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Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

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The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston) moved that Bill C–217, an act to amend the Young Offenders Act, the Contraventions Act and the Criminal Code in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with profound regret that I lead off the debate on changes to the Young Offenders Act today. Press reports indicate that a 16–year old man, Marwan Harb, was murdered yesterday in Hull, just blocks away from the Parliament Buildings.

The person allegedly responsible for that death apparently is a young offender and according to press reports the victim, Marwan Harb, is the second cousin of one of our colleagues, the member for Ottawa Centre.

We do not need this latest incident to remind us of the necessity for changes to the Young Offenders Act, which is in desperate need for reform. Just a few weeks ago there was another senseless killing, again committed by a young offender. Nicholas Battersby met his death as a result of a drive–by shooting in Ottawa. These murders, these incidents, are happening right across the country.

(1105)

My colleague from Kent who has been instrumental in calling for changes to the Young Offenders Act will be speaking about a particularly vicious murder in his community.

In the province of Alberta a woman trying to protect her children was stabbed to death, again by a young offender.

A six–year–old in British Columbia was raped and murdered by a young offender who had a number of convictions for molesting young children. The public did not know because the Young Offenders Act has a total ban on the publication of details.

The beat goes on and on. While these incidents are taking place, while these murders, rapes, robberies and assaults are taking place, we in Parliament are sitting on our hands. We did not need these incidents to tell us that the Young Offenders Act is in desperate need of reform.

We have been back for six months and there still is not any concrete action. This is the first bill before Parliament to address the Young Offenders Act, which is just one small component of the criminal justice system, one small component of a system that simply does not work, a system that is unbalanced, a system that cares more about suspects and criminals, a system that is more concerned about those who perpetrate crimes than those who are victims of crime in the country.

One thing was made perfectly clear by my constituents in the riding of York South—Weston, and I am sure by all Canadians, and that is that the criminal justice system is in desperate need of reform.

Canadians want leadership. They want changes not only to the Young Offenders Act but to other pieces of federal legislation, including the Criminal Code, the parole laws, the bail laws, the prostitution laws. We cannot simply sit back and say what a wonderful country we live in, look at how safe our country is. Let us look to the United States as an example of what it is really like to be bad as far as criminal activity is concerned.

This debate is timely. At the conclusion of the debate this morning I will be seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have this matter referred to the justice committee so that the justice committee can begin work. I will be listening very carefully to the person or persons in the House who will deny unanimous consent to send this matter to committee, and that person or those MPs who deny unanimous consent will have to explain their reasons why they want to continue to sit on their hands.

I have to say as well that I am not at all happy with the government's agenda with regard to changes to the Young Offenders Act. The government's agenda is on a slow boat to China when we ought to have changes here in the House immediately.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect and confidence in the Minister of Justice with regard to his genuine commitment to changes to the criminal justice system in Canada, but unfortunately his agenda calls for simply the introduction of a bill in June and he is not expecting passage of the bill

until later this year or sometime next year. That is just not good enough.

I would submit that it would be totally and completely and absolutely irresponsible for members of all sides of this House to rise for the summer holidays, to go back to our homes, families and cottages without passing changes to the Young Offenders Act. That would be an abdication of our responsibility as legislators. It would be an abdication of the mandate and the trust given to us by the people of Canada six short months ago.

I would urge the minister, I would urge the government, I would urge all members in the House to expedite changes. We do not need another year or two of study. I was a member of the justice committee for eight years. When I was first elected to the House in September 1984 the Young Offenders Act was only a few months old and it was clear then that the Young Offenders Act would not work. I have been calling for changes for the last 10 years.

(1110)

Here we are 10 years later and just a few weeks ago the 10th anniversary of the Young Offenders Act was celebrated. The Young Offenders Act replaced the old juvenile delinquents act. Back then the bleeding hearts claimed that the juvenile delinquents act was not working and they needed a more balanced system.

We have now a piece of federal legislation that is totally unbalanced. It is a piece of legislation that shoves aside the public interest and shoves aside security for the public. Instead it protects and invites young people to break the law, to embark upon a lifetime of criminality.

The bill which I have before Parliament today addresses three of the fundamental changes necessary to the Young Offenders Act. I will speak about those changes in a few moments.

First, I want to talk about the existing law, the Young Offenders Act, section 3, which contains eight statements of policy indicating the philosophy behind the Young Offenders Act. I want to summarize the philosophy and explain why in my view that while the intention was there, the 10 years of practice that we have had have clearly established that the principles have gone haywire.

The first principle is that young persons are said not to be as accountable for their acts as are adults but even so they must bear responsibility for their contraventions—motherhood and apple pie.

Second, society must be afforded protection from illegal behaviour although it does have a responsibility to take measures to prevent criminal conduct by youth. That was the second principle, but experience has shown that the protection of society does not even appear to register in the consideration of those involved in the system, particularly judges who have to bear some of the responsibility for some of the outrageous sentences that are handed down today.

The third statement recognizes the need for supervision, discipline and control of young offenders, but also that they have special needs and require guidance and assistance. We will not find any dispute about the need for special guidance and assistance for young people. We all recognize that there is a need for a system that will deal with young offenders. We do not want to treat 12 and 13 year olds, genuine children, like adults. We do not want to throw them in the slammer, send them down to Kingston to serve a life sentence or to serve lengthy prison terms. There has to be a balanced system. We all recognize that.

However, when we look at the experience today we recognize that the system is doing a disservice to the public and to young people because it is telling young people today that they have to carry knives. One cannot help but wonder that if there were a different psychology out there with our young people today the young person who was murdered in Hull yesterday would be alive today. Why was it necessary for the person who committed the murder to be carrying a knife? It is not uncommon for young people today to carry knives and loaded guns to school every morning. That is the atmosphere that our young people are faced with today. They carry guns and knives and other deadly weapons not simply to do harm to other people but for protection.

Mr. Speaker, when you and I were in high school, public school and university if there was a score to settle you used your fists. You would go out back and have a fist fight, a little wrestle and you would settle your scores. Today scores are settled with deadly force. Scores are settled with knives and bullets and guns. People are killed and maimed right across the country as a result of this unfortunate and tragic situation that our young people are faced with today.

The philosophy also says, the fourth consideration, that the taking of measures other than judicial proceedings should be considered where not inconsistent with the protection of society.

(1115)

The fifth statement recognizes the legal and constitutional rights of youth. Therein lies one of the major problems with the Young Offenders Act. On the one hand it says we should treat young offenders as children. On the other hand it says we should afford them all the rights and privileges afforded other criminals under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That is fine and dandy, but then young people recognize that they have the right to a lawyer; let's go get legal aid. They have the right to all the protection that adults have, such as the right to remain silent and all the other rights. Young people recognize

that those rights exist and they are using them as protection from criminal responsibility.

The sixth principle is that a young person has the right—and this is a real kicker—to the least possible interference with freedom as is consistent with public safety. It is built right into the Young Offenders Act. It says we cannot interfere with their freedom.

Seventh, young offenders have the right to be informed of their rights and freedoms in any situation where those rights and freedoms may be infringed.

Finally, parents are said to have a responsibility for the care and supervision of their children, and children are to be removed from parents only in compelling circumstances.

That is the philosophy behind the Young Offenders Act. Some of it is apple pie and motherhood, but the rest of it unfortunately has led to a system that is a contributing factor to the decay of the moral fibre and the integrity of our youth.

I want to make one thing perfectly clear. I am not calling for sending young children to jail and throwing away the keys, or whipping them and hanging them. What I am calling for is a more balanced approach. The significant majority of young people are law–abiding citizens. They do not need a law to tell them the difference between right and wrong. We are dealing with the exceptions, the small percentage of young hoods, young incorrigibles in our society, who are using the law in order to further their criminality.

We need a balanced system. Somehow the principles outlined in the Young Offenders Act have not been translated into action and the pendulum has swung in favour of the rights and protection of the youth. Public security has become a secondary consideration at best and all too often has been neglected entirely.

My bill addresses three specific areas. First, I would change the age limits provided in the Young Offenders Act. Today a young offender, a child, these people who are in need of protection and caring guidance, is defined as a young person between the ages of 12 and 17. We have the situation of a 17–year–old, one day shy of his or her 18th birthday, old enough to drive, old enough to enter into contracts in some jurisdictions, yet treated as a child and defined as a child.

Statistics show that half of the youth court case load involves 16 and 17 year olds. My bill would treat 16 and 17 year olds as adults. They would be charged and prosecuted in adult court, and in my submission that would act as a very serious deterrent to other 16 and 17 year olds from breaking the law.

As well my bill would lower the age limit to the age of 10. Some people are suggesting that there should not be any lower end to the definition of a young offender. We all know of the case in Great Britain, for example, where two 10–year–olds were convicted of murder. In Canada children under the age of 12 are used by adults to commit criminal offences. Second, some of them are committing in their own right serious offences. By lowering the age limit it allows the police to bring these children into the system so they can be dealt with and treated properly.

(1120)

My bill would define children as those young people between the ages of 12 and 15. Sixteen and seventeen year olds know the difference between right and wrong, understand the nature and consequences of their acts and therefore, in my view, ought to be prosecuted in adult court. As members know, age is always a mitigating circumstance at sentencing in adult court.

The second aspect of my bill—it is something that the minister has already indicated he supports—is the increase in the maximum penalty for first degree murder from five to ten years. I applaud the minister for confirming his position in that regard not too long ago. Just a few years ago the maximum penalty was three years for first degree murder.

We had the situation in Scarborough, for example, where a young offender committed a triple murder, first degree murder, and served three years. He then was released. Now the sentence has been bumped up to five years but in my respectful submission it ought to be ten years for first degree murder.

The third aspect of my bill would allow for the publication of the details and the identity of a young offender after the second serious conviction. Right now there is a blanket prohibition on the publication of details.

The case in British Columbia—there are dozens of other similar cases—underlined the need for the public, the neighbours, the school system to know of some of the serious offences. The young person had been convicted of molesting young children. If the public knew, if the police knew, if neighbours knew, they could have taken the necessary precautions. He murdered and raped a six–year old child.

My bill would allow the young offender two chances. Once they have committed two serious offences, then the public would be entitled to know the details and the identity of the young offender. I submit that would serve as a deterrent for young offenders.

Let me end where I began. The system is in desperate need of repair. We have to move with dispatch. For those people who suggest this concern is a knee–jerk reaction to the murder in Hull or the murder here in Ottawa or the dozens of other murders and rapes and violent assaults, let me tell members that they are sadly mistaken. Their heads are in the sand and it is time that they woke up and smelled the coffee.

This is not something that happened overnight. It is a concern. The problem has been here for the last 10 years. I would urge my colleagues to expedite changing passages in the Young Offenders Act.

I would ask that at the conclusion of this debate at 12 noon today we have the unanimous consent of the House to refer the bill and its subject matter to the justice committee so that we can begin immediate deliberations with regard to this component of the criminal justice system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the bill introduced by the hon. member for York South—Weston, a trial balloon being launched by the Liberal government on the issue of young offenders.

Since the opening of the 35th Parliament, the Department of Justice has been discussing amendments to the Young Offenders Act. For reasons known to the department, it seems this was one of its priorities.

Furthermore, in the famous red book people have been talking about since October 25, the Liberal party proposed to reform the Young Offenders Act, to offer real rehabilitation while cracking down on young criminals.

Since I assume no one is against real rehabilitation, today the Liberal government is testing the temper and sensibilities of voters on the issue of cracking down on young criminals. Considering the bill the hon. member has introduced, I understand why he sits on the extreme right of the Prime Minister.

(1125)

Unfortunately, this shift to the right on the young offenders issue is based on a skewed equation of violence and young people. To the average citizen, youth is equated with violence and adolescence is synonymous with delinquency. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

In Quebec, since 1979, all crimes committed by young people have decreased substantially, by nearly 8 per cent across Quebec and by 34 per cent in the Montreal area. Was the government, or should I say, was the hon. member aware of these figures before he introduced the kind of bill we have before us today?

We cannot go on being alarmist to this degree, because it gives a false picture of reality and we end up with bills like this one which I consider to be very alarming indeed.

It is all well and good to ask for zero tolerance, but should this necessarily mean lowering the age limit of offenders covered by the youth courts, should this mean more severe sentencing and releasing the names of repeat young offenders? This interpretation of zero tolerance is tantamount to telling all young offenders: get in there and stay there. That is the easy way out.

That is a fifties petit bourgeois attitude. The emphasis should not be on the sentencing aspect as much as on assistance, guidance and reintegration of the young offender.

Obviously, I am against the simplistic bill before the House today. If this proposal would help the government save money, a government that is flat broke, perhaps we could discuss it and consider the benefits from that angle. However, by increasing sentences and lowering the age at which one is considered to be young offender, we are merely filling up our prisons faster and adding to the number of unproductive young people who will be a burden on society for the rest of their lives.

Current public pressure for a stricter Young Offenders Act is understandable, especially in western Canada. Sensational cases reported in the media add to the skewed perception of the problem. However, reaching directly with amendments like these reflects some confusion about, and represents a major departure from, the objectives pursued by the Young Offenders Act passed in 1984, in other words, deterrence, rehabilitation and the protection of society.

In Quebec, we understand the main principles behind the protection of youth and society. When dealing with young offenders, we rely on rehabilitation and reintegration. As much as possible, we avoid criminalizing cases involving young offenders.

The Quebec Department of Health and Social Services and the Youth Protection Branch take care of young offenders and assist them. The results have been astonishing. In Quebec, we invest in rehabilitation because we believe in it. Statistics are extremely revealing in that respect. According to a very sound study conducted in Quebec between 1968 and 1983, it takes society less than five years to recoup the money it invests to rehabilitate young murderers and turn them into productive young adults who work, pay taxes and spend money, all of which keep the economy going.

In western Canada, they are understandably intolerant because they do not invest in their youth as we do. It is not one of their concerns. They do not seem to have the resources; they do not take care of young offenders who are left to fend for themselves. They just lock them up in a different part of the prison than the adults.

Our assessment of this bill illustrates how distinct a society Quebec is. You know, it is not only our language and culture which make us different from the rest of Canada, but also our beliefs, concerns and philosophy. We just do not see things the same way and the bill before us this morning is a case in point.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the goal aimed at by the amendments proposed in this bill could be achieved through a stricter enforcement of the present Young Offenders Act. It appears that, in his bill, the Liberal member is seeking to make

young offenders accountable and responsible for their illegal actions so that they can be tried in a regular court.

In our justice system, teenagers charged with indictable offences are seldom tried in adult court, even though the April 1992 amendments make it easier.

Being doubly concerned with the rehabilitation of the young offender and the protection of society, lawyers and judges are not surprisingly very reluctant, one to ask for a trial in adult court, and the other to order it.

(1130)

In Quebec, according to the information I have, transfer to an adult court is requested in no more than 5 per cent of all cases.

This reluctance is easily explained: If a young offender is found guilty in adult court he will receive a very stiff sentence, offering very little opportunity for rehabilitation. Moreover, he will be eligible for parole only after five or ten years, depending on whether the crime was first or second degree murder.

Why force the hand of the courts if, for legal and social reasons, they do not do it? Even though they can try some young offenders as adults, accountable and responsible for their actions, they rarely choose to do it. If the hon. member wishes to help society, he should instead introduce a bill to make the public more aware that a program offering help in a responsible manner affords better protection than a punitive measure, which is effective only as long as it is in force.

More than that, he should support a complete transfer of jurisdiction to the provinces, with the necessary budget. This way each province could deal with its young offenders as it chooses.

The deterrent effect sought by imposing longer sentences is not supported by the information available. In fact, the reverse in true according to *Crime and Delinquency* which, in its January issue, published the results of a study carried out in several American States proving that.

Like his government, the hon. member misses the target completely with this bill. If the Criminal Code needed amendments, it would be to force rehabilitation and reentry into the community for young offenders, but this is outside the jurisdiction of this House.

Society should be more tolerant and its objective should not be to make all young persons conform with what their environment, their family, their school and society itself expect of them, but to make them able to become independent, with the minimum of limitations, and to make their reentry a success.

[*English*]

Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak in complete, full and total support of Bill C–217, an act to amend the Young Offenders Act, the Contraventions Act and the Criminal Code in consequence thereof. It was placed before the House by my colleague, the hon. member for York South—Weston. I congratulate him for the bill and for his distinguished efforts at drawing much needed attention to the issue of young offenders.

When I was first elected to the House of Commons one of my goals was to strengthen the Young Offenders Act. Recent events in my riding only give me greater resolve and strength to push for tougher sentences.

As many in the House may be aware the city of Chatham, Ontario, population 43,000, is still reeling from the brutal murder last week of seven–year old Daniel Miller. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. A local teenage gang member has been charged with first degree murder in the beating death.

My heart goes out to the Miller family. They lost a son before the prime of his life, before he had a future. The slaying has sparked angry demonstrations and a series of petitions calling for action to prevent more violence.

A railroad bridge near where the boy's body was found was covered with graffiti by a group called Criminally Minded Corporations or CMC. A young concerned citizen painted the bridge on the weekend to erase the gutter language. The CMC is the best organized of six youth gangs in Chatham and boasts over 100 members. Many gang members wear army boots with symbolically coloured shoelaces.

In addition, this totally random act of murder is seemingly just one more example of the crumbling decline of our society, morals and family values. The day after, a 17–year–old was charged with assault causing bodily harm to a security guard who was watching over the abandoned yard where the murder took place.

Where does it end? Local parents and other citizens are calling for vigilante justice. They do not trust our current system of justice, that it lets off criminals with a slap on the wrist while the victims are left in limbo for the rest of their lives.

(1135)

One resident, Jason Gale, who moved to Chatham recently with his two young daughters, mother and grandmother said this: ''They are terrorizing people. I think if the people of Chatham started fighting back, if a few of these gang members got beaten up pretty bad or had something happen to them, I think a lot of it would stop''. Is that where our society is today?

I appeal for calm and level heads to prevail in my riding. We must improve the justice system so that criminals are punished for their crimes. Bill C–217 is an important step in the right direction.

Several years ago the former Conservative government introduced some tougher sentences. For instance the maximum sentence for murder was increased to five years from three. I said at that time when the bill was introduced, and I will repeat it

today, that the current Young Offenders Act is too soft. It is a joke.

I have presented over 25,000 names on petitions collected by Roy Asselstine Jr. and his parents calling for a reinforcement of the act. I am told by lawyers and police that if some young people are involved with the Young Offenders Act it is a badge of honour. It is a measure of distinction. That is what they are saying on the streets. No ivory tower mentality of Parliament Hill is going to change that reality. It is a reality not just in Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver but also in many smaller cities such as Chatham.

Bill C–217 will augment the debate. As my friend from York South—Weston pointed out, his bill is endorsed by the Canadian Police Association and Victims of Violence and is co–sponsored by 17 members of Parliament.

The purpose of the bill is threefold. First, the young offender would now be between the ages of 10 and 15. As a result 16 and 17 year olds would be held responsible for their criminal acts and prosecuted in adult court. Second, the maximum penalty for first and second degree murder would be increased to 10 years from the current 5 years. Third, after a second conviction the young offender's name could be published.

These are reasonable improvements to the current Young Offenders Act which is not an effective deterrent and does not allow correctional officials a sufficient opportunity to rehabilitate young people. Bill C–217 goes a long way toward balancing the needs of the public as well as our youth.

Yes, we must work to prevent crime, to give hope to young people that their futures can be meaningful, that their lives can make a difference in this world of ours. Rehabilitation must be a vital component of any new law.

I am pleased to offer my backing to the bill. I urge hon. members to send it to the justice committee where it can receive more in–depth study.

In closing I have an article from the Chatham paper. The headline reads: ''Family of teen beaten up by gang moves out of Maple City''. These are the Asselstines whose son was beaten up by the gang CMC and hospitalized. On his release from hospital he and his parents went around the Chatham area getting signatures on a petition. They have been harassed ever since and have moved with no forwarding address. This is not what we want in our society today.

It is on their behalf and that of young Daniel Miller that I stand in the House in support of Bill C–217.

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to basically support the bill as amendments to the Young Offenders Act are so very long overdue.

The issue certainly was up front during the election. There was always someone who was sure to bring it up at a local town hall meeting during the campaign.

(1140)

Consequently, in view of such wide concern about problems with the act from right across Canada, it was with dismay we found listening from this side of the House that the government did not even give a mention of the Young Offenders Act in the throne speech. After subsequently pressing the government on that sorely misplaced priority, we have now had a number of promises from the justice minister that the government is moving on a series of amendments.

However, the timing of the long awaited government bill at last count is that it is to be introduced sometime in June. Based on the shifting sands of time of this government, one wonders if there will ever be a government bill amending the Young Offenders Act tabled before the House adjourns for the summer.

I am sure therefore it is with a backdrop of frustration that the member has introduced his own private member's bill. I have heard that the substantive part of it does not have the support of the government. From our observation, this is most disconcerting.

The Young Offenders Act has a title. This bill seeks to make the act live up to its name. The YOA should deal with young offenders, not youthful adults. I would certainly like to see more comprehensive adjustments to the act, however as far as this bill goes, we on this side are prepared to support it.

Specifically the bill is threefold. It lowers the age limits that define who is a young person for the operation of the act. It also allows the publication of the name of a young offender who has been convicted of an indictable offence on two previous occasions. This is a weak effort of improvement but certainly is a move in the right direction.

The bill also increases the maximum penalty for first and second degree murder to 10 years. This last point has been hinted at by the justice minister. However the bill at least leaves the other measures alone whereas the justice minister plans to give on one hand yet take away with the other by limiting the transfer provisions of the act.

My sympathies go out to the member that he is part of a group which is so out of touch with Canadians that he has to bring forward his own bill. Although the bill has timid half measures it still does not get the support of the cabinet.

I have been around at the operational level with young offenders since the days of working with the juvenile de-

linquents act. I recall all too well the federal–provincial conferences and negotiations for 10 years leading up to the passage of the YOA in the dying days of a previous Liberal government.

Canadians were assured in bold terms how the YOA struck the right balance. I also recall strong voices at the time, even in the House, of how the YOA sent the wrong message to the community and especially to young offenders.

We have now lived with the Young Offenders Act for about 10 years. It has been amended three times in response to community concern. It is the single piece of criminal legislation that is most vilified by the public. We have had 10 years of implementation. One would think over that period some semblance of accommodation would have resulted. However the opposite is true.

The verdict is in from the empirical evidence of operation in the field. The Young Offenders Act is fundamentally flawed because it arises from false assumptions of human nature and as we know best, top down attitude that the community really does not know what is good for it.

Reformers on this side have been calling for some time for a fundamental review because the community demands it. The murder rate has doubled since the death penalty was last used in 1962. Violent crime in general has increased even more. The basic point is that crime rates in general are too high.

We know who the offenders are. We need to protect the community and give more recognition to victims. We have considerable resources available for offenders. We should do more to provide opportunities for making self–reformation available for offenders. However the Young Offenders Act is way off track in respect of victims of youth crime.

In my riding the biggest outcry for the Young Offenders Act reform comes from high school students. They are all too well aware of what the street sentiment is about what happens to one of their own when they seriously offend against another student. Many students, especially females in high schools, are afraid. There is an atmosphere out there that nothing happens to young offenders. There are no real consequences. Law–abiding students have no confidence in the justice system.

Youth are in a period of learning where they resist limits. They kick against authority and watch how the community responds. The Young Offenders Act does the young no favours by sending the wrong message about violating the rights of others. The Young Offenders Act sends the wrong message to the community.

We check the newspaper today. Again we see that 16–year old Marwan Harb of Dompierre Street was pronounced dead at the hospital after being stabbed in the back. A 15–year old boy who was arrested two hours after the stabbing will be charged with murder.

(1145)

A group of teens was walking through a park. Following an argument one of the boys punched Harb's girlfriend in the face. When Harb tried to defend her a fight broke out and he was stabbed in the back. It was a fight between a bunch of kids. It was not like a gang war. It was not racial. The victim and the accused knew each other through school. Upon being noticed the kids ran away, leaving Harb lying on the ground. Incidents like this that are repeated across Canada demonstrate that we need to address youth violence.

We have an atmosphere where youths carry weapons. There is little community consensus that we are accountable to an atmosphere of law and order and, if violated, offenders will be held to account. In some aspects we see youths behaving as if all law and order has broken down and they are living with the attitude of anarchy, every person for themselves; protect yourself because for no one else will.

The inter–relationship between law, its application and social order is complex. Yet in its simplest form,Canadians from across the country have indicated that the Young Offenders Act does not strike the right balance of deterrence to the individual, deterrence to others, victims' rights and opportunities to reform.

I recently drafted my own private member's bill that was rejected by the system as Bill C–217 was already in the hopper, working its way through. My bill was seen as being too similar. Unfortunately the bill is not votable but I commend the member for sending a message to his colleagues. I hope they wake up and get going with fundamental changes.

Reform Party members will have a lot to say in the future about a constructive alternative to the Young Offenders Act. We have been listening to the community. Our platform comes from the bottom up. The Reform Party national task force on law and order specified substantive changes to the Young Offenders Act and we will be bringing those forward.

Now is the time to support the voice of reason and practical reality. The Young Offenders Act needs changing. The bill although too modest in substance certainly goes in the right direction. Voices of this tone must be supported. The bill must not only be supported by like–minded individuals but must be supported in the name of young people right across the country. The misguided premise of the Young Offenders Act will eventually be fixed. Perhaps it will take a Reform Party government to do it.

In the meantime Her Majesty's loyal constructive alternative from this side of the House will support any voice of reason and balance to deal with the measures the community wants. Let us change the Young Offenders Act now and send a more realistic message to offenders and potential offenders that someone's

rights end where someone else's nose begins. Offending needs to be denounced.

We need a young offender law that is realistic in our culture, that balances the needs and the rights of the offender and the offended. The community must have confidence again in the justice system. That is why I support the inherent message of the bill.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on the bill this morning. I congratulate the hon. member for York South—Weston on bringing the issue forward. It is one that has been very much on the minds of all members of Parliament and certainly on the minds of the general public. There are some very succinct parts of the young offenders legislation that should be given a very serious look and review.

This issue is like any other major issue that arises and becomes a public concern. There are serious events that occur that bring the issue forward in the media. People feel that nothing is working. Something is working. Something is not. The something that is not working should be reviewed and repaired.

All legislation has to be changed from time to time to meet the trends and the changes that take place in society. However there is one thing I disagree with. As a former educator I hear some people saying that young offenders do not understand the implications of what they are doing. I can say, having taught many teenagers in my earlier days before coming to this institution, they understand what they are doing. No one needs to throw that argument out. It will not work.

(1150)

The other sad part of this argument is the fact that some people automatically think that these people come from poor homes, no training and so on in the home. There are areas where this occurs. There are other cases where people are looked after in the home and they still go astray because peer pressure is very strong on them to join gangs and go in the wrong direction.

I spoke many times in the last Parliament on young offenders because we had a serious case in my constituency in the village of Barry's Bay. I think one of the major problems is that the plea bargaining that goes on in the courts is simply not justifiable and cannot be supported. I am glad to know that the justice committee at the direction of the government is making a serious review of this legislation and will probably be into it before June or, if not, during the month of June. I congratulate it on that.

The plea bargaining that goes on in our courts today has to be changed if we are going to change the Young Offenders Act and other legislation dealing with the criminal element. There is no way that we can allow lawyers to go on bargaining away the laws of the country. The laws of the country are put in the records of Parliament, put in legislation to be carried out. That is the intent of the legislators who pass them.

I am absolutely opposed to handing it over to a group of lawyers and the court and the crown and saying: ''You drop this, I will take that''. In the end you have a situation similar to one that was brought to my attention recently by the hon. member for Victoria—Haliburton. A person goes into a store with a sawed–off shotgun, holds up the store, gets away, is finally caught and brought into court. When he is sentenced he gets four months and he will probably be out in two and a half months. They used to get 10, 12 and 15 years for armed robbery.

That is not justice in the eyes of the public and the punishment certainly does not fit the crime. These are things that have to be changed.

We cannot have people committing crimes in this country and walking away laughing at the law. That is indeed what is going on. We cannot have people going down the streets and shooting a top–notch graduate student on a sidewalk in Ottawa, Toronto or anywhere else, destroying good lives.

The system has to be seriously reviewed, not just reviewed and looked at and talked about and so on. I wish the justice committee well as it does this later. I thank the hon. member for York South—Weston for bringing the issue before the House and giving us a chance to discuss it. I know he is very serious about having the bill adopted for further study and brought before the justice committee.

The bottom line here, and I do not like using that term because it is usually used in an unsophisticated manner, or the real essence of law is that legislators pass laws hopefully to be obeyed, hopefully to be administered, hopefully not to allow a loophole where the law can be bargained away for those who want to get the case over with and win cases for people who should not be on the streets. When someone does get out on the street early and commits another crime, up goes another big sympathy wave saying: ''Oh, this person shouldn't be out on the street''.

He should not have been out on the street. The law has to be administered. Some of it is already on the books so that when a person is in prison he or she should not be out of incarceration until they have had medical treatment and are deemed by medical authorities to be capable of running their own lives, leading a decent life out on the streets and byways.

(1155)

If there is anything that we are going to have to improve along with this legislation, it is to make sure that the treatment, medical care and the advising are in place to bring these young people back into a productive way of life.

There are some who have come under the Young Offenders Act who are now very productive in society. We have to recognize that side, too. It is not a one–sided picture. We can only try to perfect it if we try to correct the things that are not working in it today.

I want to review briefly the things that I have touched on. There is the medical treatment of these people, ensuring that the plea bargaining system is changed so that it is going to back up the law that we put on the books, the publishing of names of young offenders as indicated in the hon. member's private members' bill this morning and the fact that these young people do know what they are doing.

Let us go at this in a very constructive way and correct what is working to complement that which is working today.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to support Bill C–217. I support it in principle as has been explained by another member of my party. There are some aspects on which we would like to see some fine tuning.

Any move in this direction is a move that will work in favour of our most valuable asset in Canada, our young people. Our young people are the ones who are the most disadvantaged by the current Young Offenders Act.

I agree with the member for York South—Weston totally that the bill should have been votable. It really shows something wrong with the system when we can have a votable bill on whether hockey should be Canada's national sport but for something like this that works directly against the young people, the greatest asset of Canada, we are not going to vote on it. I find that really outstanding.

Young people come to me quite frequently. They say: ''As a high school student my biggest problem is that I recognize that I am under a cloud''. I suspect that for many members and their constituents, when they see young people on a bus or gathered somewhere they assume the worst because there are some bad apples.

We must make changes to the Young Offenders Act not only for property values or violence but primarily to support Canada's greatest asset, our young people. Many of those young people are involved in things like science fairs. They are very exciting events to attend. I commend them to all members and to the public.

Many of them belong to school clubs and organizations. They belong to sports teams. Many are involved in cadets, scouts or guides. Many belong to churches, young people's groups or counsel at summer camp as counsellors. They are involved in marching bands, 4–H clubs, forestry camps, computer clubs, sports clubs and camps. Those who are actively involved are the people who are the most disadvantaged by this law.

We as adults have to get our priorities straight. Let us protect our greatest asset. Many of our young people are involved in summer work. Often we think of summer work as kind of a make work kind of a thing. As members know, without the inclusion in the work force of our young people, many of the things that get cleaned up in the summertime would not get cleaned up. They help with tourist and recreation facilities. They act as information for business.

I say that parents have to be involved in education of the young people. They have to be involved in guidance of the young people. They have to be involved—

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to the hon. member for interrupting his speech but the rules require that the debate end in about a minute's time.

I understand that a good number of members would like to take part in this debate. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice has stood. He would like to speak. I am sure the hon. member would like to conclude his remarks so I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to extend the debate on this most important subject matter for an additional hour until one o'clock.

(1200)

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There does not appear to be unanimous consent. I believe the hon. member had a second point of order.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, can you indicate who denied unanimous consent? I did not hear anything from this end.

The Deputy Speaker: The member, if he had been sitting here, certainly would have heard something.

Mr. Nunziata: It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, considering the comparative importance of the next bill we are supposed to debate to the people of Canada. However those who denied unanimous consent will have to account to their constituents and to the people of Canada why they think that an hour's debate on the Young Offenders Act is too much.

In view of the importance of the legislation, I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the bill at second reading, in principle, and to refer the bill to the justice committee for further consideration.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Once again I must advise members that there is no unanimous consent on this side.

[*English*]

Mr. Nunziata: I rise on a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. The separatists will have to explain to the rest of Canada why they do not want to debate or even discuss the bill.

I will try once again. Rather than adopting the bill at second reading I would ask that the subject matter of the Young Offenders Act, not the bill before Parliament, be referred to the committee so that all members will have an opportunity to discuss the subject matter at committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to refer the subject matter of the bill to committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Again there is no unanimous consent.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), this item is dropped from the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AGREEMENTS ACT

The House resumed from April 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C–22, an act respecting certain agreements concerning the redevelopment and operation of terminals 1 and 2 at Lester B. Pearson International Airport, be read the second time and referred to a committee; of the amendment; and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec): Mr. Speaker, this government is blatantly guilty of applying a double standard. This very same government, which not so long ago attacked the least fortunate in our society, is now getting ready to protect and compensate persons with no redeeming value whatsoever, other than the fact that they helped fill the coffers of the two major federal political parties.

This is the same government that, less than one month ago, announced restrictions to unemployment insurance entitlement, thereby propelling more workers into the ranks of social assistance recipients.

Unlike the unemployed, lobbyists and heads of corporations with close ties to political parties need not be concerned about incurring losses. There is certainly no question of them losing their benefits, remuneration or compensation. Their interests are well protected since they are directly tied to party finances.

The dealings surrounding the privatization of terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson airport are a striking example of how Canadian governments unfortunately resort all too often to playing politics. Many of those who have already spoken in this debate have recounted in detail the saga of this deal. Therefore I will not go over the same ground again.

My purpose in speaking today is to emphasize the odious nature of this affair and the offensive attitude of the two governments who have been successively involved in it.

(1205)

Take for instance the way the privatization bids were solicited. A 90–day bidding period is highly unusual for such a major contract. Did anyone in the federal administration protest? Certainly not! It was better kept in the family.

With the result that we know: Paxport and Claridge Corporation were the only bidders. The Nixon report had a great deal to say on the subject. While the quote may be a tad long, it is well worth reading and rereading:

> The RFP [request for proposals] having as it did only a single stage and requiring proponents to engage in project definition as well as proposal submission and, all within a 90 day time frame, created, in my view, an enormous advantage to a proponent that had previously submitted a proposal for privatizing and developing T1 and T2. Other management and construction firms not having been involved in the manoeuvering preceding the RFP had no chance to come up to speed and submit a bid in the short time permitted.

The winner, as we know, was Paxport, in spite of the fact it was grappling with financial difficulties. Which leads to the next question that has to be raised again: How could the government let a contract of that magnitude to a company without checking its financial statements? Can anyone imagine even for a moment that an unemployed citizen would be granted a subsidy, a loan or a contract, to start up a small business without having to prove profitability?

The answer is obvious. Never, ever, could such a thing happen. Principles like the need to manage public funds soundly would be argued. Always the same double standard! If you are rich and close to those in power, the usual conditions just do not apply to you, or barely.

Another unknown in this matter is the role played by lobbyists in obtaining these contracts. We know that the Lobbyists Registration Act was passed by the Conservative government in 1988 and came into effect in September 1989. It is interesting to stop and look briefly at the basic principles underlying this legislation. There were three principles.

First, accessibility, meaning that the public has the right to express its opinion and have unrestricted access to government; second, transparency, that is to say that activities involving governments should be clear and open; and third, simplicity, which means the administration of the registration system must be simple. To that end, lobbyists must register with the registrar

in one of the categories established by law. In theory, nothing could be simpler.

Assuming I am a lobbyist, I register with the registrar and thereafter, anybody refering to the register will know that I am working as a lobbyist. Depending on the category I am registered under, information concerning my activities will be more or less elaborate. Many problems with the application of the law have been identified, but the gist of it remains valid.

Let us move on to the role of lobbyists involved in the Pearson Airport case and the treatment provided for in the act. We will focus on three major players, namely Donald Matthews, Hugh Riopelle and Patrick MacAdam. Mr. Matthews is president of the Matthews group, which has a 40 per cent controlling interest in Paxport. As you know, Mr. Matthews presided over Brian Mulroney's leadership campaign in 1983. In addition, as a former president of the Conservative Party, he ran fund–raising campaigns for that party.

Mr. Riopelle was chief of staff to former Tory Prime Minister Joe Clark and was later to be appointed to lead the transition team of ex–Prime Minister Kim Campbell. Mr. Riopelle was hired as lobbyist by Paxport's president at the time, Ray Hession.

The third lobbyist is Mr. MacAdam, a friend of Mr. Mulroney and of the Conservative Party. These three men have one thing in common: they never registered as lobbyists.

Should the law not apply equally to everybody? It does not seem to apply to Tory lobbyists. What about Liberal lobbyists? It is an open question. We think it would be appropriate to look more closely at the lobbying firms involved in the Pearson Airport deal. Here are some of them. Working on behalf of Paxport is the Government Business Consulting Group Inc., whose CEO is J.A. Fred Doucet. Surprise, surprise! Mr. Doucet was Mr. Mulroney's chief of staff and senior adviser on Kim Campbell's campaign. It is a small world.

(1210)

John Legate is president of J.S.L. Consulting Services Limited. Coincidentally, he was hired as lobbyist by Paxport's president when he had access to the Tory Cabinet through the minister then responsible for Toronto, Michael Wilson. As you recall, the airport is located in that city.

Last but not least, Atlantic Research Canada Inc. whose president at the beginning of the privatization affair was Ray Hession, who was also president of Paxport. Mr. Hession was Deputy Minister at Supply and Services under the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Once the contract was awarded to Paxport, he resigned as president to be replaced by Don Matthews' son.

At Claridge Properties, Earnscliffe Strategy Group Inc., one of the lobbyists, is represented by William J. Fox, a former political attaché and personal friend of Brian Mulroney.

At Near Consultants and Associates Limited, we find Harry Near, who is also involved in the Earnscliffe Group. Mr. Near has long been active in the Conservative Party.

There is no need to continue this litany of names and companies, the conclusion is clear and obvious: they were all related to one another and to the two federal parties which have succeeded each other in office.

Other questions arise. Who exactly do these people and these companies represent? Who are the directors of the various companies involved? We must clear that up. These people have had great influence with political decision–makers, so much so that the former government violated an important parliamentary principle according to which a government at the end of its term makes no decision that could endanger the decision–making power of a future government.

They were so influential that on April 13, 1994, the Liberal government tabled Bill C–22 which is being debated today. This legislation would allow the government to pay corporations, especially the T1 T2 Limited Partnership, large amounts for cancelling the contract. Their influence is such that this government is asking us to ratify another transaction from which corporations tied to the two traditional parties will benefit. Their influence is such that this government is asking us to forget all the transactions between the corporations and the Department of Transport were in flagrant violation of the government policies in effect. Their influence is such that the government is asking us to forget these policies intended to encourage marketing the airports and their contribution to economic development and to make them aware of local concerns and interests.

We want to know whose economy was to be developed. We want to know what local concerns and interests were served by these agreements. We want to know who benefited: the taxpayers, local communities or corporations.

These questions indicate how openly the government conducts its affairs and how easily the public can access information on this. Remember that these principles are affected by the law and that lobbyists must respect them.

The picture we have just painted shows us a group of influential people, well connected with ties to the political parties, who can bend government decisions to their financial advantage.

We have many questions and very few answers. We all know that you must first have your questions answered before you can make a decision.

The taxpayers of Canada and Quebec need light to be shed on this issue, an intense, bright light. That is why the Bloc Quebecois demands setting up a royal commission of inquiry on this matter.

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C–22.

I wanted to go over the sequence of key events surrounding the drafting of the privatization contract, but since there are so many details, manoeuvres and shady dealings in this transaction, and since some colleagues have already looked at these events, I will instead put the emphasis on a few aspects of this project which involve the alleged transparency of this government in this whole issue.

(1215)

This government paints a glowing picture of the consulting process to get Canadians' opinion, but in fact all these so–called consultation exercises are nothing but a mirage, because when this pretence of transparency puts the government on the defensive, it quickly states that it was elected to make decisions and that it is doing just that. However, by acting like a bunch of know–it–alls, as Liberal Premier Daniel Johnson said, this government will lead us directly to social chaos. Canadians will not be fooled.

What distinguishes this government from the previous Conservative government? Nothing, except maybe the colour of its program. It is a centralizing government, a government which does not hesitate to maintain duplication and overlappings; a government which continues to violate areas of provincial jurisdictions by unilaterally occupying the whole field. Where is the transparency? Can you not see a pattern between the recent squabbles between Ottawa and Quebec City regarding manpower training, the youth corps program, federal subsidies for education, social programs reform, drug patents, the telephone industry and cable TV? All these issues demonstrate the centralizing actions of Ottawa. Where is the transparency?

As regards Bill C–22, again I will refer to what Greg Weston, a journalist with the *Ottawa Citizen*, wrote in his column on March 9. Mr. Weston wrote:

> The Grits have managed the remarkable feat of turning a highly suspicious and secretive Tory deal into a highly suspicious and secretive Liberal cancellation process—a secret inquiry, followed by the current secret compensation negotiations, which may ultimately lead to a huge government cheque with a secret invoice.

This sums it up quite well. It seems obvious to me that section 10(1) opens the door to arbitrary measures and that the power given to the minister to decide on the payment of a compensation is a discretionary power which this government should not use if it really wants to govern with a degree of transparency and credibility. Indeed, this Liberal government is not immune to patronage, as you can see when you take a quick look at those closely or remotely involved in this scandal. This is why we ask that a commission of public inquiry be set up.

The circumstances around the hasty signing of the contract for the redevelopment of Pearson Airport are very disturbing, but what is even more disturbing is the attitude of this government, which was also in a hurry to designate a former Liberal minister, Mr. Bob Nixon, to conduct a private investigation.

In the awarding of this contract, what was the role of Senator Leo Kolber, former member of the board of directors of Claridge Properties Inc., a group that has close links with the Liberal Party of Canada, and of Herb Metcalfe, a Liberal lobbyist with the Capital Hill group, who represented Claridge Properties and was a former organizer for the present Prime Minister? What was the role of Ramsey Withers, a Liberal lobbyist whose ties with the present Prime Minister are known and who was Deputy Minister of Transport during the bidding process on Terminal 3 at Pearson Airport?

What was the role of Ray Hession, former Deputy Minister of Industry and senior official with Supply and Services, the department awarding the contracts? Mr. Hession was president of Paxport Inc. and hired a battery of lobbyists, including Bill Neville, closely linked to Mr. Mulroney, Mr. Clark and Mrs. Campbell; Mr. Hugh Riopelle, former PR man and representative for Air Canada, who had access to Mr. Don Mazankowski, a leading figure in the Mulroney cabinet; Mr. John Legate, a friend of Michael Wilson, and so forth. What a mess.

Was an agreement reached by the present Prime Minister and Mr. Charles Bronfman, owner of Claridge Properties and principal partner in the Pearson Development Corporation, at that notorious $1,000 a plate dinner among friends during the election campaign? Only investigators without links to current and past governments would be able to force the people involved come clean, not a timid in–house inquiry, held privately, without any judicial powers.

Mr. Nixon himself observed that the role of lobbyists in this deal went beyond permissible norms. A time frame of 90 days for bidding proposals is unusually short. I may recall that this was a very long term contract—57 years—and a very complex one, which was to prevent several groups from submitting a valid proposal. Of course, Claridge and Paxport, already involved in the management of the airport, were able to submit tenders which, by the way, were the only ones accepted. A single corporation was to control all three terminals, despite the fact that the government of the time claimed that one of the criteria

in the privatization of terminals 1 and 2 was competition. We can see now that a monopoly was in the cards.

(1220)

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the list of irregularities is very long, and this is why we are requesting a public inquiry, an inquiry that the Liberals stubbornly refuse. The present Liberal government, claiming openness, wants to cancel the deal. But it keeps a discretionary power, in section 10, to compensate, «if the Minister considers it appropriate», certain friends of the party or contributors who may have been implicated in this scandal. As the leader of the opposition was saying, ''this particular case is overrun by lobbyists. It is full of people wheeling and dealing in the corridors of power with the two big parties—''

At the present time, Mr. Bob Wright, a good friend of our Prime Minister, is negotiating strenuously and in private too, in order to determine the amount of compensation to be given to strangers.

In fact, we are shown only the tip of the iceberg and we are asked, a bit too lightly, to forget the rest in order to save money.

The Liberal member for York South—Weston was saying in this House, on Tuesday, that compensations to the Pearson Development Corporation could reach almost $200 million.

Mr. Bronfman and the conglomerate he heads, friends of the Liberal Party, have already submitted claims for $30 to $35 million for non–refundable expenses. That's on top of tax deductions they will be able to claim from Revenue Canada, thus hitting the taxpayer once again.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay was saying in this House:

> To be exclusive in looking at compensation for out–of–pocket expenses for Pearson Development Corporation alone is not the right thing to do. We should take in the whole gamut of all those who spent considerable time and expense in developing proposals.

And this, in spite of the fact that these people knew exactly what they were doing since the present Prime Minister had announced that he would cancel the contract.

The facts revealed by a royal commission would allow the government to pass laws to prevent such blatant patronage to happen again. I am asking you: What would be cheaper, holding a public inquiry, not a review and private negotiations, or paying financial compensation to individuals who finance Canadian political parties?

We could talk about political party financing now, but we will do that later. The member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon claims that a royal commission would be too expensive and a waste of time to learn something we already know. Our colleagues opposite may know more about this contract than we do.

As Mr. Nixon himself said in his report:

> Failure to make public the full identity of the participants in this agreement and other salient terms of the contract inevitably raises public suspicion. Where the Government of Canada proposes to privatize a public asset, in my opinion, transparency should be the order of the day.

And Mr. Nixon added:

> My review has left me with but one conclusion. To leave in place an inadequate contract, arrived at with such a flawed process and under the shadow of possible political manipulation, is unacceptable.

After such a statement, it cannot be justified to compensate people or companies who tried to take advantage of such flaws.

Can we put a price on government's transparency and credibility? Is it a waste of time to try to maintain such democratic values?

With this in mind, we call for a public inquiry and for the government to get right to the bottom of these sad events.

We vigorously denounce this attempt and this bill.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I would be sorry indeed if I did not take this opportunity to speak on this bill which shows the true face of the members opposite. As you may recall, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to cancel this deal and to make the political process more transparent. Most likely he was swept up in the media frenzy in the dying days of the campaign and got a little carried away.

(1225)

His friends, those same friends who shell out $1,000 a plate for the opportunity to gain his ear, were quick to remind him: ''Careful, we incurred expenses in connection with this deal''. Today, we have a more complete picture and these individuals will receive compensation. This bill is to be passed here in Parliament, and rather quickly. Fortunately, some of us are keeping our eyes open and are criticizing the government's actions loud and clear.

The aim of the bill is twofold. First, it would cancel the deal which is full of irregularities. This is a positive development. Second, however, it would provide compensation, again by way of a closed process, to certain parties. This is far less positive.

From the very moment it came to power, this government made transparency one of its major objectives. It has also made a number of decisions, such as cancelling the helicopter contract and the Pearson airport deal and launching the infrastructure program. Three decisions, and then almost nothing, with the exception of a budget, and a bad budget at that. Since then, it has simply gone about its day to day business. The government seemed to have scored well on these three issues, but now, there is some question about its performance on the airport deal. It is

highly doubtful that the government should be given a passing grade in this case.

It bothers me to hear so much talk about transparency. It has become such a major issue that I would not be surprised to see Liberal members walking around with bottles of Mr. Clean. Yet, when time comes to practice what they preach, all is forgotten. All of a sudden, members stop talking. There is no real desire to shed light on this issue, to examine the root of the problem and to avoid a recurrence in the future. No, now that they are in power, they must not let the public in on their plans for the future.

This is terrible. If we look at the whole privatization process and at the companies involved, that is Paxport and Claridge, and if we look at who is behind these companies—and I will not bother to give you a complete rundown since my colleagues have already done that—the whole spectacle is rather sordid indeed. All these people with very close ties to the federal government used their influence, going as far as having people shifted around, to make sure they achieved their ends.

Many of these people are still alive and not too far removed from the system, still today. How can this government be trusted when many of the people involved are their friends and are still around, and when they refuse to institute an inquiry which would publicly condemn these people who can be linked to their political party?

That is not a possible course of action; it would be far too dangerous. Mr. Nixon, in the very short time he was given to investigate the matter, attempted to shed some light on this, enough anyway to tell us that this contract should indeed be cancelled. This was obvious just from reading a few good articles published in the dying days of the election campaign and around the main events. We knew then that something was wrong with the announcement of a contract to privatize the airport.

During the election campaign, it had been held out that only friends of the Convervative government were involved and the previous government was to be condemned, on this score. Now, we find out —but it had been discovered earlier— that plenty of Liberals are also involved. As the financial stakes rise, the political convictions of these people shrink. They will team up with anybody, whatever the cost.

The bill before us today contains a most interesting provision. It will allow those who are to be compensated to be targeted very specifically, ensuring that only friends get compensated. That is even better. What a great political tool.

This is the sort of attitude that deeply disheartens the public. It generated tremendous cynicism for politicians, for the administration of public funds. Here we have the perfect occasion to shed light on a major matter where certain people have used their influence, where lobbying has been too intensive and too influential in particular. Yet, we have to wait. What for? I wonder.

There are a number of quotes from the famous red book that I would like to bring up, because this government had told us it was going to control the activities of lobbyists when it would come to power. Apparently some things take much longer than others, but I will quote this:

> We will develop a Code of Conduct for Public Officials to guide Cabinet ministers, members of Parliament, senators, political staff, and public servants in their dealings with lobbyists.

It goes on to say:

> We will appoint an independent Ethics Counsellor to advise both public officials and lobbyists in the application of the Code of Conduct. The Ethics Counsellor will be appointed after consultation with the leaders of all parties in the House of Commons.

(1230)

At that time, they were probably far from thinking that the Leader of the Official Opposition would be a member of the Bloc Quebecois. They may find this a bit unsettling. But they had good intentions. Now that they are in office, it is a different matter. They were in opposition for a long time. They had enough time to get ready. A party in opposition since 1984 would have had the time to put a lot of things on the table. People would appreciate it. Instead, they are trying to scare lobbyists into being very nice to the current government. The coffers must be filling up quickly. We should avoid this legislation at all costs or take the time to ensure it will have as little effect as possible.

What is most appalling in the bill before us is clause 9 and especially clause 10. Clause 9 states that there will be no compensation for the parties involved. In short, the main purpose of Clauses 1 through 8 is to ensure that the government will not be sued. Clause 9 bars any compensation—perhaps the government hopes that people will get discouraged after reading it. Clause 10 provides for ''the approval of the governor in council'' so the minister may allow some compensation but not for lobbyists' fees. It is the least that can be done as these fees are already tax deductible. If they had to be compensated in some other way besides, it need have cost the government nothing. These people see paying lobbyists as an investment, so they have to pay the price somewhere.

We are not at all reassured by knowing that the Cabinet will have the power to do that in secrecy. To pay how much compensation? Who knows? Who will know? Will we know one day? That remains to be seen. For the sake of openness, this should be elucidated. In addition, if compensation is to be paid, people should have access to this information much more easily.

At least some parliamentarians should be able to deal with it. But no, openness will come later.

Before concluding—my colleague wants me to go quickly—I would not want to overlook one of the real sources of the present problem, namely the financing of political parties. I exclude our party because we are subject to much stricter constraints. But when you are financed by people who have very big corporate interests, when you agree to be financed by these corporations and it is even one of your biggest sources of funding, you are subject to that pressure. People who back political parties have some control.

Personally, I much prefer to have a base of party members making small donations and exercising that power instead of business people who make large donations and try to get very close to the government with those gifts. I think that is a constraint from which the government should free itself. If it is serious when it talks about openness, it has a model right at hand. Quebec already has legislation which, although it may not be totally perfect, is much better than what we have here and it could be used as a basis. But no, they refuse to look at it. Why? Because now that they are in power, they want to benefit from it. They have nine lean years to make up for now. They want to make a little hay. Perhaps later they will think of doing something to please the public, but nothing substantial. In conclusion, if there is one thing I would want to give Canadians before leaving the federal system, it is a law on political party financing that would make elected representatives much closer to the people in a much more open system—a real reform, this time.

(1235)

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, Bill C–22, the subject of today's debate, is a rather particular piece of legislation. This bill deals with agreements arising out of the request for proposals for the terminal redevelopment project at Lester B. Pearson Airport, and the negotiations concerning that project.

The bill states that these agreements have not come into force and have no legal effect. Moreover, it provides that no action or other proceeding may be instituted against Her Majesty in relation to these agreements.

This is an extremely serious piece of legislation. The previous government concluded a contract with some corporations, and this government is trying to renege on that deal by pretending that it never took place.

Why is that? Later on I will show how the process was flawed in a number of ways and that indeed the government should not go ahead with this contract.

The bill also authorizes the minister, with the approval of the governor in council, to enter into agreements to provide for the payment of amounts in connection with the coming into force of that act. This second part seems to be a convenient provision to ensure that parties which may have been prejudiced can be adequately compensated following the cancellation of the contract.

However, while it may seem appropriate to do so, the wording of the provision makes you wonder, and so do some connections which can be made between various events. I will attempt to show that, because of these events which may leave public opinion with a bitter taste, it is important to look more thoroughly at what went on before the agreements were negotiated and concluded, as well as to what is going on now.

To put the legislation in its proper context, clause 3 provides that the agreements which have been concluded:

> — are hereby declared not to have come into force and to have no legal effect.

Moreover, clause 4 says:

> 4. For greater certainty, all undertakings, obligations, liabilities, estates, rights, titles and interests arising out of the agreements are hereby declared not to have come into existence.

As for clause 9, it provides that:

> 9. No one is entitled to any compensation from Her Majesty in connection with the coming into force of this Act.

So far so good. However, everything is spoiled by clause 10 which reads:

> 10.(1) If the Minister considers it appropriate to do so, —if he considers it appropriate– –Minister may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into agreements on behalf of Her Majesty to provide for the payment of such amounts as the Minister considers appropriate in connection with the coming into force of this Act, subject to the terms and conditions that the Minister considers appropriate.

I certainly do not question the good judgment of the minister or the governor in council. However, I would like to refer to a few excerpts from Mr. Robert Nixon's report, who was appointed last October 28 by the current Prime Minister to look into this transaction. Mr. Nixon's report was submitted a month later, on November 29. What does this report tell us? To quote Mr. Nixon:

> Prior to the conclusion of the legal agreement the Leader of the Opposition (now the Prime Minister) indicated clearly that parties proceeding to conclude this transaction did so at their own risk and that a new government would not hesitate to pass legislation to block the privatization of Terminals 1 and 2 if the transaction was not in the public interest.

(1240)

Mr. Nixon's report goes on to say: ''On October, 7, 1993, the chief negotiator for the Government of Canada received his written direction indicating that it was the explicit instruction of the Prime Minister that the transaction be concluded on that very same day. On October 7, 1993, therefore, the legal agreement to privatize and redevelop terminals 1 and 2 was made''.

It was a very substantial agreement. In fact, when we talk about terminals 1 and 2, we are talking about a major air transportation hub in this country. To quote the Nixon report:

> According to a 1987 Transport Canada study, Pearson has a $4 billion direct economic impact on the economy of the province of Ontario and was directly and indirectly responsible for over 56,000 Ontario jobs. It is by any estimation more than the sum of its parts or the total of its assets and liabilities.

This is a contract which has an enormous impact on a region's economy, by letting private interests manage an air terminal of that size, while for many years, airports near nonheal have been under–used. In Central Canada we have created a powerful magnet for air traffic that can draw traffic away from the country's other major airports, especially those near Montreal.

And how many years would this contract be in effect? I am still quoting Mr. Nixon: ''Terminal 3 will be privately leased and operated for''—I was going to say at least 25 years, but no, Mr. Speaker—'' a further 57 years''. Not only our own generation and the next, but our children's children would have suffered as a result of this agreement. There would be fewer objections if the usual procedures had been followed. Again, I quote from Mr. Nixon's report: ''The RFP having as it did only a single stage''— specifications with a single stage are not only unusual, Mr. Speaker, but also extremely disturbing—''and requiring proponents to engage in project definition as well as proposal submission and, all within a 90 day time frame''.

I used to be in business, and I received government calls for tenders, and believe me, it is quite a job to read all the specifications. There are pages and pages of the stuff, and you have to read them carefully. And then, preparing a bid is also a complex undertaking. The primary concern is, of course, to make a bid that will not bankrupt the company. The price should be right, but you still have to make a profit, because if you do not make a profit, you cannot deliver. So the first thing is to make a bid at the right price and be able to make a profit.

Second, you have to make sure that your bid will be competitive with those of the other parties who are bidding, so the price has to be fine tuned to give you a good chance to get your bid accepted and win the contract.

(1245)

You see, Mr. Speaker, when you know that there are only 90 days for something that complex, you can assume that there will not be much competition and, consequently, the price is probably not the best the public could have had. I quote Mr. Nixon again: ''In summary, it is my opinion that the process to privatize and redevelop Terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson fell far short of maximizing the public interest''.

All that happened under the Conservative government. Having the Liberal government cancel the deal is a good thing. However, the clause I was mentioning a moment ago, which will allow the minister to consider compensation when appropriate, is more troublesome, particularly knowing that major actors in this Pearson deal have connections with the Liberal Party.

We could mention Claridge Properties, a company belonging to Mr. Bronfman; we could mention Mr. Colbert, from Claridge, who gave a dinner for Mr. Bronfman and the Prime Minister at a $1000 a plate. I am not questioning the honesty of members and ministers of the Liberal Party, what I am saying is that there is an appearance of conflict and the only way to shed light on this affair and dispel any doubt in the eyes of the people of Canada and Quebec, is to have the public inquiry that the Bloc Quebecois and I are requesting.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, this whole deal smacks of political manoeuvring and, as the Leader of the Official Opposition said, only a royal commission will get to the bottom of it once and for all.

People in Canada, and especially in Metropolitan Toronto, have the right to know the truth and to be assured that there will be no undue compensation for these contracts which seemed to favour the friends—friends in the broader sense of the word—of the parties which succeeded each other at the helm of the country.

Mr. Speaker, if the Official Opposition, the Bloc Quebecois, is asking for a royal commission, it is not to delay the work which is to take place at both airports because—let me tell you— Metropolitan Montreal knows only too well the devastating effects of uncertainty about airport development.

Allow me to highlight the devastating effects of the development of what became the two Montreal airports. I will stress how important it will be for Transport Canada and then for the Toronto Airport Authority to take over and redevelop Toronto airport because, otherwise, any future expansion at other airports, including Montreal, will be seriously limited.

But, let me remind the House that when it comes to airports, long term forecasting is very dicey. In the mid–sixties, the federal government decided to build a second airport in Montreal, Mirabel airport.

In 1967, it was projected that, by 1985, passenger traffic would be 14 million. In reality, things turned out quite differently.

In 1985, passenger traffic in both Dorval and Mirabel was only 7 million, half of what was originally expected.

(1250)

We know how important an adequate airport infrastructure is for the development of a region. Why? Because it is the entrance

point for investors and the departure point of human and material resources going abroad. It is a considerable economic lever.

My colleague mentioned the 1987 Transport Canada study on Pearson airport which states that the direct economic impact of the airport on the province is in the order of $4 billion—that was in 1987—and that Pearson accounts directly or indirectly for 56,000 jobs. On the other hand, when adding both direct and indirect jobs and induced ones, the total number in Montreal is 48,500. Economic development involving airports stems from the carriage not only of cargo but also of passengers.

I would like to point out that Toronto had a narrow escape when the federal government decided Toronto also should have two airports at a respectable distance from one another. The second one was to be located in Pickering, but the people of Pickering protested and managed to convince the authorities not to develop this second location, but to develop a second terminal at Pearson instead—a third one was added later on, as we know—on a site easier to integrate.

Toronto had a narrow escape, but Montreal was not so lucky. In spite of all our protestations—and as we know, farming was precluded for many years on some of the best arable land in the region—two separate airports were built in Montreal, airports that together, did not achieve together the results that had been projected for just one previously. The federal government paid no attention to the wishes of the people or the airlines. It must be noted however that had rapid, direct service been provided between the two airports, things might have turned out differently. In 1975, a high–speed link had been announced; it was to cost $400 million, but the project never got off the ground.

For any number of reasons, the airport in Toronto flourished and today, it is on the way to becoming a hub airport, ''hub'' being, as I understand, shoptalk for a traffic exchange point, a place that both companies and passengers are interested in.

Because Montreal's two airports are poorly connected, from 1969 to 1983, the gap between Montreal and Toronto increased from 27 per cent to 116 per cent in terms of passenger carriage. That is very substantial. The adverse effects of inefficiency in Montreal impacted not only the development of the airport, but also economic development. Worse yet, the federal government delayed handing over to the municipalities, the community, in Montreal the management of their airport. It is imperative that in Toronto, the municipalities, the community, rapidly assume the management of the airports.

(1255)

Just think that provided sufficient investments were made by the federal government both in Toronto and in Montreal, we could have two hubs: one in Toronto, with its own potential, and one in Montreal, as a point of entry for the Eastern part of the country.

I therefore conclude that we are calling for a royal commission of inquiry not because we want to slow things down—because we are all aware of the effects of uncertainty on economic development—but because we believe it is absolutely imperative that the manoeuvring surrounding the development of both terminals, as well as that of the third one, be dissolved, reversed and the only way this can be done, in our view, is not by striking a deal behind closed doors, but through a royal commission of inquiry.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), I have been requested by the chief opposition whip to defer the division until a later time.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 45(5)(a), the division on the question now before the House stands deferred until 3 p.m. tomorrow, at which time the bells to call in the members will be sounded for not more than 15 minutes.

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent, since tomorrow is an opposition day, that for however long the bells sound at 3 p.m. tomorrow, this time be added to the debate on the opposition motion, so that opposition parties are not penalized.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

SAHTU DENE AND METIS LAND CLAIM SETTLEMENT ACT

The House resumed from April 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C–16, an act to approve, give effect to and declare valid an agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada and the Dene of Colville Lake, Déline, Fort Good Hope and Fort Norman and the Metis of Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and Norman Wells, as represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council, and to make related amendments to another act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the debate last ended, the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin had six minutes remaining for debate. I do not think the hon. member is here. Accordingly the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Skeena on debate.

(1300)

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition to Bill C–16, otherwise known as the Sahtu Dene and Metis comprehensive land claim agreement. Before I begin debating the terms of the agreement, I want to make an observation about the big media establishment in the country that I think badly needs to be said.

The debate on Bill C–16 began on Monday last week, April 25, with members on this side of the House speaking openly and honestly about their concerns with the agreement. This marks a precedent, the first time the old style tradition of the old line political parties not debating such issues publicly being broken.

This is because Reformers believe that we must not be afraid to talk honestly about native self–government and land claims. We cannot expect to achieve workable solutions to the challenges we face as a nation unless we engage in such debate.

Following the debate on Monday, I eagerly scanned the newspapers and watched television news broadcasts to see how the media treated this issue. Do you know what I discovered, Mr. Speaker? The press totally ignored the issue. I could not find any coverage on Bill C–16 anywhere.

Admittedly many bills pass through the House that are not very interesting or newsworthy, but this is surely not the case with Bill C–16 which will convey benefits of an enormous piece of land 50 times the size of Prince Edward Island, almost one–third the size of British Columbia, to less than 1,800 aboriginals for all time.

One would think that with all the remaining land claims yet outstanding the press would be somewhat interested in what is going on here. I know the people in my riding are and I am sure the people in British Columbia and all of Canada are. How is that an MP's expense account or the theatrics of question period can remain front page news for days and yet when we see an issue of such profound importance to all Canadians, aboriginal and non–aboriginal alike, being debated the media is asleep at the switch?

I have concluded that it is either indifference born out of laziness or a tacit agreement not to provide serious coverage on issues which challenge the Liberal left agenda that has been wholeheartedly adopted and supported by a bunch of the big media in the country.

Having said that, I would like to discuss the elements of the bill which I cannot support. As has already been pointed by many of my Reform colleagues, the Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement constitutes a massive conveyance of land and benefits to a group of less than 1,800 people, half of them children.

There is not likely to be much protest coming from non–aboriginals in the land claim area because there are so few of them. Yet the land in question is important to all Canadians. It has the potential to generate an enormous amount of wealth, jobs and tax revenue in the future. That potential will be seriously affected by this agreement.

One cannot help but be struck with the magnitude of the land transfer. Over 42 square kilometres for every adult will be conveyed fee simple. The vast majority of Canadians meanwhile own only their own property, the property that their house is on, and spend most of their working lives paying off mortgages so that hopefully they can own their land fee simple in their retirement years.

According to Statistics Canada's 1991 census, 21.5 million adults live in Canada today. If each one of these adult Canadians were to be granted 42 square kilometres of land by the government one would require a land mass of approximately one billion square kilometres to meet that conveyance.

Given that the actual total land mass of Canada is just over nine million square kilometres one would need therefore an area more than 100 times the size of Canada's total land mass to meet that obligation.

In a world which continues to experience significant population growth and where population density in many countries is measured in hundreds of human beings per each square kilometre it is impossible to reconcile this massive land grant.

I ask aboriginal people to consider this very carefully. Canada's population continues to grow. We continue to accept immigrants and refugees from all over the world to come and make their home here. While we may disagree with the current immigration levels, all Canadians and all members of the House embrace this. Immigration provides benefits not only for the newcomers to Canada but to the people already living here, much like the European migration to North America brought benefits to this land and to its original aboriginal inhabitants many years ago.

(1305)

Admittedly colonization created much hardship and injustice for native Indians of the day as well and we recognize that as an inescapable part of our history. When I consider the land aspect of this agreement, I must conclude that at best it is 18th century thinking at a time when we are approaching the end of the 20th century.

In addition to the outright transfer of over 40,000 square kilometres of land fee simple, the federal government will pay out approximately $130 million over the next 15 years to the Sahtu Tribal Council. This equates to more than $130,000 for each adult covered under the agreement.

Again, to put this into perspective, if every adult Canadian was given the same amount of money, the government would need more than $3 trillion in the bank to write out the cheques. Three trillion dollars is more than four times Canada's total debt of $700 billion which includes federal, provincial and municipal government debt.

Furthermore, even after such a massive transfer of land and cash nothing in the agreement affects the ability of the Sahtu Dene and Metis to receive existing and future benefits under aboriginal programs. In discussions with my constituents on the land claims question, I hear a diverse range of opinions on how to resolve the issue.

The one consistent theme running through all of this is finality. People want assurance that the resolution of the land claims will entail a systematic reduction and phasing out of taxpayer funded aboriginal programs delivered by the government. This agreement does not achieve this.

I would now like to talk about the beneficiaries of the $130 million to be paid out to the Sahtu Tribal Council. Only some $3,500 will be given to individuals as one–time grants. Virtually all the benefits conferred on the Sahtu Dene and Metis under this agreement will be controlled by Indian leaders rather than distributed to individuals.

All governments, including this one, are notoriously bad managers of wealth and resources. I do not believe a majority of Canadians have any doubts about that whatsoever. If I were a rank and file Sahtu Dene or Metis, I would far prefer that I received a direct personal benefit rather than having money and land given over to the control of a tribal council.

I receive entreaties on an ongoing basis from native people living on reserves within my riding telling me of the injustices they receive at the hands of their leaders. They tell me of nepotism where band jobs and other perks go to relatives and friends of native leaders while others are shut out.

This is typically the way government functions. Look at the federal government's behaviour, if members need any convincing. It is for these reasons that I believe in the value and dignity of the individual over the collective regardless of what collective we are talking about. I am a strong advocate for settlements government to individual rather than government to government.

Incidentally I believe the reason a majority of natives voted against the Charlottetown accord is that the rank and file individuals living in aboriginal communities recognize that self–government was not necessarily in their interest but rather the narrow interests of the Indian leaders. They know that power consolidated into the hands of a few people is rarely a good thing. It has not been good for Canada in the case of our federal governments or the provincial governments. At a time when our national institutions are struggling to become more populous, to break down the barriers of arrogant, political elitism, natives in Canada are not interested in going in the other direction.

Therefore before I can support any legislation for self–government or land claim resolutions, I want to see the affected aboriginal people have an opportunity to decide by referendum whether they want self–government, and in the resolution of land claims, whether they want money and land turned over to themselves as individuals or to the band leaders.

My deepest concern over the bill is the precedent being set for future land claim negotiations. The Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement along with the Nunavut and other agreements entered into recently up north are no doubt being carefully studied by aboriginals in the rest of Canada, particularly in British Columbia.

There are now 38 land claims registered in B.C. with more to follow. The first B.C. land claim to be accepted by the federal government for negotiation is the Nisga'a claim which is within my riding of Skeena. Negotiations have been under way for some time behind closed doors and therefore in a forum where my constituents have no information as to what is on the table in terms of land and resources. When my constituents express their deep concern about being shut out of the process, they are patted condescendingly on the head and told by government officials not to worry, that their best interests are being looked out for. These are largely the same government officials who patted us on the head and told us that the Charlottetown accord was good for us and we should vote for it.

(1310)

We can therefore understand why people in my riding are very doubtful that their interests are being protected. The Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement will only serve to heighten their concerns.

If the people of Canada had not been given an opportunity to vote on the Charlottetown accord in a referendum we would

have had it imposed on us even though a majority of Canadians and almost 70 per cent of British Columbians found it unacceptable.

It is imperative that the people in Skeena receive an opportunity to vote on a proposed land claims settlement within the riding to ensure that the settlement agreement is not imposed from the top down. In saying that, let me reassure Indian people who may be listening that Canadians are very fair minded and I am sure that any just and equitable settlement proposed will be supported.

I would like to read from a letter I have recently sent to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which encapsulates the concerns of my constituents with respect to land claims:

> Dear Minister:
>
> As we are both aware, negotiations between the Nisga'a people of North West British Columbia, the Federal Government and the Province of B.C. are ongoing and have been for some time in an attempt to resolve the outstanding Nisga'a land claim.
>
> The land claimed by the Nisga'a falls within my constituency of Skeena and consequently is of great concern to all people living in the riding. I have received numerous phone calls, letters, and personal entreaties from constituents who are fearful of what a land claim resolution might mean for them.
>
> Given that the foundation of our economy in Skeena rests squarely on resource industries, fishing, forestry, and mining, and understanding that these resources are inextricably linked to the land base, this same land which is being claimed by natives, it is easy to see why people are concerned.
>
> These ongoing land claim negotiations are taking place behind closed doors, out of the public eye, and this heightens concern, worry, and uncertainty.
>
> I wrote to you earlier this spring on behalf of Andy Burton, Mayor of Stewart, asking that you allow a representative of this community to be appointed to the negotiating team. This request was denied.
>
> My purpose in writing today is to request detailed, specific information which may help to re–assure my constituents.
>
> 1. What is the timetable for settlement of the Nisga'a land claim?
>
> 2. When do you expect to have an agreement in principle signed?
>
> 3. Will every Nisga'a have the right, as an individual to vote to accept or reject the agreement?
>
> 4. Will members of the Nisga'a band have the option of receiving benefits conferred under the agreement on a personal basis, that is, directly from the Government rather than to the Band Council on his/her behalf?
>
> 5. Will non–Natives in the Land Claim area have the right, as individuals, to vote to accept or reject the agreement?
>
> 6. Has your department assessed potential socio–economic impacts of a land claim settlement on surrounding non–Native communities? If so, could you provide these to me and if not will you commit to do so before signing any agreement?
>
> 7. Have you considered the potential cumulative effect that over 40 land claims could have on the B.C. economy?
>
> 8. Considering that the Nisga'a land claim is the First claim in B.C. to be negotiated and will set the floor and not the ceiling for benefits and land conveyance, will you commit to a detailed study of the above mentioned potential cumulative effect?
>
> 9. Have you considered the tax base generated by the resource industries in the claim area which provides direct benefits to all Canadians, and how this base may be affected by land claim settlements?
>
> 10. Do you intend to provide fair compensation to non–Nisga'a people who are economically injured or displaced as the result of land claim settlements? If so, can you provide details of your policy on compensation? I am not just referring to fishermen, forestry workers or miners, but also the thousands of retail, commercial, and service jobs that exist because of these industries.
>
> 11. Will regulations in place to protect and enhance renewable resources apply to resources conveyed to the Nisga'a people?
>
> Will the Nisga'a people be entitled to ship unprocessed round logs for export? If so, what percentage of their timber is subject to this practice?
>
> Mr. Minister, these are serious questions which my constituents need and deserve answers to and I trust that you will respond in a forthright and detailed manner to each one.

(1315)

What I am getting at with this letter is the fact that the land claim issue is not just about aboriginal people. It is about all of us and how we will continue to function as a society both economically and politically. At the end of the day we all want and need essentially the same things regardless of our linguistic, cultural or ethnic backgrounds. We want an opportunity to live and work in a free country and within an economy that provides decent food, shelter, clothing and education for our children and allows us to enjoy the benefits of modern technology to enhance our lifestyles.

The Sahtu Dene and Metis land claim agreement is not an agreement which considers the long term interests of all Canadians, including the aboriginal peoples involved. It serves to heighten the deep concern my constituents have with the process of land claim resolutions.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in a debate that is historic and I believe precedent setting.

First, it is my belief the Liberals will pass Bill C–16 using their majority regardless of what it might mean to future generations of Canadians.

Second, my colleagues and I want to register our opposition. We believe that Bill C–16 will not create a better Canada for the Sahtu Dene and Metis or for other Canadians. It does not provide for future harmonious relationships among Canadians. My purpose this afternoon is to show why I believe this agreement will not achieve what it was designed to achieve.

The agreement will have difficulty meeting its first objective. The first objective states ''to provide for the certainty of rights

to ownership and use of land and resources''. It is clear that the intent of this objective is to provide certainty regarding the right of ownership to Sahtu Dene and Metis, called participants in the text of the agreement. Let us examine these rights.

It is for a very small group comprising 153 Metis, 829 Dene and 773 children for a total of 1,755 persons, slightly less than 2,000. More persons can be added to the Sahtu community in the future if the individuals are residents of the settlement area, have aboriginal ancestry and are accepted by a Sahtu community at any time in the future.

Acceptance is not defined in the agreement except that it requires a sponsor who is a participant and following that is approved by a process to be determined by the participants in the Sahtu community concerned.

What are some of the implications here? The agreement, based on the above, relates to a known group of people today. There is no clear definition of who will be affected in the future, except we know it could be any person who is sponsored by a process as yet unknown, determined by the community and solely by the community involved, so that those kinds of people will participate in the future from the benefits of this agreement. Thus it is possible that the beneficiaries of this agreement may be quite different from those with whom the agreement was reached in the first place.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development suggests that new participants will be few and therefore do not be concerned. Perhaps, but consider growing wealth and growing power as a result of the exploration and development of natural resources, gems, the need for water and the access to it. In such a case is it not reasonable to expect that more and more people would want to become participants? The pressure would be on to become participants in a Sahtu community.

(1320)

Let us examine some of the details of the land ownership that is being talked about. There are three kinds of ownership.

There is the ownership of the settlement area which covers 280,000 square kilometres which is the equivalent of 108,200 square miles or 108,200 sections of land. That is 54 sections per participant if you use 2,000 as the number for easy figuring. That represents slightly less than one–third of the province of B.C. as my hon. colleague has just mentioned. It contains Great Bear Lake, Horton Lake, Colville Lake and a major section of the Mackenzie River valley.

The second kind of land ownership is the outright fee simple title to 41,437 square kilometres which is equivalent to 16,000 square miles or about eight sections of land per participant. To put that into acres, it is 5,120 acres.

Then there is the third kind of land ownership and that is municipal land. There are two kinds of municipal land: land which is within municipal boundaries and that which is outside municipal boundaries.

What is significant about all of this? The land outside municipal boundaries must be held by one or more Sahtu organizations. I really want to underline the phrase ''shall not be conveyed to a person'', but the other part is that land inside a municipal boundary may be conveyed to a person. What are the implications of this?

Sahtu land may not be mortgaged or given as security. Sahtu lands when conveyed to a person are no longer Sahtu lands. What is the observation then? Since municipal Sahtu lands may be conveyed to individuals and upon so doing cease to be Sahtu lands, they can now be mortgaged and given as security.

It does not require a great leap of logic to recognize that over time what are described as Sahtu lands within municipal boundaries may indeed be owned by persons who are not Sahtu. Preposterous, you say. All we need to do is look at what is happening and what has happened in other parts of Canada.

At this moment certain financial institutions in Canada have agreed with a certain Indian band to issue mortgages on residential development on reservation lands. If it has happened once, chances are it can happen again. Indeed chances are that it will happen again. That is particularly true if huge profits appear likely.

A further example consists of the problems surrounding certificates of ownership. These are certificates of ownership of Indian reservation land by natives on those reserves having such provisions.

In years past it is my understanding that has not been the Indian way. No individual shall own reservation land, yet it happened. They said: ''But it is not selfish in the way the land is transferred''. It is my observation that it is clearly known these transfers are fraught with delays, inaccuracies and transfers from one person to another. In some cases they have even been proven to be fraudulent. Will it happen here? I do not know and neither does this government. However the provision to allow it to happen is there. Therefore the stated objective to provide certainty and clarity of rights to ownership and use of land resources is anything but providing certainty of ownership by Sahtu Dene and Metis.

Let us look a little closer at the municipal boundaries. Section 23.2.1 delineates the boundaries of municipal lands. The agreement provides that these boundaries may be changed. The provisions are particularly relevant. They state in part:

> Where there is any change to the extent or location of Sahtu municipal lands pursuant to this agreement, schedules XV and XVI shall be amended to reflect this change and such changes—

I quote and directly underline:

—shall not be considered to be an amendment to the agreement.

Schedules XV and XVI describe the Sahtu municipal lands, schedule XV the surveyed lands and schedule XVI the unsurveyed municipal lands.

This list of municipal lands includes Déline, Fort Norman, Norman Wells, Colville Lake and Fort Good Hope. These names are significant to anyone associated with oil and gas and natural resources exploration.

(1325)

It is my contention that not nearly adequate attention has been given to the possible future development in this region of Canada, particularly in reference to the implications of the provisions found in this agreement on such future developments in the region.

I believe that while the agreement clarifies some matters, it confuses others.

This agreement also is entrenched in the Constitution. The agreement states very clearly: ''This treaty, which when given effect by Parliament in settlement legislation''—and that would be Bill C–16—''will be recognized as a land claims agreement under the Constitution Act, 1982''.

That means once this agreement has been given effect it can only be amended by resorting to the appropriate part of the amending formula set out in the Constitution Act, 1982. There are six different ways of amending the Constitution. It brings into question which amending formula would apply. According to one constitutional expert:

> When the amending formula was designed, no thought was given to devising a formula for amending a constitutionalized land claim agreement between an Indian band and the federal Government of Canada. Section 43 of the amending formula comes closest in that it deals with a constitutional change that affects only one province. In those circumstances an amendment is brought about by resolutions of the Parliament of Canada and the legislature of the particular province involved. But this provision does not really fit either because the Sahtu Dene and Metis collectively is simply not a province. Nor do the territories qualify as provinces for the purposes of the amending formula.
>
> The result of all this may well be that resort might have to be made to section 41 which is described as the general amending formula. If a given amendment does not come within the more specific parts of the amending formula—

I suggest that is probably the case here.

> —then section 41 is the only amending formula that would be available in this case. The congruity of that would be that section 41 not only requires a resolution of Parliament but also a resolution of at least seven provincial legislatures. This is inappropriate in the circumstances because the provinces are of course not involved or directly affected by this land claim agreement. Nonetheless, proper constitutional amendment permits no shortcuts or extemporaneous solutions.

Some may observe that the agreement is not the Constitution. It only provides for constitutional protection. If constitutional protection is to mean anything at all then it requires that amendments to this agreement be governed by the appropriate provisions of the Constitution.

Even if we could find ways around the kinds of things we have talked about until now, there remains the question of whether there is judicial support for such claims in the first place.

Chief Justice Allan McEachern in the Gitksan case rejected such claims and went on to say that a summary of Canadian case law was conclusively against the plaintiff's claims for sovereignty of ownership. Is it right for the government to proceed, indeed to accelerate land claim settlements of this kind when the latest word from the courts is that there is no legal basis for such claims?

With an area as large as 50 times the size of Prince Edward Island, which is a province, surely it is almost as if a new province was being created. The Constitution provides that the establishment of new provinces requires the approval of all existing provinces as well as Parliament. This requirement is being bypassed by Bill C–16.

To establish a region that is to be governed under a new set of laws and to convey to a defined group of Canadians known as Sahtu Dene and Metis outright fee simple ownership of 41,000 square kilometres of land is to de facto establish a geographic and political region of Canada that in many respects is like establishing a new province. In my opinion any and all provisions of the Constitution Act, 1982, that apply to the creation of new provinces should apply in this case also.

Some may argue that I am opposed to any settlement or agreement with the Sahtu Dene and Metis regarding land. That would be folly in the extreme and a deliberate misinterpretation of my remarks. It is necessary for all Canadians to be fair minded. That includes recognizing grievances put forward by people such as the Sahtu Dene and Metis and to provide for their redress.

(1330)

I support that. My contention is that Bill C–16 does not meet its own objectives to clarify and provide for the certainty of land ownership, needlessly complicates administration, costs too much and makes any future amendments a matter of constitutional amendment.

There is a final question. Will this agreement provide for greater Canadian unity and help clarify how Canadians want to government themselves? To answer that question requires answers to three prior questions. First, will giving land and money provide for the harmonious relationships between members of the Sahtu Dene and Metis communities? The answer is no.

Second, will the settlement of land claims bring about recognition, understanding and acceptance of the respective values,

social morals, religious beliefs and decision making processes either among participants or between participants and other Canadians? Again the answer is no.

Third, will creating another bureaucracy of boards, either above or below or within the bureaucracy that currently exists for the administration of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development make governing this land more effective? Again the answer is no.

Since in my opinion the answers to these questions are all negative, how can we justify completing the agreement by passing Bill C–16? I submit what this Parliament should be doing is building a stronger, more united and more globally competitive Canada. I submit to the House and to all Canadians that passage of Bill C–16 will drive wedges between Canadians by creating political power fiefdoms that are economically inefficient, perhaps even unsound and administrative nightmares.

Passage of the bill creates an environment of competing powers that will feed selfish interests to the exclusion of the interests of others. It will create competition where co–operation should exist. Just think of our interprovincial trade barriers that exist in Canada today. Finally, it will make Canada increasingly non–competitive in the global marketplace.

In conclusion, we need to settle and redress grievances of native Canadians. We must agree that the agreement that is the subject of Bill C–16 will not do those things.

I ask all members of the House to defeat Bill C–16 and find an agreement that will redress and solve the grievances that exist between us and the Sahtu Dene and Metis people.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to address the House in relation to Bill C–16. This agreement was signed on September 6, 1993 and tabled in the House on March 10, 1994.

I know the Sahtu Dene and Metis overwhelmingly supported the bill in a ratification vote. It appears that they are more than satisfied with this settlement. However I believe we would be negligent, as parties in the past have been, if we did not address some of the problems contained within Bill C–16.

Certainly my colleagues and I in the Reform Party are willing to obtain concepts of aboriginal self–determination, but only in situations in which aboriginals will clearly come to a position of self–sufficiency within the Canadian society. Unfortunately Bill C–16 does not address this situation.

Bill C–16 in fact calls for more bureaucracy, huge settlement moneys, continued DIAND programs and extensive future negotiations on self–government. The bureaucracy which will be spawned by Bill C–16 is in a word overwhelming.

(1335)

There will be seven new boards, panels and councils established to manage the resources of 2,200 people. These new entities will have representatives from the Sahtu Dene, the Metis and the government itself.

One wonders why aboriginal representatives could not be incorporated into existing DIAND boards which manage the resources in the settlement area. The agreement, Bill C–16, appears to propagate bureaucracy in so far as it overlaps existing regulatory boards and threatens to turn a very small population into a community of regulatory bureaucrats.

The potential for bureaucratic havoc in this new regime appears to be very serious, and this is something we want to address. We must take the resource management arrangements in this settlement as something that will set a benchmark for future and existing management agreements in other areas.

As all members can appreciate the resources governed by these boards will traverse a wide area. Accordingly matters concerning wildlife or water would affect a number of distinct settlement areas all sharing in these resources and all having their own regulatory regime, a formula for bureaucratic havoc.

Moreover, the various regions may have different attitudes as to how to deal with a particular problem. Certainly that they have exclusive rights over the resources in their area, claims of mismanagement arising from governments or neighbouring bands may be difficult to establish and address.

In short, there is a huge potential for an interbureaucratic tangle among the various boards in the various settlement areas. The government's position with respect to the decisions of these boards is very unclear and may contribute to the bureaucratic bog already created under the agreement.

The new boards, the territorial government and the federal government will all have input into the process of resource management. The new bureaucracy in Bill C–16 will be responsible to, and I quote the minister, ''as the context requires''. This could be a minister of the Government of Canada or a minister of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Aboriginal boards, ministries of the Northwest Territories and ministries of the Government of Canada will all grapple with and decide on such issues as transport, the environment and natural resources. Moreover, bureaucracies within settlement areas and bureaucracies within various levels of government will all vie for the ability to regulate in their respective fields.

The net effect of this bureaucratic web is increased cost, increased confusion and increased time to enact any necessary measures. Further, we must consider the potential harmful

effects of all this regulation and consultation, the effect it may have on future economic development in the country.

Under Bill C–16 companies that may wish to develop subservice resources would have to consult with this bureaucracy, would have to consult with the Sahtu tribal council on such matters as environmental impact and Sahtu employment opportunities. I would suggest that this new extensive bureaucratic structure that is bound to be set up, is destined to be set up under Bill C–16, and the processes established in this agreement may discourage many firms from investing in that region.

In all we create an enormous bureaucracy with a small economic base to support it. This bureaucracy and the control that goes with it are far from this government's notion of self–government. Despite the large settlement area, despite compensation to the tune of $130 million, despite regulatory authority, and despite royalties derived from gas and oil production the Liberals are committed still to the establishment of self–government for the Sahtu as stated in appendix B of this agreement.

An inability to define the term inherent self–government seems to in no way deter the government from undertaking negotiations to implement it.

(1340)

This voluminous, complicated, expensive agreement is simply the introduction to a more voluminous, more complex, more expensive round of negotiations on self–government. I believe it is our duty to question what type of structure this new level of government will take, what will be its duties and powers.

Is self–government even appropriate for a population of 2,200, of whom some 982 are adults? Does the federal government recognize the time and cost involved in separate self–government negotiations with every native band in Canada as it is committed to? Will the government continue to deny the reality of the situation as it has in not believing that a definition of self–government is necessary before negotiations start to take place?

The government has no definition of aboriginal self–government and yet is prepared to embark on this journey without a map. The government will not be able to sweep this one under the rug. Provisions in this agreement and future self–government negotiations will hit Canadians where they will feel it the most: in their pocketbooks.

Since 1990 the budget of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has increased approximately $400 million a year, the largest increase of any of the ministerial budgets. In 1994–95 DIAND will spend some $5 billion, of which 68 per cent or $3.38 billion are grants and contributions to band and tribal councils, a process which the Auditor General himself criticized in 1991 as faulty since the department could not ascertain whether the funds were used for the purposes intended or managed with due regard to the economy, to efficiency and to effectiveness.

Despite this agreement, despite Bill C–16, it is clear that the Sahtu Dene and the Metis will continue to have access to every DIAND program that is currently offered. This is in addition to the settlement terms of this agreement.

This agreement and the parameters for negotiations on self–government do not address the spiralling inefficient expenditures of DIAND. The government does not address the issue of financial self–sufficiency for the Sahtu. As it now appears future self–government negotiations will do very little to assist aboriginals out from under their continuing dependency on DIAND.

By not addressing the issue of self–sufficiency it seems to me that self–government will simply represent a different instrument for the dispersal of government funds to aboriginals. I would suggest the taxpayer can no longer afford DIAND's huge and inefficient expenditures and I would suggest that aboriginals as well no longer wish to live in the dependency of a federal department.

Bill C–16 does not deal clearly with this issue. The bottom line is that this agreement creates more bureaucracy and thereby more expenditures for DIAND. Furthermore, since this settlement does not concern itself with aboriginal self–sufficiency and since the beneficiaries of this agreement are entitled to all benefits continuing derived from DIAND's programs, agreements such as this will simply push this country further into debt.

I believe it is time to settle all land claims as quickly and as fairly as possible. However, with consideration as to the current financial state of Canada I believe that these claims, every claim, must be settled with an eye to removing aboriginal dependency on government funding. I would apply the same criteria to any negotiations surrounding self–government. Otherwise DIAND simply will become a larger sinkhole for government funds.

We do not need agreements such as this one guaranteeing government funding well into the future. We need a strategy that will break the cycle of dependency. That is what the Canadian people want. That is what the aboriginal people want. I look forward to the day when aboriginals stand as economic equals with all other Canadians. Unfortunately agreements which create more bureaucracy and more expenditures will only exacerbate the dependency that these aboriginals have on the federal government.

(1345)

This settlement is just one such agreement and I therefore must opposite it.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[*English*]

It is obvious listening to the hon. member that he really does not support any aboriginal self–determination and does not really understand the nature of what the Sahtu Dene and Metis are trying to do through this agreement.

For the last couple of hundred years the aboriginal people in those land claims have been at the receiving end of the generosity of a different group of people who did not have the understanding that they were dealing with a totally different culture when they were dealing with aboriginal people in the country.

It is obvious from his remarks that this hon. member does not understand nor does he want to understand what the aboriginal people want.

It is all very fine to say: ''Well, it would be very nice for the aboriginal people in that area to have economic self–sufficiency''. It is years of being under a system like the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that has created that so–called dependency which we would not necessarily have to be dealing with today if so–called well meaning bureaucrats had decided that these people were much better off making their own decisions and the bureaucrats implementing those decisions for those aboriginal people.

I would like to ask the hon. member this question. Has he ever met with the Sahtu Dene and Metis and has he discussed at length the concerns of the Sahtu Dene and Metis? Has he discussed at length the concept of self–government with the Sahtu Dene and Metis? What is his understanding of the inherent right of self–government as we understand it? If he is that much in support of economic self–sufficiency, does he agree that the aboriginal people's inherent right of self government should be recognized? If so, how would he see that recognition through the House of Commons?

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member opposite, unfortunately what I have just heard is the standard answer when someone dares to criticize aboriginal programs. That standard answer is: ''You simply don't understand the aboriginal people''.

I live in an area of British Columbia where there are many aboriginal people. I have talked extensively with many of them and I have listened to their concerns. The one concern they have is they want to break this dependency on the federal government. They want to be able to provide for their own self–sufficiency.

(1350)

This is a good direction to go but Bill C–16, as I stated earlier, does not break the dependency. It only provides an obligation for continued dependency on the federal government.

I believe that any agreement the federal government enters into with aboriginal people respecting settlements or land claims must lead to an ending of continued federal government funding. The aboriginal people must be permitted to enter into an economic base for themselves that will create self–sufficiency.

The member opposite asked about my definition of inherent right to self–government. My understanding is inherent right to self–government means that it always existed and is answerable to no other authority. I consider every inhabitant of the country a Canadian. We have a federal government, provincial governments and municipal governments. My vision of self–government for the aboriginal people is that they get to a position where they are Canadians within the existing federal, provincial and municipal laws.

I do not support new governments being established within my country that would operate outside the established laws to which every other Canadian is obligated.

The Deputy Speaker: There are still about two or three minutes left in questions or comments.

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not understand. I did not ask a standard question. That may be what he thinks if he gets a question from somebody who is not of that culture. I asked those questions from the intimate knowledge of what I am talking about. That is why I asked the questions, not because I read it in some magazine or some newspaper. I asked them from the point of view that I know what I am talking about. That is precisely why I asked those questions.

As far as self–government is concerned I do not think the hon. member has an understanding of the aboriginal people who want to have the opportunity to exercise that inherent right of self–government.

I would also ask the member how many aboriginal people and from what particular area in British Columbia area are saying to him that they have great concerns and, if so, would he be prepared to say that this particular group opposes those things that we are attempting to do as a government? I find it very hard to believe that a large group of aboriginal people would be saying that whatever we are trying to do is contrary to the wishes of the aboriginal people in Canada.

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, I said in my earlier statement that the response that we do not understand the aboriginal people or their concerns is a standard response when someone dares to criticize any form of agreement or any form of structure that is proposed within the aboriginal and federal government negotiations.

Perhaps the hon. member is right. Perhaps I do not understand or possess the intimate knowledge of the aboriginal people that he may have. That is probably quite natural, seeing that I am not an aboriginal person. What I do understand is this. The government and even the aboriginal people themselves have no clear definition of what the outcome of aboriginal self–government would be.

(1355)

We have asked that question in British Columbia. It has been asked in almost every province. It has been asked in the House. I asked it of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and he had no answer to that question. That is the gist of what this is all about today. This agreement will provide for an immediate settlement of sorts but still opens the door for further extensive, complex negotiations of aboriginal self–government. There is no clear map. There is no clear direction. There is no clear agenda for where these negotiations will go or what they will end up with.

That is like starting a journey in a totally unknown territory and hoping you get to where you are going.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I see that two o'clock will arrive before I will have finished so I will continue until you shut me down.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C–16. As do many of my colleagues, I have a particular interest in the proposed legislation. During my career I have had opportunity to work directly with native people as a labour foreman on a hydroelectric project in the territories, as an ombudsman for the Alberta region of the department of Indian affairs under Harold Cardinal and as a business consultant.

I have seen the problems of these people firsthand and therefore I speak from experience if not empathy for the plight of these people.

The Dogrib Indians of the territories I found to be some of the hardest working and capable individuals I have ever worked with. They were more than willing to work under adverse conditions of weather and isolation when the jobs were available. However the opportunity to work is not always there and when this occurs these willing and capable people are unemployed.

I was appointed ombudsman by Harold Cardinal who was regional director general for the department of Indian affairs in Alberta. Mr. Cardinal was a prominent aboriginal leader in Canada and president of the Alberta Indian Association for a number of years.

In this position I dealt with many of the concerns and complaints of the Indian people. As a consultant I have received many complaints from band members across western Canada accusing their band council leaders of corruption and expending funds improperly. Seldom if ever did the department of Indian affairs look into these complaints.

Therefore, like many Canadians I want to see Canada's aboriginal peoples given the opportunity to become economically and politically independent. I want to see their dependency on the taxpayer ended. If an agreement provides these ingredients it should be supported. If not it should not be supported.

This agreement fails to meet these requirements and therefore I cannot give Bill C–16 my support. The Sahtu land settlement area covers 280,000 square kilometres with a population of approximately 1,700 people. I am prepared to support this part of the agreement, although extremely generous, because it is clear that these people must have a land base from which they can draw resources in order to become economically independent and self–reliant.

When we compare this to the land base of P.E.I. and Nova Scotia which have much larger populations, it is evident that the land base requirement for self–reliance is adequately provided for in the Sahtu nation in this agreement. In addition, this agreement provides not only for subsurface resource rights but for royalties on resources presently developed within the Mackenzie River valley.

These aspects of the agreement are essential for future economic self–reliance of the Sahtu nation. I submit that a strong, economically self–reliant Sahtu nation will be a benefit to all Canadians. This agreement also provides for a transfer of funds from the Canadian taxpayer amounting to—

The Speaker: I note that the hon. member still has approximately 15 minutes to speak. The hon. member will be given the floor as soon as we resume debate.

It being 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 35 the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

OZONE LAYER

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, the latest figures from Environment Canada on the ozone layer are disturbing. Measurements of the atmosphere above Toronto shows the ozone layer was 7 per cent to 9 per cent thinner in April than it should be. Approximately the same situation was reported for Montreal and Vancouver. The ozone layer filters ultraviolet rays from the sun, as we know. These rays can cause skin cancer, cataracts and possibly immune system damage.

The layer has been eroded by chlorine from chlorofluorocarbons used in air conditioners, refrigerators and some electronic and plastic industries. With 3 per cent less ozone that normal forecasted for this coming summer, it is important that Canadians, particularly children and young ones, protect their skin and eyes from harmful ultraviolet sun rays.

The message therefore is clear: Protect your health by protecting yourself from the sun.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY

Mr. Jean–Paul Marchand (Québec–Est): Despite the inclement weather, over 30,000 men and women gathered in Montreal and in Quebec City on International Workers Day, also known as May Day, to express their disappointment over the federal government's lack of genuine job creation policies and to denounce the erosion in social protection and equity.

The distress call was sounded clearly yesterday. The federal government should focus its efforts on restoring hope by implementing a real job creation policy, instead of imposing social program reforms which could very likely mortgage the future of many Quebecers and Canadians.

The members of the Bloc Quebecois join with workers in Quebec and in Canada in expressing the hope that the federal government will finally hear this distress call.

* * *

[*English*]

SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the people of South Africa in holding the first free elections in the history of their country, thereby eliminating 350 years of oppression.

Best wishes must also go to Nelson Mandela and the ANC as they are poised to take over the reins of power and guide their country through a minefield of troubles.

I implore our country to help to achieve a prosperous society for all. For South Africa can be the economic giant that drives the whole southern half of the content. To let it fall would commit this region to decades of civil strife and destitution.

I hope the leaders of the new South Africa and perhaps we in our country can learn from the gross mistakes of other countries on that continent.

Special status for one group over another and affirmative action are discriminatory and only create divisions in the society. But equal status for all and preferential status for none is a bond—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga East.

S. O. 31

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of the international recognition the CBC has so deservedly received of late.

[*Translation*]

I am delighted to pay tribute today to the English CBC TV network, which has just won the prestigious ''Rose d'argent'' at the Montreux festival in Switzerland.

[*English*]

The CBC has won the Rose d'argent for its fine production of ''Kurt Browning—You Must Remember This''.

[*Translation*]

It was also announced at a press conference last week that Radio–Canada had won the most prestigious prize at the Banff Television Festival. This prize, which was awarded for the first time to a Canadian broadcaster, honours the overall achievements and especially the quality of serial dramas on the French television network of our public broadcaster. Congratulations!

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S GAMES

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, on June 16–19, 1994 Hamilton will play host to the International Children's Games, the first time in its 25 year history that these games have been held outside Europe.

The participation age 11 to 15 is ideal for the children to learn the values of competition and fair play and to appreciate the cultures of other countries. The theme of the games ''Tomorrow's Dreams'' symbolizes the aspirations of all young athletes to develop into tomorrow's future leaders.

Hamilton is understandably proud and excited to be hosting this special event, and we look forward to making these the best International Children's Games ever. To date we have 38 confirmed cities from around the world with a total of 750 children participating, 150 from Canada alone.

All those who have been working to prepare these games are to be congratulated. Hamilton looks forward to giving the youth of the world an opportunity to participate in a multi–sport event in a spirit of friendship and competition.

* * *

(1405)

[*Translation*]

CULTURAL MINORITIES

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint–Léonard): Mr. Speaker, finally the truth is out: a Quebec government led by the Parti

Quebecois will not protect cultural minorities in an independent Quebec. The party's vice–president, Bernard Landry, confirmed on the weekend that his party rejects the idea of multiculturalism and wants minorities to integrate into Quebec's melting pot.

In a speech before the council of citizens of Haitian descent, the PQ's vice–president also stressed that Quebec's public and common culture is that of Quebecers. It is obvious that the Parti Quebecois has no desire to honour its commitment to the various minorities in Quebec society.

Now we just have to find out whether or not the Bloc Quebecois agrees with Mr. Landry's comments. If the BQ agrees with him, it should say so; if not, it should denounce him!

* * *

SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the first free elections in South Africa were held last week, allowing millions of blacks to vote for the first time in their lives. After so many years of apartheid and repression, this striking victory of democracy shows the courage and determination of those who fought for equality for all South Africans.

By clearly rejecting the political parties calling for violence and vengeance, South African voters turned the page on a dark chapter in their history to embrace a democratic and peaceful future. This rejection of violence brings hope to all Africans.

On behalf of all members of this House, I congratulate the newly elected representatives of South Africa on their victory and their determination.

* * *

[*English*]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I often receive letters from constituents who are frustrated by certain aspects of the UI system because they do not understand the limits of their coverage.

Most complaints are about restrictions on training or the taking of temporary jobs that beneficiaries felt would have improved their chances of finding more permanent work.

Anyone who insures a home or a car receives a written policy which lists entitlements, deductions and restrictions. A lot of misunderstandings and frustration could be avoided for workers if a similar document was available which listed entitlements and deductions for the UI system.

I urge the minister to produce a printed insurance policy for UI which could be posted in places of work or supplied to workers when they begin paying UI premiums. This could lead in time to a range of UI policies being available at different premium levels which would better meet workers' needs and would introduce some flexibility into the UI system.

* * *

MRS. MARGARET MCCAIN

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise in the House today to extend congratulations to a distinguished and worthy citizen from Carleton—Charlotte constituency, Mrs. Margaret McCain, who was recently appointed Lieutenant–Governor of my home province, New Brunswick.

After many years of dedicated service to several provincial and Canadian organizations, Mrs. McCain of Florenceville, New Brunswick, the mother of four grown children, will become the first woman Lieutenant–Governor of the beautiful picture province.

I know you will want to join with me on behalf of all members of the House to extend our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for a successful tenure to Margaret McCain, New Brunswick's new Lieutenant Governor, and to offer our thanks to His Excellency Gilbert Finn for a job well done.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced measures that will return over 500 frozen licences to groundfish fishermen who have demonstrated a long–term attachment to the industry. Over 200 of these restored licences belonged to fishermen in the province of Prince Edward Island.

This whole sorry mess was the result of an arbitrary decision by the previous ''no–Tory–us'' government. Sad to say it is only one of such messes in the fishery that we have inherited.

I want to commend the minister, not only for correcting this injustice but also for the establishment of a consultative process which in this case involved 11 different fishing organizations.

Even though it is a very difficult period in the Atlantic fishery, this type of co–operation between the minister and the stakeholders in the industry will go a long way toward alleviating pain and anguish while the industry is being restructured.

This new spirit of co–operation and negotiation bodes well both for redefining the concept of professional fishermen and for establishing the framework of the fishery of the future.

In conjunction with the sentiments expressed by the P.E.I. Fisherman's Association, I once again commend the minister for his work in resolving this situation.

(1410)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FOREST WEEK

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out to the House that we are celebrating National Forest Week this week.

Forests are our greatest natural resource and contribute more than anything else to our balance of trade. From coast to coast, the forest industry provides some 800,000 jobs, directly and indirectly.

[*English*]

Our forest industries provide the economic foundation of some 350 Canadian cities and towns. The people who live in these forest dependent communities know the value of forests, the vital role they play in their lives and the critical need to ensure that our forests remain healthy and flourish into the future so that future generations will enjoy the same benefits in terms of employment, recreation, and a healthy environment.

[*Translation*]

Canada is an exception among forested countries because over 90 per cent of our forests are majority–owned by the people. The forests belong to us. It is up to us to take care of them.

* * *

HIGH SPEED TRAIN

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, the Prime Minister mocked the Bloc Quebecois's proposal to go ahead with building a high speed train between Quebec City and Windsor. According to the Prime Minister, it would be hard for a high speed train to have to stop at the border of a sovereign Quebec.

Perhaps the Prime Minister has never taken the Amtrak train between New York and Montreal. If he had, he would have realized that the train does not stop at the Canada–U.S. border. For the Prime Minister's information, planes do not stop at the borders of sovereign countries either. In fact, the Bloc Quebecois does not see why it would not be the same for a high–speed train between Quebec and Ontario.

If some people wanted to build walls around a sovereign Quebec, it would certainly not be Quebecers themselves. Quebecers seem to be more aware than the Prime Minister that the future development of nations depends on openness to the world. Let us stop this demagogy and discuss rationally the real issues for Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

AIDS

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, picture a virus that attacks a baby's brain, destroying any ability to crawl, to walk, to speak. Imagine a virus that can kill a child before its second birthday, the body completely overrun by infection. There is no vaccine, no cure for this virus and babies can get it in the most tragic way: from their mothers.

White heterosexual females are the fastest growing demographic group to fall victim to AIDS. Many do not know that they have the disease. In fact they even believe this could not possibly happen to them.

Reported pediatric cases of AIDS have been rising steadily since the early 1980s. The latest statistics show that 93 children have been diagnosed with AIDS in Canada. Sixty–three of them have already died.

In Quebec one out of 80 pregnant women has AIDS. Experts agree that the only way to curtail the rise in pediatric AIDS is to prevent transmission of the disease to women.

I urge the government to support aggressive public education campaigns, including women focused efforts. AIDS in children is a problem that will not easily disappear.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RWANDA

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, the world's worst tragedy is currently taking place in Rwanda. In a country of about five million people, 100,000 are reported dead so far, while 250,000 have taken refuge in Tanzania or Burundi.

A call for action is necessary and urgent. The UN forces were reduced from 2,000 to less than 300. The bishop of South Africa, Edmund Tutu, made a plea for help, asking for the return of UN forces to Rwanda, to implement a ceasefire and help a population subjected to unprecedented violence.

* * *

[*English*]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, yesterday 16–year old Marwan Harb was brutally murdered in Hull, just across the river. Mr. Harb was the second cousin of our colleague from Ottawa Centre.

The Harb murder is the latest in a series of violent crimes committed by young offenders. The Young Offenders Act is crying out for change. It is in desperate need of reform.

Earlier today we had the opportunity to discuss the Young Offenders Act in Parliament. Regrettably the Bloc Quebecois denied unanimous consent to have the subject matter of the bill referred to committee.

(1415)

I would encourage and urge the Bloc Quebecois and all members and the government to immediately address that very serious issue. I would urge the government to immediately introduce a bill amending the Young Offenders Act and to assure Canadians that a bill is passed—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am ready to deliver my decision on two questions of privilege which were brought up on Thursday. The reason I am giving my decision now before the start of Question Period is that it could impact on Question Period itself.

I will add whatever time it takes for me to read my decision to the end of Question Period today.

As I said, I am now ready to render my decision concerning the question of privilege raised by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs on Thursday, April 28 following Question Period. I will also respond to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Roberval at the same time.

[*Translation*]

The minister has indicated that his privileges were breached when, in the preamble to certain questions, statements were made that he was unwilling to answer some questions that had been addressed to him. Such comments could give a poor impression of his work as a minister and a member.

We must always bear in mind the basic principles that govern Question Period. These principles have been eloquently summarized in the past by Speakers Jerome and Bosley, and the highlights of their statements can be found in citations 409 and 410 of the 6th edition of Beauchesne.

One of these principles is that the Opposition is free to ask questions of any minister but only if these questions fall within the administrative responsibility of the government. However, according to citation 410, paragraph 16, in the 6th edition of Beauchesne:

> Ministers may be questioned only in relation to current portfolios.

I would like to remind this House of the remarks of Speaker Lamoureux on this subject on October 16, 1968, which were reported at page 133 of the House of Commons *Journals*:

> —a minister may be asked questions relating to a department for which he has ministerial responsibility or acting ministerial responsibility, but a minister cannot be asked, nor can he answer questions in another capacity, such as being responsible for a province, or part of a province or, again, as spokesman for a racial or religious group.

[*English*]

These remarks, which were referred to by Speaker Bosley in his statement of February 24, 1986, today apply more than ever and should be followed as strictly as possible by the members when addressing questions to a minister. As the members will recall, during Question Period on Thursday I had to redirect certain questions to the ministers who were responsible for them.

[*Translation*]

This is also why I found the question of the hon. member for Portneuf unacceptable. Furthermore, on rereading the *Debates*, I must acknowledge that the questions and comments by the hon. member for Roberval to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and those by the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte–Marie to the Minister of Finance were not only incorrect, but totally unacceptable acording to our rules.

The Speaker accordingly recognizes the merits of the arguments raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I must, however, state that what is involved here is not *prima facie* a question of privilege, but rather a point of order.

Finally, to answer the question raised by the hon. member for Roberval, as to whether ministers may be questioned on a public statement unrelated to their departmental responsibilities, I reiterate the principle that a minister may be questioned during Oral Question Period on matters directly related to areas affecting his department. The member is incorrect in claiming that a minister of the government may be questioned on any comment he may have made. The precedents and the parliamentary practice are very clear on this point: a member may not question a minister concerning a public statement that is not directly related to his department.

[*English*]

In closing, I would like to add that since the beginning of this Parliament the exchanges during question period have been interesting and lively and in the overwhelming majority of cases marked by the respect that we owe to ourselves and to this House. I am certain that we can continue along this path.

I thank the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and the hon. member for Roberval for the clarity and conciseness of their interventions and I hope that these comments will be of use to them and may also serve as a guide to all members as well.

It is now 20 minutes past the hour. This Question Period will last until 3.05 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister appointed the Minister of Finance as the minister responsible for Quebec's regional economic development. However, because of his personal economic interests, which we do not criticize him for but which exist, the finance minister's room to manoeuvre is significantly reduced on several issues of importance to Quebec's economic future.

Does the Prime Minister admit that his finance minister's room to manoeuvre is extremely reduced on several economic issues of major importance to Quebec since he cannot, as he himself acknowledged, deal with the high speed train, the Magdalen Islands ferry, the multifunctional smart ship or, in large part, the conversion of defence industry to civilian uses? Does the Prime Minister admit that Quebec is thus poorly served?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. We have ministers responsible for every portfolio and if there are cases where the Minister of Finance cannot get involved for the reasons we all know, well, the Prime Minister comes from Quebec and he can intervene. However, the Minister of Transport or other ministers consider the issues and report back when it is time to do so. Everyone knows how competent the Minister of Finance is and, considering the responsibilities we have given him, he could not do any better.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister has seen fit to appoint ministers responsible for Western Economic Diversification, the Atlantic provinces' development and Quebec's development, I imagine he had good reasons to do so.

Are we to understand from what the Prime Minister just said that every time the minister he entrusted with Quebec's economic issues cannot get involved, the Prime Minister will take over his portfolio and intervene as the minister responsible for Quebec should?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this may occur in one or two areas, especially in transportation matters, for the reasons we all know, but these issues are well known by all the ministers and by the Prime Minister.

In this as in most cases, the Minister of Transport is kept abreast of developments so Quebec's interests are never minimized at any time because the Minister of Finance, who must also deal with the rest of the regional development portfolio, happens to be the minister responsible. On the contrary, I think the hon. member should rise and say, ''We are very lucky that the Minister of Finance comes from Quebec''.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister admit that the Minister of Finance is in a very bad position, under these circumstances, to intervene on behalf of the MIL Davie shipyard in Lauzon for the Magdalen Islands ferry, while his colleague in Transport, who is directly involved in the decision, and the minister responsible for development in the Atlantic provinces have all the freedom required to intervene on behalf of a shipyard in their region, in their province?

(1425)

Is Quebec not at a disadvantage since, unfortunately in this issue, the official spokesman has his hands tied, unlike his colleagues?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to really understand the objectives and purpose of the Federal Office of Regional Development for Quebec.

As I announced three weeks ago and as the Minister of Human Resources Development announced regarding the Western Diversification Fund in the west, we in the Federal Office really intend to emphasize small and medium–sized business.

In Quebec, we who are really the heirs of the Quiet Revolution and the entrepreneurial revolution know very well that Quebec's economic future is in our hands, in our small and medium–sized businesses, and as the federal government, we intend to encourage this dynamism; Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that there is no conflict of interest between the Minister of Finance, the minister responsible for the Federal Office and Quebec entrepreneurs.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte–Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance who is also responsible for regional development.

The future of the largest private employer in the Quebec City region is in serious jeopardy. It is riding, basically, on two decisions to be made by the federal government: one concerning the project to build a ferry for the Magdalen Islands and the other concerning the project to develop a multipurpose ship called a smart ship.

Does the minister responsible for regional development in Quebec recognize that the future of the MIL Davie shipyards basically depends on the decision the federal government will make in these two matters and does he recognize at the same time that he cannot intervene directly to protect the interests of MIL Davie in these two very important matters?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows very well I believe, we have just received a draft of a comprehensive business plan for MIL Davie. Our officials are presently reviewing this plan and, when a decision is made with the stockholder who has the greatest share of responsibility for MIL Davie, we may have an opportunity to give it some advice on the company. We are perfectly aware of the major role of this company in the Quebec City region.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte–Marie): My question is for the Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister not agree that the very fact the Minister of Finance is incapable of answering this question in the House clearly shows the difficulty he has carrying out his functions as minister responsible for regional development in Quebec, given he is incapable of intervening in favour of MIL Davie in cabinet, while his colleagues from Transport and Public works will be able to defend without any restrictions the interests of shipyards in the Maritimes?

[*English*]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to me that in the case of the prairies the file is the responsibility of the Minister of Transport. We are following and I am following personally this file.

I believe the interests of everyone concerned are very well protected. The mandate that has been given to the Minister of Finance does not mean he is responsible for the Minister of Transport. We have a very good Minister of Transport who is looking into this need and what is required for transportation. He has to look at all the alternatives and the costs and the decision will be made in due course.

In the case of the chantiers maritimes, we have ministers responsible. The office that is under the responsibility of the Minister of Finance has nothing to do with MIL–Davie or transportation or defence. It has to do with small and medium sized businesses. The minister is doing an excellent job helping them.

* * *

INCOME TAX

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Last night many Canadians stayed awake to do their income tax returns.

An hon. member: The hockey game.

Mr. Silye: No, it was not to watch the hockey game. Canadians were sorting through their T1s, T1CTBs, their T778s, their T4s and T5s. Frankly, today there are lot of teed–off Canadians out there.

(1430)

Every year Canadians spend countless millions of dollars on accountants and lawyers to have their income tax returns prepared. The 2,091 page Income Tax Act is an unmitigated mess of rules and regulations and is screaming for reform, as are many Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister instruct his ministers and mandarins to simplify the income tax system to reflect equity, efficiency and effectiveness and thereby reduce the tax burden on Canadians?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is very evident that the hon. member of Parliament read the red book.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow's supply motion will be on this very subject. I hope the Prime Minister takes the time to listen to some of the comments by members of this House.

Currently tax freedom day is July 7. That is how long Canadians have to work to pay their share of the costs of this government's red book plan.

I ask the Prime Minister, when can Canadians expect to pay less in taxes in a current year than they did the year before?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will be in that position the minute all Canadians who want to work find jobs. That is the best way to reduce the tax burden. However when 11.6 per cent of the people are unemployed such as the situation we faced when we were elected, we asked how we could rectify that.

The easy answer is to have programs that will create jobs. However, I note every time we want to have a program to create jobs the Reform Party is opposed to it.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, the income tax system is so complicated that the revenue department is the largest employer in the public service with over 35,000 employees at a cost of $1.8 billion. That is a workforce larger than the town of Shawinigan.

I ask the Prime Minister, has the government calculated how many billions of dollars it could save in government administration costs and how much individual taxpayers could save in tax preparation charges by introducing a fair and integrated system of taxation?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is why we have committees of the House of Commons looking into that. The Minister of Finance is looking into it all the time also.

I noted in the debate on the budget and when there was a rumour something might be changed that very often the Reform members were opposed to it. Sometimes people are afraid of too many changes.

We are trying to change the GST and replace it with a fair system of taxation. I am very confident the committee will come out with a report next month so that the Minister of Finance will be in a position to study the recommendations of the House of Commons. This is a very complex system that people want to get rid of. I know the Reform Party wants to keep the very complex system of GST. One of the statements made by the leader of that party was that they love the GST. We hate it and we will kill it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RWANDA

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis–Hébert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The civil war continues in Rwanda, where an estimated 200,000 people have been killed. Negotiations for a ceasefire have reached a deadlock.

Friday, the UN Secretary–General urged the security council to consider the use of force to put an end to the massacre of thousands of innocent people, even if this would mean bringing in more–UN peacekeepers.

According to a news bulletin this morning, the Minister of National Defence is hesitant to support this proposal by the UN Secretary–General. Could the Minister for Foreign Affairs indicate whether Canada intends to support this proposal?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the slaughter which continues in Rwanda cannot be tolerated by countries that have had development aid programs in Rwanda.

Canada is among those countries who are trying, within the United Nations or the Organization for African Unity, to find ways to make these factions who are killing each other today see reason.

(1435)

I can inform the hon. member that preliminary talks which took place at the United Nations have not been successful, and that is why we feel that perhaps another forum, the OAU for instance, might be in a better position to start a conciliation process and persuade the parties to stop killing each other. Any proposals to that effect will certainly be supported by Canada.

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis–Hébert): Mr. Speaker, considering the increasing number of Rwandan refugees who are fleeing the civil war and 30 years of close ties between Quebec and Rwanda, does the minister intend to increase the humanitarian aid he announced previously?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, the Canadian International Development Agency has donated $1 million for emergency aid, and we have also donated $2 million to the International Red Cross to help save lives and help the wounded in that country. It is not much, considering the extent of the slaughter. Canada, in co–operation with other countries, is trying to determine what kind of humanitarian aid should be sent immediately.

Obviously, as long as the fighting and the carnage continues, it is extremely difficult to bring in humanitarian aid and ensure it reaches those who need it. Nevertheless, Canada and other countries will continue to look for ways to go and help these people who have been left to fend for themselves.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The minister is on record as stating that he fundamentally disagrees with the proposition that there is a crisis in confidence in the Canadian system of justice. He has also stated he thinks the justice system works well and that it is fundamentally sound. Today it is reported that the minister has been selective in the use of his statistics to back up these claims.

Does the minister truly believe that a 61 per cent increase in violent crimes over the past 10 years does not constitute a crisis in Canada's criminal justice system?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, let me say first that I do not think any useful purpose is served by a protracted debate about the numbers. The fact is any amount of crime in Canada is too much. The justice system could always be improved and we are working hard to achieve that.

On the subject of the numbers and the statistics, let me point out to the hon. member that the statistics reported today in one of the newspapers on this very subject involve numbers going back to 1962. While that is interesting what is perhaps of more relevance to today's purpose are the more recent statistics.

Since 1977, in the last 16 years during which numbers have been kept, homicides are up only 4 per cent. Those are the statistical facts from the same source referred to in the newspaper this morning.

Reference is made to violent crime. However in many of those statistics if you look behind the initial number, violence often includes such things as schoolyard shoving and slapping by

young offenders, behaviours which were not charged in the days before the statute but now are and form part of the statistics.

I say to the hon. member that any amount of crime is too much. I insist that we keep this issue in perspective and I repeat that the justice system on the whole is in very good shape.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Mr. Speaker, it is also reported that since the death penalty was last used in 1962, and granted it is a figure used in 1962, the murder rate in Canada has more than doubled.

Is the minister going to attempt to convince Canadians there is no crisis in the justice system by using selective statistics? Or is the government prepared to introduce the necessary legislation to ensure the protection of society?

(1440)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have dealt with the point about the statistics. The more recent numbers over the last 16 years are far more reliable and meaningful. Let us put aside the question of numbers and get to the root of this issue.

I know the hon. member and I are of the same mind on one issue. That is that we have to improve the justice system in order to diminish crimes of serious violence. We have to do that by making the laws more effective and by attacking the underlying causes of crime.

I know as we introduce measures in the weeks ahead on those subjects in this House that we can count upon the hon. member and her party to support us in that cause.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Opposition is mounting to the adjustment strategy for Atlantic fishermen. According to a report in today's newspaper, a spokesperson for Newfoundland fishery workers has rejected the minister's proposal which would have each fishery worker sign an individual contract committing him or her to undergoing training or doing community work in exchange for benefits.

Will the minister concede that his proposal for individual contracts is being roundly criticized and has raised some legitimate concerns and consequently, is he prepared to negotiate collective agreements with the unions, as is being recommended to him by the spokesperson for the fishery workers?

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, first let me point out that the comments or quotes used by the hon. member are not exactly what the head of the fishermen's union has said. He said they had some questions about the nature of it.

I would like to point out to the hon. member there are already a number of programs that we offer in which there is an agreement about participation by the person who takes a benefit from human resources. For example on the question of training, one is expected to have certain obligations on their side.

We are trying to apply a principle of mutual responsibility in this area. This subject was extensively discussed with members of the fishermen's union beginning last February. They had plenty of opportunity to conduct and to exchange points of view on this matter. In fact, during the course of those discussions there was no objection raised.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, this morning's newspaper quotes the spokesperson as saying:

[*English*]

''We don't sign individual agreements; we sign collective agreements''.

[*Translation*]

Surely the minister has read these comments.

Will the minister not agree that, after going over the heads of the provinces, it would, at the very least, be in his best interests to secure the co–operation of the unions representing fishery workers and will he undertake, therefore, to meet with the unions before proceeding to sign any individual contracts?

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, let me first point out to the hon. member that this agreement we arrived at in the Atlantic fisheries did not go over the heads of the provinces. It was extensively discussed with each province involved and they were in agreement with the program. That is a fact.

Second, we discussed all these matters with the unions. Every union was involved in extensive consultations. When the minister of fisheries and I announced the program we said if there were any problems or concerns with the evolution of the agreement we would be glad to sit down with them and work those problems out.

Once again, the hon. member is trying to misstate exactly what went on. The fact is that this program is based on very

extensive and broad consultations with all the parties involved and the parties are very satisfied with the agreement.

* * *

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The latest media report suggests that President Clinton has now publicly taken the side of the American farmers in the durum wheat dispute. Given that the United States' own international trade commission has scoffed at the unsupported allegations of unfair Canadian trade practices, will the Prime Minister personally contact President Clinton? Will he ask him to rise above domestic politics and take a leadership role in the interest of free trade?

(1445)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): I did that a week ago with President Clinton, so the question is a bit late.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplemental.

Can the Prime Minister outline for the House what steps he is going to personally take to assure that this trade war does not spread and threaten to become a full fledged trade war world–wide?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have done what is possible to be done.

The Minister of Agriculture has strongly made the point since January to his U.S. counterpart. The Minister for International Trade did that with his counterpart as well. I mentioned the matter two or three times to President Clinton. We hope that reason will prevail. We are selling wheat there because wheat produced by Canadian farmers in many instances is better.

Senator Bradley for example argued last week that it was not a good move for them to try to stop our durum wheat. He recognized that durum wheat produced in Canada is much better for making pasta. I was pleased to see an American senator use the argument I made a month ago.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FUTUROPOLIS

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

The city of Montreal is planning a project named Futuropolis, which would be located in the technopark. The first phase of this project could require investments of up to $225 million within the next three years and attract some 200 companies involved with information highway technologies. The SODIM, the agency responsible for industrial development in Montreal, is committed to investing $200,000 in a feasibility study, provided the federal and Quebec do the same.

Does the Minister of Industry, responsible for the information highway, intend to give a favourable answer to the city of Montreal regarding the financing of a feasibility study on the Futuropolis project?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to receive and study a proposal from the city of Montreal. Up to now, our commitment to finance the information highway has been limited to supporting the CANARIE project establishing networks across Canada to form the basis of the electronic highway.

Moreover, as the member knows, we are in the process of drafting regulations regarding the electronic highway.

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems somewhat caught off guard by this project; he should make inquiries on Futuropolis, a project which could certainly allow Montreal and Quebec companies to take advantage of potential spin–offs and could even become a major element of the information highway development.

* * *

[*English*]

SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North): Mr. Speaker, Martin Luther King, one of the most prominent figures of the century, once said: ''I have a dream''. Today that dream is directed to South Africa and they are free again.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Can the minister indicate to this House what, if any, programs he is prepared to implement to help South Africa on its path to democratic and economic reform in the years to come?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think that all members of this House will rejoice at the outcome of the very peaceful, well run election in South Africa.

Clearly we are very happy at having been associated with those who organized this election. Canada contributed to the preparations for the campaign. Number two at Elections Canada, Mr. Gould, was sent there and was part of the team which organized the elections. Certainly he has done a magnificent job along with the others who were responsible for this election.

I would like to say that any new Canadian initiatives will first have to be discussed with the new government. Certainly the Secretary of State for Africa upon returning Canada will convene a meeting of representatives of NGOs, associations, groups and individuals who would like to discuss what kind of aid Canada should be giving in the future to South Africa.

(1450)

Following these consultations, certainly we will be in a position to make statements in this House in this regard.

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MICHAEL LAWRENCE DRAKE

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice and concerns the extradition of Michael Lawrence Drake.

In March 1992, Drake was charged with molesting a two and a half–year old girl in Washington. While awaiting trial, Drake jumped bail and fled to Canada. In June 1992, an American court found Drake guilty of sexual assault in absentia. Last week, Drake was released on bail by Canadian officials pending an extradition hearing before the B.C. Supreme Court.

Why did Canadian officials release Drake into the community when he has already been convicted of sexual abuse of a child and when he has already proven his willingness to jump bail in the United States?

The Speaker: These questions that are posed many times are so specific that I do not know that all ministers or any ministers can have a complete grasp of specific cases. Perhaps there would be another venue where the member could get that information. However, I will permit the Minister of Justice to address himself to this case generally, if he has the information.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the issue is now one of extradition as the hon. member has said.

As such, it will first go to the court with respect to the issue of a warrant of committal and then eventually it will come to me, if that is the process followed. It is open to the person in question to apply to the Minister of Justice eventually no matter what the outcome of the court proceeding. If the person is committed then the minister can intervene under the statute.

I do not propose to comment on the substance or the merits of the extradition procedure. The member's question goes to the issue of detention and the person being in the community during the pending of the proceeding. I will be happy to make inquiries about what happened with respect to that matter and respond factually to the member when I get that information.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the forthrightness of the answer of the minister. It is indeed the matter of detaining an individual who was convicted this way and puts into jeopardy the young children in our communities.

I really urge the minister to answer this question. When will we stop hiding behind the law and put the protection of children first?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, that is indeed a much more general question.

Let me say that in all cases where people are accused of serious crime, including sexual interference with children, it is a question for the court in accordance with the bail provisions in the code whether such persons are released pending trial, and indeed following trial, pending sentence or an appeal from sentence.

All I can say to the hon. member is that I am confident that crown attorneys across the country exercise their judgment responsibly and that courts in each case consider the safety of the community in determining whether bail should be granted either in the event of trial or afterward.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LOBBYING

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, in its red book, the Liberal Party stated nice principles regarding the need to monitor the activities of lobbyists, in the best interest of the federal administration. Yet, six months after the election, the Liberals have become silent on this issue. Somehow, they seem to have distanced themselves from the policies which they were advocating before the election.

How can the Prime Minister explain his hesitation to table a bill on lobbyists, considering that his stated intentions during the election campaign seemed very clear on that issue?

(1455)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have made a commitment and we intend to fulfill it. Right now, I am trying to find the right person for the job. I would like to know that person very well, so that he can participate in the drafting of the bill.

As I said, once we find that person, I will consult with the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Reform Party before making the appointment, because it is only appropriate to inform them of that choice. I hope that we can proceed before the summer recess, which means very soon.

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, almost four months after the throne speech, the government has still not appointed an ethics counsellor, as promised by the Prime Minister during the election campaign.

When will the Prime Minister appoint the counsellor who of be responsible for this ethical issue and for the enforcing of the law?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, our mandate is for five years. We have fulfilled many commitments made in the red book. I hope the hon. member will take a look at page 111; he will be surprised. Indeed, we have fulfilled our promises regarding the helicopter contract, the infrastructure program, job creation for young

people, as well as other initiatives. We are not done yet with that particular commitment. Obviously, we cannot do everything within a four month session. However, things are going very well. That problem will be solved to everyone's satisfaction—I hope—before Parliament recesses for the summer, in exactly seven weeks.

* * *

[*English*]

APPLE GROWERS

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

The minister has been asked several times by Canadian apple growers to immediately stop the dumping of U.S. apples into Canada. As usual the government talks a good game but also as usual nothing concrete comes of it. The best the government has come up with is for the growers to start anti–dumping action through the Canadian International Trade Tribunal which will take at least five months before damage is halted. These growers are being hurt by this dumping today.

Will the minister take action now to stop this destruction of the apple industry in Canada?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I have met with representatives of the apple growers on two occasions, not just the apple growers in British Columbia but elsewhere in the country. The member failed to point out that the reason we face this problem is because the Canadian apple growers lost a case earlier. The result of this is that they must now show actual damage before we can again take up the case and come to what we hope will be a successful conclusion.

It is important for the member and the House to recognize that to rush in before we have adequate facts to prove our case, having lost the first case, would be extremely unwise. Therefore we are working with the apple growers to develop the best possible case so that the next time we go forward we will not in fact lose as we have before.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue will recall that at a recent Chamber of Commerce meeting in Penticton he expressed concerns for the apple producers of Canada. He will also recall that he stated that once proof of damage was supplied to his department, immediate action would take place. I remind the minister that that information was supplied early in April by the fruit growers.

Can the minister please tell this House today when Canadians will see his government take action?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member is certainly correct in his premise. I and all members of this government are very concerned about the plight of Canadian fruit growers, particularly apple growers, faced with the American competition that is flooding across the border. He is also correct in stating that we will proceed as soon as we believe we have a case that can be won.

I ask the hon. member as I asked him on a previous occasion, in Kelowna, whether he wishes us to take the risk of a second loss or whether he would like to make sure that we have our case in hand and a case that can be won before we go to an international trade tribunal.

* * *

(1500)

OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT TAX CREDIT

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, certain members opposite have stated that the Minister of National Revenue is retroactively disallowing the overseas employment tax credit to certain Canadians.

On page 3564 of *Hansard* the member for Calgary West stated: ''This is a shameful way for the Minister of National Revenue to accomplish his goal of closing so–called tax loopholes''.

What assurances can the minister offer us that he is not making retroactive tax grabs?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain for his question which allows me to state unequivocally that there have been absolutely no legislative changes, retroactive or otherwise, to the overseas employment tax credit.

The statement he quoted by another member is in fact incorrect. This credit was introduced to make Canadian companies more competitive when bidding on foreign contacts. The object is to ensure that Canadian companies bidding on foreign contracts have every incentive to hire Canadians and provide jobs to this country. It was never intended to give anyone a tax holiday because they happen to work for a foreign parented corporation with a branch in this country.

What is happening is that there is a disallowance of ineligible tax credit claims and a normal reassessment in accordance with the law.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean–Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, lands used by the armed forces, that is the bases, the training sites and

the ranges, are likely to be contaminated by specific substances relating to military uses, which is affecting the quality of our environment.

My question is for the Minister of Defence. Can the minister tell us whether his department has a specific policy dealing with military land decontamination?

[*English*]

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the hon. member has raised this question because he states the problem accurately.

As the Department of National Defence extricates itself from certain facilities across the country where there have been target practices there is considerable environmental damage. In the case of Ipperwash we are discussing the cleanup procedure with the natives who have claim in the area and we will be spending a lot of money trying to bring that particular site back to its original form.

We also have a problem in Calgary. We moved the Lord Strathconas to Edmonton. One of the reasons was to get off the native lands there but there will be some cleanup that will have to be done.

We did make an announcement a couple of weeks ago in the expansion of the supply depot in Montreal for a $26 million state of the art cleanup of the soil contaminated in Montreal because this government is totally committed to proper care of our environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean–Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the minister for his answer. I would like the minister to inform us about the number and the type of interventions that are being made necessary by the cleanup of military lands on Canadian territory. And I would also like the minister to table, if possible, the policy on environmental protection for military lands.

[*English*]

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly make available to the hon. member all kinds of information on how the department follows this cleanup to ensure that we leave the land environmentally safe.

In effect I think we have demonstrated by the previous answer that we have an ongoing program of trying to ensure that any lands the department has used over the years that have been contaminated are returned to their original state.

JUSTICE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The figures released last week by Elections Canada proved once again big spenders cannot buy Canadian voters.

Now that the Charlottetown accord outcome has been reinforced by these results will the government save tax dollars and drop its appeal of the gag law?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am replying as government House leader.

This issue is an important one and because it is important I think it deserves to be tested in the courts.

I understand the hon. member's concerns. I will review this matter with the Minister of Justice but I continue to believe there is an important issue to be dealt with.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, this has already been tested in one court but the important question is has the government estimated the cost to taxpayers involved in this appeal and if so will it table these figures?

(1505)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Justice to look into that.

I ask the hon. member and other members of this House to consider the cost to the Canadian economy and to the Canadian population generally if it is possible for wealthy groups to influence the election unduly and not be under the same kinds of constraints as political parties. This is an issue that deserves to be considered.

I do not know why the hon. member does not want to have that done if he is concerned about democracy in this country.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, during the budget speech the Minister of Finance said the government is committed to sustainable development. The minister went on to say that the government is establishing a task force to identify barriers and disincentives to sound environmental practice.

I would like to ask the Minister of the Environment what the status of this task force is.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to sustainable development. Both the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of

Finance have committed themselves to set up this task force on sustainable development as soon as possible.

As a first step they have directed both their ministries to make it a priority. As a second step a meeting will be convened of all the interested stakeholders to discuss terms of reference, following which this task force will be set up.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in our gallery of Juan Manuel Eguiagaray Ucelay, Minister of Industry and Energy of Spain.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, earlier, you handed down a ruling which I accept and respect and which we will abide by in the future, but I would appreciate some additional explanations.

The Speaker: Order, please. I reread all the exchanges which took place, and my decision was reached after spending an entire weekend considering the issue.

If the hon. member would like further information, first of all, I would ask him to read my ruling, and if he has any questions he would like to ask me in my chambers or perhaps would like to ask the Clerk, he is welcome to do so, but the point has been made and the Chair's decision stands.

Is this the only point the hon. member wishes to make?

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to question your ruling. Not at all. I simply said first of all that we respected this ruling, but it will lead to your making another decision, and that is what I wanted to say, if you are prepared to entertain the following question.

You said in your ruling, which we accept, that a minister could answer only on a subject related to his jurisdiction. You added that the minister should not answer questions which do not relate to his jurisdiction.

I would appreciate it if you would analyse the implications of the following. If your ruling is respected from now on by everyone in this House, does that mean that when we question a minister within his field of competence while referring to a statement made by one of his colleagues, does that mean that the colleague who is quoted will not have the right to answer the question?

In other words, for practical purposes, if I cannot ask a minister about a statement he made concerning the Department of Finance and he does not have the right to reply, does this mean that if I put my question to the Minister of Finance on a statement made by his colleague, the minister who is quoted would not have the right to rise in the House and the Minister of Finance would have to answer my question? That is what I would like to know, because there are implications for the ruling you just made, because usually, if we quote a minister's colleague, often the colleague will rise to justify what he said. Now you said in your ruling that he does not have the right to do that.

(1510)

The Speaker: Order! Hon. members can put questions to the Speaker at any time, but these are hypothetical questions. If there is anything arising from what we discuss here in Parliament, and if a member, any member, has any questions about what happened in the House, I would be glad to provide some answers. However, if they are hypothetical questions, I think the Chair should consider whether an answer is necessary. I would like to leave this for the time being. Any other questions?

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table a petition which has been certified correct according to our Standing Orders. It is signed by over 1,130 people in support of the request of the Garda family, of Châteauguay, for political refugee status.

These two people belong to the Hungarian minority in Rumania where, as such, they would be threatened and persecuted.

People in the Châteauguay riding do not want another Maraloï case. They want the minister to really meet the needs, within a reasonable timeframe, of all refugees, especially political refugees, who seek to be integrated into our North American society.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all the questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall all the questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SAHTU DENE AND METIS LAND CLAIM SETTLEMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C–16, an act to approve, give effect to and declare valid an agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada and the Dene of Coville Lake, Déline, Fort Good Hope and Fort Norman and the Metis of Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and Norman Wells, as represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council, and to make related ammendments to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Crowfoot had the floor before Question Period. I believe he has 15 minutes left in his speech.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, continuing with my speech on Bill C–16, I submit that a strong, economically self–reliant Sahtu nation will be a benefit to all Canadians.

This agreement also provides for a transfer of funds from the Canadian taxpayer amounting to $130 million over the next 15 years. This amounts to over $8 million a year. These funds are apparently designated for areas such as education, training and heritage preservation.

I am sure that Canadians would support this transfer of tax dollars for these purposes as well as the allocation of the land involved. However, I do not believe that the Canadian people will support these articles of the agreement unless there is a clear indication that the financial dependency on the taxpayer will end some time in the future.

This agreement provides no such assurance. In fact, it is clear from the agreement that the Sahtu's right to receive benefits from existing or future aboriginal programs will continue, therefore continuing the dependency which this government contends will be extinguished by this agreement. This defeats the purpose of the agreement itself.

(1515)

In this connection I would like to comment on an article in the *Globe and Mail*. According to a March 29, 1994 report the federal government has spent more than $50 million on self–government negotiations with native groups over the past seven years, yet it has produced only one agreement. About 400 native communities have entered self–government talks but most have abandoned the process because it is long, bureaucratic, limited and legalistic.

According to the *Globe and Mail*, this was the finding of a federal audit. The audit apparently described a host of weaknesses in the federal policy for negotiating self–government deals at the community level and concluded that the process is long, cumbersome and expensive.

Federal payments to native groups for the negotiations jumped by 500 per cent since the process began in the 1986–87 fiscal year. The department of Indian affairs has given $30 million to aboriginal groups for the talks and has spent a further $20 million on internal operating costs.

The department has spent $50 million creating a cottage industry around these negotiations, where lawyers and political leaders are the only ones who benefit while the deplorable living conditions of the individual aboriginal person has not changed as a result of the expenditure of these funds.

I suggest the weaknesses evident in the Sahtu agreement are a reflection of the flawed negotiation process identified by the federal audit. The interests of the Canadian taxpayer are not protected in the agreement.

Within the agreement the means exist by which the Sahtu nation can continue to demand that the federal government tax the wealth of Canadians for their use, in spite of the enormous land mass assigned to these people, the significant resource royalties agreed to and the multimillion dollar cash settlement provided.

This is neither fair to the Sahtu nation nor the Canadian taxpayer. It is unfair to the taxpayer because there is no end to the financial support demanded and unfair to the Sahtu people because it does not end their dependency on the Canadian taxpayer and therefore is not a formula for self–reliance.

A final area of concern to many Canadians is that this agreement creates entitlements and rights based on race and ethnic origin and will be as racist a document as is the Indian Act. The agreement will create special status for the Sahtu nation based on race and destroys the principle of equality of citizenship in that all Canadians ought to stand equal before the law.

This does not bode well for the future unity of our country. I believe the intolerable conditions faced by aboriginal people is due to the fact that for many years they did not have equal rights in Canada. They were discriminated against at all levels of society. Their language, religion and culture were suppressed. Job opportunities were non–existent for the majority of aboriginal people.

In order to correct the situation we must ensure they stand equal before the law. If we grant them special status, harmony and unity will not be the result.

While the rest of the world, including South Africa, is bringing the barriers down between races and ethnic groups, we are in the process of erecting them through agreements such as this. We saw it in the Meech Lake accord, the Charlottetown accord and we are seeing it again in this agreement. People are being granted special rights and privileges based on race and ethnic origin.

These rights and privileges are being paid for by the Canadian taxpayer. The formula cannot succeed in a multicultural society such as Canada. We must ensure that all Canadians stand equal before the law regardless of race, language, culture or religion.

This may be the greatest failing of the Sahtu agreement. It grants special rights based on race and ethnic origin and in doing so destroys the principle of equality of citizenship in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: Members should know that we have now passed the five hour point in the debate, so we now go to 10 minutes speeches and no questions or comments, starting with the member who is about to be recognized. The hon. member for Peace River.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I live in one of those large northern ridings where there are many reserves and Metis settlements.

I am very concerned about the precedent the government is setting with this overly generous settlement. I support the concept of self–sufficiency and self–reliance inherent in the successful land claim settlement process. In no way do I argue with the principle.

(1520)

However I encourage the government to dismantle the department of Indian affairs and let the people involved conduct their own affairs. This approach develops responsibility and places decision–making in the hands of those most directly involved.

Let us deal with the magnitude of the settlement. Seventeen hundred and fifty–five people will be receiving a financial package of $130 million, including interest. The land being handed over is equivalent to eight square miles per person.

I will put this into perspective. When my forefathers came to Canada in 1869, over 100 years ago, they received 210 acres of farmland in the Muskoka Lakes area for a family of nine people. By comparison each person, not each family, receives a settlement of 5,120 acres. With this kind of generosity I do not think there is any doubt how these 1,755 people will be voting in the future.

My own farm operation in northwestern Alberta, one that my wife and I have built up over 30 years, involves 1,280 acres, two sections of farmland. Compare this to eight sections per person in the settlement. I know a lot of farmers who would not mind finding out that their land was being claimed as a settlement and getting a payout under this generous rate.

Let us not forget that the original treaty agreement called for each person to receive just 120 acres, about 5,000 acres less than is now being proposed.

In addition to the more than generous settlement of land and money, the people involved will still enjoy their aboriginal status and still have access to all present and future aboriginal programs, as well as access to resource development.

My colleagues have spoken about the very great potential for resource development in the area. The agreement allows the Sahtu to have shared resource revenue resulting from development, something which most Canadians do not enjoy.

In conclusion, it is clear that the government is setting a very bad precedent, one it will be pressured into meeting in future claims. We all know a lot of land claim settlements need to be resolved in the future. I think this one is a very bad precedent indeed. It comes at a time when our country is staggering under a burdensome debt. We cannot afford this kind of settlement.

I suggest we send the bill back to the drawing board. The government can do better. It must do better.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose the rubber stamping of this massive, open–ended and precedent setting agreement with the people of the Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories called the Sahtu Dene and Metis comprehensive land claim agreement.

First let me state that I am strongly in favour of prompt settlement of native land claims, as well as encouragement toward self–government on a tribe by tribe basis.

Why then would I oppose Bill C–16? It is for the following reasons. First, because the agreement is a blank cheque, a giveaway, of non–renewable natural resources plus resource royalties which belong to all the people of Canada.

Second, instead of simply protecting aboriginal rights and providing a municipal type ownership of major settlement areas, this is a massive transfer of land in fee simple ownership to a very tiny percentage of our national population.

Third, it is a complex, open–ended agreement with a number of provisions no sensible person should sign regarding his own personal affairs, let alone the affairs of the nation.

Regarding resources, the sparsely settled basin of the Mackenzie River today largely remains a unexplored and underdeveloped treasure trove. Although an oil glutted Canada turned down the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in 1977 and passed a 10–year moratorium, future developments and future needs of a resource starved nation may yet see us looking toward this region as a major transportation corridor, with the addition to tugs, freight barges and native fishing boats plying a river whose volume of fresh water is surpassed in Canada only by the St. Lawrence.

(1525)

The Mackenzie basin's largely unknown mineral resources nevertheless have inspired the mining rushes of Yellowknife, the Great Bear Lake and the Canol project for oil and gas.

Government policies today are seriously injuring a once mighty mining industry, but a wiser future government might once again see thousands of jobs in resource development in the Mackenzie basin whose already known riches include Yellowknife's gold and possibly diamonds, Uranium City and Echo Bay's uranium, the tungsten of Flat River and Faro's lead and zinc, in addition to the petroleum of Norman Wells and the Athabasca tar sands.

As a miner and prospector, I challenge the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Natural Resources to tell the people of Canada how many millions of dollars in non–renewable resource wealth this agreement gives away forever by ceding mineral rights to 1,800 square kilometres of a mineral rich Mackenzie basin to the 982 adults and 773 children of the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

In addition to 15 annual cash payments of between $3.8 million and $9.6 million in 1990 dollars; in addition to a percentage of oil and gas royalties received by the government within the settlement area and including the Norman Wells oil field operated by Esso; these two ministers are prepared to hand the 982 adults and 733 children a blank cheque for mineral resources.

I would be intrigued to learn when in aboriginal history oil and gas and other mineral exploration development became an aboriginal right.

My second objection to Bill C–16 is that the agreement takes away from common ownership by all the people of Canada, an area larger than the combined land mass of Vancouver Island plus the Fraser Valley plus the Okanagan Valley where I live and hand this entire area over in fee simple ownership once again to 982 adults and 733 children.

As I stated, I am strongly in favour of settling native land claims promptly and encouraging our aboriginal people to move toward self–government on a tribe by tribe basis. I would have no objection to an agreement recognizing special rights of the Sahtu Dene and Metis to such renewable resources as hunting and fishing as carried on in native communities prior to colonial contact.

I might even see myself agreeing as part of self–government for these people a municipal type ownership being vested in the appropriate bands regarding their major settlement areas of Fort Good Hope, Colville Lake, Deline, Fort Norman and Norman Wells.

However according to a brief prepared by Melvin Smith, Q.C.: ''No court in Canada of which I am aware, has decided that an aboriginal interest in land goes so far as to entitle aboriginal people to fee simple or full ownership''.

My colleagues and I in the Reform Party on behalf of all the people of Canada are opposed to settling native land claims by handing over the fee simple ownership of massive chunks of land. We believe it would be far more appropriate for this House, as guardians of the rights of all Canadians, including generations yet unborn, to give native people special rights to hunting and fishing and to guarantee native people special representation on all governmental bodies having jurisdiction over water use and land use in land claim areas. It is more than excessive. We believe it is foolhardy and contravenes the right to equality of treatment for all citizens of this enormous country to hand over so much land in fee simple ownership.

(1530)

Moving on to my third point, I see this agreement as having many serious flaws. For example there is a map accompanying this agreement which gives the impression that a certain specific piece of land has been decided upon. This is simply not true.

Appendix C to the agreement goes into some detail to describe the process for land selection which allows the Sahtu Tribal Council and the government to pursue the process of land identification and selection. In other words, this bill is asking Parliament to endorse giving away a huge tract of land which has not yet been specifically defined.

Pages 119 and 120 of the agreement are similarly open–ended. Section 26.4 merely appoints a working group to consider and make recommendations regarding a list of heritage places and sites. Also page 120 is blank, except for this note: ''Sahtu Dene and Metis sacred sites. To be completed by parties''.

Can signing this open–ended agreement be considered proper guardianship? Can signing this agreement be considered careful stewardship of a land which belongs today to our grandchildren? I say no.

Another aspect of this agreement which I find troubling is the multiplication of quasi–governmental boards. For example it will create renewable resource councils for each community. It will also create boards for renewable resources, for land use planning, for surface rights, for reviewing environmental

impact as well as land and water boards. Of course, there is an arbitration board.

I an told this government plans to introduce later in 1994 the Mackenzie River resource management act. This will spawn even more boards and panels to co–ordinate all those other boards and councils and panels and to regulate land and water uses that cross the settlement areas.

In view of the fact there are only 982 adults in the Sahtu Dene and Metis, one might be forgiven for wondering who will be left to carry on the traditional native pursuits of hunting, fishing and trapping when they are going to have so many councils and boards and panels to sit on?

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time with the 10–minute limit has expired. I wonder if he wishes to seek unanimous consent to go on a bit longer.

Is there unanimous consent to let the member complete his remarks?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Stinson Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the answer is that probably a significant part of the cash payment going to these natives supposedly for their good will be used to hire white lawyers and social workers and negotiators and other greedy hangers–on of the so–called Indian industry to deal with this agreement's miles of red tape.

Finally, in regard to future self–government for these people, this agreement provides a framework of sorts in appendix B. But it also says that in case of disputes this agreement takes precedence over future self–government agreements.

Also, according to the Indian affairs minister, it takes precedence over other federal, territorial and municipal laws as stated in *Hansard* on April 25. I believe it is wrong to set a precedent whereby any native land claim agreement should be allowed to trample all existing federal, territorial or provincial laws and municipal laws in the land claim area.

In conclusion, I wish to extend my personal best wishes to the Sahtu Dene and Metis people in their efforts to obtain a prompt, just settlement of their land claims. I can see that many people have spent many hours and much effort on this agreement, but I strongly object to some of its basic principles.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, in participating in this debate today as this House examines the wisdom of supporting Bill C–16, the Sahtu land claim agreement, I have been fortunate in having the benefit of hearing the many thoughtful, sincere and well–informed arguments made by members from all parties. I would like to acknowledge their contribution to this debate and thank them for it. Their perspectives have been a great help to Canadians in weighing this initiative, the Sahtu land claim agreement.

(1535)

It is always difficult to express any reservations about such an initiative. As we have seen already in this debate to do so brings down swift charges of lack of compassion, fairness and generosity.

I doubt if any representative of the people of Canada cares to be depicted in such harsh terms. However, someone surely has the duty and obligation to weigh agreements such as this in a thoughtful and reasoned way, especially since the well–being of the people directly affected, the people represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council, is an issue. In addition the interests of all Canadians, the 27 million people whose welfare is entrusted to the 295 representatives chosen to sit in this Chamber must also be weighed and considered.

It is plain to see that many of Canada's native peoples live in social and economic conditions that are appalling in a country with the third highest standard of living in the entire world. There has been a little verbal sparring about whether these individuals would now be enjoying a pastoral existence of self–sufficiency if they had been left as the sole inhabitants of this vast land that we know and love as Canada.

The present reality is that Canada is home to more than 27 million people from many other lands due to a policy of immigration that has been maintained by Canadian governments from the very first one to this present one. The process of immigration will not be reversed. Our duty therefore is to make decisions on behalf of all Canadians that are good and right and just and in light of current and foreseeable future realities.

For decades Canada's decision makers have attempted to ensure that the needs and aspirations of Canadians of native origin are met and looked after by the creation of a huge bureaucracy costing in excess of $10 billion each year. That is over $10,000 per capita for Canada's 997,000 aboriginals. Unfortunately very little of this money actually reaches the individuals for whom it was intended. Instead, it is used to fuel an ever growing bureaucracy.

It is painfully evident this multiplication of tax funded bureaucrats, advisors, consultants, lawyers, studies, programs, grants and politicians has done little to assist the plight of the vast majority of native peoples. Instead, a deplorable state of dependency, surrender of initiative and erosion of pride and values has resulted.

Does the agreement before us resolutely and energetically redress this ineffective approach of the past? No, not at all. Instead, it leaves in place the approaches that have allowed the present state of affairs and then incredibly adds to them with yet more boards and councils.

Will self–esteem and initiative be restored to the Sahtu people through receiving a windfall of thousands of dollars to each individual? There is no provision, no process put in place that would permit this newly acquired purchasing power to be used to hold the Sahtu's own leaders and advisors accountable to them. I strongly recommend that this element of democratic accountability be considered an essential dynamic in the coming self–government negotiations.

Further, the agreement is silent on any obligation for the Sahtu to be subject to the federal laws of Canada, including the charter. This requirement surely ought to have been made explicit in the section dealing with the provision for negotiation of self–government agreements.

The biggest concern raised by this agreement is the precedent it sets. It is not difficult to show expansive generosity with land that few Canadians will ever need or use when the number of people compensated is minuscule, less than 2,000.

What happens when the same process affects a land base that is directly vital to the personal and economic interests of not only a significant number of Canadians but to municipal and provincial governments as well? How will the Government of Canada then be able to offer the same level of land and cash to significantly larger numbers of native people? If it cannot, will it be able to justify to those claimants a different level of compensation and settlement? Have these fundamental issues of fairness and equity been thought through?

(1540)

Since everything awarded to one group must be paid for from the resources and work of the rest, this is a question which also will affect the interests of all of us as the claims process proceeds with other native groups across the country. This is especially so because, as others have also pointed out, the settlement awarded here does not extinguish or even diminish the huge cost of existing programs extended to native peoples.

I would like to say that the federal government ought to be praised for many aspects of this proposal. It recognizes the need to move expeditiously to resolve such claims. A resolution of this nature is long overdue in fairness to native Canadians and for certainty to all. The cost of such settlements increases dramatically when there is delay in reaching agreement.

We would also applaud the fact that the people affected were directly consulted and their approval obtained prior to proceeding with this agreement. There is also a healthy element of self–determination in the proposed arrangement when it comes to resources and land use. I believe Canadians would support that especially if it could lead to self–sufficiency and placed the Sahtu on the same level of contribution to the country's well–being as other Canadians.

I also believe that so long as all Canadians are subject to the same federal laws and charter, an accommodation of community customs and values at the local judicial level will benefit the administration of justice in the region.

In short, there is much that is positive in this agreement. However I believe this government needs to accept the many expressions of concern about the specifics of the agreement and consider them in the constructive spirit in which such criticisms are intended.

The deficiencies in the agreement ought to be rectified and addressed before the bill is passed in this House.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

* * *

MIGRATORY BIRDS CONVENTION ACT, 1994

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (for the Minister of the Environment) moved that Bill C–23, an act to implement a convention for the protection of migratory birds in Canada and the United States, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

(1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as part of its plan to modernize Canada's wildlife legislation, the federal government has brought forward this day amendments to the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

In 1916 Canada and the United States signed the migratory birds convention to protect species of migratory birds common to both countries. Bird populations were declining rapidly at the turn of the century and in 1917, Parliament implemented the convention by passing the Migratory Birds Convention Act which regulated the hunting and use of migratory birds and prohibited their trafficking and commercialization.

The legislation also provided for the establishment of migratory bird sanctuaries. Today there are a total of 101 migratory bird sanctuaries in Canada covering roughly 11.3 million hectares of land.

[*English*]

There have been only minor amendments to the act since 1917. It has become suddenly outdated. It no longer provides our migratory birds with the protection they need. Seventy–seven years in the continental management of migratory birds have taught us some important lessons. It is time to put these

lessons to work and to modernize the legislation through early action on the bill.

The government's amendments to the act will update the definitions in the act. It will make them appropriate for migratory bird protection as we enter the 21st century. The act's prohibitions will be clarified.

The provisions of the act are being modernized, particularly with regard to administration and enforcement, because the old act no longer provides effective means or penalties to deter law breakers. This is especially true with regard to poaching and with regard to illegal commercial uses of migratory birds.

As is pointed out in the global convention on biological diversity which Canada signed, a strong and effective legislative program is an important part of any strategy to conserve and protect our natural resources.

[*Translation*]

Poaching is a serious crime. By killing protected migratory birds, poachers destroy a wildlife heritage common to all Canadians and to all inhabitants of countries which share, benefit from and depend on these birds. Amendments to the legislation call for increasing possible fines to a maximum of $25,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or both. Provision is also made for additional fines in an amount equal to the monetary benefits accrued as a result of the commission of the offence. Furthermore, under the proposed amendments, the courts would be able to make sentencing orders directed at the lawbreaker. The courts would be given increased authority to deal with lawbreakers. Provision is also made by issuing tickets.

Moreover, amendments provide for harsher treatment for illegal commercial transactions such as the sale of products, the sale of companion birds and the illegal organized hunting of large numbers of birds. Fines for illegal commercial transactions would correspond to the nature of the offence and could include the seizure of weapons, vehicles, boats, aircraft and even companies used by the guilty parties in the commission of the offence.

[*English*]

Updating the Migratory Birds Convention Act will help ensure that populations of birds are maintained at sustainable levels. Amendments to the act were developed only after extensive consultations with affected interested parties, including the provinces and territories, the aboriginal groups, conservation groups and other non–government organizations, hunters and ordinary citizens. The proposed changes have been requested by all provinces and territories and by many interested groups.

(1550)

The federal government carries out its responsibilities for migratory birds through a strong partnership with the provinces and territories. Provincial and territorial wildlife agencies assist in migratory bird enforcement. Various types of protected areas form one network for havens for migrating wildlife, whether they sanctuaries be federal, provincial or territorial in jurisdiction.

These amendments will strengthen that partnership even further. For example, with the agreement of the provinces and territories, designation of conservation officers for the purposes of enforcing the Migratory Birds Convention Act will be made easier. Any seizures of illegally obtained wildlife could be sold with the proceeds going to the provinces, the territories or the federal government as appropriate.

The amendments will help us become better and more effective stewards of our migratory bird sanctuaries as part of an overall concept of flexible landscape and ecosystem management. For example, at certain times of the year, such as the breeding season, quite strict protection measures might be called for, perhaps to prevent beach goers from walking on plovers' eggs. At other times of the year uses may be more flexible. Good law, good enforcement and good management can help us sustain our ecosystems.

[*Translation*]

Set in the broader perspective of both the Migratory Birds Convention Act and the convention it implements, this is one of the safeguards concerning one aspect in a series of global or hemisphere–wide partnerships to protect birds and other wildlife as well as their habitats.

These partnerships take the form of land conservation programs like the Canadian Wildlife Service Latin American Program in which Canada and its Latin American neighbours join together to preserve the southern habitats of our common visitors. They also include the Biodiversity Convention, a global instrument as I indicated earlier.

This spinoff from the UNCED recognizes the value of wildlife and its habitat for the world. And this value stems from the fact that fauna and flora are part of a natural heritage without compare, represent a major socioeconomic resource and play a growing role as a general health status indicator for increasingly stressed ecosystems. Gulls and cormorants are valuable for instance to show the level of environmental disruption in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region.

We must not forget the important contribution to our economy made by activities related to fish, fauna and flora. As a matter of fact, Statistics Canada indicated that Canadians and American tourists have spent, in 1991 alone, $1.4 billion on recreation activities involving water birds. Not only has spending in that area helped maintain over 30,000 jobs, but it has generated close to $1 billion in personal income and $743 million in federal and provincial tax revenues.

I would like to stress that only very minor changes were made to the Migratory Birds Convention Act. We must therefore proceed as quickly as possible with these amendments.

[*English*]

The provisions of the act are being modernized particularly with regard to administration and enforcement because the old act no longer provides the effective means of penalties to deter law breakers. This is especially true with regard to poaching and illegal commercial uses of migratory birds. As pointed out in the global convention on biological diversity which Canada has signed, a strong and effective legislative program is a key part of any strategy to conserve and protect natural resources.

(1555)

Therefore the government's amendments to the act will update definitions in the act. It will make them appropriate for migratory bird protection as we enter the 21st century. The act's prohibition will be clarified.

I urge all members of the House, regardless of political party, to support the bill very strongly. It represents a big step forward in our common goal toward sustainable development.

[*Translation*]

I hope that all the hon. members of this House will strongly support this bill.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, as assistant critic for the environment and sustainable development, it is a pleasure for me to speak on Bill C–23.

This bill seeks to modernize and update a law dating back to 1917. To understand it better, I think that we have to go back a little into our history and look at the situation at the turn of the century. In the early 1900s, there was considerable exploitation of migratory birds and trade in them. As a result, their numbers dropped drastically. The need to intervene to end this illicit trade and to protect the species was increasingly urgent.

In 1916, Canada and the United States signed the Migratory Birds Convention. The next year, in 1917, Parliament passed the Migratory Birds Convention Act. The provisions of this Act seek to regulate the hunting of migratory birds and to prevent traffic and trade in them.

Through permits, this law controls the use made of migratory birds. Several aspects of the 1917 law are obsolete today. For example, the penalties provided in the Act are no longer what society is entitled to expect. Fines from $10 to $300 are provided for infractions. Bill C–23 as presented today increases these penalties very significantly.

Amounts of up to $5,000 and even $25,000 provided in clause 13(1) will deter poachers, we hope. The evolution of our society and the example of penalties alone show the importance of updating and modernizing this law, of strengthening the enforcement rules and clarifying the procedures.

For us in the Bloc Quebecois, several aspects of this law are of great interest. As I said in the introduction to my speech, it was very necessary to update the legislation. In particular, we hope to add that not only birds, their eggs and nests are protected but also their embryos and tissue cultures.

We think that this provision is essential; given the evolution of biotechnology and the amazing possibilities that exist or will exist in this regard, this provision is most desirable. Clearly, however, such a scientific achievement was unimaginable in 1917 and the law could not include such a clause.

According to various environmental groups, millions of wild birds are illegally captured, poisoned or driven from their nests throughout the world. Therefore it is appropriate for us to legislate in this way in view of this phenomenon.

We learned in the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* last January and in *La Presse* that 1,000 of 9,600 bird species were in danger of extinction; that is, more than 10 per cent of our birds could disappear very soon. We agree that the situation is urgent.

(1600)

An article in the March 24 issue of *La Presse* contained some comments on the seriousness of the situation. The author showed that 70 per cent of existing species in the world are in decline. According to one study he quotes, the illegal trade in wild birds is a growing threat to the species, especially in Southeast Asia.

World Watch, an American magazine, gives some of the reasons why the number of birds is decreasing in Canada and throughout the world, and I quote: ''Most bird species are in decline because the natural balance is upset by the global expansion of mankind''.

Of course, the problems caused by deforestation due to farmland expansion or urban spread, industrial and domestic pollution are but a few of the factors contributing to the declining number of birds in Canada and throughout the world. In North America alone, deforestation may have caused the alarming reduction in bird population in 250 species breeding on its territory.

As I said earlier, we must speak up on the illegal trade in birds. According to a study by the World Wide Fund for Nature, this lucrative trade is growing by leaps and bounds. In the last 20 years, 2,600 species have been identified among those traded. This commercial activity is flourishing in Southeast Asia. To the

five million birds traded each year must be added an estimated three million in China.

We are in a position to realize that this kind of trade affects much more than our two countries. We are legislating on a bilateral Canada–U.S. solution but we must also see the problem as a whole.

Serious allegations have led us to consider this problem from an international standpoint. Some airlines will not transport wild birds. That is fine. However, the article from the WWF goes on to say: ''Singapore proclaimed itself the hub of this trade for the whole region''. Because of loopholes in the legislation, wild birds illegally exported from Indonesia, Thailand or Malaysia become legal goods when they go through Singapore.

You might say we are a long way from our bill on migratory birds in Canada and in the United States, but we are not. Environmental problems such as acid rain, the ozone layer, dangerous goods and many others know no boundaries. And the impact here of these various problems require us to take a stand.

Clearly, Bill C–23 is a positive measure in this context. We cannot oppose a good initiative. However, the international scope of the problem probably requires a worldwide approach as well.

It is because problems related to the ozone layer have such an international dimension that the Montreal Protocol was signed with several countries. The issue of importing and exporting dangerous goods could not be solved with a national piece of legislation. Again, several sovereign states had to agree on regulations concerning the exchange and transportation of such goods. Canada could be the leader in this field and set, through an international convention, standards which would provide some protection to this species.

I will conclude by reaffirming my support to Bill C–23, but I also want to remind you of some proposed legal principles for environmental protection and sustainable development, which are approved by Canada.

Article two of these principles provides that: ''States shall conserve and use the environment and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations''. Article three says: ''States shall maintain ecosystems and ecological processes essential for the functioning of the biosphere, shall preserve biological diversity, and shall observe the principle of optimum sustainable yield in the use of living natural resources and ecosystems''.

(1605)

In article 8, we see that the States shall co–operate in good faith with other States in implementing the preceding rights and obligations.

These are only 3 of the 22 principles for environmental protection, as found in the Brundtland report entitled *Our Common Future*.

I would urge the Canadian government to look forward when it deals with environmental protection and sustainable development, but to keep in mind all the agreements already signed. In this case, we have no other choice but to protect the migratory birds. However, we should be careful in doing so not to impinge on other jurisdictions. Too often, our legislation grants too much discretionary power to the minister, who can choose to enforce only parts of the law. We do not think this is the case with this bill. That is why my party and I want the bill to be referred to a committee who will seek to improve it.

Together, let us protect the endangered species.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): I am very pleased today to stand and say that the Reform Party is in support of Bill C–23 at second reading. It is an act to protect migratory birds. Of course, we think of birds and wildlife together.

I have the good fortune of coming from a very wonderful constituency. Of course all members in the House say that, but my constituency is so wonderful that it happens to contain three of Canada's national parks. My riding has Kootenay National Park, Yoho National Park and Glacier National Park, which gives you an idea of the grandeur of the area I represent.

In addition, we also have an area called the Columbia River wetlands. The Columbia River wetlands are 180 kilometres long. They are comprised of a 26,000 hectare flood plain. I would like to read a short section from a brochure by B.C. Wildlife with respect to the Columbia River's hydrological cycle.

> The habitats within the Columbia River flood plain provide food, shelter and cover for an exceptionally large number of birds and mammals. Waterfowl comprising the most abundant and observable species group utilize the wetlands for breeding and brood rearing, for refuge during the flightless periods of the moult, and for feeding and resting during spring and fall migrations. Single counts have revealed more than 15,000 ducks in the autumn, more than 1,000 whistling swans in the spring.

I should say that I also have the good fortune of living just south of this area. I have seen these whistling swans in the lake in front of my home. They are absolutely beautiful birds.

> The rare trumpeter swan also appears in migration. Breeding Canada geese number some 1,200 pairs. Other birds sharing the wetlands are loons, gulls, terns, rails, bitterns, hawks, bald eagles, ospreys and 100 or so species of songbirds. Colonies of great blue herons comprising some 300 pairs constitute the second largest concentration in western Canada.

Up to 90 per cent of the elk, 70 per cent of the white tail deer and 15 per cent of the moose in the upper Columbia basin depend on these wetlands for their survival.

This gives us an idea of how magnificent and pristine this area is. Therefore I have a personal vested interest in Bill C–23.

At the conclusion of what I just read I mentioned the fact that there are also big game. We actually have about 25 per cent of the hunting in British Columbia for big game within my Kootenay East constituency.

I should mention it is not just an environmental issue although that is important enough, but it is also an economic issue. We have guide outfitters, taxidermists, sports shops, camera stores, saddle and outdoor equipment makers. In addition there are campgrounds, restaurants, motels, gas stations, automobile dealers, tire shops, grocery stores. All benefit from these wildlife resources, particularly during the fall hunting season when business would otherwise be slow.

We happen to be on one of the three western flyways. Depending on what happens with respect to the amount of water on the prairies, we may have up to tens of thousands of birds migrating overhead in the fall and again in the spring. It is indeed an absolutely magnificent area.

(1610)

The major reason I stand in support of Bill C–23 is because it is the foundation and cornerstone of being able to co–ordinate the regulators and the regulation.

Members should know that the British Columbia conservation data centre which is a section of the wildlife branch of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks in British Columbia has an exhaustive list of birds that are actually protected within our area. There are the western grebe, the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, sharp tailed grouse and long billed curlew. I could go and on with the number of birds that we are very, very proud of in our area.

I can report there is a tremendous level of co–operation between the regulators and the industrial users in my constituency. All of the forest companies are working in co–operation with the B.C. fish and wildlife branch. They are involved in doing cut blocks in co–ordination with that branch. In some cases they are taking as little as 30 per cent of the standing timber to come up with a particular kind of configuration for certain birds or animals. In other instances they are doing other things.

Often when thinking of the word environmentalist, speaking for myself I think of placards, protests, arrests, or civil disobedience. If we really want to see environmentalists anywhere in Canada, we should turn up at the rod and gun organizations in our constituencies. These are people who are going out of their way, putting their own blood, sweat, tears and money into preserving and improving the environment. In preparing for this presentation I took time to speak to four such groups.

One was the Kimberley Wildlife and Wilderness Club. It pointed out that with respect to migratory birds the biggest single item that has worked against them has been the inclusion of hydro power. I must admit I had always been a great fan of hydro power up until the time I started to look at this. The impact hydro power has had on migratory birds has been singularly devastating.

I mentioned blood, sweat and tears. The Golden and District Rod and Gun Club notes it has a gander lander. A gander lander is simply a manmade place where the geese can land, so it is called a gander lander. Over the past 15 years the Golden Rod and Gun Club has been involved in constructing between 100 and 105 gander landers. Five or six times during the winter months members go out and spend the whole day upkeeping and maintaining those.

In addition I spoke to members of the Elkford Rod and Gun Club. One of their concerns was with respect to snags. These are tall dead trees which are required for nesting for certain kinds of birds. I am happy to report that although a lot of them have been destroyed in logging operations for the protection of the people who are actually doing the logging, the B.C. forest service has just implemented a snag program. It is going out to the bush and identifying these snags and is taking steps to leave them standing so that they can be nesting places for birds. This is done in such a way that it is a safe process under workers compensation.

Members of the Sparwood and District Fish and Wildlife Association had two issues of concern. One issue of concern which I am sure all Canadians share is that whatever we are doing with Bill C–23 or any other bill, because this has the potential of overlapping on native issues, we take some time and see how those things relate.

The final thing they pointed out, which may come as a surprise to some people, is that they are actually having a population explosion of grizzly bears. There is an area down in the far southeast corner of my constituency, in the bottom corner of British Columbia, that is a remote area with a certain amount of logging and basically there are very few humans in that particular concentration. As a result the grizzlies have actually reached a point at which they may become a problem.

(1615)

These rod and gun club members are law–abiding citizens. They are committed to the wildlife, they are committed to the environment. Something that I do not understand, because I am not a hunter, is that they are also committed to hunting. Last time I looked hunters used guns.

These people as law–abiding citizens believe in safe storage. These people as law–abiding citizens follow all of the rules for

responsible use. These people expect me and other people in this House to stand up against the imposition of certain city values that seem to be pushing them into a corner.

Unfortunately the imposition of city values may come from the fact that many birds arrive in the city dead, packaged and in freezers and there is no recognition of what went into that dead bird arriving in the freezer, much less the enjoyment that these people have in a responsible way of enjoying hunting during the fall season.

We support Bill C–23 because it supports the migratory bird protection and finally we support it because it reflects the values of responsible, active, participating environmentalists, law–abiding Canadians.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, at the outset let me congratulate the parliamentary secretary, the member for Lachine—Lac–Saint–Louis, for his opening remarks and for having set the tone for this debate and also for having ensured that there will be a thorough examination at the committee level so as to provide for consultation with interested Canadians.

Also I would like to congratulate the member for Terrebonne and the member for Kootenay East for having put forward such interesting observations that will certainly add to the quality of the examination and also because they give life to what otherwise would seem a rather stultified and bureaucratic piece of legislation. It is not stultified. It is not a dull and uninteresting piece of legislation.

On the contrary, I would argue that this is a very important piece of legislation being introduced by this new government today in the House mainly for three reasons. One, it is important because the movement of migratory birds has enormous significance for our farmers, for the role that birds play in the ecological balance and in maintaining a control of insects in the open agricultural environment. That role of course is well known but it is never underlined and highlighted enough.

Second, to the urban dwellers the arrival and departure of migratory birds and their staying in Canada during the good season is a source of enormous pleasure. That pleasure is not limited to bird watchers. It is a well known shared interest that Canadians have for the presence of this magnificent species.

Third, the fact that our literature and our heritage are based on the presence of migratory birds is witnessed alone by the fact that we have found it over the decades desirable to produce banknotes and coins reproducing some of the better known migratory birds in Canada.

For all these reasons it is quite safe to assume that deep down in the subconscious of the Canadian psyche there is a tremendous attachment to wildlife and therefore the migration of birds means more than just what that poor term conveys. It is an attitude toward nature. It is an attitude toward wildlife and essential pleasure is derived from it which cannot be easily described with plain words as I am attempting to do today.

(1620)

For these three reasons I would say we are debating here in this House a piece of legislation that is significant for us and can have very significant repercussions for future generations of Canadians as other speakers have already highlighted, in particular the members for Terrebonne and Kootenay East.

This bill will allow for the creation of sanctuaries. It will ensure the management of areas important for the protection of migratory birds. It is important to note that at the present time we have in Canada some 101 bird sanctuaries protecting roughly 11 million hectares which are covered for that purpose.

If we look at the new act it is intended to broaden the definition of migratory birds. This is important because it will include sperm, embryos and tissue cultures. This is intended as a protective measure against development in biotechnology which may take place in future years. It is a very good clause that is proactive and of particular value.

Under this bill regulatory authorities will be established. One can only say that on the whole this bill is most laudable and very well prepared.

The contentious parts, however, that could be discussed and raised today relate, as is usually the case with these kind of bills, to fines and enforcement. Very briefly, I would like to draw attention to the fines which under the present legislation, before this bill comes into force, are a mere $10 to a maximum of $300. They are only levied upon summary conviction. Evidently there is here a vacuum that must be filled and we must say that this legislation is long overdue.

In the proposed bill the maximum fine will be $5,000 for summary conviction offences and up to $25,000 for indictable offences.

The question is are these fines really sufficient? I am sure there are a variety of views on this in reply to this question. In other words, is $5,000 adequate to deter someone from harming, killing or possessing and illegally trading protected species?

From the comments made by the member for Terrebonne I would be inclined to conclude that this fine is not enough, that the legislators should give the judge sufficiently broad range of fines and let the judge decide how strong the fine should be. However, the penalty should be as strong as it can conceivably be because it will also serve a purpose not just this year and next year but probably 10 or 20 years from now when this legislation is likely to be amended, but we do not know for sure. Therefore

the question of fines is one that raises a number of interesting questions.

The same can be said about enforcement. Enforcement officers will be appointed under this legislation. Their powers will be more consistent with other federal and provincial conservation legislation. Subsection 13 addresses this particular aspect of enforcement.

The question is whether a person who commits or continues to commit an offence for more than one day should be penalized or whether a limitation of one day is one that ought not to be deleted so that there is no reduction in the offence that is contemplated by the judge.

(1625)

I would be inclined to think the enforcement section needs a good examination by the committee to make it stronger. It is true that the amendments will become strong deterrents to those who would traffic in wildlife. There is no doubt that they read very well. We have to make sure that there is enough strength in the Canadian Wildlife Service and in the provincial affiliated departments to carry out what is in the legislation.

Therefore I must bring to members' attention a statement made recently by the Animal Alliance of Canada in which a recommendation is made to stop the continued erosion of the numbers of wildlife enforcement officers, that the current vacancies of five enforcement people be filled and the remainder of 29 person–years be completed to bring the enforcement officers to a level that was promised in 1991, which is just above 30.

One must wonder whether in a country as large as Canada with such a large federal jurisdiction it is realistic to expect an enforcement of this important legislation with only 30 enforcement officers or thereabouts. Evidently the answer is no and evidently we will have to address this very important question.

Resources must be allocated to enforcement. These 30 or so positions must be increased, otherwise Canada is running the risk of not being able to meet its obligations under this legislation, under the Cites legislation as well as the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act. That is quite a lengthy title for that matter.

There are a number of questions that ought to be put on record on second reading. I would simply reduce them to the following.

Is there sufficient power provided by this bill so that the present minister and future ministers can undertake all the necessary action to ensure the protection of migratory birds?

Is the scope of this convention broad enough now that Canada has entered into NAFTA? Should initiatives not be launched at the political level as well as at the technical level to broaden the scope of the Migratory Convention Act so as to include Mexico and both Central and South America since as well we all know the movement of birds does not respect boundaries?

This convention is binding only on North America. If the scope of the convention is not broadened, a number of species could be in danger in the years ahead.

Many of our Canadian species do straddle two continents. We have to understand that all wildlife is really world wildlife, not just limited to Canada. Our ability to enjoy the presence of migratory birds in Canada depends also on the ability of protecting the species in those regions of the world where they spend their winter.

Therefore, the Canadian songbirds as we know and appreciate them depend on the rainforests of Central and South America. This is a political message that we have to carry to the international fora to ensure that this convention is broadened to its largest possible scope. Otherwise Canada will have a very limited chance to improve the survival of the species in the decades ahead.

(1630)

We are debating today not just what would be the reality of the nineties but most likely the reality of the first half of the next century since this kind of bill does not reach the floor of the House of Commons that frequently.

In conclusion I would say that the changes proposed to the act are essential. They are very desirable. They are timely. We must work together to ensure there is a co–ordinated effort to achieve the protection of migratory birds.

We must ensure that the fines are a very strong deterrent. We must do our best to find ways to ensure the enforcement of the proposed act is carried out in every area of the federal jurisdiction at least. I suppose there could be excellent co–operation between provincial and federal services. We must ensure that the powers to create new sanctuaries are implemented and that the existing sanctuaries continue to be protected.

Finally, as I just mentioned and before I sit down, I would really make a plea to the Minister of the Environment to consider taking an initiative personally to ensure the scope of the convention is enlarged to include all the Americas and to provide the necessary protection in decades ahead.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38, I wish to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Mercier, social programs; the hon. member for Chicoutimi, electronic highway.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of the bill to amend the Migratory Birds Conventions Act. I commend my colleagues on both sides of the House for their sensitivity and support of the bill. In particular I support my colleague from Davenport who has examined the bill carefully and has put forward some very sincere concerns.

Along with the Canada Wildlife Act, this act urgently needs updating to come into line with current environmental legislation in both Canada and the United States. Many provisions of the act as it now stands are ineffective or are simply not in harmony with related federal, provincial or territorial legislation.

Today I would like to focus on how the bill will affect one particular group that is following the updating process very closely, and that is Canada's First Nations. In fact the bill now before the House is only one of three initiatives in this area having particular importance for First Nations. The other two are the effort to amend the Canada–U.S. migratory birds convention of 1916 and the implementation of an interim policy on enforcement, especially the provisions on water fowl harvesting by aboriginal people.

The 1916 convention is a binational agreement governing the conservation of migratory birds in Canada and the United States. In our country the Migratory Birds Convention Act is the enabling legislation for the implementation of that agreement.

Regulations under the act control the hunting of migratory game birds during certain periods of the year. They also establish closed seasons to protect breeding, nesting, brooding and moulting birds at other times of the year.

These and other provisions complement measures taken by the United States, the provinces and territories, wildlife groups, the private sector and individuals to conserve this valuable wildlife heritage.

In many cases the different authorities and sectors have worked in close co–operation toward that common goal. One outstanding example of such a partnership is the North American water fowl management plan.

(1635)

In some areas of Canada, especially the north, migratory birds have traditionally been an important food source for aboriginal peoples. First Nations continue to rely heavily on this source at different times of the year. In certain cases activities that are protected by aboriginal rights are not covered by the provisions of the Migratory Birds Conventions Act. For example, the hunting by natives of migratory birds during the closed season from March 10 to August 31 or the collection of eggs. Of course aboriginal people also hunt birds during open seasons. Hunting migratory birds does more than provide food to First Nations. Traditional hunting activities have a great significance in aboriginal culture. Preserving that culture means preserving Canada's wildlife resources.

In its present form the migratory birds convention fails to provide for closed season harvest and egg collection by aboriginal people. That omission can be rectified only by amending the convention itself, a step that requires negotiation between the United States and Canada. As I mentioned we are seeking to initiate the necessary negotiations. They should take place later this year.

First Nations take a significant proportion of the migratory birds hunted in Canada. The latest estimates suggest that aboriginal people harvest between 250,000 and 750,000 ducks and roughly 350,000 geese each year. For ducks that represents 13 per cent of the Canadian harvest and 6 per cent of the total North American harvest. For geese the figure represents 32 per cent of the Canadian harvest and 12 per cent of the total North American harvest. Geese constitute a major food source for some aboriginal communities, notably along the Ontario and Quebec coasts of James Bay.

Given the magnitude of the annual harvest and our desire to safeguard the subsistence harvesting needs of First Nations we must work in co–operation with aboriginal communities. We need new partnerships to achieve the shared goals of conservation and management of ducks and geese.

An amended convention will promote such partnerships, particularly in the form of co–management agreements, self–government agreements and the wildlife management provisions of comprehensive claims agreements.

Already co–management with aboriginal people is being implemented for the conservation of caribou, polar bear and other species. The approach is generating the needed data on harvest which can serve as a basis for agreement on harvest objectives. We wish to build on this success in our future efforts to amend the convention.

Earlier at workshops organized through Canada representatives from government, aboriginal communities, wildlife groups and others discussed options for closed season harvesting. These consultations provided valuable guidance for the coming negotiations with the United States on amending the migratory birds convention to allow for hunting and egg collection by natives.

Of course the amendments to the convention and to Canada's legislation and regulations must respect aboriginal and treaty rights to hunt migratory birds. To ensure that they do, thorough consultation is a must. That is how we will achieve the best possible provisions for addressing aboriginal concerns.

Consultations are now under way on such changes to the convention with the full participation of aboriginal organizations, the provinces and territories, and environmental and conservation groups. It will not happen overnight, but discussions to this date have been encouraging. What is more, Canada and the United States are now working on convergent tracks as we prepare for formal negotiations.

Among the changes now under consideration by hon. members to the Migratory Birds Convention Act, one provision concerns the procedure for amending the convention itself. The bill before the House will allow the schedule to the act setting out the convention to be amended by order. The change will ensure that Canada can promptly fulfil its obligations to the United States, the convention and all those affected by an amended convention, in particular aboriginal peoples.

Until such time as the convention is amended an interim enforcement policy governs our application of the Migratory Birds Convention Act and the Canada Wildlife Act in the areas of closed season hunting and egg collection by aboriginal people. This policy gives top priority to conservation. It will remain in effect until after passage of the bills modernizing the two acts and until the convention itself is amended.

(1640)

The interim enforcement policy also stresses consultation and co–operation, two very important elements in any effort to build partnership for conservation with the First Nations.

There are pressing reasons for proceeding with the present amendments to the Migratory Birds Convention Act. It requires time to lay the groundwork for amending the migratory birds convention so that it takes into account the needs of aboriginal peoples.

While we continue to do that, however, we must safeguard the resources themselves. We must ensure that they are used sustainably. To do this Canada must act at once to update its wildlife and migratory bird legislation, strengthening enforcement and modernizing administration.

Any delay could jeopardize Canada's ability to ensure sustainable population levels for migratory birds and other wildlife. Let us consider the need to deal with the illegal commercial sales of murres and other migratory birds. That is only one reason we cannot afford to postpone these amendments.

For the benefit of Canadian wildlife Canada must proceed with the updating of the Migratory Birds Convention Act and its companion, the Canada Wildlife Act. At the same time we must continue extensive consultations with aboriginal people to meet their needs and concerns. The proposed amendments to both acts will in no way prejudice the outcome of these broader initiatives.

Canada's wildlife needs protection and it needs it now. That is why the government has introduced the bill now before the House to amend the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and that is why the bill deserves swift passage.

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, to help hon. members in considering the bill now before the House allow me to offer some background on migratory birds and Canada's efforts to protect and conserve them.

The Migratory Birds Convention Act provides protection for over 400 species of migratory birds in Canada. Among them are water fowl, sea birds, shore birds and song birds. In all it is a remarkably wide variety.

Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service works to ensure that all species of migratory birds will continue to survive and benefit future generations of Canadians. Safeguarding migratory birds requires many different measures because the birds themselves have such varied habitats and ways of life.

In every case, however, there are the same basic components to the strategy pursued by the wildlife service. It monitors bird populations. It informs Canadians about the status of birds and their habitats. It co–ordinates multi–party efforts to preserve habitats. It establishes and enforces regulations to curtail the abuse of birds.

In some cases research is needed to understand how human activity affects the chances for birds to survive. Sometimes special plans have to be made for the recovery of endangered bird species. The wildlife service deals with these needs as required.

In every case a broad ecosystem approach is essential involving many stakeholders. That approach is central to the work performed by the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The issues demanding attention are highly diverse. For example, tree harvesting may affect migratory song birds. Pesticide runoff from farms may harm water fowl. Commercial fishing nets may trap and drown sea birds. Spills of oil and other harmful substances may jeopardize entire sea bird colonies.

One crucial step that must be taken is to identify critical habitat for migratory birds not only in Canada but throughout their flyways. In this instance many of Canada's migratory birds winter in Latin America and the habitats must be protected. With this in mind the Canadian Wildlife Service has established a Latin American program to further Canada's interest in migratory birds wintering south of the U.S.–Mexico border. The program seeks to identify the needs of migratory birds so that they can be included in conservation planning.

To this end it relies heavily on co–operation with other countries and international organizations. That co–operation must be seen in the memorandum of understanding between the Canadian Wildlife Service and the American and Mexican

wildlife agencies to conserve migratory birds and their habitats in Mexico.

(1645)

The service has also helped established international initiatives. One of these is these is the international waterfowl census of the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau. Another such initiative is the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The network's objective is to identify and protect critical areas for the migration of shorebirds. Under this initiative the Wildlife Service has worked with countries throughout South America to develop an atlas of coastal shore bird habitats.

Here in Canada two hemispheric shorebird reserves have so far been identified, both of them in the upper Bay of Fundy. These have been twinned with three wetland sites in Suriname designated as hemispheric shorebird reserves in 1989. Work is proceeding to identify other important sites in Canada and to secure their designation and protection under the network.

Game bird species present a special challenge. They are an important recreational resource, translating into significant economic activity. At the same time we must see that this resource does not depreciate. In other words, we must ensure that it is used in a sustainable manner.

Canada manages migratory game bird species through an annual regulatory process for monitoring and controlling hunting. Associated with this process are population surveys. A hallmark of the process is consultation, in particular with the provinces and territories and with the American government agencies.

The Canadian Wildlife Services follows a two pronged approach in managing game bird species. One component of that approach is regulation and compliance; the other is habitat enhancement. Both efforts draw heavily on national and international input. Within Canada there is a notable contribution from the provinces and territories and increasingly from co–operative wildlife management boards involving aboriginal groups.

Internationally Canada works with the flyway councils set up to manage the birds according to their natural migratory pathways. We also work with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee.

To support the consultations of developing game bird regulations, status reports are prepared. These publicly available documents give information on game bird populations and explain proposed changes to the regulations. The status reports are distributed to many Canadian and American organizations with an interest in migratory game bird conservation and with reports these organizations are in a position to influence the development of regulations.

The Wildlife Service also publishes an annual newsletter entitled ''Bird Trends''. This deals with the population status of Canadian birds. A top priority of the Wildlife Service is promoting public awareness about migratory bird issues. This is the first step toward fostering the volunteer networks on which the service relies for data collection.

Together with the Canadian Nature Federation the service sponsors Birdquest, a public information and education project on migratory birds. Birdquest encourages a basic understanding of the ecology of a bird, populations, and it does this by teaching participants about bird identification, bird study and bird conservation.

Those who successfully pass through Birdquest qualify to join one of the service's volunteer based programs. These play a key part in supporting migratory bird conservation initiatives and they help the service identify problems and implement solutions.

More important, the Birdquest program encourages Canadians to become actively involved in initiatives that contribute to migratory bird conservation. One of the most notable initiatives to protect migratory birds is the North American waterfowl management plan. This unique undertaking offers a forum for international agreement on a broad range of waterfowl management issues. It also provides the focus for action to enhance waterfowl habitat.

Under this co–operative agreement a series of joint ventures are targeting species inhabited areas of special concern.

(1650)

In Canada the aims are to secure important waterfowl habitats throughout the country, to address the serious decline in western waterfowl populations, to initiate the collection of long–term survey data for eastern duck populations and to delineate and monitor the distinct breeding populations of Arctic nesting geese.

The north American waterfowl management plan brings together Canada, the United States and Mexico. It is a formal representation from Canadian provinces and territories as well as American states. Among its key contributors are the federal government, departments in Canada and the United States alike. It also involves many non–government organizations.

We can find broad co–operation in most of the activities of the Canadian Wildlife Service. With the United States the service works to conserve migrant songbirds through a program called Partners in Flight. With the aboriginal people, the service joins in co–operative wildlife management boards. With Canada's leading environmental non–governmental organizations, the service has a long history of joint projects.

Above all, with the provinces and territories, the service works to ensure the enforcement of the Migratory Bird Convention Act and to preserve ecosystems as habitats for wildlife and to tackle the problems of endangered species.

These are efforts that directly benefit all Canadians. Through the amendments to the Migratory Bird Convention Act it will be possible to reinforce these efforts and for that reason I support the passage of this bill. I urge all hon. members to do the same.

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, as a strong advocate of wildlife conservation I am pleased to speak in support of this bill to amend the Canada Wildlife Act.

Wildlife has a special place in our country. It is part of a heritage we all value. In the north many Canadians still earn their living by wildlife harvesting. Throughout the country wildlife related activity is a cherished form of recreation for an overwhelming majority of people.

Our challenge is to see that this heritage is passed on to future generations of Canadians. At the moment I am regrettably unsure that we will succeed.

Wildlife populations in Canada today are under considerable stress. More and more species are being designated as endangered and some populations are experiencing declines. But the outlook is not entirely bleak because while the dangers are greater than ever before, so is the support for wildlife conservation and so is our understanding of what it takes to protect and conserve our living natural resources.

Back in the 1970s when the Canada Wildlife Act was passed we thought mostly in terms of protecting individual species that were at risk and our efforts were limited by a failure to recognize the wider social and economic benefits of wildlife.

That recognition is now becoming more common. We know that wildlife activities make a significant contribution to Canada's economy. In hard dollar and cent terms we need to maintain our wildlife to maintain our prosperity, our communities and our traditional lifestyles. That is why close to 90 per cent of Canadians want better protection for our wildlife.

We also have come to recognize that working with individual species is not necessarily the best way to conserve wildlife. Certainly this is justified in the case where a particular species faces special threats. We have realized that each species is part of a web of life on which it depends and which it helps sustain. Tear apart that web and many species may no longer be able to survive. Patiently mend the web and you may help save not one but dozens of species.

(1655)

In other words, we have understood that the most effective way of ensuring the health of wildlife is by ensuring the health of the ecosystems in which they live. No creature can long exist outside its accustomed habitat. Our task, first and foremost, is to protect key ecosystems, to conserve essential habitat. This is how we can ensure that future generations of Canadians will enjoy the benefits of a rich wildlife heritage.

In 1973 our predecessors in this Chamber were far–sighted enough to know the value of habitat protection to wildlife conservation and they incorporated that approach into the Canada Wildlife Act. The act allows the Minister of the Environment to acquire lands for the purpose of research, conservation and interpretation. Under the act, 45 national wildlife areas have been established in the intervening years, covering 287,000 hectares of territory.

The areas are managed by the federal government in co–operation with provincial and territorial authorities as well as non–government organizations. They complement an extensive system of national and provincial parks and other protected areas which encompass much prime wildlife habitat.

Internationally as well we have seen a growing appreciation of the need for an ecosystem approach to wildlife conservation. That is what underlines the North American waterfowl management plan, the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance and, most important, the historic global convention on biological diversity adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992.

Among other things, the 1992 global convention calls for each signatory nation to establish a system of protected areas as a way of conserving biodiversity. To meet our commitments under the convention Canada must now redouble its efforts on this front.

We made a promising start in November of 1992 at the first joint meeting of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for wildlife, parks and environment. The tri–council meeting called for development of Canadian biodiversity strategy. It also gave fresh impetus to the effort to complete Canada's network of protected areas, including areas representative of Canada's marine natural areas.

That effort has been defined in different ways. At times the call was to set aside 12 per cent of our country's territory as protected areas. But more important than achieving a particular figure is protecting representative samples of the Canadian ecosystems. Inevitably that means protecting key habitat on which our wildlife depends.

The bill now before the House will improve our ability to do that. It broadens the definition of land in the existing Canada Wildlife Act to include both land and marine areas alike, out to the 200 nautical mile limit. This wider definition will put the administration of the act in line with the ecosystem approach. Under the amended act it will be possible to establish new

national wildlife areas protecting habitats where wildlife reproduce, as well as associated offshore areas in which they feed.

The more extensive our network of national wildlife areas the better will be our protection for wildlife. Already this network covers a diverse array of landscapes and ecosystems throughout Canada and they support such varied activities as hiking, photography, bird watching, grazing or haying, and hunting, all in a manner compatible with the wildlife conservation objectives of a given area.

Allow me to describe a few of the national wildlife areas in existence or shortly to be established. In New Brunswick this year we will see the designation of Portobello as the province's fifth national wildlife area. This designation will protect over 2,000 acres of wetlands where waterfowl breed and stop on their annual migration as well as the Old Growth Forest where moose, whitetailed deer and black bear still roam.

(1700)

In Quebec, Cap–Tourmente is an area that combines archaeological and wildlife significance. This site of the north side of the St. Lawrence River was established primarily to protect the habitat of the world's only greater snow goose population but it also contains remains of prehistoric as well as more recent times. Here Samuel de Champlain built a dwelling and a stable in the early years of European colonization.

In Ontario the Long Point national wildlife area forms a core of an international biosphere reserve. This fragile sand based ecosystem on the shore of Lake Erie contains unique habitats, including a significant portion of the remaining Carolinian forest and critical wetlands.

In Saskatchewan Last Mountain Lake is North America's oldest waterfowl refuge. Parliament first set aside land here in 1887 and this year it will be formally designated as a national wildlife area.

Yukon will get its first national wildlife area in 1994 with the designation of Nisutlin River Delta under the Teslin Tlingit land claims agreement. The area will protect approximately 5,200 hectares of inland river delta used by waterfowl as breeding grounds and a stopping point for their migrations.

In particular, it will shelter the tundra swan, a species listed as vulnerable with only 15,000 individuals in existence throughout the world.

Nisutlin is especially significant for the part being played by the first nations in its creation. In the Northwest Territories Polar Bear Pass has been the national wildlife area since 1986. It has also been recognized as a wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention and a significant biological site under the international biosphere program. This Arctic oasis supports some of the largest concentration of birds and mammals in the far north.

In the eastern Arctic huge numbers of sea birds nest at Coburg Island or at Nirjutiqavvik and it provides feeding habitat for the beluga, the narwhal, the walrus, the polar bear and three species of seals. A national wildlife area will be created there in 1994 under the terms of the Nunavut final agreement. The area will protect 3,450 hectares of land area and 14,350 hectares of water area for a total of 17,800 hectares.

The Inuit of the community of Grise Fiord will have a direct say in the management of the land use decisions affecting this area.

Far to the south of the island at the mouth of British Columbia's Fraser River, Alasken national wildlife area has been in existence since 1976. This is an important staging area for migratory birds, including the lesser snow geese from Wrangel Island in the Russian Arctic.

This is only a small selection from the list of Canada's national wildlife areas but it shows the variety and richness of these sites. It also shows the flexibility of a concept of wildlife area under Canada's Wildlife Act.

In Ontario's Long Point, for example, virtually all human activity must be closely monitored to avoid ecological damage. In constant, buildings standing at Alasken from before the site was designated now are used as offices of the Canadian Wildlife Service's Pacific and Yukon regions.

Other wildlife areas are open for many types of recreational activities, including closely regulated hunting, fishing and trapping.

(1705)

In other areas local native people continue to exercise their traditional wildlife harvesting rights. That flexibility is one of the keys to the success of the national wildlife areas.

In many cases the sites that we seek to designate are of great importance to particular communities and groups. Our challenge is to gain their support and co–operation, to find ways of working together for common goals, including the goal of wildlife conservation.

This is truly sustainable development at work. Perhaps the greatest value of our national wildlife areas is that they give us a model for sustainable development, one that we should apply more widely. This House has an opportunity of doing exactly that by amending the Canada Wildlife Act. I am confident that hon. members will appreciate the importance of this bill and will give it swift passage.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I listened with considerable interest to the presentation of the members opposite.

I am wondering if the member opposite is aware that the penalties under the migratory birds act are in many respects much more severe than any penalties envisioned under the Young Offenders Act. For those watching this debate on television who may still be awake, I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. Culbert: Mr. Speaker, first of all I will comment on the portion of the migratory birds act that you spoke of. Quite obviously those penalties you may consider overly severe. I consider them reasonable and severe in order to protect our migratory game birds.

As you know from the—

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate that the hon. member is new, but would he please address his remarks to the floor. We do not refer to other members as ''you''. We say ''the member'', rather than ''you''.

Mr. Culbert: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. Certain the comments that have come forth in the question are appreciated. We are well aware in this House in recent weeks of the concerns that have been expressed on the Young Offenders Act.

Members on both sides of the House have heard the replies with regard to those questions from the Minister of Justice. I am not going to try to second guess him. I will wait for the hon. minister to bring forth his proposals on the Young Offenders Act and how he intends to make those amendments.

As far as the migratory birds act, I am in support of it. We may have to strengthen those penalties in future years in the protection of our wildlife.

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in support of Bill C–23, an amendment to the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

I note that this act was written in 1917. I do not think millions of passenger pigeons were flying between the United States and Canada across Lake Ontario in 1917 but there had been millions of them before the turn of the century.

After 75 years it is high time that we revised this act and amended it where necessary. Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring* alerted all of us to the dangers of pesticides and herbicides among bird populations. We have to keep that in mind. The situation has certainly not improved since that time and more needs to be done.

I know we are working hard on whistling swans. I would still like to see some bluebirds in the spring. There is even a dearth of warblers. Canada has a particular responsibility in this regard. Hundreds of species fly north to nest in our northern wilderness each year and fly south again in the fall to take colour and song to our southern neighbours so that we particularly must be cognizant of our role in maintaining biodiversity with respect to birds.

(1710)

I would like to bring forward the results of an important survey made by the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1991. It surveyed 103,398 Canadians and it provides information on the socioeconomic benefits of biological resources in Canada. This was the third such survey since 1981 done by the Canadian Wildlife Service and some of the important findings are as follows.

In 1991, 18.9 million Canadians, 90.2 per cent of the population, took part in one or more wildlife related activities, devoting a total of 1.3 billion hours and $5.6 billion to these activities.

The majority of Canadians, 86.2 per cent, stated that it is important to maintain abundant wildlife and 83.3 per cent stated that it is important to protect endangered or declining wildlife populations.

On the economic side an estimated 1.8 million Americans visited Canada for fish and wildlife in 1991 and spent $842 million on these trips which provides us with a significant balance of payments in this area since that is five times the amount Canadians spend in the U.S. on such trips.

A second report is being prepared which will examine in more detail the impacts resulting from wildlife related activities on the Canadian economy in the form of income and jobs.

I quote from the Minister of the Environment: ''The conclusions I draw from this survey are that Canadians remain strongly committed to the protection and conservation of abundant and diverse wildlife and that spending on wildlife related activities makes an important contribution to the Canadian economy. Those are among the reasons why the federal government is dedicated to working with the provinces, territories, environmental groups and the private sector on initiatives such as wetlands conservation and the protection of Canada's biological diversity''.

Birds such as the golden plover and the Arctic tern travel thousands of kilometres twice each year from Canada's northern reaches to South America. Birds do not know anything about municipal, provincial or national boundaries. It therefore behooves us to do the best job we can in amending the Migratory Birds Convention Act to assure the world that biodiversity will continue and that our feathered friends will be here for many years to come.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take about five or ten minutes to speak on this bill.

I am in support of the bill and congratulate the minister and the parliamentary secretary for their work in this regard as well as all officials of the environment department.

I want to take this occasion to raise an issue of local concern, one that affects very much the citizens of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell with regard to wildlife, particularly migratory birds. Perhaps when I introduce this subject some members might think that it is trivial issue. I want to assure members that it is not. It is indeed a very important issue for the agricultural community of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*Translation*]

As you know, Canada geese spend the winter in the United States and come back in the spring to nest in Ungava, in northern Quebec.

(1715)

[*English*]

Until some years ago the migration route of these birds was somewhere around Kingston, Ontario, and the birds would land, approximately 120,000 of them, on Wolfe Island and from there move north flying approximately in a north–northeast direction. For reasons that officials of the Wildlife Service of Environment Canada do not understand fully to this day, the birds have changed their migration route and are gradually flying farther and farther east. They now fly between Ottawa and Montreal. That is approximately the route.

[*Translation*]

They first stop in my riding and then in the Papineauville area. In fact, there is a Canada geese festival celebrating these beautiful birds on their way north.

They are a magnificent sight and like all my constituents I like to see them fly above. However, there is a community in my area which, for obvious reasons, finds that less enjoyable, and that is the farm community.

As I said, the birds stop in our area and their number can reach 75,000 to 80,000 at once. If the area was forested, they would do little damage. Even in a corn field they would not do much harm. But in a field of alfalfa or tender grass, very rich in protein because they grow on rich soil, they can play havoc. The losses suffered by farmers in my area are enormous.

I have here a report prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture which puts the losses at $240 per acre, and we are talking about hundreds and hundreds of acres destroyed every year. On several occasions, I asked the federal government to help these farmers. Unfortunately, I never obtained anything with the previous government.

I believe there are three solutions or three elements of solution to the problem we have in my riding. First, I think the agriculture departments of the Ontario provincial government and the federal government should implement a policy for compensating specific site owners, a program similar to the crop insurance they have in Quebec. In other words, if one specific producer loses part of his crop, he should be eligible. The Ontario plan does not allow for the analysis of such local losses. To be eligible, losses have to be regional and of course birds do not land on a complete region; they visit one site, destroy 300 or 400 acres at a time, but not the fields around that area. Therefore, that plan should be modified.

Second, there is a problem with the approach used to control birds when they decide to land on one specific field.

[*English*]

Until about three years ago farmers in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell were given permits by Environment Canada to shoot down one bird. The farmer would receive a permit to kill one bird. After killing the bird he would turn it upside down, pursuant to instructions given by Environment Canada, and spread out the wings. They are very huge birds. With the bird turned upside down it can be viewed from the sky by other birds and of course they would never go near that farm for the rest of the season. That was working reasonably effectively.

Three years ago Environment Canada took the position that the birds were gradually dwindling in numbers and we could no longer afford to do that.

[*Translation*]

That might be true, but I have a problem with that. If it is true the bird belongs to an endangered species, how come hunting those birds is permitted in the fall? If all that is true, why not prohibit fall hunting? In the past, I never succeeded in getting my point across to officials in charge of those issues.

(1720)

It seems to me that if there must be control, it should be in the fall, when after all, it is a luxury to hunt them, not a necessity as it is in the spring when farmers should be allowed to shoot them. After all, perhaps only 25 farmers would be allowed to kill one bird each to avoid such serious losses.

Anyway, this was turned down. Instead, farmers were given, at great cost to taxpayers, guns and blank cartridges to scare them off. But, needless to say, these animals are extremely intelligent, over and above everything else, and once you shoot at them three or four times without hurting them, they are no longer afraid of your gun. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that farmers bought automatic propane guns that shoot once every half hour, or something like that.

[*English*]

Farmers in the area were explaining to me that for the first day the birds would leave when the shots were heard. On the second day they would leave about five minutes before the shots were heard. On the third day they would just tip their head up, listen to the shot and tip it back down again and continue eating. That is

how effective that particular Environment Canada fiasco was for my electors. All of this was a tremendous expense for the taxpayers.

Finally last year I thought we had the solution where Environment Canada offered to the electors of my area to establish a series of wildlife refuge areas.

[*Translation*]

Three areas had been designated as bird sanctuaries, one along the South Nation River, the other one near the Ottawa River, and the third one not far from Cob Lake, in my riding. Everything was planned, but unfortunately, the government withdrew its offer to supply funds. My constituents did not appreciate that at all. It happened under the former government, of course, not ours.

Still, material losses are nonetheless great, and that is what I want to bring to the attention of the House. As I said, to hon. members who deal with issues concerning the whole country, this may seem to be just a local and rather unimportant issue, but I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that when you lose—and I have the estimate here—when you lose $240 per acre and when you lose suddenly 200 crop acres, it is not very funny.

Several constituents of mine, several farmers in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell suffered losses because of that. There are two things I hope for. First, I hope that the federal government will convince the Ontario government to amend the crop insurance program so that these farmers can be compensated.

On the other hand, I hope that a solution will be found, either proposing sanctuary measures or restoring the program allowing each farmer to eliminate one bird every season, all the more so since, as I was saying, only about twenty farmers are involved.

I am not raising this point to tell you that I am not one of those who want to keep protecting that species, quite the contrary. However, I must stress that when people realize that no one wants to hear them, it sometimes happen that they take the law in their own hands. But there is no winner under such circumstances, because people will cause damage and will no longer respect these birds. What I want to do is make sure that that species will be protected. After all, they are a Canadian symbol and, what is more, they are very unique birds. I have been briefed about Canada geese.

[*English*]

For those of us who are English speaking, they are known as the Canada goose, a symbol of our nation until we put the loon on the dollar. Before that I guess the Canada goose would have probably been the most famous bird we had. It still is a beautiful creature.

(1725)

I want to raise these concerns because they affect greatly the electors of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. At this time of year I am deluged with phone calls from farmers who see their crops being lost because of the damage being done. It is the role of the government that makes these laws, laws that I support, to ensure that they are made in such a way so as to not sacrifice the agricultural community. Both can co–exist quite well if we put our minds to making sure that that co–existence does not mean that one community is sacrificed for the other.

It does not have to be that way. All we need to do is work co–operatively. I am confident that with people like the Minister of the Environment, the parliamentary secretary who is a very able person in the area, that we will succeed where we have failed before in preserving the crops of the farmers of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*Translation*]

And who knows, by establishing sanctuaries such as these, as we could, and as the department had suggested a year ago, perhaps we could increase the number of people who would go and see these beautiful creatures in their habitat. And the appreciation for these great birds would increase if we all worked together. That is, in any case, what I wish for, and I hope the department will examine that issue, which is very important for those I have the honour to represent in this House.

[*English*]

That being said I want to go on record supporting the initiative that is before us today and to again ask the government to think of the electors of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the problem they have in this area of wildlife management.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois–Rivières): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and thank our colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his speech. One can see how sensitive and knowledgeable he is about the subject.

I have a technical question to ask him. He mentioned a measure suggested which would allow farmers who suffer damages to kill one animal per season. I fail to see how this could possibly change or improve the situation, and I fail to see what impact this could have.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, that is an easy question to answer. When the program was in place, it had a very positive impact since birds which flew over the area and saw one of their own, dead and turned on its back to afford them a better view, would get scared. It is as simple as that.

That approach was so efficient that, according to departmental experts, birds would not go within about one kilometre of the site where they saw a dead bird.

When you study these birds, and I had the opportunity to do so since these birds are a problem in my riding, you understand how intelligent they are. In fact, they are so bright that, at the risk of repeating myself, they would only need a couple of days

to tell the difference between a real rifle and one that is used only to make noise without hurting them.

However, it is interesting to observe such a phenomenon and to see that these birds will do everything possible to avoid an area where they feel threatened.

I would like to say that this problem is different every year. Apparently, it has something to do with the heat of the earth. For example, birds base the speed at which they head for the north on the degree of thawing. If the earth does not thaw fast enough, they will stay in my riding for maybe three weeks. Can you imagine the damage they can make during that time. Sometimes, like last year, they only stay for about five or six days, because the earth warms up more rapidly. Maybe the frost was not so bad, or things were warming up more rapidly, or something like that.

After a short stay in our area, they resumed their journey to the north. Needless to say that, with the very cold weather we had this winter, I suspect these birds will stay a little longer in my riding this year, unfortunately for our farmers, but fortunately for bird watchers.

(1730)

That is probably why they will stay with us for a few more days, even though they have been in this area now for two or three weeks.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent to suspend the sitting until such time as the House is ready to deal with the adjournment debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The deputy whip may not be aware but I believe the House is ready to deal with the matters on the late show.

Mr. Boudria: I was not aware the members were already present in the House. That being said, I amend that to move that we proceed immediately to the adjournment debate and that Mr. Speaker see it as the time of adjournment.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

INFORMATION HIGHWAY

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi): Mr. Speaker, on April 25 last, I put a question to the Minister of Industry asking him to explain the absence of representatives of the cultural community on the committee in charge of defining the government's strategy for the information highway.

I also conveyed to him my concern over the fact that the provinces were not involved in the process. Today I would like further clarification to be provided with respect to these two questions.

I represent the riding of Chicoutimi. The Saguenay region was the first in Quebec to welcome a multimedia centre, an investment of $80 million which will result in 250 jobs. I feel concerned by the electronic highway.

In the Throne Speech and again in the budget speech, the government announced it had the intention of putting forward a Canadian strategy for developing the information highway.

As we all know, the government has appointed an electronic highway advisory board. This board has 29 members, including one from my riding in the person of Mr. Charles Sirois, and I am very pleased with that.

Among these 29 members are representatives from the cable broadcasting, broadcasting and telecommunications industries, but none from the cultural industry. But there are living strengths, creative forces and expertise only waiting for an invitation to share their vision.

The cultural community is structured. It has its own structures and experienced representatives. Why are they excluded from this process? In the name of what? The artisans of the cultural industry cannot be ignored when dealing with this issue.

Besides the establishment of an infrastructure per se, there is the content of the information travelling on this electronic highway. One of the objectives of the board is to strengthen the French and English cultural identities; yet the board has no representatives from the cultural community. There is a glaring contradiction in there. How can this operation be credible when the committee does not include any representatives of the cultural community, despite the extra dimension and the extremely important expertise they could bring? This is not a whim but a matter of representation. Culture will not be affected only indirectly; it is at the heart of the electronic highway.

Although the committee includes 29 members, the Minister of Industry did not appoint any representative of the cultural community. Industry, however, is well represented. They apparently preferred to leave out players who could have made a necessary, useful contribution.

Under its mandate, the council is being asked to deal with copyright and intellectual property issues and to come up with results. Is this not an admission that workers in cultural industries make a considerable contribution? Why are these players absent from the process defined by the government, then?

The Ostry report recommended creating a ministerial committee and provincial participation as well. The government ignored that. Instead, the electronic highway will be developed behind closed doors, with only one player and in the federal arena. Excluding the provinces and the cultural community is a bad start in designing the electronic highway.

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the concerns raised by the hon. member for Chicoutimi regarding the government's strategy on the electronic highway.

The government has already stated clearly that it has three main objectives in that regard: to promote job creation; to give every Canadian access to that highway; and to reinforce Canadian sovereignty and cultural identity.

[*English*]

I wish to assure the hon. member that the government was and continues to be very aware of the information highway's cultural dimension.

The advisory council will contribute to the dialogue on this subject. I believe we should all be appreciative that so many prominent men and women have accepted to donate their time and effort in this vital cause. By its very mandate the council will reach out to Canadians. In so doing it will help to identify key policy issues as well as to involve a wide range of stakeholders.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Chicoutimi said that the cultural community was not represented on the advisory council.

In selecting the advisory council members, the government tried to appoint the most qualified people, those who can best put their knowledge and experience to the service of all Canadians.

In that perspective, I believe that the government should be congratulated for appointing such remarkable Canadians to the advisory council on the electronic highway.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5) the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

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

(The House adjourned at 5.38 p.m.)

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Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS