, within the context of the bill, I would like to talk about the health care system. It is important that we get all sorts of drugs, herbs and any remedies to the people as soon as possible, including natural foods that are safe, that do not have to go through the same lengthy procedures as regular drugs, and that when the 20 year patent period is up, the generic drugs can start right away and get the drugs into the system

at the best price for the health care. The Romanow report identified this as a problem and a way to reduce costs in the health care system. In general, we must speed up the processes and become more efficient.

•(1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** 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.

[*Translation*]

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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