



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 133 • NUMBER 001 • 2nd SESSION • 35th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

The House of Commons Debates and the Proceedings of Committee evidence are accessible on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Prayers

SECOND SESSION—35TH PARLIAMENT—OPENING

[English]

The Parliament which had been prorogued on February 2, 1996, met this day at Ottawa for the dispatch of business.

The House met at two o'clock, the Speaker in the chair.

The Speaker read a communication from the Secretary to the Governor General announcing that His Excellency the Governor General would proceed to the Senate chamber at 1.50 p.m. on this day for the purpose of formally opening the Second Session of the 35th Parliament of Canada.

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the Speaker, with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

• (1500)

And being returned to the Commons chamber:

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that in accordance with the representation made by the government, pursuant to Standing Order 55(1), I have caused to be published a special Order Paper giving notice of a government motion. I now lay upon the table the relevant document.

* * *

[Translation]

OATHS OF OFFICE

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-1, respecting the administration of oaths of office.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.)

[English]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House of Commons did attend His Excellency the Governor General this day in the Senate chamber, His Excellency was pleased to make a speech to both Houses of Parliament. To prevent mistakes I have obtained a copy which is as follows:

* * *

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE TO OPEN THE SECOND SESSION THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

February 27, 1996

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable Members of the Senate;
Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the House of Commons:*

A year ago when I became Governor General, I spoke about the generosity and the compassion of Canadians. I spoke especially of the unsung heroes, the volunteers and helpers who encourage and care for their communities.

Since then, travelling to almost every province, I have seen how much Canadians love their country and how generous and open they can be to those in need. I have discovered the great strength of those currents of generosity and compassion.

In the schools and the Scout troops and in every part of life, from the nurseries of the newborn to palliative care for the dying, Canadians give endless help to one another. Surely this must be the most giving of countries.

We are developing a new award to recognize the unsung heroes of Canada; and hundreds of Canadians have already put forward the names of their fellow citizens, to honour their constant help and their open hearts.

On the opening of the second session of this Parliament, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I make the following brief statements of government policy. The Prime Minister and Ministers will expand on this in coming days. Legislation and other administrative measures will follow.

The Address

Twenty-eight months ago, Canadians elected a new Parliament and chose a new government. Since then, the Government has acted to meet its commitments to the Canadian people. Ministers have insisted upon the highest standards of integrity and honesty in fulfilling their mandate.

The Government approaches the second half of its mandate confident that what unites us as Canadians is far greater than what divides us; certain that the values we share as Canadians are as relevant today as they have been at any time during our history; and determined to apply basic Canadian values and principles to the new policies and fresh approaches that are required to prepare ourselves and our national institutions to deal with the challenges of the 21st century.

Canadians are concerned about economic uncertainty, the sustainability of social programs and the unity of the country. The scope and enormity of the challenges are such that no individual, municipality, province or region acting in isolation can expect or hope to address them successfully. It will take the will to reason together and to pull together. Each of us must join with those with whom we have the most in common, with whom we share the most at the most basic level—at the level of values. And when we reflect on it, we realize it is with other Canadians that we have the most in common. And when we look at our history, and at our place in the world, we know we can solve our problems.

Ensuring Opportunity: A Strong Economy

A strong economy is the essence of a strong society. A strong economy creates the ability to translate into reality the values of equality of opportunity, compassion for the underprivileged and protection of the vulnerable.

Government has a necessary and essential role in facilitating change in society. Many Canadians are concerned about their security, and particularly their security of employment. The Government will work with the private sector and the provinces to make the collective investments required to produce hope, growth and jobs. Because government does not have the resources to do everything, it must be strategic in its approach. It must invest in people. The Government will focus its new initiatives on youth, science and technology, and trade.

Youth

Young Canadians want the opportunity to put their energies and talents to use. Young Canadians deserve a climate of opportunity. This must be a national objective.

It is time to harness the energy of the Team Canada partnership abroad between the federal and the provincial governments and the private sector to create hope, opportunity and jobs for young people at home. The Government will challenge the provincial governments and the private sector to enter into a domestic Team Canada partnership to create such opportunity for young people. In particular:

—The Government will announce measures to double the number of federal summer student jobs this summer. The Government challenges the business community and provincial and municipal governments to do likewise.

—The Government will work in active partnership with the provinces, the private sector and young people themselves to prepare initiatives to enhance youth job opportunities so that young Canadians can get work experience.

—The Government will challenge business and labour and all levels of government to work together to create new approaches to assist young people in finding their first job.

Science and Technology

To create enduring jobs for Canadians in the economy of the 21st century, investment in knowledge and technology is essential. The Government will establish guiding principles to improve the effectiveness and focus of the federal science and technology effort. In particular:

—The Government will make specific proposals to support technology development in the aerospace industry, in environmental technologies, and in critical enabling technologies such as biotechnology. Further measures will be taken to promote technology diffusion, including the launch of a Canadian technology network.

—The Government will support technological innovation by providing a predictable policy and regulatory framework for the information highway.

—The Government will continue to expand the access to the School Net and Community Access programs so that Canadians, particularly those in rural communities, will be able to use technology to increase their knowledge and access to each other and to the rest of the world.

Trade

Canadian jobs and growth depend heavily on our exports. Every one billion dollars of exports means 11,000 Canadian jobs. The success of “Trade Team Canada” demonstrates the value of working together to succeed in world markets and therefore create job prospects at home.

Further “Trade Team Canada” missions will be undertaken under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

To create jobs at home, the Government will announce new measures to enhance export development and financing, with emphasis on developing new products and new exporters and attracting new foreign investment.

The Government will continue efforts to expand NAFTA and will work towards more world trade liberalization.

Where there are trade disputes, the Government will spare no effort to promote and defend legitimate Canadian trade rights and interests.

*The Address***A Climate for Economic Growth and Job Creation**

In the first half of its mandate, the Government has taken steps to ensure that the economic and fiscal conditions are in place for sustained growth and job creation. The Government has made major structural reforms. The deficit has been cut. International trade and investment initiatives have been undertaken. Much has been accomplished. Canadians are beginning to see dividends, particularly with lower interest rates.

But the job is not yet completed. The Government will continue to take appropriate action to promote a proper climate for economic growth and jobs. In particular:

—The 1996 Budget will set out how the Government will attain its deficit-reduction targets, bringing the deficit down to two percent of gross domestic product in 1997-98 and ensuring that further progress will be realized in 1998-99 and beyond.

—The Government will work with the provinces to conclude discussions on sales tax harmonization and establish a process to replace the GST and provincial sales taxes with a national sales tax.

—The Government will introduce proposals to strengthen the economic framework with legislative improvements in the areas of competition, bankruptcy and copyright.

—The Government will introduce proposals to update legislation governing financial institutions to ensure that it continues to be relevant to the emerging needs of businesses and consumers.

—The Government will propose a modernization of the rules governing labour relations under federal jurisdiction through changes in Part I of the Canada Labour Code.

—The Government will ensure through regulatory reform that requirements are strong and clear, delays are minimized and activities co-ordinated between departments and between levels of government.

—The Government is committed to the economic renewal of rural Canada. The Government will address the problems facing rural Canadians in a way that is tailored to their needs. Rural Canada is rich in natural and human resources and faces different challenges than urban areas. The Government will move forward in the coming session to make sure that all Canadians benefit from economic prosperity.

Ensuring Opportunity: Security for Canadians

Economic growth is not an end in itself. Government has the obligation, in accordance with basic Canadian values, to ensure security for Canadians in a rapidly changing world. Our legacy to future generations must include the assurance for all Canadians, wherever they live, that there will be a modern and accessible health care system; that a helping hand will be available when a helping hand is needed; that a public pension system will be there

to support people in their old age; that our environment is protected; and that Canadians will be safe in their homes and communities.

A Secure Social Safety Net

The Government is committed to ensuring opportunity through a sustainable social safety net for the future. The Government will secure Canada's social union for the future and will adapt our federal arrangements as necessary to meet current challenges and to prepare for the next century. The Government is open to new ways and new directions to pursue our values. In particular:

—The Government will work with the provinces and Canadians to develop by mutual consent the values, principles and objectives that should underlie, first, the Canada Health and Social Transfer and, building on this, the social union more generally.

—The CHST consists of tax points and cash. The Government will announce plans to put a floor under the cash transfer component to provide a guarantee of continuing federal cash to the provinces. This will serve to secure Canada's safety net, particularly medicare.

Canadians attach high priority to our health care system and to the principles of medicare. The Government reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the five principles of the Canada Health Act. The Government will continue to work with the provinces to ensure the future of our publicly financed health care system.

Canadians expect to have secure elderly benefits and pensions available to them when they retire.

—The Government will propose to Parliament measures to sustain Canada's elderly benefits system for the future.

—The Canada Pension Plan will be made sustainable for future generations. Discussions are already under way with the provinces on possible changes. A joint federal-provincial paper setting out the problems and challenges facing the Plan has already been released for public consultation. And reforms will be legislated once the required provincial consent has been obtained.

Equality of opportunity is a basic Canadian value. It begins with children. The Government will announce measures to improve Canada's child support system, with the particular objective of helping single parents and low-income working families.

Security for Canadians means ensuring that people who are out of work can get help while they are unemployed and can get help to go back to work.

—The Government will implement a new Employment Insurance System beginning July 1, 1996. The Government will ensure that the legislation, while respecting the fiscal parameters of the proposed reforms, is responsive to the realities of the Canadian job

The Address

market and that the impact of changes does not fall unfairly on workers who are most in need of support.

—The Government will accelerate its current discussions with the provinces on labour market training and development to ensure the orderly withdrawal of federal activity in training, and to explore new approaches and the appropriate roles and responsibilities of each level of government for strengthening national and local labour markets.

Environmental Security

While sustaining the social safety net is an essential element of security for Canadians, it is not all. The quality of Canada's natural environment is a matter of national pride. Security for Canadians means sustaining our environment. All Canadians must work together to protect the environment. In particular:

—The Government will propose the modernization of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

—A federal Endangered Species Protection Act will be introduced.

—Legislation to ratify the UN Straddling Stocks Agreement and the Law of the Sea Convention will be presented to Parliament.

—The Government will promote the long-term conservation and revitalization of the Pacific salmon fishery and continue with the revitalization of the east coast fishery.

National parks are the heritage of a nation. The Government will seek agreements with provincial and territorial governments and with First Nations to establish new national parks and national marine conservation areas.

The solutions to many environmental problems lie outside our borders. The Government will continue to play an environmental leadership role both at home and in the international arena.

Personal Security

The non-violent character of our country—safe homes, safe streets—is also an essential element of security for Canadians. The Government will focus corrections resources on high-risk offenders while increasing efforts to lower the number of young people who come into contact with the justice system. The Government will develop innovative alternatives to incarceration for low-risk offenders. Criminal procedures will be reformed to better serve victims of crime.

International Security

In an interdependent world, security means taking an active role on the international stage. All Canadians strongly identify with, and take great pride in, the role Canada plays in the world. The Government will continue to work in the G-7, NATO and the United Nations for a more stable and peaceful world. It will pursue

a wider spread entrenchment of democracy, and greater respect for human rights.

In keeping with its commitment to advancing human rights and dignity, the Government will make the rights of children a Canadian priority and seek an international consensus to eliminate exploitative child labour.

The Government will pay special attention to addressing the growing crisis of confidence in the United Nations, which Canadians rightly regard as the most important multilateral organization to ensure international peace and security.

Canada will also do its part to help keep and build peace in Bosnia, Haiti, the Middle East and elsewhere.

A Modern and United Country

Canadians have a common history, a common collective experience, a shared territory, and institutions that are uniquely our own. The Government will act to preserve this heritage.

Canadians also agree upon the values and principles which bind us together and give us confidence in ourselves and in each other.

On October 27, the people of Canada came together in their own communities and in Montreal to demonstrate as never before the will to stay together. On October 30, the people of Quebec voted in a referendum to stay in Canada.

At the same time, the referendum result gave a clear message that Quebecers want change in the federation. This desire for change is broadly shared across Canada. The Government will act on a responsible agenda for change for all of Canada.

In the last two years, the Government has made significant changes in a number of areas. The Government will work with the provinces and individual Canadians to ensure that the Canadian federation is modernized to meet the needs of the 21st century. This modernization must be respectful of our diversity and be based on partnership and dialogue. Canadians want and expect governments to be flexible and to operate efficiently and effectively so that the country functions well. In particular:

—The Government will not use its spending power to create new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction without the consent of a majority of the provinces. Any new program will be designed so that non-participating provinces will be compensated, provided they establish equivalent or comparable initiatives.

—There are areas where, in the 21st century, the federal government does not have to be involved. For example, components of Canada's transportation infrastructure are being transferred to community-based groups, municipal authorities and the private sector.

—The Government is prepared to withdraw from its functions in such areas as labour market training, forestry, mining, and recreation, that are more appropriately the responsibility of others, including provincial governments, local authorities or the private sector.

—The federal government will propose to the provinces a much strengthened process to work in partnership, focussing on such priorities as food inspection, environmental management, social housing, tourism and freshwater fish habitat.

The federal government has an important contribution to make in preserving and modernizing Canada's social union so that the caring society remains Canada-wide in scope. In particular:

—The Government will work with the provinces and Canadians to develop agreed-upon values and principles to underlie the social union and to explore new approaches to decision making in social policy.

—The Government will continue to protect and promote unhampered social mobility between provinces and access to social and other benefits, and will work with the provinces to identify new and mutually agreed approaches.

The federal government has a major role to play in strengthening the Canadian economy and the Canadian economic union. The Government will work with the provinces to take concrete steps to further improve the functioning of the Canadian economic union. In particular:

—The Internal Trade Agreement, which came into effect in July 1995, must be improved. The government will work with the provinces and the private sector to achieve a much more open agreement.

—The Government is prepared to work with the provinces and other partners to reduce or eliminate remaining barriers to labour mobility.

—The Government is prepared to work with interested provinces towards the development of a Canadian Securities Commission, a single food inspection service, and a national revenue collection agency.

The Government welcomes public participation in the debate about Canada. It will encourage Parliament to reach out to Canadians to seek their views on the specific components of an agenda for change.

A First Ministers meeting will be called in the months ahead to discuss how governments can better work together for job creation in Canada, how to secure the social safety net and how to put into place a common agenda for change to renew Canada.

The Government intends to focus its energies on positive action to prepare Canada for the 21st century. The Government welcomes

The Address

the commitment of the new government of Quebec to focus all its energies on the real problems of its citizens. The Government will work in collaboration with the Government of Quebec and all provincial governments on an agenda of economic renewal and job creation.

But as long as the prospect of another Quebec referendum exists, the Government will exercise its responsibility to ensure that the debate is conducted with all the facts on the table, that the rules of the process are fair, that the consequences are clear, and that Canadians, no matter where they live, will have their say in the future of their country.

The Government recognizes that national unity is more than a re-balancing of roles and responsibilities of levels of government.

At a time of globalization of the economy, Canada is especially well placed to compete because of two official languages and the many Canadians who speak languages other than English and French. The Government recognizes that because of the minority status of the French language in North America, French-speaking Canadians have legitimate concerns. The Government affirms that it is particularly important to reinforce a Francophone presence at home and abroad. Such a presence contributes to our national identity and is a source of strength and enrichment for our country.

Action has already been taken to recognize Quebec as a distinct society within Canada and to guarantee that no constitutional change affecting any major region of the country will take place without the consent of that region. The Government supports the entrenchment of these provisions in the Constitution.

National unity means reminding Canadians of what they have in common. The Government will put forward a series of measures with special emphasis on helping Canadians, particularly young Canadians, to broaden their experience of Canada and to learn more about their country. A new Citizenship Act will be introduced to better reflect contemporary views of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Culture is at the core of our identity as Canadians. The Government is committed to strong Canadian cultural industries. The Government will propose measures to strengthen culture in Canada and will ensure continued access to our own cultural products in order to maintain a balance between Canadian perspectives and those from abroad. The Government reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the long-term vitality of the CBC, the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada as institutions which interpret Canada to Canadians and to the world.

The Government believes that one of the tests of Canadian values is our ability to incorporate the aspirations of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. The recent historic Nisga'a agreement in principle shows that this is possible. The Minister of Indian Affairs

The Address

and Northern Development will continue to pursue other initiatives in partnership with Aboriginal people and other governments.

*Honourable Members of the Senate;
Members of the House of Commons:*

In looking to the 21st century, it is essential that the federal government, in its own policies and programs, be dedicated to providing modern, flexible public services—services that are accessible, affordable and responsive to the needs of clients and citizens. The Government acknowledges the contribution of the Public Service of Canada to the continuing achievement of its goals. Further measures will be introduced to enable more flexible and innovative methods of service delivery.

By working in partnership throughout Canadian society to create jobs and economic opportunity, to provide the security of a modern social safety net, and to preserve national unity, the Government affirms that a legacy of hope can be left to future generations.

Members of the House of Commons:

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry out the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.

May Divine Providence guide all of you in your deliberations.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.) moved:

That the Speech of His Excellency the Governor General, delivered this day from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, be taken into consideration later this day.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[*Translation*]

VACANCIES

LAC-SAINT-JEAN, PAPINEAU—SAINT-MICHEL, ETOBICOKE NORTH,
HUMBER—SAINTE-BARBE—BAIE VERTE AND
SAINT-LAURENT—CARTIERVILLE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that I have received a communication notifying me that vacancies have occurred in the representation, namely: the Hon. Lucien Bouchard, member for the electoral district of Lac-Saint-Jean, who resigned January 15, 1996; the Hon. André Ouellet, member for the electoral district of Papineau—Saint-Michel, who resigned January 24, 1996; the Hon. Roy MacLaren, member for the electoral district of Etobicoke North, who resigned on January 24, 1996; the Hon. Brian Tobin, member for the electoral district of Humber—Sainte-Barbe—Baie Verte, who resigned on January 24, 1996; Mrs. Shirley Maheu, member for the electoral district of Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who resigned on January 31, 1996.

• (1505)

[*English*]

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed warrants to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of writs for the election of members to fill these vacancies.

* * *

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Mr. Bob Kilger, member for the electoral district of Stormont—Dundas, be appointed deputy chairman of the committee of the whole House.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of debate with regard to this motion.

I would like to say a few words with regard to this motion and the appointment of deputy chairman of committees of the whole House. I am not taking exception at all with regard to the person who is appointed. I certainly give due respect for that person.

I am rising on the basis of principle. I raise a matter which was brought into the House of Commons via the Liberal red book and also under a paper entitled “Reviving Parliamentary Democracy: the Liberal Plan for the House of Commons and Electoral Reform”. This paper was submitted at an earlier date by members of the opposition, at that time, the member for Cape Breton—East Richmond; opposition House leader, the member of Saint-Léonard; chief opposition whip, the member for Kingston and the Islands; assistant House leader, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

In their statement they agreed to the independence of the Chair:

In order to enhance the independence of the Chair and in an effort to reduce the level of partisanship, when the Speaker is from the government party, two of the junior chair officers should be from the oppositions so that the four presiding officer positions are shared equally by government and opposition.

The paper further suggests that the Speaker and Deputy Speaker positions could alternate between government and opposition, the Deputy Chairperson could be from the government, and the fourth person from the opposition. There would then be equity and balance between the two sides of the House.

• (1510)

In the Liberal red book the Prime Minister stated:

So you can come with this book every week in front of me after I'm Prime Minister and say: “Where are you with your promises?”

The Address

The Prime Minister promised he would carry out this policy of his caucus, which he is not doing today.

I used the privilege of giving prior notice to the Prime Minister on February 7, 1996 by letter, quoting the policy of the government: "I would appreciate your examination of this and in this House, the second session of the 35th Parliament, that you would introduce this new policy".

Again the Prime Minister has forgotten about the red book. He has forgotten about the promises to Canadians and has turned down that policy. I ask clearly of the Prime Minister today, why did he not keep his promise? He still has a chance before we finalize this motion to allow an opposition member to be appointed to the position we have now discussed. It is incumbent upon the Prime Minister, if he is unable to do it, to explain to the people of Canada why he has again broken a red book promise that should be held.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. During the first session we realized that the government was having a lot of trouble keeping its promises, and the speech from the throne we just heard does not bode well in this respect.

There was a suggestion in the famous red book, which I will read to you, since on the other side of the House they have made a habit of reading from the red book, although practising what it says is another matter altogether. I read this to refresh the government's memory: "In order to enhance the independence of the Chair and in an effort to reduce the level of partisanship, when the Speaker is from the government party, two of the junior chair officers should be from the oppositions so that the four presiding officers' positions are shared equally by government and opposition". It seems this was discussed during the election campaign. I admit we did not hear much about it in Quebec, but apparently it was a very popular topic in the rest of Canada. There was some reference to the British habit of giving presiding officers' positions to members of the opposition.

To give the government a chance to keep one of its promises, for a change, we intend to support this motion. This should be a simple matter, because although it seems they have a lot of trouble convincing the public, this time it would just be a matter of convincing the caucus. I know that in some areas, the Prime Minister has trouble convincing not just his caucus but his cabinet as well. We are giving him a chance here. It seems pretty straightforward, and I hardly think it would create too many problems in caucus to find two positions for the people who would otherwise be appointed Chairman and Deputy Chairman. I may add this is no reflection on the qualifications of the people who are being proposed, including the hon. member whose name was proposed just now and for whom I have the greatest respect.

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House leaders of the two opposition parties have made some interesting suggestions.

My first response is that my recollection of what has been quoted is with respect to a document published some months before the red book and is not in the red book as such. I suggest this would be a topic worthy of consideration by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs when it is constituted later on.

[*Translation*]

Finally, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition in the House for his support of the British usage. It is very interesting to see this support for the British usage, which is fundamental to the whole of Canada's constitutional context.

• (1515)

[*English*]

I want to thank the House leader of the Bloc Québécois for support of British usage because this is one of the foundations of what we are proud to see as one united Canada from sea to sea to sea.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate to those members of the House who may not know that the recommendation that the speakership be more non-partisan by having members of the opposition appointed to various positions in the chain of command from the Speaker on down was considered by a standing committee of the House in the last Parliament. It was unanimously recommended by a standing committee of the House of Commons in the last Parliament and was approved by the Liberals at that time. It did not originate in the red book nor did it originate with the people who are now on the government side. It originated from a careful consideration of what would be in the interests of Parliament by members of all parties in the last Parliament.

The recommendation was made and I see no reason why it cannot be lived up to. Therefore, I would like to join in whatever criticism is being offered to the government for not living up to that promise.

I might also say that when we listen to rhetoric about the House and co-operation and non-partisanship, I as the NDP House leader have been around all day and no one from the Reform Party took the time or the courtesy to let me know this was going to happen. If we want to work together and we want to talk about non-partisanship, then let us work together and not surprise each other in these ways.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The Address

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1550)

Before the taking of the vote:

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

There appears to be some debate whether or not the matter to be voted on is a matter that is included in the so-called red book. I have had an opportunity to review the red book, in particular appendix B, which is platform papers. The appendix refers to a document dated January 19, 1993 entitled "Reviving Parliamentary Democracy: The Liberal Plan for House of Commons and Electoral Reform".

The Speaker: The hon. member rose on a point of order. I would ask him to put his point forthwith.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, in view of the concern, I would ask that you seek the unanimous consent of the House prior to the vote to have the appointment of officers referred to a committee to give consideration to the commitment that would appear to be in the red book.

The Speaker: Does the member have unanimous consent to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

(Division No. 1)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Arseneault
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélaïr
Bélangier	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brushett
Bryden	Calder
Campbell	Cannis

Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Cohen
Collenette	Collins
Comuzzi	Copps
Cowling	Crawford
Culbert	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dingwall
Dromisky	Duhamel
Dupuy	Easter
Eggleton	English
Finestone	Finlay
Flis	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harper (Churchill)	Harvard
Hickey	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Irwin	Jackson
Jordan	Keyes
Kirkby	Knutson
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)	LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Lee	Loney
MacAulay	MacDonald
Malhi	Manley
Marchi	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
McCormick	McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Milliken
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Murray
Nault	O'Brien
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peters	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Pillitteri	Proud
Reed	Regan
Richardson	Rideout
Ringuette-Maltais	Robichaud
Robillard	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd	Sheridan
Simmons	Skoke
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo	Telegdi
Terrana	Thalheimer
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Verran	Volpe
Walker	Wappel
Wells	Whelan
Wood	Young
Zed —143	

NAYS

Members

Althouse
Bachand
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brien
Caron
Chatters
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral

The Address

de Jong
 Debien
 Dubé
 Dumas
 Fillion
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gilmour
 Gouk
 Grubel
 Guimond
 Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
 Harris
 Hayes
 Hill (Macleod)
 Jacob
 Lalonde
 Langlois
 Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
 Leblanc (Longueuil)
 Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
 Loubier
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Ménard
 Meredith
 Nunez
 Picard (Drummond)
 Pomerleau
 Riis
 Sauvageau
 Solberg
 St-Laurent
 Strahl
 Tremblay (Rosemont)
 Wayne—89

de Savoye
 Deshaies
 Duceppe
 Duncan
 Forseth
 Gauthier
 Godin
 Grey (Beaver River)
 Guay
 Hanrahan
 Harper (Simcoe Centre)
 Hart
 Hermanson
 Hoepfner
 Johnston
 Landry
 Laurin
 Lebel
 Lefebvre
 Leroux (Shefford)
 Marchand
 Mayfield
 Mercier
 Morrison
 Penson
 Plamondon
 Ramsay
 Rocheleau
 Schmidt
 Speaker
 Stinson
 Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
 Venne

PAIRED MEMBERS

nil/aucun

• (1600)

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPEAKER

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais, member for the electoral district of Madawaska—Victoria, be appointed Assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I say again to the Prime Minister that we in this House would like to give him a second chance to meet the commitment he made to Canadians through the red book. The hon. member pointed out very clearly that the policy of the Liberal government is there in appendix B, endorsed, enunciated, clarified and committed to by this government. However, the government is not prepared to live up to those commitments. When will the government do that? It is very clear that it should at this point in time.

We are going to vote against the motion. Again it will be on principle, but it will be a little different from the other one. We do not agree with the Prime Minister's appointment in this case. Therefore, it is for two reasons that we will vote against the motion if it is to proceed.

I want to say this clearly and I want it on the record. On the last motion we voted on principle to reject the motion. We did not reject the appointee. The person named by the Prime Minister in that motion is acceptable to the Reform Party. However, in this instance, the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria is not acceptable as far as we are concerned.

• (1605)

I believe that we must set the ground rules in this House so they are fair to all members of the House, whether they are on the government side or the opposition side. The ground rules for the second session of the 35th Parliament are being set in a manner that is going to be unfair with respect to the openness and the opportunity for us to debate in a fair manner. That is the way it is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say clearly to you it is our intent to vote against this motion and to have a standing vote not only to record the Prime Minister's rejection of his own policy but also to indicate our lack of support for the appointee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will also vote against this motion, and not because of the choice of the individual, particularly because she is a woman, and I think women should be given prominence in this House.

What we do oppose, however, is the method being used. The party in government should give some thought to the fact that it could still keep one of its promises without too much difficulty. We will therefore await its decision. It could perhaps make this motion with respect to other committees or other positions, but in this particular case, I think it should recall the red book. We are not opposed to the individual, but rather to the approach and the many forgotten promises, need I say.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me this whole unfortunate mess could have been avoided if the government had shown a little imagination and innovation by living up to its own commitments. They are not radical commitments but things that have been done in other Parliaments and other legislatures that were quite doable.

Having said that, I regret that the Reform Party has made this a personal matter with respect to the appointment. I say on behalf of the NDP that we will continue to vote against these motions as a way of registering our objection to the fact the government did not

The Address

take the opportunity to bring in these reforms. It is not because we are making any statement about the person who has been suggested by the government.

Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to the motion before us concerning the appointment of the assistant deputy chair.

In the much vaunted Liberal red book the government indicated it would enact certain reforms to ensure the House functioned in a more democratic and open process. As part of that promise the Liberals said that two of the junior chairs or deputy chair positions would go to the opposition parties.

While in opposition the Liberals submitted a paper entitled "Reviving Parliamentary Democracy". This paper was signed onto by the chief government whip. One of the recommendations was that in order to enhance the independence of the Chair and in an effort to reduce the level of partisanship, two of the junior chair officers should be from the opposition side of the House.

Like so many other Liberal initiatives, it would appear to be a case of saying one thing while in opposition then doing nothing or another thing once in power. Like so many other Liberal promises, the commitment to enhancing democratic practice in the House of Commons will not be served by this motion to appoint both deputy chairs from the government side.

In particular the motion appointing the member for Madawaska—Victoria is as much an affront to the principles of fairness in this House as it is counterproductive to the goal of enhancing the independence of the Chair. It is on this point that I would like to elaborate for members in this Chamber.

There has been much comment lately about the chief government whip's intention to bring the Reform House leader before the Bar of the House on a charge of contempt of Parliament.

Given the hon. member's shortcomings as joint chair of the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages, the motion to appoint the member for Madawaska—Victoria as assistant deputy chair can rightly be viewed by Reform MPs as contemptuous. As chair of the standing joint committee the member for Madawaska—Victoria—

• (1610)

The Speaker: Colleagues, on the matter of debate, your Speaker gives every latitude in the debate itself but I would appeal to the hon. member to be very judicious in his choice of words. I would ask him to keep that in mind for the remainder of his address to the House.

Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, as joint chair of the standing joint committee the member for Madawaska—Victoria has shown nothing but condescension for her opposition colleagues when addressing their concerns. On several occasions the member in question has gone so far as to not even allow the committee clerk to answer the questions of opposition MPs. Sadly, this member in her duties as joint chair has even impeded the ability of Reform members to bring forward motions.

In terms of being able to apply the standing orders of the House in a fair and even-handed manner, the member for Madawaska—Victoria has been unfair in the application of those very standing orders in committee on everything from the election of co-chair to not permitting votes on whether the chair should be sustained in her rulings. The hon. member has run roughshod over the legitimate responsibilities of fellow committee members, yet the government has the audacity to put this member's name forward for consideration as assistant deputy chair. What is even more ludicrous is that the government expects it to go uncontested by fair minded members who deserve and expect that the Chair be objective in its dealings with all members.

While in this House and during a debate on the MP pension plan, the member for Madawaska—Victoria showed a penchant for the type of close physical contact that appears to be the trademark of members across the way. Given the hon. Prime Minister's recent actions at a flag day ceremony in Hull, this would perhaps serve to explain the rationale behind the motion to appoint the member for Madawaska—Victoria as assistant deputy chair.

In closing, if this motion is to stand as a reflection of the government's commitment to enhance democratic procedure in the House, then Canadians might well ask whether they are well served by this government at all. Furthermore I call on members from both sides of the House to reject the appointment of the member for Madawaska—Victoria as assistant deputy chair.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to be as long in my remarks but I will intervene to go on the record today that we are opposed to the motion. It is not for personal reasons, not for the reasons that my colleague just evoked and certainly not for personal reasons in regard to the motion that was just voted on in the House of Commons. It is that the government made a commitment and clearly has not lived up to that commitment. It is also my understanding that in these matters the government would usually consult with the opposition parties with regard to the nominations if only out of courtesy and in respect to the functioning of the House of Commons.

As I comment on why we are equally opposed to this motion, I cannot miss the opportunity to point out the incredible hypocrisy of Reform Party members. They have the gall to talk of fairness to all members as they speak and the same hypocrisy of a political party whose members ran saying that they would not apply personal politics to the House of Commons, that they would not behave the way other parties have behaved.

The Address

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Charest: Can you hear them now, Mr. Speaker, trying to shout me down? This is the same group of people who said that they could do politics differently. I hope Canadians will judge as they can judge all members of the Reform Party, including their colleague, Sugar Ray Grey.

• (1615)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak specifically to the principle involved here. I am looking at the red book put forward by the Liberals.

Quoting page 91, in the last election the Liberals said:

Canadians have always prided themselves on the quality of their democratic institutions. Yet after nine years of Conservative rule, cynicism about public institutions, governments, politicians, and the political process is at an all-time high.

I parenthesize here to state that they had not taken into account their own hypocrisy with respect to the commitments they were making to the people in the red book because in 1996 it is even higher than it was in 1993.

I continue from the red book:

If government is to play a positive role in society, as it must, honest and integrity in our political institutions must be restored.

The most important asset of government is the confidence it enjoys of the citizens to whom it is accountable. There is evidence today of considerable dissatisfaction with government and a steady erosion of confidence in the people and institutions of the public sector.

This erosion of confidence seems to have many causes: some have to do with the behaviour of certain elected politicians, others with an arrogant style of political leadership.

A few minutes ago the House leader for the Liberals talked about the statement that there were to be people elected from the opposition parties to fill the role of deputy chair. His direct inference—he is welcome to correct me if I misunderstood him—was basically that because it was not in the body of the red book it was not a promise.

On the back page of the red book, appendix B, platform papers, it states:

These policy statements were released by the Liberal Party on the dates shown. Copies may be obtained by writing to the Liberal Party of Canada.

One of the listings is *Reviving Parliamentary Democracy: The Liberal Plan for House of Commons and Electoral Reform*.

I draw to the member's attention, and if there are any fair minded Liberals in the House I draw this to their attention, that my House leader was reading from *Reviving Parliamentary Democracy: The Liberal Plan for House of Commons and Electoral Reform*, the document referred to in the appendix of the red book.

Although it appears within the binding of the red book as appendix B, if the House leader and the rest of the Liberals are saying that because this document was not quoted and not included in the body of the red book we cannot take the Liberals seriously, I suggest what we have been subjected to as Canadians with the red book is a trick, a ruse and a deception. There is no other way around it.

I call on all fair minded people in the House to take into account that the Minister of Health, the Minister of Labour, the member for Kingston and the Islands, and the Liberal government whip applied their names to this document which states:

In order to enhance the independence of the Chair and in an effort to reduce the level of partisanship, when the Speaker is from the government party, two of the junior chair officers should be from the opposition, so that the four presiding officer positions are shared equally by government and opposition.

• (1620)

If this was said by those four members, and indeed their names are applied to it, and if this document is referred to within the covers of the Liberal red book, I ask any fair minded member of the Liberal Party to at least abstain and if they have any backbone to vote against this appointment. Otherwise they will be failing on a matter of personal principle.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely and unequivocally support the member for Madawaska—Victoria

It is unfortunate and regrettable that the Reform Party has personalized this rather important procedure we are going through. It now has gone beyond whether there was a commitment in the red book to have two of the junior officers from the opposition parties. This is the first time in the 11 or 12 years I have been in Parliament that the appointment or the election of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker or junior officers of the chair has been politicized and personalized to the extent it has been today.

In order for you, Mr. Speaker, to be effective and in order for the Chair to be effective, you must together with your junior officers have the support and respect of all members and all parties in the House.

The moment the election of a Speaker or Deputy Speaker is decided on a partisan or party basis and once the matter becomes personalized, it is a very sad reflection on Parliament as a whole.

Earlier I tried to have the matter referred to a committee for further consideration. Some members of the House in their wisdom decided they would rather have a vote and personalize and politicize the election of the junior officers.

I abstained in the first vote because I believe that if we made a commitment in the election we should keep that commitment. I intend to abstain from this vote as well, not because I disagree in

The Address

any way with the appointment of the member for Madawaska—Victoria but because I disagree with the manner in which this matter is being dealt with today.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will speak briefly to this matter because it is something I was involved with earlier in my role as House leader for the Reform Party in the previous session of this Parliament.

It is not that the government was not aware of this promise. We talked about it in the procedure and House affairs committee and in the House. A commitment was made, a promise to change the way Deputy Speakers are selected. The government recognized and acknowledged in committee and in the House that it was a policy it had endorsed and that its party stood behind.

We are two years into the 35th Parliament and nothing has happened. Now there is a motion before us today to debate. This is a free country and we are allowed to speak. We should be consulted about who is being proposed. However, we were told who was being appointed. That is not consultation. We were not asked to work with the government in choosing Deputy Speakers. We were just told this was the way it was to be.

It is quite appropriate for those who have to deal with the Chair to be able to make comments before a person is appointed.

We have worked in committee and in the House with the person proposed to fill this position. At various times we have been slurred by this person. This person has been unparliamentary toward us. This person has denied us our parliamentary privileges. Certainly we cannot speak after a person is appointed. That is not the time to speak. The time to speak is before the damage is done while we can still fix it and help the Liberal government to fulfil a promise it made.

Today is an important day. It is the first day of the second session of this Parliament. The governor general has just read the speech from the throne and expects Canadians to believe the government will keep its promises and keep its commitments to Canadians.

• (1625)

Here is one of the simplest promises the government could have kept. It ignored it. It has flaunted us with its failure to keep its promises. Then it expects us and Canadians to believe it will keep its word, its commitment to Canadians about jobs, its commitment to Canadians about good reform to social programs. I doubt it. The government is playing games. It is playing with words. It does not prove its actions by its deeds.

The government could withdraw this motion. It could consult with us properly. It could commit to its promises. Then we would have a better Parliament. We would have a better situation in the

House and we would be able to get on with the nation's business in an appropriate way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day for parliamentary democracy, in my opinion, when certain members choose to launch a personal attack on someone whom I believe to be worthy of the confidence of everyone in this House. The member for Madawaska—Victoria has a most distinguished career to her credit, both politically and personally.

She has studied at l'Université de Moncton and l'Université Laval and holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree. She has rendered distinguished service as deputy speaker of the legislature in her home province of New Brunswick, bringing the wealth of that experience with her to this House when she was elected to it. Furthermore, she has been a member of the New Brunswick chapter of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and has acquitted herself in a distinguished manner during several missions as an election observer. I believe that her outstanding contributions should make all of us parliamentarians proud to have someone of the calibre of the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria as a colleague.

It is rather sad to see something like this happening. Certain members of the Reform Party have every right to say that a government could have made a promise, ought to have, or whatever. It is certain that the government, as it has indicated today in the speech from the throne, has already fulfilled close to 75 per cent of its commitments by this mid-point in its mandate, with more yet to come. The House leader also brought to our attention today the government's readiness to refer the matter to a parliamentary committee. He made that same offer, moreover, a little earlier on, when speaking about another appointment.

It is now obvious that this was not what the Reformers wanted. Some of them, in fact, have indicated that what they had in mind was not referring the matter to a parliamentary committee—since that was what the House leader was offering to do—but rather attacking a subsequent appointment, choosing as their victim not only another colleague in the House, not only the only woman among the four nominees, not only a member of a francophone minority community, but also a distinguished parliamentarian, one with experience in the Chair and in a legislative assembly. Let them go ahead and do so. The people of Canada will judge them for their actions.

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be brief, but I am sure I speak for my colleagues in the official opposition in roundly criticizing attitudes targeting individuals who hold values that the official opposition is proud to defend.

The Address

There is such a thing as respect for people, and I think that, when Canada's Parliament allows respect for individuals to fall by the wayside through comments made, we must speak out, and I am grateful to my colleague for having talked about this totally unacceptable attitude.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments I would like to add to the debate. What we are really debating is the integrity of the government and its willingness and ability to keep its promises.

It is very symbolic on the day of the throne speech at the start of the second session of this Parliament to hear the general statements made. I know this is not a debate on that speech, but with those general promises Canadians have good reason to wonder that if they cannot trust the government on the small things, can they trust it on the larger ones?

As was pointed out by government members, a promise was made to appoint deputy chair positions from the opposition benches. This seems to follow the trend on any democratic reforms which the Liberal government has talked about, which is the tendency to ignore the very things on which it campaigned.

For example, we have yet to see free votes in the House of Commons. Where are they? They are not here. It is a sad thing and something which could easily be remedied by a statement from the Prime Minister.

In a few days we will go through the charade of the election of the co-chairs of committees. When that comes up we will again see what will happen. The whip will tell party members who will be the chairs. The people sitting opposite are just voting machines. They are robots. They are seals. That is a shame because there are some very competent people over there who could be doing much more.

The government appointed an ethics counsellor. The ethics counsellor does not report to the House, but to the Prime Minister behind closed doors. That is not an ethics counsellor. That is someone who barks on demand. That is not good enough.

Now we have the latest broken promise, a promise printed in black and white in the red book: to appoint the chairs from the second and third parties.

I also have to comment on some of the things which have been said regarding the way this person was selected. I have heard three comments made in the House which have indicated that the reason this person should be selected is because she is female and she is from a minority position in a province.

The government has done itself a disservice. There are many competent women in the House who could fulfil the role.

However, the government needs to look for a consensus among the parties for the people that have the respect of the parties and of all members to hold that chair; that neutral position. That is what should determine it, not the gender of the person.

I do not think anyone here, of either gender, would say that they have in the past felt slighted because someone of another gender was in the Chair. That is ridiculous. It is a preposterous way to choose someone for the position. It is a mistake to select people based on their gender for the very important role about which we are talking today.

I would like to add that after the hon. member for Sherbrooke rose to add his particular brand of whatever one would call it to this debate, I have to say that we have nothing to learn from the Conservatives when it comes to democratic reform. Absolutely nothing.

We watched in disdain from afar his government over eight years use one example after another of absolutely contemptuous behaviour toward the House of Commons and the people in it. The only thing he is right about is that it seems the members over there on the Liberal side have learned well. It is a shame on them. It is a shame to this Parliament. It brings about the entire issue that this whole thing is symbolic of: You cannot trust the Liberals.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government whip said that this is a sad day in the House of Commons and I have to agree with him. It is a sad day in the House when another promise contained in the Liberal red book has been broken once again.

Reform members have sat here day after day for the last two years and have watched over and over again as the government has failed to fulfil promises which it made in its infamous red book. Congratulations, once again, to the Liberal government.

• (1635)

The hon. government whip mentioned in his comments two words, confidence and trust of this House. I am sure hon. members will agree with me that the characteristics of confidence, trust and respect are not something that is taken on as a mantle with this appointment. Indeed, confidence, trust and respect must be earned. It is not something that is bestowed on a person.

As members of my party have pointed out earlier, the member for Madawaska—Victoria in her duties on the committees that she has chaired has not exhibited the characteristics of confidence and trust. This party would not be comfortable with having that person in the chair as Acting Speaker.

For this reason I must oppose the appointment of this person as well as the mechanism by which this appointment is being made, in blatant disregard of the promise of the Liberal red book.

The Address

I would also like to refer to the statements made by the member for Sherbrooke in respect to his comments of our party talking of hypocrisy. Let me remind the House that this is the same member who not more than a year ago on national television said that some day Canadians will realize what a great Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was. Enough said.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a short comment for the record to clarify or counter what was said by the other side of the House.

I want to make it absolutely clear that when we vote against the person proposed it is not because she is female, it is not because of where she is from, it is not because of her French connection. There is a certain level of partisanship in this House. I get along with some people on the other side of the House very well. They are very fair-minded. I may disagree with them. I may agree with them. But it does not alter the fact that they are presenting their views very clearly and very fairly.

There are some on the other side of the House that come from the west that are male, that are anglophone, that I would not want to see in that position either. We are voting because of the characteristics of the partisanship of this individual, not because of gender, language or any other factor.

There is a history in this Parliament in the first session of very credible people sitting in the chair that you now occupy, Mr. Speaker. At the very least the Liberal government should keep up that tradition.

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to the statement of my colleague. This is exactly what we are on about. It is not a personalized instance at all.

Basically what we are talking about is merit and how we perceive it. There are other choices in this House and we feel that based on merit that this is not a good choice.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate by recollecting the day that you were elected as Speaker of this House. I was so impressed as a rookie MP coming into this House to see how the Speaker was elected to the office, the august position that you hold, to keep impartial judgment of what happens and to apply the rules in a fair and accurate manner so that everybody would be treated fairly.

I commend you for all the good things you have done and I commend the Liberal Party, the government, for the way in which this House started. It was wonderful. However we have seen that degenerate to the point where we are today debating a promise that was made and is now being ignored. There is a denial of the very good place where this House started, the way in which you were elected, Mr. Speaker. I honour and respect and have great confidence in that.

We are now seeing a degeneration of that very noble start into something that has become partisan, that has become personal. It is a denigration of the respect that this House should enjoy in the hearts and the minds of every Canadian.

• (1640)

I am not proud to have to say this today. Mr. Speaker, I appeal to you that this motion be withdrawn and that a fair and accurate election take place of this individual to the office of Acting Speaker at the level that is being proposed in this motion.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all I have to say to you is that I am certainly glad you do not have to be appointed today.

As I sit here and listen to the debate I am particularly concerned about the way it has been personalized. The hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria is a very intelligent young person who has had considerable experience. The government promised that when it got into office it would put responsible people into responsible positions.

The hon. member for Surrey North said that it is not a personalized matter, yet the hon. member for Lethbridge started the debate by saying that Reform members personally did not support the person who has been nominated. It was made a personalized matter by the Reform Party this afternoon.

I was interested in another comment made by the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster who accused others of playing games in this House. The hon. member for Fraser Valley East talked about integrity. He said that they had nothing to learn from the Conservatives. They have learned too much from the Conservatives. Today we have heard about hypocrisy and so on.

The hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria has my total confidence. She has the total confidence of her constituents, the people in that region and right across Canada. If we are going to have confidence and trust in office—this is a very key point down the road—and this debate has made it a personal matter, what is going to happen when the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria takes the chair?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hopkins: This is the very point.

Every member in the House has a right to take a responsible position but never in the history of Parliament or ever in the history of Parliaments to come should the Chair be condemned because of a personal battle. It has become that today. I heard one member go on at great length about how the member for Madawaska—Victoria handled the chair in a committee. When it comes to the chair of the House of Commons no member in this House should be thinking

about carrying personal grudges or old debts against the person sitting in the chair of the House of Commons.

I am very sorry this has been made a personal matter by the House leader of the Reform Party and others. They came into the House saying that they were going to lay down new conduct in the House of Commons. They cannot do that if they are going to attack people personally. We are here to debate but this chair here must have the confidence of all members in the House when a person is put in it.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that we should let the vote go forward as long as we do not have a whole batch of other speakers to hold the House up today. Let us elect this person to the position of chair in a democratic fashion on the floor of this House.

The conduct of the Reform Party today has been to accuse others of hypocrisy. They have spent a lot of time talking about new ideas of being civil in the House of Commons and so on. One cannot accuse an individual of not being capable of taking the chair when one has the background the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria has.

• (1645)

Today when the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria is elected by a vote in the House of Commons as one of the chairpersons, it is up to the Reform Party to respect her when she is in the chair on future occasions and not carry the old grudges from Parliament or committees into the House. Let us run this in a civilized manner. However, the House can run in a civilized manner only if the people who say they came here to change the House run it in a civilized manner themselves. It is not up to just a few people to be civil; everybody must be civil.

In fairness, let us get on with the democratic vote and let the chips fall where they may. However, after this person is elected let us respect the Chair of the House of Commons of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this proposal from the committee was intended to eliminate partisanship from the management, if I may put it that way, of the debates in the House. Had the government implemented it, we would not have had this debate, which, far from eliminating partisanship, does the very opposite.

I regret the fact that, in their defence of their position, the members of the Reform Party are in fact helping to make it partisan. Had the government done what it ought to, our Reform colleagues would have proposed someone as deputy speaker, I hope it would have been a woman, and I would not criticize her, particularly on the basis of incidents that allegedly occurred in a committee where I was not present.

The Address

I think the spirit was to have each party participate in the management of the House and therefore each party believed that those it proposed were best suited to ensure that debates were appropriate to the institution.

[*English*]

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to this debate and I bring forward a slogan taught to me as a child. It is something we have forgotten about today.

I was always taught that an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure. Today we heard a throne speech in which the government made commitments to bring unity to the country, to depend on provinces and negotiate with them under the circumstances of honour and trust. The government knew there were hard feelings on some of these issues. If it had wanted to prevent this it could have exercised an ounce of prevention. It could have been very easily done if it had consulted with all the House leaders and had put forward all of the people it wanted to put into the chair.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the way you have run the House. I know I am probably not one of your favourite constituents but I still respect and honour you for what you have done. However, what the government is trying to do right now is going against exhibits you have shown to the House such as fairness, respect and discipline. If we want to correct that we will have to put pounds of cure into the House to ever receive the trust of the Canadian people.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is politics as usual. I know when this 35th session of Parliament started we had promises of things being done differently from the Reform Party.

• (1650)

The opposition parties have referred to some appendices included in the red book. We hear the carping coming our way from the members of the third party. There were issues stated in the red book such as gun control which they very much wanted the government to oppose. We did not. We kept our promises.

They wanted us to reject the infrastructure program in the body of the red book. They wanted us to gut national health care. We had it in the red book. We kept those promises. They did not want us to keep our promise of reducing the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP in three years.

When they talk about some appendices of the red book, when they have done nothing but stand up and oppose what we have done in terms of keeping the commitments spelled out in the red book, it is a degree of hypocrisy in terms of the arguments. As far as personal attacks on the proposed junior officer, again I say to the Reform Party, shame.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

Speaker's Ruling

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

A recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred until tomorrow at 6.30 p.m.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this House at its next sitting consider the business of supply.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a total of four days will be allotted for the supply period ending March 26, 1996.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before we proceed to the consideration of the speech of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada, I wish to address the matter of the designation of the official opposition. Members will recall that in the last session on December 14, 1995 the hon. member for Lethbridge raised a point of order and presented arguments supporting his contention that the Reform Party should be designated the official opposition.

As hon. members are aware, the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party are now tied with 52 seats each in the House. It is within this new context that I must address the House today. While prorogation terminates all outstanding business before the House including points of order, in this case there are mitigating circumstances that

compel me to refer to arguments presented by hon. members last December.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Before doing so, I want to make a few remarks concerning the role of the Speaker in situations such as this. In some jurisdictions faced with similar questions, the laws or rules of those legislatures give the Speaker precise powers to designate the official opposition, or specify the criteria upon which the designation of official opposition is to be made. In such cases, the Speaker is left with no discretion in the matter. I would refer hon. members to the Ministerial and other Salaries Act, 1975, of the United Kingdom, and the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, of Saskatchewan as examples.

[*English*]

Here in the House of Commons, however, there are no such rules or guidelines. On December 14 several members who contributed to the discussion contended that it was up to me as Speaker to decide this question. The hon. member for Elk Island, after raising the idea that the official opposition may be considered as a government in waiting, went as far as to state on page 17677 of the debates:

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of the decision you are about to make in the next six weeks. You are being called upon to decide who would form the Government of Canada in the event the Liberals resigned.

If you decide Canadians are best served by a party whose stated objective, which it has demonstrated in the last two years consistently, is to break the country into two pieces, you would err greatly.

I must respectfully differ with the hon. member. Your Speaker of the House has no role to play in the selection of a government. In our system the Speaker chooses neither the government nor the government in waiting. That prerogative belongs to the Governor General of Canada on the advice of his privy council.

To put the Speaker in a position in which he would be choosing not only the official opposition but perhaps the next government based not on any objective criteria such as numbers in the House but rather on a qualitative judgment about the performance of the current official opposition party seems to me an untenable proposition. It would also be an encroachment on the royal prerogative and a violation of our long established constitutional practices.

[*Translation*]

Unless the House wishes, either in the rules or in legislation, to give the Speaker precise powers and guidelines by which to designate the official opposition, I must state at the outset that I do not feel it is within my power to make such a decision, based on the argument advanced by the hon. member for Elk Island.

As I did when preparing my June 16, 1994 ruling on the designation of party status for members of the New Democratic Party, I have again looked to the rulings of my predecessors for

Speaker's Ruling

guidance in understanding my role in dealing with such unprecedented cases. In 1963, Speaker MacNaughton was asked to rule on the question of seating of opposition parties in the Chamber. At that time, he commented at length on what he perceived to be the role of the Speaker in such matters. This statement can be found at pages 385 to 388 of the *Journals* for September 30, 1963. I feel that much of what he said is relevant to the current circumstances and have used his words as a guide in examining the matter.

• (1700)

[*English*]

I would like to quote again certain sections of Speaker MacNaughton's statement:

The legal rights and duties of the Speaker are to be found in the Statutes of Canada, the Standing Orders of the House, in the Constitutional and Parliamentary authors and finally in the customs and precedents which have become constitutional conventions.

According to Campion, the Speaker is the representative of the House itself, in its powers, proceedings and dignity and the chief characteristics attaching to the office of Speaker of the House of Commons are authority and impartiality—. It is in consequence among the duties of the Speaker to see that the Standing Orders of the House are followed in the course of its procedures and that the privileges of the House, once they have been defined and recognized, are protected. It is also the duty of the Speaker to be impartial and removed from politics—.

Allow me to refer once more to the special traditions that surround the Office of the Speaker. While he is the servant of the House he is, at the same time, its spokesman and its symbol. His value to the House and its Members continues effectively only when the House assists him in every way to maintain his dignity and his impartiality—.

It seems to me that—a situation such as that now facing the House must be resolved by the House itself. It is not one where the Speaker ought by himself to take a position where any group of members might feel that their interests as a group or a party have been prejudiced. Nor should the Speaker be put in a position where he must decide, to the advantage or to the disadvantage of any group or party, matters affecting the character or existence of a party, for this surely would signify that the Speaker has taken what is almost a political decision, a decision where the question involves the rights and privileges of the House itself.

[*Translation*]

The designation of the official opposition has never been decided on the floor of the House of Commons. As Speaker, I am entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the orderly conduct of business in the House. To do so, I must now determine, in light of the tie situation and the point of order raised, which party shall form the official opposition.

It is a cornerstone of our democratic tradition that government rests on the consent of the governed. This means that the minority accepts the right of the majority to make decisions provided that the right of the minority to be heard, to dissent, to air grievances and to promote alternative policies is respected.

The role of an opposition in our form of parliamentary government is therefore fundamental. Its leadership is equally important.

[*English*]

For this reason, Parliament has seen fit to acknowledge the importance of the individual holding the position of Leader of the Official Opposition by providing this person with support and allowances similar to those granted to the Prime Minister. As well, in its procedures the House recognizes the significance of this position, despite the lack of any official definition thereof.

The position of Leader of the Official Opposition is firmly anchored in our parliamentary system of government through practice and the implementation of various statutes and rules of procedure. The importance of the Official Opposition and its leader has been commented on both in Canada and in other countries with Westminster style Parliaments for well over a century.

The question of which party would assume the role of the official opposition, however, has never been an issue in our House of Commons until now. As the hon. member for Lethbridge pointed out, perhaps it is for this reason that there has never been any definition or method of designating the official opposition or the leader of the opposition in either our statutes or standing orders.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Without written rules detailing the procedures for the selection of the official opposition, the title has traditionally been assumed by the party which held the second highest number of seats in the House of Commons. The one exception occurred after the 1921 general election when the Progressive Party won the second highest number of seats but, because of their support of the government of the day, declined to assume the role of official opposition.

[*English*]

In his submission, the hon. member for Lethbridge cited three precedents to support his claim that the Reform Party should be designated the official opposition. The first precedent the hon. member cited illustrated his contention that, in the case of an equality of seats, popular vote and the range of interests represented by a party should determine which party is designated the official opposition. The other two precedents, he suggested, indicated that where doubt exists in the choice of the official opposition, members of the opposition have been allowed to select their leader; the Speaker has had a role to play in this process; and parties which have not had the second highest number of seats in the legislature have become the official opposition.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

While all three precedents occurred in circumstances quite different from our present situation, for the benefit of hon. members I would like to comment on each.

[English]

The first precedent referred to by the hon. member was the ruling of Speaker Amerongen in Alberta in 1983. I have reviewed this ruling and the circumstances in which it was given.

As the hon. member knows, this matter was raised at the beginning of a new legislature following a general election. The opposition was composed of two New Democrats and two independent members. Both the leader of the NDP and the then member for Little Bow, who is currently the hon. member for Lethbridge in our House, had sought recognition as leader of the official opposition. As the hon. member pointed out, the Alberta speaker based his decision to grant official opposition status to the New Democratic Party, in part, on the popular vote received by the New Democratic Party.

However, in a ruling on the designation of the New Brunswick official opposition given by Speaker Dysart on December 16, 1994, a ruling referred to by the chief government whip, the Chair rejected the Alberta precedent based on popular vote as being unsound and as setting an undesirable precedent. I must concur with Speaker Dysart when she stated on page 3752 of *Hansard* of the Legislative Assembly:

Basing a decision on factors outside Parliament opens the door or invites future decisions with no basis in parliamentary precedents or practice. With the one noted exception,—

that of Alberta—

—the Official Opposition has been determined by the number of seats held by the party, not by their popular vote.

The second precedent referred to by hon. members concerns the outcome of the first post World War I general election in Great Britain. The situation was very complicated and I would like to describe the circumstances faced by the British Speaker at that time.

As the hon. member for Lethbridge noted, the government elected in December 1918 was a coalition of 383 Conservative-Unionists, 133 Coalition Liberals and 10 Coalition Labourites led by the Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George. The main opposition groups in descending order of seats were the Labour Party, a number of anti-coalition Liberals, and the Irish Nationalists. Members of the Sinn Fein, the largest party in opposition with 73 members, refused to take their seats at Westminster.

The anti-coalition Liberals under Herbert Asquith, had suffered a severe election defeat and Mr. Asquith himself had lost his seat.

Until he could return to the House in a byelection, the Liberals chose Sir Donald Maclean, the former deputy speaker, as the party's parliamentary leader.

The Labour Party, whose defection from the wartime coalition government had in part precipitated the election, increased its representation in the House, but the party's leaders were defeated in their own seats. William Adamson, a returning member from Scotland, was selected as the Labour leader in the Commons since the majority of the Labour members were new members without parliamentary experience.

• (1710)

[Translation]

From my research, it would appear that the situation as described by the hon. member for Lethbridge was not completely accurate. In Volume II of *A Speaker's Commentaries*, the memoirs of the then British Speaker James Lowther, at pages 251 and 252, he describes the situation as follows:

[English]

Before the new parliament met I was confronted with the difficulty of having to decide which party constituted His Majesty's Opposition. The Liberals only mustered 26, whilst Labour numbered 59. The latter, therefore, claimed to have become the official Opposition. I was interviewed by Mr. Adamson, who was then the chairman of the Labour Party, and strongly urged their claims. He argued that there were 59 Labour Members representing a distinct and independent Party, that Labour candidates had received the support of more than 2 1/4 million voters at the recent Election, that the Liberals numbered only 26, and that even those 26 were only a minority of a Party which was identified with and formed part of the Coalition Government. On the other hand, some Members of the Liberal Party argued to me that their discomfiture was only temporary and that they were the real "Simon pure", with great historical traditions behind them, which should not be lightly set aside by reason of a passing failure at the polls. It was a difficult situation. I pointed out to Mr. Adamson that my share in determining the question of the leadership of His Majesty's Opposition was a very small one, and was limited to determining who on the front Opposition bench should, every Thursday, ask the formal question as to future business; that if the question of determining the official Opposition was to be solved by numbers, the Sinn Fein Party, who had not then decided whether they would come to Westminster or not, outnumbered the Labour Party by a dozen or more; and that the application of a strict arithmetical rule might lead to some embarrassment and might compel me, in the event of the Opposition parties becoming about equal in numbers, through the decision of by-elections, to resort to a weekly census. I therefore solved it in the usual British fashion by a compromise, in the nature of Solomon's judgment, suggesting that the leadership should be divided between Sir Donald Maclean and Mr. Adamson. This course was adopted, and during the duration of the Parliament Sir Donald and Mr. Adamson used in alternate weeks to exercise their privilege as leader, of asking the formal questions as to the future business of the House, the only Parliamentary act which by tradition is the prerogative of the leader of His Majesty's Opposition. In the matter of initiating or winding up debates on behalf of their parties, they both took part, dividing the honours between them so far as possible.

My understanding of the events and recollections of Speaker Lowther is that there was no formal decision rendered by the Speaker. Rather, he simply offered a suggestion which the two parties accepted. The consultations which occurred took place

outside the Chamber before the new Parliament met, and before Speaker Lowther was re-elected.

Nothing in the *Debates* indicates that Sir Donald Maclean of the anti-coalition Liberals was Leader of the Official Opposition. In fact an examination of the *Debates* in the House of Commons for that session of Parliament confirms that the two party leaders did alternate in asking the Thursday business question, but in debate Mr. Adamson was given precedence over Mr. Maclean. It should also be borne in mind that in Britain the leader of the opposition did not receive an additional allowance until 1937.

• (1715)

Thus even with much less serious consequences, Speaker Lowther was reluctant to play a role in determining the leader of the opposition and limited his role to suggesting a compromise. This precedent in my view does not support the position of the hon. member for Lethbridge.

[*Translation*]

The third precedent cited by the hon. member concerns events which occurred in Australia during the second world war. The situation in the House of Representatives at that time was as complex as that of Great Britain in 1918. The Australian government at that time was a coalition of the larger United Australia Party or UAP, under Mr. Robert Menzies, and the smaller United Country Party or UCP, under the leadership of Mr. Arthur Fadden. Mr. Fadden, however, was the Prime Minister. On October 7, 1941, the coalition was defeated in the House, the government resigned and a Labour Party government was sworn in.

[*English*]

The Australia and Country Parties remained a coalition going into opposition. As leader of the larger of the two parties, Mr. Menzies normally would be expected to become leader of the opposition. However, as the outgoing prime minister, Mr. Fadden also had a claim to the position.

The hon. member for Lethbridge stated that the United Australia Party settled its own leadership and then in a joint meeting, presided over by the Speaker, elected the leader of the United Country Party as leader of the opposition.

The events, however, were far more complicated. According to *Australia's Commonwealth Parliament, 1901-1988* by G.S. Reid and Martyn Forrest, at pages 58 and 59, at a meeting of the Australia Party Mr. Menzies tried to convince his colleagues that the opposition leadership should not be left to Mr. Fadden. He also

Speaker's Ruling

suggested the Speaker of the House, Walter Nairn, should preside over the joint meeting.

Mr. Menzies' motion concerning the opposition leadership was soundly defeated by his party colleagues and as a result Mr. Menzies declined to seek renomination for his party's leadership. The result of the joint meeting, convened immediately after the UAP meeting, saw the selection of Mr. Fadden as leader of the opposition supported by many Australia Party members. According to Reid and Forrest, press reports of the period stated that Mr. Fadden's election was unanimous.

It should be noted that where the number of seats in the Australian House did not clearly determine which party should be the official opposition, the opposition parties took it upon themselves to meet outside the chamber to try to resolve the difficulty.

With information obtained directly from the Australian House of Representatives, it cannot be confirmed that Speaker Nairn presided over the joint meeting. However, as Speaker Nairn was a member of the Australia Party, he would probably have been present at the meeting, as it was common practice then and still is the practice for the Australian Speaker to attend his party caucuses.

Since no records of these meetings have been published, I am unable to determine with any certainty who presided over this meeting. If Speaker Nairn had chaired the meeting he probably would have done so in a party role and not as an impartial Speaker of the House.

[*Translation*]

In the Canadian House of Commons, the election of the Speaker by secret ballot affects his or her political relationships. It places upon the Chair occupant an even greater obligation to set aside his or her parliamentary party connections while serving as the Speaker for all members of the House. Once elected, the Speaker therefore does not attend any caucus. If any group of members wished to meet outside the Chamber to deal with some matter, and indicated their wish for me to chair such a meeting, I would of course offer my services as an impartial, neutral facilitator. I am sure that no member of this House would want to see the Speaker involve himself in partisan matters.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Therefore the Australian precedent does not assist me in the matter currently before me. Having listened to the presentations by hon. members, having examined the precedents referred to by the hon. member for Lethbridge as well as others from provinces and other countries, and having taken into account our own traditions, I can find nothing which would have supported the contention of the hon. member for Lethbridge that the Speaker of the House of

The Address

Commons may decide to grant official opposition status to the second numerically important party in opposition.

By convention the number of seats held by a party in the House has been the determining factor.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to address the new reality which the House faces today, and that is the issue of the equality of seats of the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party.

At the beginning of this Parliament the Bloc Quebecois, the largest minority party in the House, assumed the role of the official opposition with their leader taking up the duties of the Leader of the Official Opposition. As a result of a byelection and the resignation of the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on January 15, the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party now have the same number of seats in the House.

[*English*]

Just as Speaker Dysart of New Brunswick was required to do in 1994, I must answer the following question: is the existence of a tie sufficient to overthrow or displace the recognized official opposition? From my examination of the precedents from other Canadian jurisdictions, including the most recent precedent from New Brunswick, I must conclude, just as Speaker Dysart and other Speakers have, that in the case of a tie during the course of a Parliament incumbency should be the determining factor and the status quo should therefore be maintained.

An equality of seats in the two largest opposition parties should neither deny the members of the Bloc Quebecois their position today as the official opposition nor prevent them from choosing from among their members the leader of the official opposition. Thus the Bloc Quebecois will currently retain its status as the official opposition until a further review of this status is warranted.

I hope it is clear to all members that in this matter the role of the Speaker is to ensure the business of the House is conducted according to the standing orders and our practices. It is my duty to ensure that any matter which may be legitimately brought before the House meets the procedural requirements for the form in which it is presented.

As I noted earlier, the designation of the official opposition has never been decided on the floor of the House, and the House has never put in place a procedure for the selection of the official opposition. My comments are obviously made in relation to the present context of the number of seats on the opposition side of the House and in the absence of any statutory authority or rules or guidelines for the Speaker to act on if required to intervene in determining which party should at a certain point in time become the official opposition

[*Translation*]

I wish to thank the hon. member for Lethbridge for raising the point of order and all other members for their contributions, as well as their patience in listening to this lengthy but important statement.

* * *

• (1725)

[*English*]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House proceeded to the consideration of the speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor General at the opening of the session.

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure and some relief that at last I rise to move the motion on the address and reply to the speech from the throne.

To you, Mr. Speaker, welcome back. Like you, I do look forward to the second session of this 35th Parliament. It is clearly a place for open debate.

Although it has now been some time since we heard the speech from the throne, at that time I was reflecting on all that has happened in the 28 months since the election brought us here to the Chamber. In the intervening period I have had time to consider it even more closely. Unlike what I have just heard from members opposite, my memories of the red book are quite different. I remember it as an ambitious plan, a plan taken to the people by our Prime Minister in 1993, a plan overwhelmingly endorsed by the Canadian electorate from coast to coast, a plan that has been put into action.

Only half way into our mandate the government has already delivered on the vast majority of commitments in the red book and in the first throne speech.

[*Translation*]

The two-fold objective to stimulate job creation and economic growth while reducing the debt and the deficit lay at the very heart of the action plan. The emphasis on jobs and the economy helped to create half a million new jobs and achieve a rate of economic growth that ranked among the highest in the world.

[*English*]

Having clearly set out fiscal targets in the first budget, we consistently met those targets. How did we do that? By sticking to

the economic fundamentals, keeping inflation low and reducing the deficit from over 6 per cent of GDP when we took office to a projected 2 per cent by 1997-98. The government has always believed in a balanced approach.

We have remained true to the words of my colleague the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria who, though perhaps ill qualified as a defensive back, will make a very good Speaker upon the opening of the 35th Parliament. She said: “A Liberal government will have a social conscience while being fiscally responsible. A lean government does not have to be a mean government”.

We are proud of our record in the first half of our mandate but this no time to grow complacent, and that is what brings us here today. Today’s throne speech represents a reaffirmation of our initial goals. Its purpose is to set out our plan of action for how we will build on past accomplishments during the second half of our mandate.

The throne speech focused on three priority themes: jobs and growth, security for Canadians and modernizing the Canadian federation to ensure unity.

Canadians do not want nor do they expect government to do everything. Canadians expect government to make strategic choices. By forming partnerships with the provinces and the private sector we can succeed in helping Canadians achieve the dignity of work.

When I think of work I think of youth. What immediately comes to mind are my own 19-year old twin boys who happen to be here in Ottawa today. Their existence has a lot to do with my concerns for ensuring there are job opportunities for our youth. I do not suffer from any empty nest syndrome. These boys need to get out of the house. They need to get jobs.

The priority of this issue was brought home to me again last week. The University of Saskatchewan is in my riding in Saskatchewan. USSU vice-president Robert Millard, to use our finance minister’s expression, keeps my feet to the fire on this issue. He and students across the country will be happy with today’s throne speech announcement that we will double the number of federal student jobs this summer.

• (1730)

I read in yesterday’s newspaper that youth are exiting Saskatchewan in record numbers because there are no jobs. Last night I heard the same thing on a local Ottawa station in the hon. whip’s riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The announcements made in today’s speech are directed at exactly that problem. The government has shown its commitment to our youth by announcing initiatives that will help them make the transition from school to work and find real jobs in the future, a good example of our reaffirmation of our commitment to be an innovative technology leader

The Address

[*Translation*]

By concentrating our efforts on science and technology, we will help Canadians take advantage of the creation of knowledge-based industries, which will generate more jobs, better jobs and durable jobs for Canadians young and old.

[*English*]

Jobs in areas such as agricultural biotechnology, the aerospace industry, environmental technologies are opportunities that currently exist in Innovation Place in my riding of Saskatoon—Humboldt and which will be further enhanced by today’s announcement.

Another aspect mentioned in today’s speech is the importance of trade. Last week we had the pleasure of a visit from the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific in Saskatoon to discuss the importance of national trade in creating jobs and growth.

The tremendous success of the Team Canada trade missions led by the Prime Minister, most recently in Asia, has resulted in billions of dollars in business deals for Canadian companies and tens of thousands of new jobs. The government will continue to enhance export development and financing and encourage Canadians to be key players in world markets.

The next theme we discussed earlier today was security for Canadians. When I was in my riding during the January recess a consistent message I heard from my constituents was the value they place on the maintenance of our social programs. They and many other Canadians who share their concerns will be heartened by today’s commitment to safeguard the principles of medicare, to reform and sustain the public pension system and to implement a new employment insurance program.

Perhaps nothing unites us as a nation like our belief in the need to preserve the fabric of the Canadian social safety net. It is one of the attributes that has earned us the status of the best country in the world. This is high praise to our modest Canadian way of thinking, making us far too prone to blush, to brush it aside, little realizing with what envy our nation is eyed by others around the globe.

This does not mean we can afford to take our federation for granted. The throne speech indicated the commitment of the government to keep Canada together. To remain strong and united we must be open to changing needs and circumstances, ready to be flexible and adapt to the needs of all parts of the country as we enter the next century.

This pledge is not lightly given. Like the other commitments in the throne speech, it is a promise to be kept. “The most important asset of government is the confidence it enjoys of the citizens to whom it is accountable”. That quote appeared in chapter 6 of the red book under the heading “Governing with Integrity”, from which, I was pleased to see, the hon. member from Kootenay East was quoting earlier this afternoon. I was pleased to see he has a

The Address

copy. I am equally pleased to see he has read it. I am pleased to see that he can read.

If members think back to the time of the next election, they will recall that no longer did Canadians perceive their elected officials as the trusted servants of the people. Again we heard the member for Kootenay East quoting from the red book to suggest that after years of scandal and patronage, by 1993 politicians did not enjoy the best of reputations. Perhaps after the comments from the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley his leader may be distressed to learn this member pines for the days of Brian Mulroney.

The difficulty we faced at the time of the last election was that Canadians had lost faith in the political leadership to maintain the integrity of government institutions.

In the months leading up to the last election, I too was among the ranks of despairing Canadians who had lost faith. Like many other rookie members of the House, I would say from all parties, at that time I had finally reached the point at which action had become the only antidote for the cynicism and discontent tormenting me. Although I had not held political office before, I decided the time had come to get involved.

• (1735)

As I mentioned from chapter 6, restoring integrity to our political institutions, a personal priority for the Prime Minister, became one of the first orders of the day. As my boys will tell you, I say with annoying regularity actions speak louder than words. We have only to look to the example set by the Prime Minister, his own long political career, his unblemished record of honourable service to his country to find out what standard is required. Having regained the trust of the Canadian electorate in 1993, the Prime Minister received a mandate to begin the process of restoring the faith of Canadians.

I mentioned a few moments ago that I have the honour to represent the riding of Saskatoon—Humboldt. It is a long way from Ottawa. Canada is a big country. In spite of the convenience of air travel, what with the time change and connections required, it takes me a good six hours to get from door to door; back to the riding on Friday for the weekend and back on the plane Monday to work in Ottawa. Many Canadians perhaps do not realize that when the House is in session this is a weekly commute.

Before you get too choked up with this sad story, Mr. Speaker, let me say I am lucky. I live in the city of Saskatoon. When I get off the plane I am home. Many of my colleagues who live in rural Canada have yet another leg of the journey ahead, a long lonely drive usually in the dark after a gruelling week and a long flight.

I think in particular of my colleague from Saskatchewan, the member for Souris—Moose Mountain, a young lad of 27; clearly the driving has taken its toll.

Members from other geographically distant areas, the territories, the interior of British Columbia, northern Ontario, rural Quebec or Atlantic Canada, know exactly what I am talking about. Even when we are in our ridings, often in the rural areas declining populations are so scattered over such vast geographical areas that travelling is a real challenge. Even worse, it makes personal interaction between the MP and the constituent increasingly difficult.

Members representing urban ridings face the same outcome but for entirely different reasons. Though geographically manageable, ridings in large centres such as Vancouver or Toronto have undergone tremendous population increases. I think of my colleagues, the member for Mississauga West and the member for North York, whose ridings have populations of over 300,000.

We have shifting population patterns, the challenges presented by time and distance and the increased workload in Ottawa severely taxing the ability of the MP to maintain direct contact with the constituent.

Consider my own riding of Saskatoon—Humboldt. It is a rural-urban split. It is located virtually in the heart of the province of Saskatchewan. It includes one-third of the city of Saskatoon and large rural area to the north and east. It is bounded on the west by the South Saskatchewan River, putting to rest any popularly held misconceptions that there is no water in Saskatchewan.

If you were to accompany me on a tour of the riding, Mr. Speaker, first we would make our way through a well treed residential area. Myth number two debunked, we have trees. We would end up at the University of Saskatchewan, established just after we became a province in 1905. On that campus we would find a variety of colleges including law, engineering, fine arts, medicine and agriculture. We would find the Royal University Hospital. We would find the Saskatchewan Accelerator Laboratory and finally on the outer edges, Innovation Place with its thriving ag-biotech community.

Travelling beyond that we would end up at the edge of the city where in the interest of time we would have to transfer to a helicopter to view the hundreds of square miles that make up the rural portion of Saskatoon—Humboldt. Flying over this vast area we would see First Nations communities, grain farms, agricultural manufacturing, beef and pork operations, schools, churches, town halls, post offices, curling rinks and that prairie landmark, the grain elevator. Most important, we would see the people who live in that riding, the constituents.

• (1740)

Who are these people? We would see a young mother working on aboriginal justice initiatives; a first year engineering student who wonders where the money will come from for next year's tuition; a hospital cafeteria worker who is worried about special care for her diabetic preschooler; a particle physicist who does not want to have to leave Canada to continue her research; a new Canadian pumping gas who devotes his spare time to the jazz festival; a feedlot operator linked to the Internet for market prices who keeps a .22 in the corner to shoot gophers; a farm woman who drives a school bus, works at the credit union and who cannot find decent child care; a Roman Catholic priest with an aging flock; and finally, one of my favourites, an 86-year old francophone lady who cannot get out any more but who crochets like a demon and sends me Christmas cards.

There is not a member in the House who could not produce an equally lengthy, diverse or interesting profile of the Canadians in his or her own riding.

If we stitch all of those ridings together we end up with a map of Canada, a tapestry of rich and varied hue reflecting the myriad of constituents whose interests, both individual and collective we have been sent here to represent.

There are so many different strands of opinion. There are different strands of thought, religious belief, education, ethnic background, income brackets, age groups and loyalties.

Our challenge as parliamentarians, as Canadians, is to be the loom that will take those many strands, all those different colours, all those different fabrics and strengths, and weave them into a strong, beautiful, sheltering Canada.

As was stated in the throne speech, the government approaches the second half of its mandate confident that what unites us as Canadians is far greater than what divides us. The commitment made today is to find those precious threads that strengthen the national fabric without constricting those within its folds; to call upon our shared Canadian values; to build an independent nation, economically strong, socially just, proud of its diversity and characterized by its integrity, compassion and competence.

I have no doubt this challenge can be met and that the opportunity is there. As we head into a new session of Parliament I urge all members of the House to reflect on what we cherish about Canada, to recognize the privileged responsibility we share and the sacred duty we owe to the Canadians we represent to strengthen and preserve this country.

[*Translation*]

Long live Canada!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Address

Mr. Sheridan: I now move, seconded by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, that the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Roméo A. LeBlanc, a Member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, upon whom has been conferred the Canadian Forces' Decoration, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Commons of Canada, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to speak in support of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne before it gets dated.

As the representative of the electoral district of Ottawa—Vanier, which is in many ways a microcosm of this great country of ours, it is with a mixture of pride and humility not to mention trepidation and some nervousness, that I accepted the Prime Minister's invitation.

It is also with gratitude; gratitude because the speech from the throne speaks of the values that unite us. It speaks of the sustainability of our social programs. It speaks of ensuring opportunity, in particular for our young people. It speaks of fiscal responsibility guided by equity, fairness and balance. It speaks of safe and clean communities. It speaks of a rejuvenated, flexible and exemplary public service. It speaks of a proud and effective participant on the international stage. It speaks of our Canadian identity, of our cultural institutions, of our future, of the hope we all share for a better tomorrow. Most important, it speaks of and for a united Canada. On this very date last year, a scant four days after having been sworn in, I sat in the Chamber and listened to the Minister of Finance introduce the 1995 budget. These were his words: "Mr. Speaker, there are times in the progress of a people when fundamental challenges must be faced, fundamental choices made, a new course charted. For Canada, this is one of those times. Our resolve, our values, our very way of life as Canadians are being tested. The choice is clear. We can take the path too well trodden of minimal change, of least resistance, of leadership lost. Or we can set out on a new road of fundamental reform, of renewal, of hope restored. Today we have made our choice. Today we take action".

The Address

That budget charted the course of our economic recovery. The actions taken that day and since have inspired in the country a sense that we are on the right path. When was the last time the national government spoke with any credibility of a \$17 billion deficit target? Yet that is the target reaffirmed in the throne speech for fiscal 1997-98.

The government has met its targets and will continue to do so for the betterment of the country. Next week the government will table its third budget, once more reflecting the priorities of Canadians. While our goal of progressively lowering the deficit and eventually eliminating it is essential in maintaining the confidence of our financial markets, lenders are not the focus, nor the reason, of the deficit reduction strategy. Rather, the focus is the need to foster a climate for wealth creation, a climate within which the private sector can prosper, grow and create employment. The creation of a variety of productive opportunities for Canadians, the creation of work, that is our primary focus.

[Translation]

As Félix Leclerc stated so very aptly in one of his songs, the best way to finish a man off is to pay him to do nothing. All too often loss of work leads to loss of spirit, loss of hope, dropping out of society, fear, crime. The speech from the throne represents a great challenge, a magnificent challenge to us all, a noble challenge, a challenge that requires all of the creativity and all of the resources of both our government and the private sector.

• (1750)

[English]

It is not an easy challenge. Nowhere has it been felt more than in the nation's capital. The federal government's decision to reduce its workforce by some 45,000 has had profound effects on the national capital region where residents make up one-third of the government's workforce.

While it has a history of dependence on the federal government for employment, the national capital region has chosen to ride the wave of change rather than drown in it. History is rife with examples of communities stagnating or disappearing because they were unable to adapt to change. I assure the House that this will not be the case in our region.

The national capital region has changed. It has a strong and vibrant private sector. Tourism, high technology industries, biotechnology industries, colleges and universities, research centres and a myriad of trade related businesses have turned our community into a dynamic region, a region focused on success, a region preparing to compete head on in the international arena.

A word of caution however. As the former member for Sudbury, the Hon. Doug Frith, said in his remarks in support of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne in 1980:

The development of the various regions of Canada need not be at the expense of others. Surely as Canadians we realize that a strong western and Atlantic Canada are as important to the confederation as a strong central Canada. We must begin to understand that by strengthening the parts we strengthen the whole, and that by promoting regional cannibalism, we begin to road to self-destruction. The strength of confederation has been the ability of the federal system to share and redistribute the resources of the various regions of Canada in order to preserve an economically and socially progressive federation.

Our region will continue to absorb its fair share of reduced spending. However, our people are hurting too. Unemployment in our region is now higher than the national average. Also, there are more people dependent on social benefits in our region alone than in all of Saskatchewan, with all due respect to my colleague across the aisle.

Therefore, we too will need some tender loving care, not necessarily in the form of large cash infusions but perhaps along the lines of removing barriers and facilitating economic development projects.

Just as economic development is the focus of our deficit reduction plans, the ability to maintain meaningful and necessary social programs is its *raison d'être*.

By continuing to increase the nation's debt we only reduce opportunities to provide for the needy. On the other hand, by reducing the debt relative to the gross domestic product and eventually by reducing it in absolute terms, the country will be able to guarantee the long term viability of our social programs.

Think of the day when we will start paying off the debt, which is not too distant in the future. Think of the perpetual annual savings of \$80 million or so every time we knock a billion dollars off the debt. As the ads state: "Imagine the freedom".

Already the benefits of our strategy are becoming visible. The ability to introduce a cash floor in the Canadian health and social transfer is but a first manifestation of healthier finances.

As the fiscal health is restored so will the ability to ensure the financial, physical and mental well-being of elderly people, physically challenged people and of those who cannot fend for themselves. In other words, the improving economic and fiscal situation will also improve the ability to redistribute wealth, one of the primary functions of any national government.

[Translation]

Changing topics, I would like to talk a little bit about the riding of Ottawa, particularly its northern boundary, the Ottawa River. Crossing that river, as some 40,000 people from Eastern Ontario or West Quebec do every day to get to work, one discovers the other component of the National Capital Region. Together we, that is

The Address

those on both sides, Eastern Ontario and West Quebec, comprise a single economic area, so much so that the *Globe and Mail* committed an interesting slip in a page one headline after last year's byelections, which you will remember were in Brome—Missisquoi, Saint-Henri—Westmount and Ottawa—Vanier. To quote the *Globe and Mail*: "Liberals win three Quebec byelections." You cannot win them all.

• (1755)

In this National Capital Region of ours, we are so alike in the way we talk, the way we think and the way we live that an outside observer like the *Globe and Mail* would have trouble determining our province of origin. Our region straddles both provinces. Anglophones and francophones, both on the Ontario and the Quebec side, live in harmony with each other.

This region is a good example and a wonderful symbol of our ability to live together. However, we are not the only symbol of this duality. A brand new symbol has now been added to the constellation of Canadian symbols: the two-dollar coin. What a marvellous symbol of a country where two official languages coexist, a country where two main cultural groups live together, a nation with two founding peoples. What a wonderful idea to design a bimetallic coin to reflect our bilingualism and our biculturalism.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bélanger: This new two-dollar coin, which is getting a rather rough ride in some quarters, is nevertheless an interesting reflection on the Canadian situation. Some people are trying to break it up, to divide it, to separate it, to separate one piece from the other by hitting it with a hammer or exposing it to the worst possible weather, to extreme conditions. No wonder that a few of the 70 million coins that were minted finally split in two.

But why should anyone try to separate two sections that are part of a whole? Once separated, they no longer have the recognition or the value of the whole coin. Separated from each other, their distinctness diminishes and even disappears. Only when they are together do we see that each part is distinct from the other. Only when both pieces are fitted together, each in their proper place, does this coin have its full and proper value, and the same applies to our country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bélanger: So I say three cheers for those who designed the coin and, especially, three cheers for those who created this country 129 years ago.

I may add that the same analogy could apply to Canada's francophone communities. Imagine the francophone community without Quebec or imagine Quebec separated from the one million francophones in the other provinces. In both instances, communi-

ties would be divided, and all francophones would come out losers, should the country break up. However, the value of francophone communities, in a united country, is beyond measure.

I would like to thank the Prime Minister most sincerely for according me this badge of honour and especially for the privilege of seconding the address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am particularly grateful, because the speech from the throne prepares the way for reconciliation.

In terms that are appropriate and in a manner that is direct, honest, and unequivocal, it deals with questions vital to the renewal of our federation and questions we will have to try to answer in the coming months. They include recognition of the distinct nature of Quebec society, a constitutional veto for Canada's regions and the enshrinement of these two important concepts in the Canadian Constitution.

It also raises the thorny question of the division of powers. The genius of the British North America Act and its sections 91 and 92 lies not in the creation of two levels of government: a senior and a necessarily junior one. It lies in the creation of two orders of government that may and can co-operate while keeping separate jurisdictions.

All too often in this House and elsewhere in the country, we hear talk of two levels of government rather than two orders of government, of a national government and its responsibilities and authority and of provincial governments with their own responsibilities and authorities. One is not subordinate to the other nor subject to the other. Neither is better than the other, they are complementary.

Like many, I believe in a strong national government, as do most of the people in Ottawa—Vanier.

• (1800)

However, a strong central government does not mean a national government that does everything, has a finger in every pie, imposes its will on everything, in short acts like Big Brother. No. A strong central government means a national government that does a good job, a very good one even, in areas within its jurisdiction, in its public finances, in its relationships with other individuals, communities or governments.

The throne speech reflects that spirit of respectfulness and open-mindedness toward the provincial governments. I feel we are on the right path. The path we have begun along today will lead us to our intended destination: a strong country that respects all of its constituent elements, a country where there is a sense of harmony, where all ethnic groups have a place alongside the two founding peoples, and where those two peoples live in harmony with each other and with those who were the original occupants of this land, each adding to the strength of the other, understanding each other,

Government Orders

accepting each other, helping each other out, growing and developing together.

For this reason, I am pleased to support the motion of my colleague from Saskatoon—Humboldt on the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

The Deputy Speaker: My dear colleagues, it is now the official opposition's turn. As I recognize the hon. member for Roberval for the first time this session, I wish to extend on behalf of the Chair congratulations on his election as leader of the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this will certainly not be my longest speech. I will now move, seconded by the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie:

That the debate be now adjourned.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.) moved:

That the Business of Supply be considered at the next sitting of the House.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order concerning Motion No. 1. I think you will have to agree with the point I intend to make, which is that this motion is out of order.

I would refer to arguments made by the present government in 1991, when it was in the opposition, in response to a motion presented by the Progressive Conservative Party, the government party at the time, when it wanted to resurrect measures that had died on the Order Paper when the House was prorogued.

At the time, the Conservative motion listed the bills in question and, if I remember correctly, there were six. The Liberal opposition argued that a general motion could not be debated and that the House would have to proceed item by item, motion by motion and bill by bill. I realize that, in this case, the government has avoided the pitfalls of the motion it condemned at the time by not specifying the bills it wants back on the Order Paper. The government is trying to resurrect all the bills that died on the Order Paper instead of taking them one by one.

I would like to recall some of the statements that were made at the time. Mind you, all this was item by item. Speaker Fraser finally agreed with the arguments put forward by the opposition. These included, and I am reminded of what was said by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier at the time—his successor just made an eloquent speech—who is now a senator, who condemned this approach, referring to it as a legislative mess, and who called hon. members opposite—who were sitting where I am now but are sitting opposite today—government bullies. It seems to me that borders on the unparliamentary, but apparently it was accepted by the Chair.

• (1805)

The government is trying to do exactly the same thing today, but in a roundabout way. It is are trying to accomplish indirectly what it cannot accomplish directly. I realize that the government members have realized that their arguments were not totally convincing, since the approach has been an item by item approach, even if that had been condemned, as seen by the statements I just quoted.

Nevertheless, the approach has been item by item, bill by bill. When the official opposition was consulted by the government, it was made clear to the government that we were prepared to examine each bill on its merits and that we would agree to a certain number of them. I am thinking, for instance, of the bill of my colleague for Québec making excision illegal. We are, of course, prepared to resume examination of that bill where we left it last December, but it would take a lot of gall to assume that we would agree to re-examine the Axworthy reform as the Young reform. There are limits.

On these grounds I would ask you to consider this motion as not in order, as you cannot do otherwise, based on the arguments put forth several years ago by the government party in terms far more crude than mine.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to challenge the validity of the motion which has been put forward by the government with respect to reinstating bills and amending standing orders.

The motion has many faults. It deals with two entirely separate matters and it deals with the reinstatement of bills and with the changing of the standing orders.

The first half of the motion that deals with the reinstatement of bills contains within it over 30 pieces of legislation. I refer to citation 552(3) of Beauchesne's sixth edition:

There can be but one question pending at the same time, though there may be numerous matters of business in various stages of progress standing on the Order Paper for consideration during the session. The only exception from this citation occurs at the report stage of a bill, when the Standing Orders confer upon the Speaker the power to combine amendments or causes for discussion and decision.

Government Orders

How can a member responsibly take a decision on this motion put forward by the government today? We do not know which bills will be introduced. In essence we are signing blank cheque.

The motion says that at first reading:

—if the speaker is satisfied that the said bill is in the same form as at prorogation, the said bill shall be deemed to have been considered and approved at all stages completed at the time of prorogation and shall stand, if necessary, on the Order Paper, or, as the case may be, referred to committee, at the same stage and under the same legislative procedural process at which it stood at the time of prorogation.

That is unacceptable. After we pass this motion we should leave it to individuals to decide, not the House. Since when does democracy act in this way? That is absolutely ridiculous and highly irregular.

I refer to citation 566(5) of Beauchesne's:

Any irregularity of any portion of a motion shall render the whole motion irregular.

Not only is the whole motion irregular but a portion of the motion is extremely irregular and extremely dangerous to the way we do business in the House or in any other legislative assembly.

• (1810)

There was a heated debate in May 1991 led by the Liberal Party and many of the current sitting members of the House regarding an exactly identical matter. The Liberals argued not only against the ethics of reinstating bills without the unanimous consent of the House but the receivability of a motion to do so.

The Mulroney motion of 1991 affected only five bills. This Liberal clone motion is far more sweeping. The government has taken the worst procedures from Mr. Mulroney's government of the day and has somehow managed to make them even more offensive. That is shameful and horribly unacceptable to this House.

The motion before us today has the potential of affecting over 30 bills and we do not even have the opportunity to know which ones will be considered for reinstatement. We are going to make a decision blindfolded and completely kept in the dark.

Some members of this House may feel that all bills should have died on the Order Paper when the House prorogued and others may think all bills should be reinstated. Some may think that just private members' bills or just government bills or a combination of the two should be put back into this assembly.

When we add the standing order changes we have got one big mess, a Charlottetown accord kind of mess. It is a mess. It is irregular and I declare and feel that it is certainly out of order as a motion before this august body here today.

I will not waste the time of the House arguing that this cannot be done other than by unanimous consent because that great parliamentarian, Mr. Brian Mulroney, set the precedent in the last Parliament. That is not good enough. Unfortunately though today the Liberals have chosen to adopt the Mulroney style of democracy in government and are again pursuing the Tory thrust that was in the last Parliament. We know where that led us.

Notwithstanding the ethical consideration, Speaker Fraser in considering the Mulroney motion ruled that there cannot be just one vote on five separate pieces of legislation. The motion in 1991 was intended to reinstate five separate bills. The motion put forward by this government today proposes to allow the reinstatement of over 30 bills. The 1991 motion referred to specific bills where today's motion deals with "facilitating the business of the House". That is very general. The effect is the same. Many bills will be reintroduced with one swoop and one motion. This is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I now refer you to the Speaker's ruling of May 29, 1991, pages 733 to 735 of *Hansard*. The Speaker ruled the motion in order but used his authority to amend the motion. He referred to a ruling from another speaker on March 23, 1966 and I quote: "It is only in exceptional circumstances and when there is little doubt about it that the Speaker can intervene and of his own initiative amend the resolution proposed by the hon. member". The Speaker also cited citation 424(4) of Beauchesne's fifth edition which states: "The Speaker has the unquestioned authority to modify motions with respect to form".

The Speaker decided at that time to allow one debate but a separate question for each bill. That is what happened. The Speaker established that there ought to be a separate vote for each one of the bills. That is the precedent we face here today.

The question, Mr. Speaker, that you are faced with is similar. However, I believe there is a difference. You should not be bailing out the government at this time as the Speaker did in the last Parliament. The Speaker in that Parliament had no precedent for such a motion and that qualified as exceptional circumstances. This time around the government has no excuses. It knows what the precedent is. It is not up to the Speaker to bail out the government every time it presents an inferior motion, but that is what we are faced with here today.

Mr. Speaker, you should rule this motion out of order and the government should come back with proper motions so that the House can take a responsible decision on each bill separately and on each one of the issues that are in that motion in a separate way. Fiscal discussions should be in one motion and bills should be in another. Then we can look at them as such. However as this motion is formed, it is highly unfair to the members of the House. It certainly should be unacceptable to you, Mr. Speaker, in its form.

Government Orders

• (1815)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the submissions by the House leaders of the Bloc and especially that of the Reform Party.

The motion I would like to move involves a totally different approach to the motion in 1991 which is the subject of their critical comment. In 1991 the motion dealt with specific government bills but this motion simply provides a procedure or framework open to all MPs and not just ministers.

Each bill affected by this order would have to be introduced separately with the question put separately. My hon. friend, the Reform House leader, has totally misunderstood the structure, point and purpose of my motion.

My motion, if adopted by the House, would not restore a group of unknown, unlisted bills. Instead it would simply provide a framework enabling each minister and each private member who wished to do so the opportunity to have their bills introduced separately with the question put separately on each of those bills.

The hon. member for Lethbridge, in particular, says that the motion will enable bills to be put forward whose identity we do not know anything about. I respectfully submit that the hon. member for Lethbridge again is quite incorrect in what he says because he obviously has not understood what my motion clearly states.

My motion applies only to the bills that were on the Order Paper at the time of prorogation. Those bills are listed. The order paper is a public document. I am sure, contrary to what was suggested earlier in the debate, that the hon. member for Lethbridge is able to read the Order Paper. I would strongly disagree with anybody who suggests the contrary.

There was concern about a motion like the one I want to present affecting the standing orders but I submit that a motion to amend or to suspend standing orders is always in order.

I submit that the fact this motion deals with two different procedures does not in any way invalidate it. The House will recall that in 1994, I proposed a motion which was accepted by the Chair as being in order that amended dozens of standing orders affecting five or six procedural issues.

The opposition parties did not get up at that time and say the 1994 motion was out of order because it dealt with more than one subject. On the contrary, there were some words of praise for the reforms to our parliamentary procedure that were involved in that motion.

I submit on the precedent of the motion that I presented to make permanent changes to the standing orders in 1994, this motion is certainly in order even though like the one in 1994 it covers a number of different issues and standing orders.

Again, that my motion is not intended to make any permanent changes to the standing orders but merely to provide a procedure to enable this House in a way that will be useful to all hon. members, not only ministers but private members on all sides of the House, to get on with the business of the House without repeating work that has already been carried out.

• (1820)

I have just one or two other comments. An hon. member, criticizing my motion in the debate on this point of order, said that there was something wrong with individuals moving bills rather than the House as a whole. Every bill is presented to the House by an individual member moving the bill whether it is a government bill moved by a minister or a private bill moved by a private member. This is exactly what we do with every bill.

The last precedent that I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is one created by the hon. member for Lethbridge himself. Last fall he presented a motion to the House which was accepted as being in order and if adopted would have allowed the restoration after a prorogation of all private members' bills in one fell swoop. At that time he did not say: "Oh, I am sorry. I made a big mistake. I should not have presented this motion because it covers all private members' bills". No. He put it forward as a worthy reform of the procedures of the House of Commons.

That motion was not ruled out of order by the Chair. It was accepted by the Chair and placed on the Order Paper. If that motion which dealt with private members' business was in order, then I submit that my motion which deals not only with private members' business but with government business is equally in order.

On the basis of all the points I have made but especially on the basis of the words written down, submitted to the House and accepted by the House, by the Reform House leader, I submit that my motion is in order. He has proved it by his words and by his motion. Therefore, I suggest that the point of order is not in order and I should be permitted to proceed with my motion because it is in the interest not just of the government but of all the members of the House, private members on the government side and private members on the opposition side. If the hon. members were really interested in preserving the interests of private members they would readily accept my motion rather than present this point of order.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very cute in proposing a motion which ties

Government Orders

private members' business to government business in a way that obviously gives the government House leader the opportunity to make the Reform House leader feel uncomfortable.

However, I would like to speak to what I think is the larger point which is the fact that this is in effect, as was argued earlier by my colleague from the Reform Party, something in the nature of an omnibus motion.

Certainly the government House leader will recall, having been here in 1982, when an omnibus piece of legislation, albeit legislation and not a motion, provoked 16 days of bell ringing. It is not just in this House but in many other legislatures and most recently in the Ontario legislature where omnibus bills provoke a particularly strong reaction on the part of elected members. Why is that? It is because it goes against the tradition established by Speaker after Speaker in so many contexts that the House should not be forced to rule on more than one matter at a time. People should not be put in that kind of position.

It is somewhat misleading, although not deliberately so, for the government House leader to suggest that the framework which the motion establishes provides an opportunity for the question to be put on each and every piece of legislation that would be reinstated within this framework. What will happen is that the bill will be reinstated at the particular point at which it was when the last session came to an end. There will be no question put.

• (1825)

The government House leader suggests that there will be individual questions put on whether or not legislation is reinstated. That is the question we are debating here; not the questions that will be put at the various stages of legislation, but whether the legislation itself will be reinstated. That is the question that opposition members want put and those are the questions that will not be put if this framework motion is adopted.

The government House leader suggests that somehow there will be individual questions put with respect to these 30 bills. The point was rightly made that we are talking about 30 bills, not just the five that we found so offensive and which the Liberals found offensive when the Conservatives tried to do a similar thing in May 1991.

Is there no end to the parliamentary hypocrisy, call it what you like, which we see from Parliament to Parliament to Parliament where people get up on the government side and do in spades what they condemned in an even smaller form when they were in opposition? Is there no end?

I have seen this happen on a number of occasions. I have seen Conservatives condemn Liberals and then do it. I have seen Liberals condemn Conservatives and then do it. In this case it is the Liberals who condemn the Conservatives and who now come before us with a motion which does in a much more exaggerated way the very thing that they found so heinous in May 1991. We had a bad decision in May 1991. That motion never should have

been deemed acceptable by the Speaker at that time, a Speaker for whom I had a great deal of respect, but I have to say I did not agree with him on that occasion.

We should not let that precedent be magnified now by the advancement of this particular motion. Basically if it is adopted it will create a situation in which the end of session and a throne speech really becomes just a PR opportunity for the government. It is not the end of a session and the beginning of something new. It is not what the end of session and the beginning of a new session used to be. It is basically just a little photo-op for the government because nothing stops. It does not have to take responsibility for the parliamentary timetable. If it cannot score with the goal posts the way they are and get its legislation through, this motion simply says move the goal posts.

It says we can do anything we like with the standing orders any time we like. There is too much of that going on. Too much of it went on under the Conservatives for nine years where they just moved the goal posts. I remember one time they had a motion where they just said they could change any standing order any time in any way they liked.

What we have here is a kind of parliamentary dictatorship when it comes to standing orders. The Liberals saw through it at the time. Yet now they do a very similar thing and it is very distressing. They ought to think twice before they do this. For once somebody should not do in government what they condemned in opposition. Indeed they should say that was wrong and we are not going to do a similar thing when we are in government. Would that not be a refreshing change?

The Deputy Speaker: I see several members standing. I will go back and forth on this. I would ask all members to please not repeat any point that has already been made.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond very briefly to some of the points that have been raised.

First, there is a major difference between this initiative and the one of 1991. This time we are offering an enabling motion and the bills are reintroduced afterward. They are not introduced automatically by way of the motion. That is the first point.

Second, Mr. Speaker will surely recognize and recall that there was a very interesting debate in which a member of the Reform Party, namely the member for Lethbridge, offered a very constructive suggestion to bring back bills that had already reached a certain stage in the previous session. In fact, what the government House leader has done is precisely that.

I just heard a bit of heckling from an hon. member from the Reform Party who said that was only for private members' bills. Imagine the following proposition. The government in a different Parliament had attempted to resuscitate only government bills and that was deemed to be wrong. Now the Reform Party's solution is

Government Orders

to only reinstate opposition motions or bills and that would presumably, according to their criteria, make it right.

As the hon. House leader stated, if the arguments made by the Reform Party some weeks ago were correct, then surely the arguments would apply equally to opposition members as they would to government members. In fact, the enabling motion offered by the government House leader today proposes a mechanism whereby members, if they wish, can revive their own bills within a 30 day time frame. It does not resuscitate or revive all bills, but for those members who wish to bring them back, it brings back to the House in an accelerated mechanism bills that had passed second reading. For instance, there could be bills where the solution has already been offered.

[*Translation*]

Some parliamentarians may choose not to proceed with certain bills. That is their choice. We are still entitled in this House to adopt a practical mechanism such as proposed by the member for Lethbridge. However, if he were right, his reasoning in my opinion would have to apply to both sides of the House. Parliamentarians

on both sides must be equally entitled to return bills to the stage they were at prior to prorogation.

In brief, this is the decision the Chair will have to make to put an end to this debate. I hope the Chair will decide the government may proceed with the consideration of this motion.

The Reform and Bloc members have not convinced the Chair, I think, or at least they have not convinced me of the merits of their argument. The argument remains perfectly valid in that we have a motion before us which is entirely in keeping with our rules.

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, it is now 6.30 p.m. I think I have heard enough. The question is a very serious one. We will consider the point our colleagues have raised and rule on its admissibility as soon as possible.

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House is adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

(The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

SECOND SESSION—35TH PARLIAMENT— OPENING			
Oaths of Office		Mr. Boudria	12
Bill C-1 Motion for introduction and first reading		Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral	12
agreed to.	1	Mr. Strahl	13
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	1	Mr. Harris	13
		Mr. Gouk	14
Speech from the Throne		Ms. Bridgman	14
The Speaker	1	Mr. Schmidt	14
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	6	Mr. Hopkins	14
Motion	6	Mrs. Lalonde	15
(Motion agreed to.)	6	Mr. Hoeggner	15
		Mr. Telegdi	15
Vacancies		Division on motion deferred.	16
Lac-Saint-Jean, Papineau—Saint-Michel, Etobicoke North, Humber—Sainte-Barbe—Baie Verte and Saint-Laurent—Cartierville		Supply	
The Speaker	6	Motion for consideration of business of supply	16
		Mr. Massé	16
		(Motion agreed to.)	16
Committee of the Whole		Points of Order	
Appointment of Deputy Chairman		Official Opposition—Speaker's Ruling	
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	6	The Speaker	16
Motion moved and agreed to.	6		
Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge)	6	Speech from the Throne	
Mr. Duceppe	7	Address in Reply	
Mr. Gray	7	Mrs. Sheridan	20
Mr. Blaikie	7	Motion	23
Mr. Nunziata	8	Mr. Bélanger	23
Motion agreed to on division: Yeas, 143; Nays, 89	8	Motion	26
Appointment of Assistant Deputy Speaker		Mr. Gauthier	26
Motion	9	(Motion agreed to.)	26
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	9		
Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge)	9	GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
Mr. Duceppe	9	Government Business	
Mr. Blaikie	9	Motion No. 1.	26
Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead)	10	Mr. Gray	26
Mr. Charest	10	Mr. Duceppe	26
Mr. Abbott	11	Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge)	26
Mr. Nunziata	11	Mr. Gray	28
Mr. Hermanson	12	Mr. Blaikie	28
		Mr. Boudria	29

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation/Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste – lettre

**8801320
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:

Canada Communication Group — Publishing
45 Sacré–Coeur Boulevard,
Hull, Québec, Canada, K1A 0S9

En cas de non – livraison,

retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à:
Groupe Communication Canada — Édition
45 boulevard Sacré–Coeur,
Hull, Québec, Canada, K1A 0S9

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes.

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Additional copies may be obtained from the Canada Communication Group — Publishing, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9, at \$1.75 per copy or \$286 per year.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.

On peut obtenir la version française de cette publication en écrivant au Groupe Communication Canada — Édition, Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9, à 1.75 \$ l'exemplaire ou 286 \$ par année.