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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 2, 1997

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 2, 1997

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1000)

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Colleagues, before we begin with orders of the day, I have received notification from the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. Yesterday we had an incident in the House where the word treasonous was used by a member putting a question to a minister. At that time I asked the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas to withdraw his comments. At that time his answer was no.

I see that the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas is in the House this morning. Rather than have any kind of a long statement or explanation, as far as the House is concerned I have a question to put to the hon. member and it will be quite direct.

Does the hon. member wish to withdraw the word treasonous which he refused to withdraw yesterday?

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yes. Out of respect for the traditions of the House I do withdraw the word treasonous.

The Speaker: I consider this matter closed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STONY RESERVE

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wild Rose raised a question of privilege on September 30. At that time I heard argument not only from the member but from other members in the House. This morning the hon. minister of Indian affairs will be making a statement, giving us further information on this question of privilege.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information for your consideration of the question of privilege raised by the member for Wild Rose.

The member for Wild Rose alleges that an official of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development deliberately misled him and subsequently denied him information to which he was entitled as a member of Parliament, thus constituting a contempt of Parliament. This is not the case. I wish to put before the House an outline of my understanding of what occurred that day and the rationale for the official's actions.

On August 29, 1997 my staff offered to have senior departmental officials from the Alberta region provide the member for Wild Rose with a briefing on the initiatives being undertaken by the department in the Stony community. While I cannot speak to the specifics of the hon. member's expectations, there was no promise at that time to release confidential financial information of the band to him. The meeting was subsequently arranged for September 16, 1997.

A few days prior to the meeting Indian affairs officials learned that members of the Stony band would be attending with the hon. member. On the day of the meeting the departmental regional office became aware that members of other bands in Alberta were also accompanying the member to the meeting.

On September 16 the hon. member for Wild Rose arrived by bus for the meeting accompanied by two assistants and approximately 20 members from three different Alberta bands. The member conducted at least one interview via telephone with the media while on route to the meeting.

• (1005)

Representatives of the media also arrived at the building that afternoon, apparently at the invitation of the hon. member. Despite this development the participants at the meeting were advised that they could be present for the general briefing but that DIAND officials were not at liberty to reveal to non-band members financial information confidential to the Stony band.

The position taken by DIAND officials was guided by restrictions of the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act.

It is acknowledged that the information sought was not requested under the Access to Information Act. However, given the government's potential liability over inappropriate disclosure of confi-

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dential information to third parties, the Access to Information Act is used for guidance on the informal release of information.

Confidential financial information relative to the band is mandatorily protected by the Access to Information Act. As such, it can only be released to third parties after a consultation process. Consultations are with the chief and council or duly authorized officials of the band. Some of the information can be provided, however, to individual members of the band, as they are entitled.

At that point the largest contingent at the meeting, primarily members of the Samson band, agreed to leave the briefing and requested a separate meeting with DIAND officials immediately following the meeting with Stony band members. That request was granted.

The hon. member for Wild Rose and one other member of another First Nation protested the position being taken by DIAND officials. An assistant to the hon. member then drafted a handwritten note at the meeting which he had signed by members of the accompanying group. This note appointed the member as their financial advisor.

The hon. member for Wild Rose claimed that as their financial advisor he was entitled to the same information as the band members themselves. DIAND officials were unsure of the legal implications of releasing the information under these circumstances or the rights of a financial advisor to receive such information. As such, he advised those present that if they pursued the matter legal advice would have to be sought before the meeting could continue.

The hon. member agreed to leave the meeting to allow a discussion of financial issues with the members of the Stony tribe.

The member for Wild Rose was not present during the discussion of financial issues which was provided to individual members of the Stony band, but he was present during the briefing by DIAND staff of the initiatives being taken to address the situation at Stony. These initiatives include the appointment of a third party manager to manage the day to day operations of the Stony First Nation, the initiation of a forensic audit of the band operations and the establishment of a joint task force to examine the conditions on reserve and develop proposals to address them.

After the meeting the hon. member asked if the department could contribute to the cost of the bus which was used to bring the group to the briefing. The member was advised at that point that this was not possible.

Sometime after the meeting the hon. member's assistant contacted the DIAND regional office. He stated that he had a conversation with an official in the office of the access to information commissioner and claimed he was advised that the member was

entitled to the information he had sought as a representative of the individual band members present. The member's assistant was advised by DIAND to submit a formal access to information request. This would allow the member to specifically state what information he required and it would enable the department to obtain legal advice on a specific request for information.

These events appear to have led to the hon. member's question of privilege. I wish to submit the following points for consideration.

First, the member for Wild Rose alleges that officials deliberately misled him and withheld information. The fact is there was no intention to deliberately mislead or withhold information. It was my staff that offered the briefing and regional officials provided the briefing as promised. The regional official involved did not provide information which he felt was confidential and protected under acts of Parliament.

Second, I do not believe that the official's actions indicate a contempt of this Parliament. The fact that he said he would not release the requested information under unusual circumstances without first obtaining legal advice was, I believe, the prudent course of action and demonstrated no contempt for Parliament or the member's rights as a parliamentarian. His emphasis on prudence with respect to confidential information demonstrates his respect for Parliament and the laws that it develops.

• (1010)

Third, in this question of privilege the hon. member refers to regulations governing disclosure of information. While it is not clear to which regulations he is referring I wish to make the following points. The member for Wild Rose claims that the released confidential financial information is permitted if written consent is received. The member argues that he had such consent.

While it appears that he had the consent of a few band members, the information being sought related to the entire band and was not specific to those members. He did not have the consent of the band. He also claims that as a member of Parliament he is entitled to confidential information. If he is referring to the Privacy Act, section 8.1(g) does allow that personal information can be released to a member of Parliament "for the purpose of assisting the individual to whom the information relates in resolving a problem". Again, in this case the information requested was not specific to the individuals but related to the entire band.

My department arranged a briefing in good faith, provided the briefing and attempted to accommodate the request for information within the law. The official involved acted prudently by not revealing confidential information without seeking legal advice. I am sure the hon. member would not want officials of the department of Indian affairs or any public servant to risk releasing

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confidential information or violating the spirit of an act of Parliament.

I appreciate this opportunity to outline the circumstances surrounding the point of privilege raised by the hon. member for Wild Rose.

The Speaker: I see the hon. member for Wild Rose is seeking the floor. I presume it is on this same matter. I do not want a debate to go back and forth. I am looking for the facts.

If the hon. member for Wild Rose feels he has some additional facts, new facts, that he has not laid on the table already to add to this discussion, then of course I would recognize him at this time. If he does not have any new facts I will proceed from there.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to put it in the form of a question more than anything else. The minister states that a member of Parliament cannot receive this information based on the signatories of the band present authorizing me to do so. Yet in the same breath when I left the bureaucrat in question was willing to give that information to those very few band members.

If I am required to get the entire band's permission, then surely the bureaucrat would not be allowed to give just a handful of people that information. It must go to the whole band.

I am really confused as to exactly what the minister means by that.

The Speaker: Once again, this is put in the form of a question and of course it is one of the questions that this House has asked me to take into consideration and which will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, you suggested that if one had any new information that might help you would receive this.

I know of this particular official. I spent 20 years in the consulting business in Alberta. One of our areas of work was trying to improve relations between aboriginal people and oil companies. In the conduct of that work I had encounters with this official.

• (1015)

The real problem—and the minister simply does not address it—is that many bureaucrats in this department started out idealistic and got into this matter to try to help aboriginal people. Because of the difficulties of the problems being dealt with and the machinery they had to work with, they have become utterly cynical about whether there is anything they can do. They now no longer try to help. They simply play by the bureaucratic rules and the more bureaucratic the better. Those are the real problems.

The minister's response does not address those problems at all. Perhaps the minister could think for a moment. If we were first nations people who were pulled in from that band, 15 to 25 of us, could she put herself into their shoes and listen to her own statement? It is utter bureaucratic nonsense that does not address the concerns of the people.

This is what the hon. member was endeavouring to get beyond by arranging this meeting. The minister's response takes the side of the bureaucrats, not just against this member of Parliament but against the interests of ordinary people who would find her answer utterly incomprehensible, as do the members on this side of the House.

The Speaker: We are getting a little more into debate rather than facts. If there are pertinent facts that have not been laid on the table as opposed to opinions in terms of personalities, I will permit interventions. They must deal with facts and if they do not deal with facts I will intervene on the statements.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when you look into this instance in its entirety I know you will review all the discussions.

This question affects not only the hon. member for Wild Rose but many of us who have bands in our ridings—and in my case I have over 20 of them—that face similar problems.

We should look at the privileges of a member of Parliament with regard to the Access to Information Act and other problems. The minister says that information cannot be given out without the consent of chief and council, and the chief and council are the ones the aboriginal people with whom I deal want me to investigate.

Look at the dilemma the member for Wild Rose and I are in. The access to information people are now at the point where they will have to proceed to court to try to get this stuff, because the member of Parliament cannot represent the people who sent him here.

The chief and council, the very ones grassroots aboriginal people have come to me for help on because they have a problem with them, are told they cannot get the information because it is the chief. But it is the chief who is the problem. What are we to do?

The Speaker: Once again, we are sort of enlarging on the whole question. I ask hon. members to be very diligent in their remarks. If there are other facts, let us stick to the facts and I will hear them.

I return to the hon. member for Wild Rose, and this will be the final intervention.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point to one thing stated by the minister. She said that I was acting on behalf of these people from the Stony reserve as a financial adviser. That is false.

I am not a financial expert in the slightest. I am the MP for that riding. I am their elected official. I was there at their request and

Routine Proceedings

was trying to serve on their behalf. That is why I was there and not as a financial adviser. That is hogwash.

The Speaker: Many times we have situations where we have disputes and different interpretations of the facts on what really happened. One person will look at it one way and another person will look at it another way.

• (1020)

It falls upon me now to take the information you have laid before me on this question of privilege. I undertake to do that. I will have a look at the statements on both sides. I will have a look at whatever information the member has laid before me. After I have studied it to my satisfaction, I will come back to the House with a decision on this matter.

Does the hon. leader of the Reform Party in the House have some facts to add?

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is for a point of information. I ask whether the Speaker will be willing to accept more information, statements and depositions to help your decision.

At this point I am not sure whether the Speaker has all the information. You could request witnesses or anything that would help your decision in this matter.

The Speaker: When members raise questions of privilege they usually lay whatever information they have on the table. The words of hon. members are taken as hon. members, and I will deal with the situation as presented to me by hon. members.

Should I need any other information I will inform the House that I need it to make my decision. If not and if I can come to a fair decision for all of us, I will do so and I will base it on the facts that hon. members from both sides have laid before me and before the House.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order with respect to this issue.

The Speaker: Is the hon. member rising on a point of order on this issue?

Mr. John Bryden: I am not sure. I would like to make one observation with respect to what I have heard. I request that you consider this issue in the context of—because I do not think it has been very well expressed—members' privileges under the Privacy Act.

It would appear from what I have heard that this issue pertains to the Privacy Act more than to the Access to Information Act.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that intervention. I assure the House that I will look at all aspects of the matter because the privileges of a member and the privileges of members are at stake.

I will take as broad a view as possible, but I will bring to bear precisely on the issues raised by the hon. member for Wild Rose and the response by the hon. minister.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, a number of order in council appointments made by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1) these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

* * *

[Translation]

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian section of the International Association of French speaking Parliamentarians on a symposium to exchange information on parliamentary action in a democracy, which was held in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on April 25 and 26, 1997.

* * *

• (1025)

[English]

CANADA-YUKON OIL AND GAS ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-8, an act respecting an accord between the Governments of Canada and the Yukon Territory relating to the administration and control of and legislative jurisdiction in respect of oil and gas.

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

* * *

CANADA MARINE ACT

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-9, an act for making the system of Canadian ports competitive, efficient and commercially oriented, providing for the establishing of port authorities and the divesting of certain harbours and ports, for the commercialization of the St. Lawrence Seaway and ferry services and other matters

related to maritime trade and transport and amending the Pilotage Act and amending and repealing other acts as a consequence.

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

Hon. David M. Collette: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I wish to inform the House that this bill is exactly the same as the one passed by the House in the last Parliament. It is my intention to propose that it be referred to committee before second reading pursuant to Standing Order 73(1).

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-227, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (income deferral from forced destruction of livestock or natural disaster).

He said: Madam Speaker, my bill is quite straightforward. For some years now under the Income Tax Act income from the forced destruction or sale of livestock as a result of a drought situation has been deferred.

I am simply proposing that the same system and rules apply to the destruction of livestock under any natural disaster circumstance.

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

* * *

PLAIN LANGUAGE ACT

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-228, an act to promote the use of plain language in federal statutes and regulations.

He said: Madam Speaker, sometimes constituents ask me for copies of legislation that has been passed in the House, bills that we are currently talking about. Then they realize that they cannot understand a word in the bill; they have no idea what it means.

In addition to the fact they are written in such complicated legalese, these bills are always open to legal challenges in the courts.

• (1030)

My bill would force those who write the bills to construct them in plain language.

Other countries that have this type of legislation have found that it greatly simplifies the bill writing process.

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

Routine Proceedings

CITIZEN-INITIATED REFERENDUM ACT

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-229, an act to provide for the holding of citizen initiated referenda on specific questions.

He said: Madam Speaker, in 1987 when the Reform Party was first talking about citizen initiated referenda, hardly anyone else was talking about it. In the early 1990s New Zealand introduced citizen initiated referenda into its parliamentary system. The Harris government is in the process of doing so and the Klein government has already introduced a referendum process for tax increases.

This bill would bring the federal government in line with the trend worldwide for greater democratic input from the people. It is the most important bill I am introducing today.

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

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-230, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (election expenses).

He said: Madam Speaker, passage of this bill would force political parties to raise all the money they need from the people they purport to represent, instead of gaining money by compulsion from taxpayers through the election rebate system. I hope members will support this bill and force their supporters to actually support them.

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

* * *

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-231, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning labels regarding the consumption of alcohol).

He said: Madam Speaker, alcohol is the only consumer product which, if misused, can harm you that does not have a warning label to caution about the risks. Forty-five per cent of motor vehicle collisions, 30 percent of accidental fires, 30 percent of suicides, 5 percent of birth defects, 65 percent of homicides, 50 percent of family violence, 65 percent of child abuse and one-sixth of family breakdowns are all directly or indirectly due to alcohol misuse.

In the last House I introduced a bill to require health warning labels on the containers of alcoholic beverages. It received all

The Address

party support, passed second reading and was at committee at the time of the prorogation of the House.

I am pleased to raise this bill again in the House and I look forward to getting the support again from all hon. members.

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

* * *

• (1035)

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I propose that all the questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Thibeault): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from September 29 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg North—St. Paul.

It is my distinct pleasure to rise in the House today as the newly elected member for the riding of Oak Ridges. The riding is named after the Oak Ridges moraine which intersects nine municipalities. It is made up of the communities of Richmond Hill, the home of the largest observatory east of the Rocky Mountains and the home of Elvis Stoyko, world championship skater; the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the home of the largest strawberry festival in Canada; and the northern Markham area, the high tech capital of southern Ontario.

The residents of the riding have placed their trust and faith in me. I will not let them down. Public office is a sacred trust and I believe that our role as parliamentarians is to listen to the people, act with fairness and wisdom, and to never forget that we are here to serve the interests of Canada.

Lucius Clay said of government:

The road to democracy is not a freeway. It is a toll road on which we pay by accepting and carrying out our civic responsibilities.

We have accepted our civic responsibilities as members of this House. I believe that Canadians now more than ever expect and even demand that our nation's leaders try to work toward consensus on issues. The days of political attack and rancour have not served this nation well, in my view. Political parties and governments need to work more co-operatively if we are to achieve the best for our citizens.

Yes, there will be fundamental issues on which we will disagree, but where there is an opportunity for us to work together to achieve solutions, let us do it, in the words of Nike.

The Speech from the Throne is the government blueprint for the coming term. I would like to focus on three areas which are of concern to me: youth, national unity, and investment in knowledge and creativity.

In order for Canada to be truly a land of opportunity we must develop an economic atmosphere which speaks to young Canadians, which tells them they have a future in Canada. They need to be able to dream and to reach for the stars.

The government has stated very clearly that the level of unemployment among our young people is far too high. We have the best educated young people in our history and we need to create the conditions that will position them to thrive in our knowledge based economy.

In February the government announced the youth employment strategy which consolidated over \$2 billion in new and existing funding for programs and services that young people need to acquire the skills and work experience to find jobs and lasting careers.

I welcome the three priorities of the government in this area: to make sure that young people make a successful transition to the world of work; to make sure that our young people who want to continue to learn have access to education; and finally to make sure that our young people who have found it difficult to get started in the workplace get a second chance.

As a former educator I have worked closely with students. I know their concerns and their aspirations. Canada is the land of opportunity and the government has committed itself to making the vision of tomorrow a reality for Canadian youth.

The role of internship programs has been particularly successful in helping young people get started. The government has committed itself to expand these programs. Enhanced funding for student summer placements will continue.

Working with the private sector and provincial governments, a Canada-wide mentorship program will be developed. I believe that the greatest investment we can make in Canada is in our young

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people. The government has listened and is responding to the needs and concerns of young Canadians.

• (1040)

Former American Vice-President Hubert Humphrey said of government “the impersonal hand of government can never replace the helping hand of a neighbour”. His words are fitting when applied to the national unity debate. The nation was created in 1867 by people of vision, men and women who were prepared to hold out a helping hand, to say that together much can be accomplished, but divided little can be achieved.

In the words Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier:

We are all Canadians. Below the Island of Montreal the water that comes from the north from Ottawa unites with the waters that come from the western lakes, but uniting they do not mix. There they run parallel, separate, distinguishable, and yet are one stream, flowing within the same banks, the mighty St. Lawrence, and rolling on toward the sea bearing the commerce of a nation upon its bosom—a perfect image of our nation. We may not assimilate, we may not blend, but for all that we are still the component parts of the same country.

In the Speech from the Throne the government has indicated that the most important commitment is to keep Canada together. It is our duty. It is our responsibility. The overriding goal is to strengthen and unite the country by joining in the common purpose of keeping Canada as one of the best places in the world in which to live.

[*Translation*]

Canada has a proud and rich history.

[*English*]

In spite of geography, we have shaped a society that reflects our cultural values as a nation; tolerance, understanding, recognition of the vital role that two languages, generosity of spirit and respect for the individual.

There are those in this House who would fail to adhere to the words of Sir John A. Macdonald: “Let us be English or let us be French but let us always remain loyal and above all, let us be Canadian”.

[*Translation*]

I think Canada exists because its people can work together.

[*English*]

We are destined for greatness because of the Canadian spirit. That spirit was shown on the battlefields of Ypres in 1915 and Vimy Ridge in 1917. Canadians acted as one: French, English, people of many backgrounds united in a common goal. The Canadians who risked their lives in 1942 in their raid on Dieppe and in June 1944 on the beaches of Normandy understood that. My

late father was wounded on those beaches in Normandy. He believed, as did those of his generation, that Canada was worth protecting and that Canada and our way of life was worth saving.

The forces of disunity are the forces of despair, the forces of gloom. Men like Sir George Etienne Cartier believed that French speaking Canadians would survive as a people within the larger nation. His belief has proven to be well founded. The French language and culture is protected by the Constitution, the charter of rights and freedoms. The use of two official languages, the thriving of the French language not only in Quebec but the unparalleled demand for the language in our schools across the country is a testimony to Cartier and his vision.

I believe sincerely that Prime Minister Laurier was correct that the 20th century does belong to Canada. Our leadership on the elimination of land mines is another example of how Canada is recognized around the world for its compassion and concern for others. Canada is my home. It is my passion. I believe the issue of unity can only be addressed by people of goodwill.

Yes, there are issues of alienation that must and will be addressed by people who are unified in the belief that this country is worth preserving. I am reminded of the words of Macdonald on the fate of our nation when he stated “whatever you do adhere to the union. We are a great country and shall become one of the greatest in the universe if we preserve it. We shall sink into insignificance and adversity if we suffer it to be broken”.

• (1045)

The time has come to reawaken Canadians to our history, to remind them of our roots and to acknowledge the contribution of men and women across this country, men like Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier. I believe the time has come to proclaim our faith in their work and to declare two national holidays in their honour to recognize their contributions to Canada and to the building of our nation.

I applaud the government for having the wisdom to invest in knowledge and creativity. We live in a changing technological world. To quote from the Speech from the Throne, “With the nation’s finances in good shape, we will soon be positioned to make choices and investments that support innovation and risk taking in Canada, and to attract more foreign investment in knowledge based industries”.

The government has targeted growth strategies that focus on knowledge intensive sectors where we are stronger and have good prospects for new growth and global leadership, areas such as biopharmaceuticals, the environment and information and telecommunications. SchoolNet is another good example.

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I am pleased the government has focused its efforts in these areas. I believe that together we can achieve the greatness that Laurier and Macdonald spoke of 100 years ago.

Long live a united and strong Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, my distinguished colleague from Oak Ridges, who describes himself as a teacher, has had much to say about youth, Canadian youth in particular. I would like to ask him a question.

As he is well aware, barely 4 percent of our electorate trusts politicians and many of that number are members of our own immediate families or friends of ours. However, our young people's trust in politicians is pretty close to 0 percent. In order to give Canadian young people more faith in parliaments and in elected representatives particularly, would the hon. member not agree to try to convince his colleagues in the Liberal party to propose a bill similar to the one in Quebec? This legislation would allow only voters to contribute to political parties, so big business would no longer be telling them what to do. Fundraisers would not be allowed to twist the arms of company CEOs in order to get \$10,000, \$20,000 or \$100,000 in exchange for certain recompenses from the government.

I can see several Liberal members of this House who are nodding to indicate that they would be in agreement with such a bill. However, I would like to hear it from this hon. member's lips. Would he be agreeable to the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois joining forces to look at what is being done in Quebec in order to improve finances at the present time, not just government finances, but also those of the political parties?

When we see things like what we saw on last night's news—this morning, when I called my riding office, they reported a number of constituents' calls still coming in, along the lines of "Is that what is happening in our fine riding of Frontenac—Mégantic, as it is in Drummond and Trois-Rivières, where Liberal fundraisers are forcing company CEOs to pay up \$10,000 or \$20,000 if they want any recognition?" This is scandalous.

Surely the hon. member for Bourassa will want to rise in his place and—

Mr. Denis Coderre: I have a point of order, Madam Speaker. I object to a member making false allegations leading to unfounded accusations. I ask that the member withdraw his comments.

An hon. member: It is in all the newspapers.

Mr. Denis Coderre: He said the Liberal Party was putting pressure on certain company CEOs in several ridings. It is unacceptable and I ask that he withdraw that statement.

• (1050)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Thibeault): This is a debate period. Everyone must be given the time and opportunity to speak.

The questions and comments period is almost over. I would ask the member for Oak Ridges to make one last brief statement, should he wish to do so.

[English]

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question. Although I did not raise that issue, I certainly agree with him that we want to restore confidence in our youth. I believe this government is certainly doing that with some of the programs that I outlined.

The hon. member raised a concern about campaign financing. We do have spending limits. We do have a process of disclosure. If there are suggestions that the member wants to put forward, I am all ears. I think the process we have in place is a good one.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured and delighted to rise today on behalf of my constituents and reply to the Speech from the Throne for this 36th Parliament.

It is truly an honour to be sent by the people to this House to represent their concerns and aspirations. I therefore seize this opportunity of my first debate in this Parliament to once more thank the people of Winnipeg North—St. Paul for their trust and confidence in me.

I thank those from the former riding of Winnipeg North who now constitute nearly half of my adjusted riding of Winnipeg North—St. Paul. I thank them for the continued confidence which they first entrusted in me in 1988, renewed in 1993 and again last June 2. I also thank those who are my constituents for the first time. I assure them that I will continue to discharge my duties and responsibilities as their member of Parliament with the same dutiful and careful attention I have served the people in the past. I shall consult with them and will continue to use my best judgment at all times taking the collective interests of our constituency and our country as my guidepost.

May I share with my colleagues in this House and with my constituents that I feel a special sense of honour and privilege as I debate today knowing that this new Parliament will be the last Parliament for the departing 20th century and the first Parliament of the 21st century as the throne speech so aptly noted. I am sure we collectively share this special moment in Canadian history just as we collectively share a special sense of duty to serve our country, the country of birth for most of us but the adopted country for some of us.

Nearly 30 years ago I became an adopted son of this country believing I was to begin a new life for my family and myself. As soon as I landed on its soil I felt at once a sense of security. I knew

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this would be a country where I could build a home, a career and most importantly yes, a future.

It was the future that became the driving force in building my family. Had I not believed that there was something good in this country to build upon, there would have been no inspiration there to pioneer the way for our children in order that they would have as equal if not a greater opportunity for success as their father has had.

• (1055)

I now look at my family, my four sons: Reis, Advin, Sherwin and Christopher. I ask myself, have I done what I set out to do in being the best leading example of fatherhood to my family. My wife Gloria would ask too, has she done what she set out to do in being the best leading example of motherhood to our sons.

Like any parent, father or mother, perhaps there is a need for insurance that the future for our children will continue to advance. On this earth there is no insurance of longevity, only the belief, the faith that what we have contributed in our lifetime can be an assurance of a future.

In essence we are only caretakers of this world. This is the directive of our humanity to which we are all instinctively called. And so it was with our First Nations people who began building Canada's first communities thousands of years ago. And so it was with the pioneers of Canada today who brought this nation together just over 100 years ago.

There must have been something great in creating a country of such immense promise. They could never know that future but they could ensure that it would happen by putting in place those building blocks upon which its future could be founded. They built our Confederation, the physical structure of our nation and the social infrastructure for our citizens, pensions and medicare just to mention a couple.

I put forth to hon. members this challenge, that we face up to the responsibility of ensuring our nation's continued future into the next millennium. This country has spent over a century discussing nation building. It is now up to us to project that history into this new millennium by securing and sustaining that nation Canada which has been built.

We must as members of Parliament in partnership with the government be prepared now to answer to the future needs of our children or else in this 36th session of Parliament we will have failed in contributing to this period of Canadian history entrusted to us. This is why our government strongly believes in seeing our youth educated and therefore empowered to be creative and innovative in facing the social, economic and political challenges of our fast growing world.

We recognize the need for an education that is responsive to these challenges by committing an endowment fund for scholarship. I am indeed delighted that the prime minister announced in his reply to the throne speech the millennium scholarship endowment fund. What will it do for young Canadians? The fund will help in at least two key priority areas, investing in the knowledge and creativity of Canadians and giving young Canadians a chance to thrive in the new economy by ensuring that post-secondary education is accessible and affordable to them.

Earlier I said I am delighted to rise and speak. I am delighted because this government has restored our nation's finances to order. The deficit has been reduced significantly and in a year or two we will have a balanced budget. The inflation rate is low. The interest rate is low. The unemployment rate is going down. But the work must continue.

I am also delighted because we have a government that believes that each Canadian child existing now and hereafter is guaranteed a future beyond the year 2000. It is a call for our government to be accountable to each member of its citizenship who is entitled to the fullest exercise of Canadian rights and privileges, and we have responded with the introduction of the national child tax benefits program.

That is why above all when this government speaks of Canada's future, it will deliver its message with one united voice for all Canadians, that in the true spirit of Canadianism what we ensure for one we must be prepared to ensure for all.

As we continue this 36th session of Parliament our job is to secure the future of this great nation. At times it may seem a daunting task. Yet, we must ask, can we afford to doubt ourselves when the future of our country is in our hands?

• (1100)

Had I been told 29 years ago that I would one day be standing in Parliament representing the constituents of Winnipeg North and that in my third election as the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North—St. Paul, I would reclaim my seat; and had I been told that amidst the devastation of my province plagued with the natural disaster of floods, its citizens would rise to the task of meeting the needs of our communities, I could never have doubted that the challenge would have to be met, not just out of necessity but because the vision of our nation's future was at stake.

Therefore I ask, are we prepared to take this country into the next millennium? If so, what is the government ready to do about it?

I am proud to be part of this government which has restored an infrastructure of hope and confidence for Canadians since it took office in 1993, because it understands the changing world. I am proud as well to be part of the government that has now set an

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agenda for the Canadian people that truly will bring us to the new millennium.

I thank the House and my colleagues for their indulgence. We shall work together so that Canada will continue to be the number one nation in the world in which to live.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on his eloquent speech in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

During the member's comments he indicated that he felt the government had restored health to the nation's finances. I wonder if the member could comment on what his definition of economic and fiscal health is.

Does it include 9 percent stagnant unemployment, shrinking family incomes, 17 percent youth unemployment, 100 billion additional dollars in the national debt, the highest personal income tax rates in the industrialized world, a \$600 billion Canada pension plan unfunded liability that future Canadians will have to pay for? Is this his idea of giving hope to young Canadians?

I am always entertained to hear members opposite talk with such great passion about the future and youth. This is a caucus that does not have a single member under the age of 30 talking condescendingly about hope for future generations, which it has forever indebted and made poorer because of the choices of the government to add \$100 billion to the public debt and the previous government, of which this Prime Minister was an integral member, created the debt to begin with.

Does this minister think that debt and that kind of serious economic problem creates hope for young Canadians?

Mr. Paul Forseth: No vision.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to respond. In 1993 the whole nation knew that the deficit was \$42 billion. In another two years the budget will be balanced.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: If the hon. member would allow me to reply and not ask questions to his questions, perhaps he may share in the real facts and figures.

Mr. Ken Epp: He did not ask about the deficit. Answer his question.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: Madam Speaker, if the member would be courteous and respectful of the House—

Mr. Ken Epp: You be courteous enough to answer the question then.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: Madam Speaker, I have not yet finished answering the question. The member is prejudging my answer. How could the member say that I am not answering the question when he does not give me the opportunity to answer the question?

When the deficit has been reduced from \$42 billion to nearly zero and the budget will be balanced in two years, that is a sign of fiscal health.

We recognize that there is still a debt. We do not deny that. That is why we continue to work to increase the economy of the country so that we will have the revenues and eventually we will be able to repay the debt. The government has stated that when we have the fiscal dividend we will spend half of it for the repayment of debt and reduction of taxes. However, in contrast to the Reform Party we will spend half of our fiscal dividend for social and economic programs for the country, for medicare, education and for research and development. The Reform Party does not care about the essence of politics. It does not care about the essence of government. Government is for the people. It is not only for the reduction of debt. A reduction of debt is not the ultimate essence of our obligation. We will reduce the debt. We will reduce the deficit because we would like to serve the people. Meanwhile we need a balanced approach. The Canadian people gave us that mandate and so I am pleased to be part of the government.

• (1105)

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. friend. He spoke with a great deal of eloquence about how well the government has done in his view. I suspect, knowing his constituency well, that he deals with a great number of immigration problems.

Years ago one of the dark sides of Canadian history was the head tax on Asians. We have rejected that as one of the darkest moments in our history as a country.

His government recently imposed a major head tax on all new Canadians. He will know that this poses an incredible burden, in particular on poor families coming from developing countries.

I would be curious to know what my hon. friend says to new Canadians who are applying to have relatives, friends and extended families come to Canada and have to pay these exorbitant head taxes now as a result of the taxes imposed by his government on new Canadians.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: Madam Speaker, when the issue was emerging a couple of years ago I consulted with my constituents. Every new Canadian that I spoke to understood that we are in a tight financial situation. They understood that they would have to pay the \$975 landing fee, but what they did not understand, and for which I fought with them, is that the fee must be paid at the time of landing and not before. On that we succeeded.

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I might inform the hon. member from the NDP that even the NDP member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly signed the petition accepting the landing fee.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I need to challenge the hon. member. Of course we ask questions about the diversion of the taxpayers' dollars to paying interest which really is what happens when we have a \$600 billion debt. One-third of every dollar that taxpayers send to Ottawa is simply transferred to financial organizations that have lent the government money. That is money that is not available for government programs.

How can this member claim success for the government's fiscal policies when what it is doing is arranging to spend one-third of the taxpayers' dollars on things that have nothing to do at all with delivering government programs to needy people in this country?

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: Madam Speaker, perhaps the best way to answer the question would be with another question so that the members could get the meaning.

Let assume for a moment that we spend all the revenues of Canada to pay our debt. What would happen to the people of Canada? What would happen to the people who get sick? What would happen to the children who are hungry? What would happen to the children who would like to get an education?

We have placed our priorities. I consulted at the doorsteps during the last election. I presented the program of the Reform, the program of the NDP. Canadians shared their confidence with us because they believe a balanced approach is the way to govern the country.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, as this is the beginning of the 36th Parliament, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Drummond for once again demonstrating their faith in me. They can count on my co-operation and be assured that I will defend the interests of this riding with a booming economy, which is also referred to as the heart of Quebec. As I did at the beginning of the 35th Parliament, I want to offer my constituents my full co-operation and promise them that I will do my utmost to promote their interests.

Since I will continue to act as health critic, my comments today will pertain mainly to the throne speech sections that touched on health issues.

But first, I must condemn this Speech from the Throne for promoting nothing less than a Pierre Elliott Trudeau style of federalism with all its consequences. This overbearing and centralizing federalism adamantly refuses to recognize the equality of the

two founding peoples, thus thwarting the legitimate ambitions of the Quebec people. This type of federalism wants Quebecers to choose between being unique like the Pacific salmon or facing the threats of plan B if they want to assert themselves. Never before has a Speech from the Throne so openly threatened Quebecers' right to decide their own future.

In the face of this spurious choice of a renewed federalism provided everyone fits the same mold, we say that our aspirations are legitimate, that they are imbued with the spirit of democracy and that we are marching down that road to freedom and to our future.

Getting back to the issue of health care and the government's plans as stated in the throne speech, I would like to talk about the way the cuts were distributed. The Liberals go around preening and busting their britches over their balancing the budget by next year. However they are not saying how they got to that point.

They do not mention that for the most part cuts have been made at the expense of the poorest of the poor. Nor do they boast about the fact that they cut \$4.5 billion in transfer payments to the provinces, including \$1.3 billion to Quebec alone. Also, they neglect to mention that the government has grabbed the surpluses in the unemployment insurance fund, to which it stopped contributing several years ago.

Not a word either about the federal departments' expenditures, which were supposed to be cut by 19 percent but were reduced by only 9 percent, or less than half the Liberals' rather modest goal. Moreover they hide the fact that 54 percent of the cuts made were to social programs, health care and education.

But we in the Bloc Quebecois are going to tell it all. We are not going to let the Prime Minister and his finance minister get credit for the sacrifices made by others.

This is typical of Liberal smoke and mirrors. Governments in Quebec and the other provinces are made to look like heavies, because they have been forced to make cuts and not Ottawa, which in turn steps in as a saviour using the money it took from workers and the neediest and reinvesting mere crumbs in areas which are not even under its jurisdiction, namely social programs, education and once again health care. I say "once again" because this is not the first time the Liberals have tried to intrude on health care.

• (1115)

They date back to the first red book, which called for the creation of a national forum on health, raising objections from all of the provinces because they had no representation on it. No provincial minister was allowed to take part. And anyway, a number of them had already carried out a similar exercise. Here, once again, they were having standards and views dictated to them, while the

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provinces were the ones that knew what they needed in the area of health.

This Forum cost \$12 million at the very least. They are shoving the unemployed onto welfare because of the cuts, but paying \$12 million for a national forum which leaves no room for the provinces. They tabled a condescending report which was a total endorsement of federal interference in the health field. This report went beyond the Prime Minister's expectations, and here he is ready to spread his tentacles further out into this area of provincial jurisdiction.

They found new ways to interfere. Take tax credits for home-based care, for example. Not only are they interfering but they are adding to what has already been put into place.

In red book II, the Liberals promised to create a new credit for home-based care. In the Speech from the Throne, they say they want to follow up on this promise of interference. Having seen the Liberals make cuts in transfer payments for social programs that could reach a total of \$42 billion between 1995 and 2003, what are we to think when we see them announcing a new annual program worth some one hundred million dollars? This is nothing more and nothing less than hypocrisy.

Rather than including that amount in the transfer payments to the provinces, the federal government is using its powers of taxation to interfere in the delivery of home care, an area that comes under provincial jurisdiction. The federal government wants to see its maple leaf logo on the cheques, rather than leaving the provinces alone to manage their own areas of jurisdiction.

And what about another attempt at interference, the integration of a federal drug plan? According to the throne speech, the federal government will establish a national plan, with national standards, a timetable and a fiscal framework to set up its new discovery in the area of meddling and duplication: drug insurance. This meddling and duplication is unacceptable.

It is out of the question for the federal government to come along and impose its own standards, when the whole thing is already set up. The Liberals must promise to provide a system whereby those provinces not interested in participating or already having such a program, like Quebec, can withdraw from the program, with full compensation.

Then there is the Canadian information system. The Canadian health information system is another example of the federal government's centralizing tendencies. Here come the Liberals again with the announcement they made in the latest budget on the Canadian health information system, a fund worth \$50 million over three years.

Madam Speaker, you are telling me I have only a minute left, but I still have a lot to say. However, I will move to my conclusion.

What we in the Bloc Québécois object to is that this is the Liberal government's tactic of smoke and mirrors, of doing anything to save face. We in the Bloc, however, have news for the Prime Minister. People are no longer being taken in by this sort of antic. Quebecers are increasingly aware of what goes on here and can count on the 44 members of the Bloc Québécois, who will be here every day, in every debate, to reveal the pretence and go beyond appearances, to show people what really goes on here, even though that may not be to the liking of the other side of the House.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment.

I listened with great interest to the member from the Bloc Québécois and there are a few things I would like to point out. We have to accept in this House the comments from the opposition party on how it feels about our programs and our achievements. However, I believe the best judge of that is the people of Canada. They reflected this in the last election by not only renewing our mandate but by sending the message to the Bloc Québécois, because its numbers went from 54 to 44.

The member talked about the national forum on health. Consultation was done well before the election and when its recommendation came back one of its highlights was to restore funding to a base of \$12.5 billion. Without hesitation the prime minister and the government took the initiative to restore the funding and accepted the recommendation of the committee. At the same time they went beyond and added \$50 million over the next three years, which the member also pointed out.

I want to comment on the point the member made about the aspirations and the path to freedom. I am puzzled about the use of the word freedom. I feel I and the rest of Canada are being told we are hostages held in a ball and chain. As a Canadian, whether I live Quebec, Ontario or British Columbia, I like to believe I have freedom. I have the freedom to vote, I have the freedom to select, I have the freedom to travel, I have the freedom to choose. Maybe in Quebec I am restricted as to the schools I can send my children, but that is for the Quebec people to decide.

I do not know what the member means by the path of freedom. As Canadians we are all free citizens.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to the last comment made by the hon. member. I should remind him that what we have been saying for the past 30 and perhaps even 300 years is that we are one of the two founding peoples of this country and that we want to be recognized as such. That is what we call freedom.

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I would also like to comment on some of my hon. colleague's remarks regarding the National Forum on Health. This forum was established following the last throne speech. The government was committed to travelling across Canada to find out what works and what does not work in each province's health care system.

This was to be done in co-operation with provincial ministers and representatives. The ministers and their representatives said no, as they considered this to be outright interference in an area of provincial jurisdiction.

Under the Constitution—which you like to bring up when it suits your purpose—the federal government is only required to transfer tax revenues. These amounts are to be distributed among the provinces on the basis of population, and the federal government is required to transfer some of the money to help the provinces carry out their responsibilities in the area of health.

Need I remind the House that health care management is the responsibility of each province. Health is an exclusive provincial jurisdiction. I hope that is clear.

As for the Canada social transfer, we read on page 58 of red book II: "A new Liberal government will raise the CHST cash floor to \$12.5 billion beginning in 1998-99". The \$6 billion increase in health spending announced by the Liberals is a sham. This is not new money; it comes from the cancellation of cuts the Liberals had planned to make. This money is spread over five years. It is definitely not extra money the federal government will be transferring to the provinces every year. So, don't tell us—

• (1125)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Thibault): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. Resuming debate with the hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with a great deal of respect that I take part in the debate on the throne speech.

First, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment as assistant deputy chairman of committees of the whole House, and I also want to take a few moments to thank the voters of Louis-Hébert for putting their trust in me, and also the numerous volunteers without whose support I would not be here today.

Everybody agrees that research and development is a key component for any society wishing to be fully prepared for the 21st century. Economic prosperity is increasingly the result of research and technological development, rather than the development of natural resources. The government opposite may be full of good intentions in its speeches, but we are still waiting for concrete action. For instance, the throne speech is extremely vague on the

government's approach regarding this strategic sector. The government only included a few paragraphs to affirm its supposedly crucial role in that area. It is so ironic.

Science and technology are at the core of a modern country's prosperity. The government claims to recognize the primary role of science and technology in preserving the public's health and well-being. It claims to recognize it has a contribution to make to job creation and economic growth. In their red book, before the 1993 election, the Liberals promised to double funding for research and development. However, as always, these commitments turned into cuts of 50 percent to research budgets.

If this government truly cared about research and development, it would at least restore research funding to its pre-1993 level, and as quickly as possible. Even then, Canada would still be trailing far behind other OECD countries. This is how serious this Liberal government is, in its throne speech.

As Mr. Tavanis, the Rector of Université Laval in Quebec City, recently pointed out, "because of the globalization of knowledge-based economies, particularly in the developed world, knowledge is finally recognized for what it is, namely a collective wealth, a tool for economic and social progress, and a competitive asset for nations. The role of universities is particularly important in Quebec, where research and industrial development still lag behind what is being done in other developed countries with which, unfortunately, we must compete".

Last February, in full pre-election mode, the Liberals, with their sense of the dramatic, announced with much fanfare the creation of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. One election and a few months later, the Bloc Québécois is still waiting for more information on this tool to modernize research infrastructure.

Questions come to mind. Will there be funding with which to pay researchers? This is vital to ensure the quality of research and stop the brain drain. The question remains unanswered.

The whole scientific community is impatient to see this much heralded foundation become reality. It is not known when it will actually be up and running.

The Bloc Québécois has already identified a number of weak points. The new foundation's mandate excludes social sciences, a key sector that is seen as secondary to research. The preferred emphasis was on "hard sciences", leaving universities like the Université du Québec à Montréal, which does not have a medical or engineering faculty, out of luck.

Despite the \$800 million investment, an annual contribution of \$180 million announced by the Minister of Finance in the February 1997 budget, it is clear that it will not offset the deep cuts made by the Liberals in recent years in R&D.

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• (1130)

The Bloc Québécois has not forgotten that the federal research councils sustained cuts of close to \$100 million, or 10 to 14 percent of their budget, and that funding for health and post-secondary education was slashed by \$3.3 billion, with a direct negative impact on research in these two sectors.

These blithe cuts in transfers to the provinces, as well as departmental budgets, the latter having lost half a billion for R&D, have been detrimental to the activities of all the country's research laboratories, centres and agencies.

In this throne speech, the government is trying to look generous, but it is in fact interfering in three areas of provincial jurisdiction: health, universities and social programs. This is a sure way to irritate provincial governments, which in turn are forced to make corresponding cuts in these same areas, in response to dramatic cuts in federal transfer payments.

For those who are in any doubt, from 1994 to 1997 federal cash transfers for health, welfare and post-secondary education dropped from \$19.3 billion to \$14.9 billion. They will drop by another \$2.4 billion this year.

The selection of R&D projects will be the responsibility of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, which may, if necessary, resort to peer evaluation. Universities have already expressed their views on the matter by demanding this particular selection process, peer evaluation, without receiving any guarantees in that regard.

Moreover, for new programs, the foundation will require partners to contribute 50 percent or 60 percent of total funding. It is hard to imagine how universities and hospitals, already faced with considerable budget constraints resulting from cuts in transfers to the provinces, will manage to meet this major challenge. We do not know how this foundation will distribute the available funds among the provinces. Can we hope that Quebec's share will be proportionate to its population?

Considering what is at stake here, namely our ability to participate fully in the economy of the next millennium, the shortsighted vision favoured by the Liberal government is cause for concern. Yet there is a sense of urgency because of the fierce competition that exists at the international level in the area of research and development. Therefore, I call upon the government to stop talking and start acting before it is too late.

I should advise the government that, as my party's critic for science, research and development, I will monitor the establishment of this foundation and the funds that will be invested in these areas. I will act as a watchdog for that community, which has contributed more than its share to the government's struggle to put its fiscal house in order. I will be all the more vigilant since my

own riding of Louis-Hébert includes universities, CEGEPs, research hospitals and a thriving high tech sector.

All this activity, of which I am very proud, will pave the way for the new economy in our region and in the national capital of a sovereign Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on what I believe is her first speech in the House and I welcome her. I am particularly pleased when we have members opposite who are interested in the science and technology files. I welcome a lot of the remarks which she made today and I would like to ask her one question.

I represent a large university in my riding. Research and development, the development of new technologies and the building of research infrastructure which will be a part of the product of this new foundation is of great interest to me. We are constantly seeking out new partnerships and new forms of investment in order to build the kind of research strength which we would all like to see. As the member has recognized, it creates jobs and a secure future for us.

However in discussions with some of the larger firms, the political instability in Canada particularly in the province of Quebec is a significant disincentive to investment. I just wonder how as a new member in this House with experience and an interest in this very important area she answers that. Would we not be better off if we resolved the unity question, if we put that aside and got on with the work of investing in this country together and building a future for all of us?

• (1135)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Alarie: Madam Speaker, fortunately, my hon. colleague's concerns are not shared by investors around the world. We are experiencing healthy growth in investment, and hence in the number of potential partners in research and development.

If I may refer to the terms recently used by the metropolitan Quebec chamber of commerce, concerning an investigation on the job losses in the public service resulting from early retirement policies, it said that the research and development sector was so vibrant in the Quebec City area that those job losses were gradually being offset by new jobs in research and development. This is what we call the new economy.

At this time, everything is fine and investors from around the world—I will not go through the list of the most recent investments, although I could if you were to ask me to—are much more concerned with the quality of researchers and the development sector than they are with any other problem. For the time being, they are very positive about Quebec.

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To conclude, I would like to say that each dollar invested in research and development creates jobs.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Qu'Appelle, NDP): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the new member for Louis-Hébert on her speech.

I have a question for her. I have often visited the great city of Montreal, and I remember Montreal used to be the most important city in Canada, and it was booming. In the last 20 years, Montreal has experienced high unemployment and a great deal of poverty. Over that period a Parti Québécois government has been in office in Quebec City for a long time.

How is it that, with a Parti Québécois government, in Montreal there is high unemployment, poverty is on the rise and prosperity is a thing of the past? Does the hon. member have an explanation for this? This is really sad, because Montreal used to be the most important city in Canada.

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my answer will be very brief indeed. If it were not for all these cuts to transfer payments, maybe poverty would not be so acute in the Montreal area.

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate you again on your appointment. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough-Centre.

I must confess that it is with some pride that I rise today in this House as the new Liberal member for Bourassa. You undoubtedly know that I lost three previous elections before winning on June 2. All those years of relentless efforts have earned me the nickname of Mr. Tenacity. My colleagues opposite will surely have the opportunity to find out why real soon, if they have not done so already.

Since June 2, the voters in Bourassa have, for the first time in four years, a real member of Parliament, a true federalist voice in the House of Commons, a good representative who will fight to protect their interests and express their viewpoints in Parliament.

So, my first words in this House will be for the voters of Bourassa. I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart for letting me live my dream, which is to represent them in the Parliament of Canada.

The taxpayers of the wonderful riding of Bourassa, in Quebec, have elected me to take part in the building of a strong Canada for the year 2000, a strong Canada for our children, a strong and united Canada proudly looking to the future. That is what I will be trying to achieve in the next four or five years.

Let me assure you that the mandate the people of Bourassa have given me is something near and dear to my heart and that I take it very seriously, because I am very much aware of my responsibilities and the trust these people have put in me.

• (1140)

It is in that spirit that I intend to contribute, in my limited capacity, to the reflection on the trust which must exist between the citizens and their elected representatives in a healthy democracy.

If I asked for the floor in this venerable House today, it is to talk about the priorities of our government. By the way, some of my colleagues on the other side of the House would do well to listen. They could learn how to go about taking this country beyond the year 2000.

The hon. members across the floor have frequently accused us of not going to the people with a book full of promises and undertakings to cure all the ills of Canada. Had we done so, nobody would have believed us and we would not have been re-elected with a majority, as we were on June 2.

Had we said that the federal government could solve all the problems, we would have been lying through our teeth. We chose to concentrate on a few clear, essential priorities we can deal with vigorously.

You probably recall the sorry state of the country's finances a mere four years ago. Need I remind you that within a single mandate, the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Paul Martin, did a tremendous job of turning things around? So much so that we will reach a balanced budget, a zero deficit, earlier than forecasted.

It is now possible to think about reinvesting in social programs. As a matter of fact, the government will increase its financial assistance to provinces beyond the budgeted level. We will introduce a bill that will bring up to \$12.5 billion the guaranteed annual cash payments to provinces and territories within the framework of the Canada health and social transfer.

This is certainly good news for all Canadians. Interest rates are the lowest in 30 years, inflation is under control, the dollar is stable and investment is constantly increasing. Even consumers are starting to believe again in the strength of our economy, and this is a very good sign.

The good news as we are pulling out a difficult period of downsizing is that while putting our house in order to reduce our costs, we have also changed our methods and approaches in order to get better results. The reforms that we have initiated and that we are pursuing will allow us not only to save money, but also to get our money's worth, to pay for services that Canadians really need, in a flexible and efficient manner.

In short, we made all the changes needed to develop a less costly model, but also a more modern and efficient model. Now that the health of our public finances is progressively improving, we have to put forward an action plan for the future.

The Liberal government's action plan is based on our highest priority, employment, that is to make sure that this good health is also reflected in the quality of life of all our citizens. This is why

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we intend to intensify our efforts in the development of job opportunities, for young Canadians especially.

Our young people are enterprising, well educated and ready to take over from us and contribute to the development of Canada. We must ensure that conditions are such that they can find their place in the sun. It was to that end that, last week, the Prime Minister announced in this House the establishment of the millennium scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to young people.

In the years to come, our government will be spending \$800 million to stimulate youth employment. That is positive, concrete action, not empty promises. With the economic indicators forecasting continued recovery in consumer spending, the basic conditions for the private sector to increase its hiring level are in place. But to get a job when jobs are increasingly specialized, one must first get appropriate training. Our government plans to focus its energies on that.

We are confident that we can work toward ensuring that as many Canadians as possible have the necessary skills to get the jobs opening up in high tech areas. The changes to employment insurance were designed with that in mind. It is also with that in mind and to demonstrate flexibility that we signed with the Government of Quebec an agreement ensuring that the management of training assistance is brought closer to the people concerned. This is proof that the federal system does work.

Finally, the changes we are thinking about making to the financial support to families are along the same lines. We intend to increase the federal government's contribution to the child tax credit by at least \$850 million over the course of this mandate.

Let me conclude by summing up our priorities for the next four years. We are committed to building a prosperous country, through careful and responsible policies aimed at reducing underemployment and child poverty, and a healthy country that will remain healthy thanks to better organized health care services.

To these two main priorities I must add a third one, without which implementation of the other would be impossible.

• (1145)

Our third priority, therefore, is to promote national unity and it is also why we have picked the right way to go about it: deliver good, flexible, honest and effective government to all Canadians, government that stays the course during hard times, government that manages the public purse wisely and works to eliminate the deficit and the debt.

I am convinced that our government will approach the whole issue of national unity in a spirit of co-operation and partnership

with the provinces. We will do everything it takes to make Canada a strong and united country.

The people of Bourassa, like all Quebecers and all Canadians, want a federal system that works better and that meets their needs. During this term of office, I will personally and with pride promote Quebec's interests within the Liberal Party of Canada and campaign tirelessly for the French fact in this country.

Finally, and more particularly, our determination to serve our fellow Quebecers well can be seen in our desire to take action to help the greater Montreal area make the transition to the new economy. Behind the statistics on unemployment and poverty, there is still lots of good news for the area's economy.

Throughout greater Montreal, there are businesses that are innovating, discovering new markets, and expanding; in a word, hiring. Better news yet: these businesses are not all in high tech sectors. Whether it be textiles, tourism, retail sales or home care, there are businesses doing well and hiring people.

Our government thinks that the best way to offset job losses in slower growth areas is to encourage the creation of more new jobs in emerging sectors.

We have already invested heavily in research support and infrastructure renewal, and we intend to continue our role of supporting and jump starting the Montreal economy in the years to come.

Change, prosperity, responsibility, flexibility and honesty; this is the best guarantee of a united Canada where Quebecers like myself can be proud to be what they are: full-fledged Canadians.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, the new member for Bourassa, who until recently was the assistant director general of his party, the Liberal Party of Canada, in Quebec said it would be effective and desirable to forge bonds of trust between him and his voters, between the Liberal Party of Canada and Canadian voters.

It would be extremely difficult to build up trust, given that, as a whole, members of this Parliament do not enjoy a great degree of credibility among the public. According to a poll conducted last year, barely 4 percent of voters have some confidence in members of Parliament.

The member for Bourassa spoke about promises, promises which, need I remind him, were not kept. During the 1993 election campaign, his government promised to abolish the GST. That promise was broken. His government also pledged to set up a \$5-a-day child care program from coast to coast. Another broken promise.

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How can the member believe he can promote trust when, yesterday, the headlines of every newspaper in the country revealed that fundraisers from the Liberal Party had twisted the arms of businesspeople throughout Quebec to collect funds for the last election campaign, not to the tune of \$5, \$10 or \$50 but, rather, \$10,000, \$50,000 or \$100,000. As we all know, when Bombardier, for example, or the CIBC gives \$100,000 to the Liberal Party, it is because it will make five times that amount. Theirs is not an investment that will bring in a mere 3 percent in interest; it is a lot more profitable than that.

It is very difficult to build up trust between voters and MPs when some Liberal members behave in this fashion.

In the past, the Conservative Party experienced problems of its own. Today, unfortunately, it is the Liberal Party. The former director general of its Quebec wing certainly did not provide a good example if his goal is to promote trust. It is just empty rhetoric.

• (1150)

Mr. Denis Coderre: This is laughable, Madam Speaker, because regarding credibility, if you look at the facts, I won the election by 9,000 votes. The Bloc Québécois lost more than 500,000 votes altogether. We have increased the number of our members in Quebec. We are everywhere or almost in the Quebec area. Federalists won a majority of votes compared to 38 percent for the other side.

If the hon. member wants to make allegations, if he has new facts to disclose—because that concerns me as much as it concerns all of us as members of Parliament—he should tell the RCMP, which, according to the news release, is conducting an investigation at the request of the human resources minister. They should stop reading newspapers and making allegations. If the hon. member has some new facts to reveal, he should do so outside the House so he will not be protected by parliamentary immunity. If he knows of anyone engaging in such practices, he should disclose their names. I have been in the Liberal Party of Canada for 15 years and I know everyone. But if he is in a position to name names, he should do so. I myself have never witnessed anything like that and I find this kind of thing appalling—

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien: Are you ready to put your seat on the line?

Mr. Denis Coderre: Madam Speaker, if the member for Frontenac has new facts to reveal, he should do so. We in this party have forged a link of trust. The hon. member for Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies won the election by almost 8,000 votes. I won by 9,000 votes. In the riding of Ahuntsic, we won by more than 10,000 votes. We chose job creation, investment and financial credibility instead of playing the same old record.

They have played that old record so much that, as the Cyniques, an old comedy group of the 70s, used to say, you can hear the other side of it. This is terrible.

For the sake of all of us in this House, I hope that if the hon. member knows names, because he seems to know some things, he should leave the House and say what he has to say during a scrum. I too would like to know who is collecting money. This would be helpful to all of us.

[English]

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me today to have the opportunity in the 36th Parliament to join in the debate on the Speech from the Throne.

I begin by thanking the residents of Scarborough Centre for once again entrusting me with their vote and their confidence. It was a privilege and an honour for me to have represented them during the 35th Parliament. That I find myself today in the 36th Parliament I owe it to them and I thank them. I pledge to them that I will once again do my utmost to bring their concerns to this honourable House. I also thank my volunteers, for had it not been for their support and commitment the excellent result we achieved would not have happened.

I also take this opportunity to thank my staff: Costas, Effy, Sandra and Kathy for keeping our office in an excellent working mode and serving our constituents during the election period. I thank my entire family, especially my two sisters, Nomike and Kathy, for their love and support. Also a very special thanks goes out to our riding president, Ernie Chaplin, for his dedication and continued support.

Last but not least I thank my children, Irene, Paul and Daniel, and my partner and loving wife, Mary. I say “Thank you, Kohani, for your love and support. You are my Rock of Gibraltar”.

Since the debate began last week many members have spoken on the throne speech. They brought forth many issues and many statistics. They dissected, analysed and commented on the throne speech in a way they chose to interpret it. I am sure every member in this honourable House respects each other's views whether we agree or disagree.

This is the arena where we all come to debate, to state our position, to bring forth the concerns of our constituency and our region. Because time does not permit I do not want to go into an in depth analysis and talk about how, when the Liberal government took office in 1993, the unemployment rate was at 11.5 percent and today as we all know it is 9 percent and dropping; how we inherited a \$42 billion deficit from a Conservative government that had never met its budget targets; or how we inherited a country so weakened from all aspects that we were being described as a third world economy. Our social safety net was also falling apart, not being able to address our needs today let alone the needs of the future.

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• (1155)

Within just a few short years and as a result of prudent initiatives, we have restored our economic sovereignty and have put our country on a solid footing. We are once again a nation and all of us as Canadians, whether we live in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba or wherever, can realistically see the light at the end of the tunnel. These initiatives are well known and the results are well documented.

I personally do not want to gloat about them. I choose to leave it up to the economists, the statisticians, the pundits and, yes, even the international community. Mostly I leave it up to the people of Canada to be the judge.

When I was canvassing during the election the households I visited in my riding often confronted me with various issues such as our pension system, our health system, our deficit, our job initiatives, crime issues, moral issues and issues such as the fiasco of topless women, which I might add I do not support and find unacceptable. I hope the government will do something to right that wrong. As members can see there are a variety of concerns.

However there was a common issue in each and every household, the issue of Canadian unity and how our country today is being torn apart. I was constantly asked what was happening to our country and why, when we have the privilege of living in the best country in the world, we would want to destroy it.

I was told a small group of separatists wanted to break up a country which on more than one occasion has been recognized as the best country in the world to live in. It is beyond me and the constituents of Scarborough Centre.

A strong message given to me in the last election, to do whatever I can to make sure the country stays united. I pledge to my constituents and to everybody else that I will do everything within my power to make sure not only us and our children but generations to come will inherit a country that is strong financially and indeed united.

It takes more than the member for Scarborough Centre and the constituents of Scarborough Centre. It takes more than just rhetoric. It takes goodwill and understanding from all Canadians. It will take political will and not the political rhetoric often used to exploit the weak and the vulnerable.

My constituents—and I know I speak for a vast number of Canadians—have recently been greatly disturbed by the comments of an unelected member of the Senate, Pat Carney. She suggested that separation be left on the negotiating table and that there was a bias shown by the federal government toward B.C.

Let me remind the senator that six Liberal members were elected from British Columbia and four of them are ministers of the crown

and one is a parliamentary secretary. That is a hell of a lot better than what her and her boss, Brian Mulroney, did during their mandate.

That is not all. Even the Reform member from South Surrey, B.C., in an article I read just the other day agrees with Ms. Carney that separation will be on the table when B.C. attempts to negotiate a new deal with Canada. The article goes on to state:

While she agreed that Ms. Carney's comments were irresponsible, she said the senator was only expressing the concerns of British Columbia.

What a flip-flop. This is what they call their new style of politics, saying one thing one day and another the next, tailoring the message for one region and changing it for another region.

The leader of the Conservative Party used that tactic during the last election and we all know how it backfired. Therefore I suggest members of the Reform Party take note.

Now we have the NDP. One of its senior members, the member for Burnaby—Kingsway, is ready to tie himself to a fishing vessel and at the same time advocate the same type of tactics. The Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois are simply saying their way or the highway. That is not the approach to recommend.

I am appalled at the tactics being used here. Why is it that before we sit down to negotiate we first threaten separation? For example, when a family problem comes up, does the husband and wife first talk about separating or do they for the love of their family and children sit down and rationally work things out? They comprise if they have to because we all know there is no perfect solution.

• (1200)

Why must we always start our negotiations with a knife to the throat? Is that what we are all about? Is that the Canadian way? I do not think it is.

When we find ourselves abroad we have no hesitation in talking about our wonderful country. Proudly we talk about our systems, our lifestyle and everything we have in this great country. When we return home we also say how great it is to be home, even though we have visited some exotic places.

I spoke earlier about the family. Let me tell members about a special family. This past year we had two unfortunate and tragic incidents in Canada, the Saguenay and the Manitoba floods. It was that special Canadian family that lived in Scarborough, Saskatoon, Vancouver, Trois Rivieres and Charlottetown. Together they came, cared, reached out and helped.

I recall one interview in which a gentleman from the Saguenay region, with tears in his eyes, said how moved he was by the response from the rest of Canada. He went on to say how he voted yes in the last referendum. But he said that in the next referendum,

and he hoped there would never be another referendum, he could vote for Canada because he now saw the light.

That is what we are about, a caring and loving country. This is the country that is admired worldwide. That is what makes us all proud and different Canadians.

I close with a statement made almost 130 years ago by Sir John A. Macdonald, one of the founders of this country.

If I had influence over the minds of the people of Canada, any power over their intellect, I would leave them with this legacy. Whatever you do, adhere to the Union. We are a great nation and shall become one of the greatest in the Universe if we preserve it. We shall sink into insignificance and adversity if we suffer it to be broken. Let no factious men put it asunder.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I want to comment on some of the remarks by the hon. member, some of which were regrettably partisan, to the Speech from the Throne.

There were some very eloquent remarks from the member from Scarborough Centre on Canadian patriotism and the importance of national unity. I would like to strongly second some of the sentiments he expressed. I and my colleagues have always believed that patriotism, a genuine love for one's country, is better expressed through actions than through mere words.

How does the hon. member believe his government can express that love and passion for Canadian unity through actions of fundamentally reforming the federation so that we do not hear the kind of remarks from Senator Carney and so we no longer have the presence of the secessionists in this great Chamber?

Is this hon. member willing to look at reforming the upper chamber of the House so Canada will no longer be the only major federal government in the developed world which does not have proper regional representation in its halls of power? Is the hon. member willing to look at concrete reforms of federal institutions so that all Canadians feel included and can share in the kind of magnificent patriotism expressed by this member?

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for an excellent question.

I talked the other day in an S.O. 31 of an accountable senator. The key work was unaccountable.

The member knows that he and I and every individual sitting in this House have to go to the people every four or five years. The people judge us based on our performance, results, programs, etc. I bring back that word today in response to the question, unaccountable.

Senator Pat Carney is unaccountable because she does not have to go to the people every four years. Maybe the time has come to look at the other house and make those senators accountable, whether it be for their attendance or what they say, for the sake of

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this country. They should be held accountable for what they say. They should have to go to the people every four or five years and present themselves as candidates so that when they speak in every region of this country they will have to answer to the people, as we have to answer to the people.

• (1205)

Yes, I agree that the time has come that maybe we should have an elected Senate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not question our colleague's sincere desire to represent his constituents properly. I think, however, that he should not question our sincerity, as we are democratically elected members from Quebec.

I would like to point out to the hon. member that the government, in the throne speech, far from giving up its power to spend, the spending power of the federal government, has just shown that it intends to do the opposite. My hon. colleague said that, as with married couples, when things are not going very well, always threatening to leave does not solve any problem, and that we should not always be made to react because a gun is being held to our head.

I would like to remind the hon. member opposite that several members on this side have risen to point out to the government what the priorities of Quebec are in the area of occupational or manpower training.

Again, we have to remind this government that, in the throne speech, far from giving up their power to spend, they are at it again, overlapping and duplicating, in the section dealing with young people. I will read him a brief passage from a letter I received from the Quebec minister, Louise Harel, as a result of a meeting with a youth advisory committee within the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre, the SQDM:

In an opinion submitted to the SQDM, some representatives of youth groups question the federal youth employment strategy, pointing out that if the federal-provincial agreement of April 21, 1997 is a first step towards respecting the consensus in Quebec, the youth employment strategy put forward by the federal government goes in the opposite direction.

That is why we, as a group in the Bloc Québécois, condemn this strategy of overlap and duplication in areas under provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Thibeault): The hon. member for Scarborough Centre for a very short answer.

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, that is what I refer to when I say exploitation. The cacophony of condemnation is so swift from the Bloc Québécois it is unbelievable.

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She talked about manpower. This is where they confuse the issue. I remind the member that when the Quebec government asked for manpower training this government was more than willing to give it the responsibility for manpower training. That has been done.

Maybe what they should do in the Quebec legislature is look at how to refine and use the tools which we have given them, as opposed to exploiting them for their own agenda.

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am dividing my time today with the hon. member for Vancouver East. Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment.

I rise to address this House as the honoured representative of the people of the riding of Sydney—Victoria in Cape Breton. Like most members who have spoken here today, I am both privileged to represent my constituents and humbled by the trust they have placed in me. I would like to extend a special thank you to my constituents for placing that trust in me and to my family. Anyone who has served in this position knows that it is our families and our partners who are the unsung heroes of Canada.

The people of my riding are proud Canadians, being among the first founding people of this federation. We are a strong people. We are a resilient people. We are a generous and a hard working people.

As members of Confederation we have in the past prospered when Canada prospered and we have contributed to the prosperity of Canada.

• (1210)

We have given Canada our artists and our musicians. From our rocky shores have come great Canadian writers and leaders in the fields of commerce, labour and statesmanship. We gave our young service men and women in 1914 and again in 1939 when they served in all facets of the military and merchant marine. We shared with all Canadians the goods we had in the dark days of the Great Depression.

Like all citizens, we kept no tally sheets. We kept no balance of payments because we knew that Canada is more than a ledger of debits and credits. Canada can only exist if it is supported by the values of compassion and sharing. This is the basis of Confederation.

At different points in this country's history some provinces have always prospered more than others. It is the willingness to share and ensure equality of access to national programs and not necessarily equality of powers that makes Canada unique.

One of the core characteristics of Cape Bretoners is our penchant to speak the truth. I think it was Disraeli who said something

unpleasant is coming when men are anxious to speak the truth. As I look across at the benches I think that unfortunately this government may find the truth I am about to convey unpleasant, I hope a little unsettling.

I will speak with the candour my constituents expect. We face a crisis, a crisis that has been building in Cape Breton for at least 40—

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, you do not have a quorum in the House at the present time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): We do not have a quorum. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Resuming debate.

Mr. Peter Mancini: Madam Speaker, I was trying to make the point about how forgotten the people of Cape Breton feel in the nation today and I found myself speaking to an empty government, empty of ideas, empty perhaps of compassion and empty of concern for the people I represent. I was speaking about the truths that I hope to convey to some of the government members on the other side.

We face a crisis in Cape Breton that has been building for 40 years. It has been brought to the attention of politicians of every stripe by every member of Parliament to come from my island. To give an example I will provide a quote. On October 11, 1962 the hon. Malcolm Vic MacInnis, the member of Parliament for Cape Breton South, rose in this very House to deliver his first speech:

Last winter our people experienced unemployment at the rate of 25 percent. We will be the first to admit we have received assistance from this and other governments, but the assistance has always been a stop-gap measure, in times of emergency to meet each crisis as it comes along.

Exactly 17 years later to the day, on October 11, 1979, my predecessor rose in this House to deliver his first speech. He commented on the suffering of Cape Bretoners faced with an unemployment rate of 17 percent.

As I rise today, 17 years later almost to the day, we face an unemployment crisis in Cape Breton of 20 percent minimum.

• (1215)

To say we have been patient is an understatement. To say that we are angry is a simplification. To say that we have been betrayed is perhaps the truth.

We have become the third solitude in Canada. What worries me and my constituents is the growing ranks in this country of that third solitude. It includes many Canadians. Men and women not only in Cape Breton but in New Brunswick, in Newfoundland, in the Gaspé, in all regions of this country. It includes our First Nations people, our youth and our elderly, our farmers and our

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fishers. It includes in short all those who have lost faith in the generosity of our nation.

The people who control the money markets, the free traders and those who sing the praises of the multilateral agreement on investment stand today with the absent members of the Liberal government indicted in the court of public opinion.

In the throne speech this government congratulated itself for its so-called economic recovery and for maintaining our social programs when in fact it is the same government that has slashed transfers to the provinces, cut EI benefits and failed to meet its commitments to the east coast fishers and has failed to address the concerns of our veterans from the merchant marine.

In this land of plenty, we have hunger. In this land that should echo hope, we have despair. In a land that should be strong, we have weakness.

The third solitude is the millions of Canadians who no longer believe that Canada's strengths are their strengths or that Canada's gains are their gains. They are the people who have not benefited from the so-called economic recovery. They are not the people who benefit from the bond trades and the stock market rallies. They do not make transactions on their laptop computers or their cell-phones.

They are the people who used to make things and it is they who built this nation. They worked on the assembly lines and in the mines and plants and on the boats and in the fields and in the forests. Today it is they who make up a class that was once middle or called working but is no longer.

It is 17 years since my predecessor rose in this House to give his first address and 36 years since his predecessor's.

We are angry. Cape Bretoners are angry. In fact they are enraged. I do not rail against hard times alone. That is nothing new to us in Cape Breton. What is new is the new meanspiritedness of this new Canada.

We built and worked and fought for a nation that believed in compassion, equality and social justice. But persistent and unrelenting cuts by this and past governments to our national social programs have threatened the very fabric of our society and impacted Cape Bretoners more than most. In response, governments shrug their shoulders and say there is nothing they can do.

Government is not powerless. This government could act today to improve the lives of the people I represent.

It could take action on the environmental disaster that is the Sydney tar ponds. A real commitment from this government could not only clean up the environment, but create new jobs and real growth in the environmental sector while helping to establish the

University College of Cape Breton as a centre of excellence in this field.

This government could act immediately to develop the Donkin mine. This government could stop the offloading of ports and docks in communities like Baddeck and Iona, communities that depend on these services. This government could make a real commitment to the east coast fishers in towns like Ingonish and Pleasant Bay.

If this government does not move in a bold and decisive way and take action to develop a strategy for real economic recovery in Cape Breton, then they will have done nothing but to continue their legacy of hopelessness and despair.

We in Cape Breton will endure. We always have. We will continue to face the adversity before us. We ask for the support of our government. It is after all the reason we have a federal government.

We have always been committed members of Confederation. We ask this government to show the same commitment to the people of Cape Breton.

In closing, it is my deepest hope that years, many years from now when my successor rises in this House for the first time, it will be to speak of our natural beauty and the prosperity of our people and not the economic and social disparity that we face today. It is to that end that I will devote my energies as a representative.

• (1220)

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that the constituents of Sydney—Victoria riding are a strong and resilient people. The member spoke about giving and sharing rather than calculating what we can get from society. The Bloc often uses the word demand specifically rather than talking about the nation as a whole and how we can all flourish, be together and share.

Despite the harshness of the land, we have seen some great accomplishments in Canada. It is indeed generous and has been aware of the solitude the member spoke about. But what does he propose? Does he propose more of the same while he admits that what he has had in the past really does not work? Will he not admit that some of the problems of the past have been that the people of Cape Breton have sent the wrong people to Parliament and when they do this they get more of the same that he is asking for? He mentions 36 years of anger yet the solution I hear him proposing is more of the same.

I will say that he is right about the Sydney tar ponds issue. There is a point where things can be done. However for him to say that we need more of the same and indeed much more of it will probably not bring the kind of solutions he is looking for.

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Mr. Peter Mancini: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the number of questions contained in his statement. I will try to deal with each one. I propose a number of possible solutions to the problems.

First would be a fairer tax system in the country which is not necessarily the tax breaks advocated by the party the member represents. Lowering individual tax rates for an individual who is already living below the poverty line is of little assistance. But a fairer tax system to tax some of those who are not paying taxes in the country would contribute to the national good. That money could then be used to invest in places like Cape Breton. That could be a first step.

The member says that things in the past have not worked and that I am proposing more of the same. Some past solutions have worked. When they are free of political interference, the ideas are good. In Cape Breton we have a project called New Dawn, a community based developmental agency that is doing remarkable things for seniors and housing.

He asked if the people of Cape Breton have often sent the wrong people to represent them. Sometimes we have and sometimes we have not. I would point out that we have had representatives as distinguished as Clarence Gillis and Malcolm MacInnis and other very good representatives.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was attacking the record of the government in social development and other areas.

I want to point out to him that in publications from the OECD and other agencies such as the United Nations, on many fronts such as the health and medical index as well as on the human development front and higher education, Canada has ranked as the best country in the world when it comes to taking care of its people.

We spend more on health care as a percentage of GDP than any of the other G-7 nations with the exception of the United States. In terms of health care, Canada's is the best in the world. In terms of human index development, Canada ranked out of 100 at about 95.1, which is the best in the world. We have the highest number of people who can enrol in post-secondary education.

● (1225)

I hope that the hon. member is not suggesting that more money needs to be spent. I hope he is suggesting that we have to look at the way we are spending those moneys.

Mr. Peter Mancini: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledged the good things in this country. As I indicated at the beginning, if the member had been present for my speech, Cape Bretoners were among the major contributors to the good things in this country.

He says that Canada is doing well. I would only respond that some people in Canada are doing much better than others. It is for those people who are not that we ought to have concerns.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I did not want to interrupt once again the hon. member from Cape Breton as it is his first speech in the House, but we do not have a quorum in the House at the present time to continue on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The member for Saint John claims that we do not have a quorum. If the member will give me a moment I will count.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There is a quorum. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here in this House in the 36th Parliament as the new member representing the riding of Vancouver East.

I have to say as I make my inaugural speech that I feel a very heavy responsibility as I struggle to find the ways and means to bring to the attention of this House a sense of the urgency that comes from the communities I represent.

We are not wealthy or affluent communities. Vancouver East is a highly urban community of over 100,000 people from very diverse and multicultural backgrounds. It is made up of people who are coping with the difficulties of everyday life. In many ways the experience of my first week in this House of Commons seems very far removed from the sometimes harsh realities of life in east Vancouver. Yet despite these difficulties the pride and dignity in Vancouver East is a model for other communities to embrace.

It is a community with a long tradition of social activism and social commitment. It is home to many of Canada's First Nations peoples as well as home to many new Canadians who find in east Vancouver a balance of Canadian roots and multicultural diversity.

If we walk up and down Commercial Drive or through bustling historic Chinatown or along the neighbourhood streets of Strathcona, one of Vancouver's oldest communities, the sense of unique neighbourhoods and their history and character is very evident.

At Hastings and Nanaimo we experience the urban flavour of thriving small businesses that serve the community. There is the landmark Carnegie Centre on one corner of Main and Hastings and the Four Corners Community Savings opposite. At the Kiwassa Neighbourhood House the breakfast program for families is a welcoming start to the day. There is also the pioneering Western Front artist run centre in Mount Pleasant, the Italian Cultural Centre and the new Chinese Cultural Centre Museum. These are only a few of the many community facilities and programs that

serve and define east Vancouver as a place of strength and support for its residents.

Unfortunately my riding, like many other ridings and communities in Canada, is also living the consequences of federal Liberal policies of continuing high unemployment especially among youth and aboriginal peoples, of growing poverty, homelessness and inadequate housing.

Vancouver East is poorer because of the failure of this government to aggressively deal with unemployment and declining wages. At the same time this federal government has slashed our social programs at an unprecedented level. There is more homelessness in my community because the federal government has callously abandoned the development of social and co-op housing.

• (1230)

Some of the people in my riding are never heard by those in power. In the downtown east side, in one of the communities in Vancouver East, more than 6,000 people live in what is called single occupant rooms, meaning that they are living in very substandard accommodation. In this same community, we are struggling to cope with a health crisis that results from poverty, an epidemic of HIV transmission among injection drug users.

I brought this to the attention of the Minister of Health in my first week in this House. The people of Vancouver East are waiting for a response with hope that the government will demonstrate that it is willing to act. We ask: How many more deaths will there be? Already over 1,200 British Columbians have died from drug overdoses since 1993.

Vancouver poet and activist, Bud Osbourne, spoke to the community about these and other tragic deaths. He said "But with these thousand crosses planted in Oppenheimer Park today, who really see them, feel sorrow, feel loss, feel rage? Our hearts shed bitter tears. These thousand crosses are symbols of the social apartheid in our culture, the segregation of those who deserve to live and those who are abandoned to die".

Last week I listened very carefully to my first throne speech. I listened for words of concrete action to be taken, for example, to assist students reeling from the burden of student loan debts or for real targets to reduce unemployment and eliminate poverty. I hoped to hear about commitment to act against violence against women or to hear that the government is going to introduce a national child care program so often promised by the Liberals, or for any indication that the government might finally embark on a campaign of fair taxation to ensure that the vast wealth in this country is something that benefits all Canadians.

However, there was silence from the government on these critical issues. It led me to think about what meaning there is in

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being here in this place that honours tradition and ritual and holds to represent the people of Canada. The meaning, I believe, is created by the change that is possible if we have the will to act. I know that I and my fellow New Democrats bring back to this House a value and tradition that has almost disappeared, a quest for social justice and social equality and a voice for those who have been silenced and shut out.

We live in an increasingly globalized corporate economy where the rights of multinational corporations, about to be embodied in the multilateral agreement on investment and furthered by APEC, are seen as more important than the rights of people and sustainable human development.

However, as New Democrats we believe that we can bring hope and change not only to this House but to Canadians who believe as well in the progress of nations as outlined in a 1996 UN report. It states "The day will come when the progress of nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities and public buildings, but by the well-being of their peoples: by their levels of health, nutrition and education; by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their labours; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children".

The people of Vancouver East expect and deserve no less and I am honoured to represent and fight for their interests in this House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech by my colleague for Vancouver East and I agree with her almost 100 percent.

• (1235)

Unlike the members opposite, she is very sensitive to the plight of the destitute in our society. Unlike them, she is very sensitive to the concerns of the unemployed. I listened earlier to one of the members on the other side. He keeps saying that Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. However, as my colleague said so well, some people are in dire straits.

We must be sensitive because what is happening in Canada is that the rich are getting richer at the expense of the poor. We take from the poor to give to the rich.

I have a question for my colleague. I know that the government is in a very difficult situation because multinationals are always filling their slush fund. The recipient, of course, must return the favour. As we recently saw in the newspapers, the situation is getting out of hand.

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Will my colleague support me when I introduce a private member's bill to restore fiscal health? I ask my NDP colleagues for their support.

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and his question. He has outlined the sensitivity of the issues that I have raised and remarked on the fact that the government has been insensitive and callous in its treatment of poor people. I acknowledge the comments of the hon. member and share his view.

I also agree that it is very clear that the Liberal government has acted in concert with multinational corporations. There is no question that the public finances and our taxation system have been designed to assist those wealthy corporations.

One of the major issues which we need to address in the House, which my fellow New Democrats and I will raise, is the issue of fair taxation. We live in a very wealthy country. The issue is not whether there is enough money. The issue is how those funds are distributed.

When the hon. member's private member's bill comes forward we will examine it with great seriousness and sensitivity to ensure the common goals that we have, are supported in the House.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver East used the term fair taxation a number of times. That is typically one of the buzzwords or the mantras of the NDP. Perhaps it is, from that particular perspective, the code word for a political agenda. We should really know what the hon. member means when she says fair taxation so that it can be revealed for what it really is.

Here is a grand opportunity for the member to expand on the NDP version of what it means to have fair taxation.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. The NDP policy on fair taxation is not a mantra or a code word, it is a serious issue.

Over the last few decades we have seen a significant shift in taxation policy from corporations to individuals. The tax burden is being carried by working people and by middle income people. There are tens of thousands of profitable businesses and corporations that pay not a dime in taxes.

This is not a code word. It is a basic fundamental issue that is the business of this House. We must ensure that we have a fair and equitable taxation system.

I can say, looking at the record, that the Liberal government has moved us further and further away from that. I would suggest to the hon. member and other members of the Reform Party that it

would be to their credit if they would also take up the issue of fair taxation for Canadians, instead of their code word "cutbacks" which are hurting the poor people in Canada.

● (1240)

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton.

As this is the first opportunity I have had to speak in the House, I wish to begin by thanking the people of Winnipeg South who sent me here. I have been elected four times now, twice in the provincial legislature and twice in this Chamber. I know of no greater honour. I am proud to represent the people of Winnipeg South. They take their politics seriously. They consider the issues in depth and I have to convince them each time that I will work on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment, the Speaker on his election and the other members who serve the House on their appointments. It is going to be a fractious House. We see some of that right now. We have been very well served by the leadership in this Chamber. I congratulate the new members who have been elected to the House and those who are returning. It is an interesting place. Members who are here for the first time will find it a very challenging yet a very productive place if they approach it properly.

This was an interesting year for those of us who live in Manitoba. As my colleague mentioned, we had two very significant natural disasters in Canada although we had several others in other parts of the country. We had the very severe flood in the Saguenay region and we had the very different but equally severe inundation of southern Manitoba.

One of the things that gratified me in the first instance, during the Saguenay flood, was how Manitobans and westerners—I am a western Canadian—rallied. Mr. Hubert Kleysen, who lives in my riding, has a trucking firm. He went throughout western Canada organizing truckloads of furniture and supplies which were sent from western Canadians into the Saguenay.

I can tell the House from personal experience that the reverse happened during the flood in Manitoba. The number of people from all across Canada who phoned, who travelled to Manitoba to help out, who came in to volunteer was really quite overwhelming. Members of this Chamber phoned regularly to offer support, donated money, equipment and supplies. To this day I am approached by people who offer to help out.

There is a movie that was popular about eight to twelve years ago called *Starman* in which the alien makes the following comment about humans: "You are at your best when things are worst". That was really demonstrated during the flood in Manitoba.

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It hit right at the time of the election. What was the defining moment for me was when the Reform candidate, Greg Yost, a friend of mine and a very decent man, was going door to door during an election distributing literature with my name in it. He was referring people to the flood centre we had set up for assistance. The Conservative candidate was working out of my office, having given his office as a storage space for people who had to move out of their homes. The NDP candidate was regularly sandbagging on teams deployed from the office. The two Conservative members of the provincial legislature that bracket the river on the south end of my riding formed a team with myself and the local city councillor.

It was truly a non-partisan effort that shows what we can do regardless of our political position and philosophy when we come together to work on issues.

There were Conservative and NDP members present in the House in the last Parliament but I want to welcome them both back to official party status. I personally am delighted to see both of them back because they will add a dimension to the debate that was sadly lacking in the last Parliament. If I have a concern about the debate that took place in this Chamber, it is that it was badly divided between two opposition parties that I believe fundamentally support the separation of this country. I welcome the emergence of two other parties that have a national view and a sense of what Canada can become if we can get the regions working together.

• (1245)

I am also delighted, I confess with a particular bias, to see the NDP back in some number. I do not want to see too many of them in the House, but enough of them to participate in the debate.

In the last House we had extremely significant social policy issues that crossed the floor of this House, pieces of legislation that were debated in this House without ever a question from the other side, such as the affects of changes to health care, unemployment and homelessness.

These issues were debated fiercely on this side of the House in this caucus. I chaired the social policy committee and there were terrible fights. But when we came into the House expecting to hear debate, occasionally if a New Democrat could get to his or her feet there might be a question come across. But that happened very rarely because of their lack of numbers in the House. From our friends in the Reform Party there was never a question, never a concern, never an expression of interest in what was happening with the unemployed, the homeless or the sick.

There was some interest in health corporations and privatizing the system so they could make some money out of it, but never the kind of question that was raised by the member from Vancouver

East about what happens when thousands of people are sick or dying.

I am interested to see the return of the Conservative Party. I will be very interested in what it will have to say given the base of its support. We have one member from Manitoba who carries a rather onerous responsibility of representing western Canada for that party. I must confess I do not have a good sense of exactly where they sit on some of these issues. I will look forward to what will happen in the debates to come.

My experience in the relatively short time I have been here has been that this place is fascinating and can be very important and productive. There is an enormous amount of work that goes on in committees when members put aside some of their partisanship and focus on how to build an excellent health care system, on how to build a good research and development program and how to deal with issues of equity when you are looking at issues of debt reduction. Some profoundly important work gets done.

I invite members for all parties to participate in that work. We have a very active agenda and an enormous challenge put forward to us by the prime minister when he starts talking about what is going to happen a few years out. The finances are coming together but I think we have a little further to go. We have to be a little cautious. We do not want to find ourselves slipping back into the position we were in which robbed us of any flexibility in this last decade or so.

There are some opportunities. There is an opportunity now to challenge ourselves with the task of building a truly profoundly important future for ourselves and our kids. I appreciate the criticism that comes across the floor, it is important to the debate and I invite more of it. I hope it will be more focused on substance. I was very disappointed to see the member from Burnaby do what he did yesterday because I think this debases the debate in the House. I do not think that contributes to a discussion on how we do things better for the people we represent. Rather, it diminishes the view of this House. I feel much the same way when a Reform member stands up.

To my friends in the Bloc I want to offer one comment. It must be very difficult for members of the Bloc right now. I have some sense compassion for them. I know a number of the members of the Bloc as we worked closely together on the HRD committee and the transport committee.

I have great respect for most of their positions. I differ very strongly on the issues sovereignty and I cannot help but think what it must be like sitting in opposition looking across at a government that has been re-elected with a majority, a considerable accomplishment in this country. It has increased its representation in the province of Quebec. It has managed to wrestle the finances of the country into some sense of control. We have begun to see a

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significant drop in the unemployment rate. We are not where we want to be but we are heading in the right direction.

• (1250)

I notice that a significant majority of Quebeckers are now saying they feel they would be better off within a united Canada. I enjoy the participation of the members of the Bloc in the debate and in committee. I invite them to participate and perhaps we will find some ways to make Canada better so that they can step aside from the one policy that we find so difficult.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very offensive for this member to speak on one hand about co-operation in this House and raising the level of debate and making Canada work, and then to make accusations of the Reform Party that we are not a party that wants the country to keep together.

It is as if he is trying to say to me, coming from 200 years of United Empire Loyalists stock, someone who has lived in three provinces of this country, who lived 32 years in this province before moving west, that I am not dedicated to keeping this country together.

We are a party that wants to keep this country together. It is hypocritical for the member to say on the one hand that he wants to have a great debate and yet to raise such provocative issues like this when he knows that this party is a federalist party.

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment from the member. I also note that the member is new in this House. This is his first term here.

If he goes back to my remarks he will realize that I was talking about my experiences with his party in the last session of Parliament. I hope he brings to the floor of this Chamber exactly the kind of debate that he is talking about.

Let me pose a question to him. If that is the kind of debate he is interested in, why did he campaign under a slogan that said no more prime ministers from Quebec? What does that do for the unity of this country? What does that do to bring us together?

That is the slogan that member campaigned on. So when he wants to talk about the unity in this country, he should go back to his party bosses and do a little work within his own caucus to see that his message supports unity in this country.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. Liberal member for his throne speech. I am very pleased to hear him talk about non-partisan issues.

I am hoping that he, along with a lot of members of his party, will help me to see that the infrastructure program, which has been implemented by this government, will be done in a non-partisan way.

We have real problems in the province of New Brunswick with political interference from the premier of the province of New Brunswick and those little communities that were supposed to get part of that infrastructure program.

They were all cancelled by the premier. He took all the money out of the Tobique—Mactaquac area and put it into the riding of his previous minister, who is still in this government.

He did that also in the other part of the northern part of the province. Now he has interfered in my area. We did it in a non-political way. I would like the hon. member to tell me he is going to help us to take the politics out of infrastructure.

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the member for Saint John for that question. I will commit to her today that I will do everything I can to assist in ensuring that is the case if she will give me the same assistance with the premier in Manitoba.

I have exactly the same problem with the Conservative premier of Manitoba who takes a program which we designed and operated and pulls it into his riding and presents it as his own. Maybe we can find a way to work together to ensure that does not happen in the future.

• (1255)

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me extend my sincere congratulations on your election.

It is with great humility and excitement that I rise today to deliver my maiden speech in the House of Commons. I consider it a great honour to stand in this House to represent the citizens of Nepean—Carleton.

We are referred to in the House by the name of our riding. That is an important reminder that the seat we occupy is not ours. It belongs to the people of our riding, in my case the citizens of Nepean—Carleton.

Nepean—Carleton has been blessed with some excellent members of Parliament, both Liberals and Conservatives, people like Dick Bell, Gordon Blair, Walter Baker and Beryl Gaffney. They were people who cared deeply about their community and their country, people for whom politics was not merely a job but an opportunity to serve their fellow Canadians in one of our great national institutions.

Let me say a few words about my immediate predecessor, Beryl Gaffney. As many in the House know, Beryl represented the former riding of Nepean over the course of two Parliaments. Beryl's background in municipal government kept her firmly rooted in the community. In the House she was a fierce defender of the interests of the national capital region, a fervent advocate of human rights, a committed spokesperson for women's health and an active proponent for the municipal infrastructure program.

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Beryl Gaffney remains a source of inspiration to those who confront serious illness. Diagnosed with a serious brain tumour part way through her term, she endured major surgery and battled back to sit in the House and speak on behalf of her constituents. She enjoys the respect and admiration of people across the national capital region and across the country.

Over the course of this Parliament it is my intention to devote myself to providing the people of Nepean—Carleton with the best possible representation. Although my predecessors have set a very high standard, I will do my utmost to give voice to the concerns of my constituents in the House and its committees and I will work to ensure that their problems and inquiries with government programs and services are addressed with care and efficiency.

The constituency of Nepean—Carleton has been my lifelong home. I am very proud to say my family traces its roots in this community back to the 1820s and early 1830s. Nepean—Carleton is a riding that has changed dramatically in my own lifetime. From a quiet collection of farming communities it has been transformed with suburbanization and technology.

Predominantly Anglo-Saxon 30 years ago, my riding has benefited from the arrival of many new Canadians who have brought with them not only their skills and their talents but their hopes and dreams for a better life in the best country in the world.

The presence of the federal government in the national capital region continues to be very important to Nepean—Carleton. Many of my constituents are federal public servants.

There is a new kid on the block that is making its presence felt in a big way. Companies which are part of the Ottawa—Carleton region's thriving high technology industry can be found in the northern part of my riding which is part of the city of Nepean. Many of the residents of Nepean—Carleton work for companies like Computing Devices, Nortel, Newbridge, Corel, Mitel and Digital, to name a few. They are engaged in information technology, environmental technologies, biotechnologies, aerospace and telecommunications technology. They are part of the knowledge based economy which has transformed Ottawa from a predominantly government town to Canada's high technology capital.

These high tech companies are selling Canadian products to every corner of the globe. They are competing with the world's best and they are winning.

The southern portion of my riding contains the largely rural townships of Osgoode, Rideau and Goulbourn. Many of the residents of these areas also work in government and high tech industries, but many work in the agricultural industry, dairy, beef and cash crops, which has itself been transformed by new technologies.

In many respects Nepean—Carleton offers the best of both worlds, urban and rural. We are close enough to the country to uphold the rural values of community, self-reliance and hard work, but we are also close enough to the city to understand the importance of innovation, the entrepreneurial spirit and Canada's place in a wider world.

My constituents understand and appreciate the past but they also have an eye on the future. That is why this Speech from the Throne is important to them. Those who have read the throne speech will know that it builds on the tremendous accomplishments of the last Parliament. The future of every Canadian is brighter because of the achievements of the last four years. I am thinking of things like deficit reduction, taking the deficit from \$42 billion down to a balanced budget which is now within sight.

Interest rates are at their lowest levels in 30 years. Almost one million jobs have been created since 1993. Our economic growth is expected to be the best of the G-7 countries this year. We continue to record huge increases in our trade surpluses. As we all know, the United Nations continues to rank Canada as the number one country in the world according to the human development index.

• (1300)

Anyone who has read the throne speech knows that it follows up on the commitments made by the prime minister and the Liberal Party during the election. It continues the important work of prudent financial management while, at the same time, directing resources to strengthen the social and economic fabric of this great country.

Let me address just a few of the themes on which the throne speech touches. One area which has not received much attention but which is important to my constituents is the reference to the public service. There is no doubt that there have been some tough times for the public service with the downsizing and restructuring of recent years.

It is extremely important to ensure that steps are taken to enhance the morale and the esprit de corps of our public servants. They provide Canadians with important services and programs from search and rescue to meat inspection to trade promotion. We must ensure that we maintain a well-motivated, professional, non-partisan and efficient public service. I am pleased that the throne speech contains a reference to the people who day after day carry out the work of the Government of Canada.

I can tell the House that I was also very pleased to see the reference in the throne speech to investing in knowledge and creativity. This is vitally important to high technology companies in Nepean—Carleton, the national capital region and, indeed, the entire country.

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Let me quote directly from the throne speech, “The government is determined to do more to support innovation and risk-taking in Canada and to attract more foreign investment in knowledge based industries to Canada. We will build creative partnerships between the private and public sectors to accelerate the adoption of innovative technologies in all sectors of the economy”.

The government believes that through small and medium size businesses we can develop and improve new technologies. That is why we are increasing the industrial research assistance program, or IRAP, to promote the diffusion of technology throughout Canada. We have already made a good start in this direction in the government’s last mandate. Through programs like SchoolNet, Technology Partnerships Canada and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation we are making tremendous progress.

SchoolNet, which Microsoft’s Bill Gates said was “the leading program in the world in terms of getting kids to use computers”, will have every school and library in Canada connected by 1998.

Technology Partnerships Canada, an investment fund with more than \$250 million a year, will work with business to keep the development, marketing and production of new technologies in Canada where it will create jobs and foster new growth. There is also the business development bank which is providing start-up capital to new enterprises.

The throne speech touches on many areas of importance to my constituents. The sections of the throne speech which refer to investing in children are particularly important. Again I would like to quote briefly from the throne speech. “One of our objectives as a country should be to ensure that all Canadian children have the best possible opportunity to develop their full potential. We must equip our children with the capacities they need to be ready to learn and participate fully in our society”.

However, the throne speech is not just about idle rhetoric. The government is committed to increasing its contributions to the Canada child tax benefit by \$850 million a year with higher payments to families beginning in July 1998.

I would like to indicate my strong support for some of the other priorities in the throne speech, especially creating opportunities for young Canadians. We all heard during the last election about the problem with youth unemployment. It is unacceptably high. We have to address that issue in this Parliament and I think we have had a good start with some of the recent statistics and job creation figures that we have had in that area.

However, we also have to reduce barriers to post-secondary education and ensure, as well, that young people are able to get that all important first job.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and I understand his wanting to

express his pride. However, I wonder how he can be proud since, although the Speech from the Throne focuses on young people, it is the policies of this government since 1993 that have forced a significant number of young people into poverty.

• (1305)

The OECD’s human development index, as mentioned in the document, indicates that, here in Canada, 50 percent of the children in single parent families live below the poverty line. This index could change, because some of the criteria are being reviewed. With the 20 top countries in a somewhat similar situation, the index was not made for wealthy countries, as we all know.

Is the hon. member proud of the cuts to education, the regular hikes in tuition fees, which led not to increased access to education, but to increased difficulty obtaining an education in the case of those who have little money? Perhaps the announcement of a fund, which the Prime Minister had to make outside the throne speech, will in some way resolve what is felt generally—that as far as young people are concerned, the speech rings hollow.

Is the member proud that, for reasons of efficiency, the federal government, after so many years, has decided to leave job training with the provinces, where it is most efficient—and I repeat efficient, because that was what was decided—when in the name of the same objective of efficiency, it is refusing to do the same for young people? Why would it be effective for everyone but young people? Why should the great federal mind be dealing with these problems, when they are local problems, and jurisdiction is clear, for good reason.

Is the member proud that the government is announcing \$850 million for young people, \$250 million of which was already provided for in the last budget, while the remaining \$600 had been promised in 1993 for a national child care program that never saw the light of day?

I have no doubt my colleague wants to be proud, but he should have reason to be proud.

[English]

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Speaker, in the context of the government’s overall program I do not think there is any question that over the last four years the government would have liked to have spent money on areas related to children and youth and aboriginals and other areas of society that in many respects have been neglected.

Certainly one of its primary concerns over the last four years has been the deficit and the impact that the huge deficit and increasing debt would have had on the future of young people. If we had entered the next century with a debt of \$700 billion or \$800 billion, what sort of a future would that provide for our young people? I can answer that question. It would have provided no future at all because they would have been ground down by excessive debt. The

opportunities for government to do creative things in our society would have been reduced significantly.

The government's achievement in addressing the deficit was certainly a first step toward securing the future of young people, children and youth.

A number of important programs and initiatives were announced in the throne speech. I referred earlier to the Canada child tax benefit which I think is extremely important and the government's focus on the need to create strong families so that the family unit can be strengthened as a fundamental component of our society. That is in the process of being done.

When we look for instance at the initiatives related to the centres of excellence to deepen our understanding of children's development and well-being and to improve our ability to respond to their needs, these are good programs which will contribute significantly to the well-being of young Canadians.

The aboriginal head start program is another one that I think is certainly very important to the children of aboriginal parents to ensure that they get the best possible start in their lives.

• (1310)

With respect to youth unemployment, certainly Canada's level of youth unemployment is extremely high. It is higher than anyone in the House would like to see it. As I mentioned earlier—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the chamber today as the new member of Parliament for St. John's East. It is a great honour and privilege to be here.

With my first words in Parliament I want to extend my thanks and deep appreciation to the people of St. John's East for having sent me here. Obviously I could not be here without their approval and support. I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve in such a distinguished setting as the House of Commons of Canada.

As previous members have done, I would like to extend to you, Madam Speaker, my congratulations on your appointment. I would also extend to the Speaker my sincere congratulations on his election. I look forward to serving over the next few years under Madam Speaker's watchful gaze.

The riding of St. John's East is no stranger to this debating floor. One of my predecessors was the Hon. Jim McGrath, an individual for whom I had a great deal of respect and admiration. He was a long serving, articulate member of the House. I believe he was

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here for 20-odd years. Over that time he earned the reputation of being a true parliamentarian.

If I had one goal to set for myself in this chamber it would be that I could contribute to my province, contribute to my nation, in much the same way that Jim McGrath did. I know that is a very difficult task, given the fact that one has to make a lot of sacrifices to be in public life. However, I do know that the sacrifice is worth making if one wants to live in the greatest nation on earth. The privilege which we in this country have is to live in the greatest nation on earth.

I have somewhat of an advantage over some of my colleagues, as I have a bit of experience in political life. I spent about 13 years in the Newfoundland House of Assembly. During that time I ran across many occasions on which I found myself being frustrated with the system. One could be very frustrated in his day to day duties.

I can also inform hon. members that there are many difficulties involved in this job. One of the difficulties happens to be that we may not always find ourselves on the same side of an issue as our constituents. I believe that when we have that kind of experience we feel a sense of alienation from the very people who elected us, simply because we have a great regard for them. However, they may not necessarily agree with our views on how this world should unfold.

During my 13 years in the Newfoundland House of Assembly there were a couple of occasions on which I found myself in that kind of spot. One issue which stands out in my memory happened in 1990 when we were involved in the Meech Lake debate. I found myself on the opposite side of the issue. I recall speaking publicly in the Newfoundland House of Assembly in support of Meech. I felt strongly about that particular issue.

I had been listening to people like Peter Lougheed, Grant Devine, Joe Ghiz, David Peterson and Bill Bennett, people whom we all respect and admire. I had been convinced by these people that it was in the greater public good for us to vote for Meech Lake. I think if we had shown a little tolerance, a little respect for the people with whom we share a common border we might not be involved in the national unity debate in which we are involved today.

• (1315)

I remember well feeling the wrath of many people in the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador because I voted in that way. Many of them had been persuaded by former Premier Wells that if we voted for Meech Lake it might put the nation on a road we would soon regret.

Meech Lake is gone and so is Premier Wells. I guess history will have to judge, make a pronouncement in due course on the validity

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of the arguments he presented. I happen to feel that the people who stood in the way of Meech Lake back in 1990 will be judged very harshly by history.

My colleague, the member for Burin—St. George's, was in the house of assembly with me at that time. I take a great deal of satisfaction from knowing I voted in a way I felt was right for my province and for the nation. I have no regrets about that, even though the people of the province may not have felt that way on the issue. That is all history.

The strange thing about history is that the more things change, the more they stay the same. I am only a couple of months into my term of office and I find myself on the opposite side of another important issue in my province, the education debate.

Hon. members are fully aware that a few months ago there was a referendum in Newfoundland. The premier of the province received a mandate and 38 percent of the eligible voters in the province gave complete support to the premier to exercise a mandate to change the denominational educational system in Newfoundland to a full blown public secular system.

Last evening we had the Quebec amendment before us. Very shortly the new term 17 will come to the Chamber. That will mean a constitutional amendment which will wipe out, not adjust, the rights of certain classes of people in Newfoundland to education in their particular school system.

Given the tolerant nature of the people of Newfoundland and of people across the country, I find that to be a little disappointing, to say the least. I have very grave difficulty with the wiping out the rights of these classes of people. There were those who had these rights since 1949 and those since 1980. Two separate groups of people were given rights under the Constitution of Canada.

Why do they feel that way? Christian based religion has always played a very important part in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Newfoundland society in general. The churches started schools and hospitals in Newfoundland. Denominational education has been very important to the people. Denominational education was front and centre in another debate long before you and I came to the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. It was front and centre in 1949 when we joined Confederation with Canada.

It was a very important part of the debate. We became a province of Canada under the umbrella of a negotiated set of rules call the terms of union. One of those terms happened to be term 17 which gave rights to certain classes of people to their own religious school system. It gave rights to certain classes of people by religious affiliation. Term 17 has been amended twice.

• (1320)

It was amended back in the 1980s when I was part of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. As a province we extended to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador rights under the Constitution of Canada that they would be able to have their own particular school system. That was not a long time ago, just back in 1980.

Now here we are. We are going for a third amendment to the Constitution of Canada, a new term 17 that will wipe out or completely extinguish the long held rights of these people to their own educational system.

I have been very vocal and very upset about the issue over the last couple of months. How did we ever get to this point? Hon. members know more about the last amendment we had before the House. They were here and I was not. It called for a diminishing of rights in education. To his credit Clyde Wells at least made some provision for those classes of people who wanted to retain their rights in education.

The provision was fair for those people. The amendment came to the House of Commons. All schools were to be declared interdenominational schools but where numbers warranted people would have the right to retain their rights in the educational system of the province.

There was a stormy debate in the House of Commons. It went to the Senate. There was a veto in the Senate but it passed. I cannot say the churches were completely happy with that, but as we say in Newfoundland a half a loaf is better than none. They still retained their rights in the educational system of our province, including the right to teach their children in their particular faith beliefs.

We are back at it again in this Chamber even though over the last number of months in my province approximately 54,000 or 55,000 people voted to retain their rights in education and to keep their 28,000 children in their particular school systems.

The amendment that came to the House of Commons and was passed had to be implemented in Newfoundland. As with any new amendment there is bound to be a bumpy start. It had a bumpy start in Newfoundland as well. The rights of these people were affected even after that constitutional amendment.

On the west coast of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador some disagreement came about which had to go to court. The judge happened to say to those people that their rights had been affected, trampled upon. Therefore the judge granted an injunction to make sure their rights got back on track again.

Something totally unbelievable happened after that. Premier Tobin seized upon the public frustration and called a referendum. It was a 30 day referendum in which he decided the court case was

over. They were never going to be able to do that again, so he ensured their rights were wiped out totally and completely, totally extinguished. I find that to be totally intolerable.

I know one is not allowed to say an individual in the House committed a cowardly act. I know that is an unparliamentary term, but I will say that Mr. Tobin seized upon an opportunity that he should not have seized upon. As a result he has less intestinal fortitude than a model leader of a province should have. I find that to be terribly disappointing.

● (1325)

He called a 30 day referendum, whipped up public sentiment, went to the polls and won. How did he win? I think it is necessary to tell members of the House how he won. When he decided to call his referendum, term 17, a new term to be enshrined in the Constitution of Canada, was released to the public 16 hours before the advanced polls opened.

A new term 17 to amend the Constitution of Canada is something that is very important to the people of my province. They had 16 hours notice to examine that term before the advanced polls opened. I find that to be totally intolerable.

On top of that, the premier of the province spent \$350,000 on a campaign and never advanced one penny to the opponents of the cause. I find that to be intolerable as well.

It is in that kind of highly charged atmosphere that Premier Tobin will bring forth his version of term 17 to this honourable House. He will wipe out forever and a day the long held rights of these groups of people, people who have held those rights since 1949 and others who have held them since 1980.

I hold that to be a very sacred right but it is not a popular view to hold right now in my province. I think it is a sacred right. It is a sacred right that these parents hold as well, a constitutional right protected under term 17.

That right will be wiped out by parliament in association with the house of assembly of Newfoundland. I have problems with what we will be doing here. I have problems with what we will be doing to those people who want to exercise that right, and there are many who want to do so. I have very serious concerns about the tolerance lacking in all of us when we use this Chamber to take away a religious right that is sacred and protected by the Constitution of Canada. That is what we are about to do.

I have problems when we submit the rights of a minority to the judgment of the majority. The minority by definition is the loser so how can the minority win?

There is a school of thought in the country that says a referendum is a very blunt instrument with which to adjust or take away the rights of minority groups. There is also the school of thought that says we should not amend the same constitutional clause of the Constitution of Canada twice in rapid succession. Constitutional

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provisions need time to settle into the social order. We are changing the same clause of the Constitution of Canada twice in the space of one year. What time did it have to settle into the social order? None.

I sometimes wonder what it means to have a constitutional right if it can be made subject to the ebb and flow of public sentiment. That is very serious. When we as a nation or as a province decide to do that we do a grave disservice to the people not only of my province but everywhere else.

To pass this kind of constitutional amendment twice in one year will send a very bad signal to other minority groups throughout the country.

● (1330)

That right of these parents to educate their children in the way they want to educate their children in my view is a sacred right and it should not be interfered with. We should never, under any circumstances—perhaps that is too far to go. Perhaps there are circumstances under which we can take away minority rights but I do not think it should ever be done without the consent of those people who are directly affected by that.

We have not sought to get any kind of permission from the people who hold those sacred rights. There are 52,000 of those people who hold those rights, who have already registered their children.

I remember the Pentecostal Assemblies a week before the referendum took place had a poll conducted of that 7 percent population that is represented as Pentecostal and 95 percent of those people said “no, we do not want that”. But we are ignoring their rights. That is not the popular view for me to take in my province right now, but I feel very strongly that ignoring the rights of those people will set a very bad precedent for other minority groups in this country.

I realize that Madam Speaker is about to cut me off so I will just say I appreciate the opportunity to say these few words.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated and enjoyed the speech just given by the member. I suppose the reason I appreciated it is because he expressed sentiments which I and which members of the Reform Party hold very strongly. That is the necessity to live by the rule of law and that the law should not be just slightly changed because of the whims of certain individuals.

I was very pleased that the leader of our party in talking about the motion that was before the House yesterday tried in his amendment to preserve those rights. The amendment he proposed in essence gave legs to this principle which this member has been talking about today. That is the principle that the rights of minorities in this country if they are entrenched in the Constitution ought not to be taken away without the specific consent of that

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minority group that is involved in that decision. I agree with this member 100 percent on that.

We need to ask that question with respect to a very broad range of issues that are now before this government, before this House, before us as members all the way from the question of Quebec separation to these issues of schools and the constitutional amendments which are being challenged by it.

I really like the clause which my leader quoted yesterday from the Manitoba Act which states "Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools which any class of persons have by law or practice in the province at the union". That is a very good solid principle. It is a shame that in this Parliament we are running roughshod over those very strong principles.

In view of that, my question for this member is, how is it then that he was reluctant to support the amendment that we put forward on the issue that was before us yesterday since the principle is identical? I think it is an important comparison. I am not asking him to defend his decision but I would like his views on that, please.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Madam Speaker, I could almost support that amendment yesterday except for one thing. It mentioned a referendum and I was under the impression that again we would be subjecting the rights of these people, especially minority groups as we have in Newfoundland and Labrador on this particular issue, and condoning the referendum to take these rights away.

• (1335)

Maybe there are times when we should have a referendum to adjust the Constitution of Canada. However, when there is a minority group, then I do not believe that without its consent we should take away those rights. That group would be the loser by definition.

The very fact that those people belong to a minority group should keep them outside of that particular process. Seeing the word referendum to me was an indication that if we had a minority rights issue, we would holus-bolus take it to a referendum to remove those rights. I have a great concern about that.

Other than that I thought the leader of the Reform Party made an excellent speech yesterday. There were many points in his speech which I agreed with. As a matter of fact, I sent him a note requesting a copy of his remarks because it was such a good speech. However, with respect to the referendum process and the taking away of rights of a minority group, that was of great concern to me.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech of the hon. member for St. John's East and I must say with a great deal less approbation than has been expressed by the hon. member for Elk Island.

I was reminded as a result of his speech of the very clear reason the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney was destroyed in the election of 1993. It was very obvious in the Charlottetown accord and in the Meech Lake accord that the government and obviously this member who was a supporter of the government at that time failed to listen to the people.

As he admits, in his area of St. John's the people spoke out overwhelmingly against Meech Lake and I presume the Charlottetown accord as they did in my region of Ontario. I was not a politician then, I was just an ordinary citizen, but in my village everyone was against Meech Lake and everyone was against the Charlottetown accord. What was so distressing and the reason I got into politics was the fact that the politicians of the day, especially the Conservative politicians, would not listen to the people.

Now we have the irony of the member for St. John's East telling us that he again is not listening to the people in his riding when it comes to the amendments to term 17. He is saying he acknowledges that the majority of people in Newfoundland agree that a constitutional change must be brought forward to change the school system in Newfoundland, but he is prepared yet again to ignore the people because he knows better. He knows better, like his predecessors in the Conservative Party and the previous prime minister who I think now has a job in the United States. Good luck to him.

Does the member not think it is about time he recognized that he cannot ignore the majority? He speaks all this nonsense about looking after the rights of the majority when in fact he is only looking after his own party's platform. Does he not think it is time he listened to the people? Maybe his judgment is not correct.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting comment.

Let me say to the hon. member that he has nothing to be proud of. If he turned down Meech Lake, he has nothing to be proud of. I think history will judge him very harshly. We would not be involved in the national unity debate today had we had a little common sense back in 1990.

It is a very interesting point that the hon. member makes. I suppose it cuts right to the heart of whether a member of the House of Assembly or a member of the House of Commons has to vote in the same way that his constituents vote and whether we should follow them on all occasions. I have to admit that I have done that on more than one occasion, but I have to admit that I have not done that on a couple of occasions as well. It is an issue which we are

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not going to solve here. It has been ongoing for the last couple of hundred years.

I want to make a couple of points on this particular issue. The 38 percent of the people who voted yes in the referendum in Newfoundland are well represented on this particular issue. We have all of the members of the Newfoundland House of Assembly who are unanimous in their view on that. They are well represented. However I worry sometimes about the minority groups which are not well represented in the House. I think I have a duty and an obligation as a parliamentarian to represent them as well. I think that is a very important point.

• (1340)

There are enough members over there to pass the thing, but I certainly hope they will find a lot of reasons to reflect on this over the coming weeks and probably come to another conclusion.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit curious about the hon. member's comments about the referendum section of the amendment proposed yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition.

It was very clear in his amendment that he was talking about a three-legged stool in which referendum was one leg. The amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition was in fact not that a referendum alone would determine constitutional amendment but that there could not be a constitutional amendment without a referendum in addition to the other clauses that he suggested.

I am wondering if the hon. member just did not understand what was going on or if he merely voted the way the member for Sherbrooke told him to.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Madam Speaker, I do not operate that way. I do not vote the way people want me to vote in this House. I vote according to my conscience and I vote in what I feel are the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

He talked about a three-legged system yesterday. I think one part of it was the referendum process that these things would have to go through. The other was the rule of law and the other was determined to be within the national interest.

I do not think—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Resuming debate.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

First, Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your appointment to the position of Acting Speaker. The job that you hold is of great importance as you preside over the most important debating Chamber in our country. You must ensure that we can

discuss in this Chamber with civility the viewpoints of Canadians from coast to coast in helping to guide the governance of this great country.

Second, I must thank the constituents of Kitchener—Waterloo for the honour of re-electing me to serve as their representative in the 36th Parliament of Canada. I promise them and I promise all Canadians that I will do my very best to represent them in this crucible of democracy. I also thank my many friends and supporters for their tireless labours during the last election campaign.

I want to thank my staff, Dianne, Mohammed, Dan, and Tanis for their work in the constituency office and the Hill office prior to, during and after the election to ensure that we serve our constituency and our country well.

In rising to speak on the first throne speech of the 36th Parliament, which will be the last parliament of this millennium and the first of the next millennium, I do so with humility and with tremendous optimism for the future of our country. We have people from all parts of the world coming together in Canada and building a nation characterized by tolerance, understanding, generosity and prosperity.

Together we have built a country that has become a beacon of hope in an often troubled world torn by strife, wars, poverty, intolerance and lack of compassion. The fact that Canada has invented peacekeeping is a reflection and a demonstration of the ethnic diversity of our country.

Whenever there is a war or a disaster in the world, there are Canadians among us who are hurting because of troubles in their former homeland. Our diverse ethnic make-up must continue to be our social strength that nurtures our tolerance and compassion and does not serve the cause of disunity.

I vividly recall returning to the land of my birth, Hungary, for the first time since leaving as a refugee in 1957. I was going to Budapest as an adviser to the Prime Minister of Canada at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I was most impressed with the prime minister's knowledge and interest in these issues.

• (1345)

When we landed at the airport it was a red carpet that greeted our arrival. I descended from the plane at the side of the prime minister as a parliamentarian of the best country on this planet. It was very different in February 1957 when my family and I fled the communist dictatorship through landmines.

Therefore, members can easily understand that the latest contribution Canada has made in the area of banning landmines has a very personal significance to me and to many other new Canadians with similar or worse experiences.

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During the course of our trip to Budapest, I met with a group of family friends. They toasted me and said "Welcome home". With a great deal of emotion, I thanked them for their toast and stated that Hungary is the place of my birth and that I will always have a concern for its development and well-being. However, my home, where my wife Nancy, of Irish and Scottish background, and our 11-year-old daughter Erin are, is Canada. I thank them for their love and support. They certainly are my Rock of Gibraltar.

I salute my parents and all those immigrants to Canada who came to help build this great country of ours with a commitment to tolerance, understanding and a burning desire to give their children an opportunity for a better life.

Many Canadians fail to realize how fortunate we really are in comparison to other countries. The task of keeping together this country of ours, Canada, has to be our greatest priority. To do otherwise, to let this country fail due to mean-spiritedness, intolerance and regionalism would be a crime against humanity.

The challenge for us as parliamentarians from across this great land is to ensure that we continue to build a country that celebrates the diversity which unites us in our resolve to maintain our nation as a model for the rest of the world.

On Wednesday, the prime minister, in speaking on the throne speech, pointed out to the House that individual parliamentarians working together can make a difference. With the help of the former minister of supply and services, I was able to leave my mark in a modest way by securing for Canadians the right to refuse ad-mail delivery by Canada Post.

Before I came to Parliament I was involved in community justice and the building of a safer and more secure community through the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council of Waterloo region. The fruits of our experience in this area are reflected in the crime prevention, community safety effort contained in the throne speech. This will challenge and assist communities right across Canada to establish local crime prevention efforts that will address the root causes of crime and so build safer communities and a safer nation.

I am also passionate about higher education, affording our youth an opportunity to compete successfully with the best in the world and building on the knowledge based industries that will define our economic well-being as a nation.

The Waterloo region is blessed with three excellent post-secondary institutions. I am proud to have served those institutions, the University of Waterloo, Conestoga College and Wilfrid Laurier University. I salute the pioneers who built these institutions. Wilfrid Laurier opened its doors as a Lutheran seminary in 1911.

The University of Waterloo was started in 1957, the same year that my family and I came to Canada and it has been a very important part of my life. In its 40 years it has gone from mud and dreams to an institution of excellence and world renown. Conestoga College has 30 years of service to the community and a graduate job placement rate close to 90 percent.

More than 250,000 Canadians have attended these institutions. If one multiplies that by the \$50,000 a year of wealth generated by each of those individuals, we have a figure of \$12.5 billion that Waterloo region adds to the Canadian economy each year by the virtue of higher education.

Let us continue to follow the wisdom of the pioneers who built our post-secondary institutions. Let us be bold enough and forward-looking enough to uphold their vision by continuing the investment in our children's future and our nation's future.

David Crane, in the *Toronto Star* on September 16 of this year, wrote:

Kitchener-Waterloo, along with Cambridge and Guelph, provide one example of how people at the local level—in business, government, social agencies and unions—helped this region make the transition from old industrial Ontario—what the Americans call rust-belt economy—to a new knowledge based one.

He is right and we need to do this as much as we can in all 10 provinces and 2 territories right across Canada.

• (1350)

In 1993, for the first time, three graduates of the University of Waterloo were elected as members of Parliament. I am proud to have been one of those three. Other alumnus was Dr. John English, the former member of Parliament for Kitchener who has now returned to the University of Waterloo but while he was here in Ottawa made a tremendous contribution in initiating the post-secondary education caucus of the Liberal caucus, along with the member for Peterborough and myself. Also involved was the member for Port Moody—Coquitlan, Sharon Hayes, who resigned her position as a member of the House yesterday.

As I reflect on both my colleague John English and Sharon Hayes, I can say that there is very much a sense of family values in the Chamber. In the case of the former member for Kitchener, his wife is experiencing some medical challenges, as is the case with the husband of Ms. Hayes.

The post-secondary caucus helped to ensure the future of post-secondary institutions and the hundreds of thousands of students were given high priority.

The innovation foundation announced in the last Parliament, this throne speech and the prime minister's announcement of scholarships as a millennium project illustrates dramatically that as Canadians we have embraced our knowledge based future.

I challenge all Canadians and Canadian businesses as well as Bill Gates of Microsoft to join the prime minister in making sure that the millennium scholarship endowment fund becomes a national crusade. As a nation we must pledge to our young people that post-secondary education is a right of every Canadian. This right is based on merit rather than financial circumstances.

My time is short and I am unable to elaborate on all the points of the throne speech. However, I embrace the balanced approach of the government's program and I thank the Canadian people for having supported through many sacrifices our efforts to regain the economic sovereignty of our country. As a result, Canadians can be the masters of their own destiny. Together we can continue on the path of nation building with tolerance, compassion and generosity as pillars of our Canada.

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the hon. member's comments. I certainly respect his Hungarian heritage. I have had the pleasure of working alongside many people from Hungary. I can usually keep up with them for the first hour and then I have to resign myself that I cannot quite keep up.

I was interested to hear that when he spoke to a group in Hungary he had the conviction to say that Canada was his home, but his place of birth was Hungary.

Does the hon. member endorse the money spent by his government to fund multicultural activities that celebrate the place of birth somewhat more than the accomplishments of Canadians?

I also ask the hon. member would he support the option of marking Canadian citizen on our census forms? This is the kind of initiative that I think is consistent with his comments and which serves to strengthen our nation and celebrate our Canadian citizenship.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Before coming to this place I was the president of the Kitchener-Waterloo multicultural group. With limited financial resources we assisted the settlement of new Canadians, making sure they had a chance to acquire the language, the customs and gave assistance with job searches.

• (1355)

Canadians come from many different parts of the world. It is important to understand that those roots exist and also to utilize them. Canada is a trading nation. One of the reasons why we are successful is because it does not matter which part of the world we are going to trade with, we are going to have Canadians coming from those backgrounds who can open doors that would not be possible otherwise.

By nature, Canadians are very much an inclusive society. The member talked about not reinforcing those heritages. I can only say that is what Canada is.

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Also, during the last Parliament when we were facing the issue of the referendum, Canadians, in particular those who were not born in this country, which is one out of six Canadians, were very strong within the province of Quebec on the whole issue of the referendum to make sure that we maintain Canada. They took great offence at Lucien Bouchard's comments saying that the rest of Canada is not a nation, not a people.

In my case, as I mentioned, my wife is of Irish-Scottish background and my daughter is 11 years old. Surely to goodness she is part of a people and that people is Canada.

The Speaker: This just about brings to a close the question and comment period. I see it is almost 2 p.m. We will pass to the statements by members, but I want to recognize that the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore will have the floor when we return to the debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ASIA CONNECTS YOUTH CONFERENCE

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, later today I will have the honour to attend the Asia Connects Youth Conference being held in Winnipeg this week to mark Canada's Year of Asia-Pacific.

This national multimedia conference has attracted 200 delegates in addition to hundreds more participants at 11 provincial and territorial sites via the Internet.

Delegates will gain invaluable opportunities to learn more about Asia-Pacific, the world's fastest growing region, and meet visiting youth from the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam as well as Asian youth studying in Canada. Like the government's youth international internship program, this conference will help youth gain the skills and contacts they need to enter the global marketplace.

Indeed, the Asia Connects Youth Conference is one more measure of the government's commitment to our youth. I salute the government.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Michael Campbell, host of the Saturday morning radio show *Money Talks* recently presented his listeners with a startling example of the effect of compound interest.

Invest \$3,400 per year for 35 years in an RRSP at 10 percent and receive almost \$1.2 million on retirement, enough to fund an annuity of \$98,000 a year. But workers who pay \$3,400 per year for

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35 years into the Liberal CPP plan will receive \$88,000 less per year, a paltry \$9,000 per year.

If there are members in the House who still think they can justify a CPP pension of \$9,000 per year after 35 years of payments, they had better give their heads a shake. We should be acting now to turn the CPP into something worth having instead of leaving it as a massive tax grab which promises only poverty after 35 years of payments.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the government will further strengthen and improve the Young Offenders Act.

Several incidents of vandalism and theft in one night in the small rural town of Melbourne in my riding have given law-abiding citizens cause for concern. In frustration and fear my constituents are pressing politicians for change and I hear them.

• (1400)

The crimes show a need for greater responsibility on the parts of both parents and young people. Judgments must be severe enough to deter youth from following a life of crime while making personal responsibility a priority.

To my constituents in Melbourne and Mount Brydges and all other areas who are dealing with the reality of crime at home and in their businesses, I pledge to work on their behalf for an improved and strengthened Young Offenders Act.

* * *

[*Translation*]

**LEADER OF THE PROGRESSIVE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY**

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal daily *The Gazette* reported yesterday that the Conservative leader had decided that his colleagues would exercise a free vote on the amendment to section 93 of the Constitution Act requested by the Quebec government, since a moral issue is involved.

Why does the hon. member for Sherbrooke not recognize the legitimacy of Quebec's approach and the general consensus over this issue in the province? Why is he ignoring the National Assembly's unanimous vote? Why is he not asking his party to support Quebec?

The reason is the Conservative leader failed to convince his 15 colleagues from outside Quebec. This failure clearly shows that the

will of Quebeckers means nothing to the Conservatives, that their leader would rather speak for the rest of Canada than for his constituents and the Quebec people.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the government for its promise to invest in a national children's agenda. One of the most crucial investments we can make for our children is through the protection of the natural environment. We have altered biosystems, changed the chemistry of the planet, its topography and geological structures. We have altered hydrological cycles and changed the earth's climate. We are threatening the major life systems of this planet.

[*Translation*]

When we stop respecting the environment—

[*English*]

—we demonstrate a profound disrespect for our children.

* * *

KINSMEN CLUB OF ERIN MILLS

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to bring to your attention that the Kinsmen Club of Erin Mills, a community that forms an integral part of my riding, will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this weekend on October 4.

A visionary group of young men started the local Kinsmen Club 20 years ago. Since then they have made a positive contribution to the quality of life in Erin Mills and throughout Mississauga. In its 20-year history the club has organized many local events and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to benefit non-profit community organizations. Some of the beneficiaries include the Erinoak Treatment Centre for Children, the Credit Valley Hospital, the local Boy Scout troop and the Heart and Stroke Foundation, among many others.

Thousands of our residents have benefited directly from the activities of the Kinsmen. On behalf of the House I would like to congratulate the Erin Mills Kinsmen Club on 20 years of hard work and dedicated service to our community.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Namaste, Sasri-Kal, Ram-Ram, Ya Ali Madat and Jambo.

These greetings emphasize that Canada is a multicultural society. Our multicultural policy was intended to build bridges but it has been manipulated in the past and therefore faces growing criticism today.

Canadians are looking to strengthen their roots in this country. They want to be Canadian first, especially when the very existence of our country is in question. Often people ask "am I a Canadian or am I a hyphenated Canadian?" I can attest to the fact that today culture and multiculturalism are thriving not because of government funding but because people choose to do so on their own.

The multicultural community can play a very important role in the unity of our country. I urge the government to make positive changes to this policy. Let us ensure there is no discrimination, no barriers to their advancement and that they enjoy full freedom as defined in the charter.

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[Translation]

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Justice Michel Bastarache on his appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Justice Bastarache is not only an eminent jurist but also a champion of francophones' rights across Canada. His contribution to the advancement of the Francophonie was acknowledged even by the government of Quebec which, in 1991, inducted him into the Ordre des francophones d'Amérique.

I deplore that the Bloc Québécois chose to use Justice Bastarache's appointment as an excuse to launch into another unwarranted attack against Canadian federalists.

● (1405)

It is very inappropriate for the separatists from the Bloc Québécois and the PQ to question the integrity and legitimacy of an institution like the Supreme Court of Canada, because they never hesitate to reward their separatist friends, including some who are not even competent to sit.

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BILINGUALISM

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce accused Lucien Bouchard of being against bilingualism.

In fact, Quebec could be a role model for second language teaching. Second language classes are compulsory from the fourth grade to the end of college. It is in Quebec that second language teaching is the most rigorous. It is therefore not surprising that Quebec is the most bilingual province in Canada, with 35 percent of the population speaking both English and French.

S. O. 31

However, the Bloc Québécois denounces the fact that, in Canada, the onus of bilingualism is on the francophones. Forty percent of francophones in Quebec and Canada are bilingual, compared to only 8 percent for anglophones.

In English Canada, bilingualism is too often the last step to assimilation for francophones, which is just what the English provinces want. Denying this fact amounts to refusing to fight against it.

* * *

[English]

COMMUNITY ACCESS

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I was honoured to announce, on behalf of the Ministry of Industry, 10 new public access sites to the information highway in my riding of Leeds—Grenville.

The access sites will be located in Cardinal, Spencerville, Prescott, Maitland, Algonquin, Kemptville, Oxford-on-Rideau, South Gower, Oxford Mills and Burritts Rapids. This is a tremendous undertaking and will go a long way to hooking these communities to the information highway. The federal government was instrumental in this initiative by implementing the community access program.

I am proud to say that Leeds—Grenville is now one of the most populated ridings of CAP sites in the country.

The success of our government's efforts with this project is very dependent on partnerships which involve industry, educators, governments, individuals and communities. This announcement is certainly a tribute to the community leaders who have pursued a shared vision of Grenville County's future in the knowledge economy.

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CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week in this House the Minister of Finance castigated the former Conservative government for attempting to save the Canada pension plan on the backs of those who are unable to pay, our senior citizens. "We would never do that" stated the minister.

It seems as though the minister and the prime minister are quite content to put the burden of trying to fix decades of mismanagement on the backs of another group unable to pay, young workers.

Young workers are starting their families and careers, undertaking the major financial commitments of their lives while trying to make ends meet. For many Canadians this will be the straw which breaks their financial back.

The 73 percent increase over the next six years is simply another example of an oppressive tax by the Liberals. Not only will individuals pay up to \$700 more per year through this tax, but

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employers will do the same. This is a sure fire way to discourage the youth of today, stifle job creation and stifle economic growth.

My colleagues and I stand opposed to such a meanspirited attack on young people and on all Canadians who contribute to this fund.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC PREMIER

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lucien Bouchard's economic mission is drawing to a close. Is it an economic mission or a partitionist mission? Did he talk about Quebecers' concerns? Did he talk about job creation and economic recovery?

If he did, he only paid lip service to it. The truth is that this was no economic mission. Its objective is clearly to promote Canada's partition.

Does he hear Quebecers when they tell him that their priority is the economy?

No. Mr. Bouchard, how will you justify to Quebecers the high cost of your trip to France if you do not talk about their priorities? Mr. Bouchard, as you prepare to discuss partition among the splendor of the palaces at Matignon and the Élysée, all Quebecers demand that you talk about job creation and economic recovery.

It is high time that you put your own interests aside to talk about those of all Quebecers.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House the importance to my riding of a mining project that will create 210 much needed jobs in northern New Brunswick.

• (1410)

This summer, the Breakwater Resources project, evaluated at \$54.4 million, made it possible to resume operations at the Caribou mine. New processes enable Breakwater to predict that it will be able to extract more zinc, lead and silver ore from the mine than it produced prior to its closure in 1990.

This mine will, therefore, be a source of ongoing employment for my constituents of Acadie—Bathurst for the next eight years.

[*English*]

The Caribou project clearly highlights the new face of Canadian mining, a high technology industry—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

BOMBARDIER

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bombardier Inc. of Canada, an exporter of quality Canadian technology throughout the world, employs thousands of Canadians.

The Bombardier plant in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan was recently awarded an \$81 million contract for 50 commuter cars for New York.

Currently our plant employs 790 employees working on two contracts. One is for 25 bi-level cars for southern California while the other is for 208 subway cars for the Toronto Transit Commission. The plant has even produced rail cars for places as far away as Ankara, Turkey.

Canadians should be proud of Bombardier and of our country's exporting prowess, something this government and all Canadians should continue to support.

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MEMBER FOR SAINT JOHN

Mr. Greg Thompson (Charlotte, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer a tribute to the member for Saint John.

Recently the international leader of the Salvation Army, General Paul A. Rader, conferred on the member for Saint John the Order of Distinguished Auxiliary Service. This is the highest recognition the Salvation Army awards to a non-Salvationist.

The member's contribution to local and national public service is well known, in particular her years as a very progressive mayor of Saint John. The Salvation Army was pleased to recognize her dedicated and practical service to mankind by awarding her this distinction.

The member for Saint John is only the 57th Canadian to be inducted into the Order of Distinguished Auxiliary Service and the first person in Saint John. The award is well deserved and we are very proud of her.

Members of the Salvation Army are here with us today in the gallery and I wish to welcome them to this Chamber.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a full week since Canadian passports were found on two men believed to be Israeli counterterrorist agents operating in Jordan.

Oral Questions

We agree that the world must be vigilant against terrorism but Canadians want some answers on this affair and they want them now. We do not even know who these men are.

My question for the government is are these two men Canadians? Are the passports they were holding valid, forged or stolen?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it can be confirmed that the two passports are forgeries. There are about six million Canadian passports out at any given time.

The identity of the two individuals has not been determined definitively. We categorically reject any notion that there was collusion between the government of Canada and any other government.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has an obligation to protect the good reputation of Canadians overseas. The maple leaf flag is trusted and our passport is internationally respected.

Our concern is that any use of the Canadian passport to cloak foreign operatives damages the reputation of Canadians abroad and endangers their safety.

• (1415)

Just to be absolutely clear, did the Canadian government know anything at all about the mission in Jordan in which Canadian passports were used? Were any Canadian agencies involved in any way, shape or form in that mission?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government shares the concern of the hon. Leader of the Opposition about the reputation of Canada and Canadian difficulties.

We know nothing about any involvement by any Canadian in the matter. We can confirm that the Canadian ambassador to Israel is being brought back to Canada for consultation.

The matter is being treated very seriously. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has met with the crown prince of Jordan today in New York and he will meet with Israeli officials.

As the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows, it is a Jewish holiday and it is very difficult to find people today.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Prime Minister said it would be unacceptable for foreign operatives to use the Canadian passport. Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs even threatened diplomatic retaliation.

All of these are fine words, but where are the actions to prevent the illegal use of Canadian passports no matter how or by whom they are used?

Since the government has done little in the past to quell the illegal use of Canadian passports, what concrete steps will it take to ensure that Canadian passports will not be used illegally in this manner in the future?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will know that the Canadian passports require less visas than perhaps any other passport in the world. It is a very desirable passport for people to have. They may have been forged. They may have been stolen. As I say, there are six million of them out there.

The hon. member knows that the government is taking this matter very seriously.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have travelled extensively and I know the value of the integrity of the Canadian passport.

We are told that there are boxes of these passports being used by other countries. I have just been contacted by a frightened Canadian in Jordan who says that all Canadians are in danger of repercussion. He was told by the Canadian embassy in Jordan to stay indoors for his own safety.

What is the Canadian government doing to protect Canadians travelling abroad?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's point is a very good one. It is a concern to Canadians when anything like this happens.

The member knows that it had nothing to do with the Government of Canada. They could have been stolen. They could have been forged.

We are doing our best and the matter is being taken very seriously.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the very competence of our foreign affairs department is being called into question.

A week after a major incident takes place the government is telling Canadians that it does not really know what is happening. Either that is true or our foreign affairs department is inept.

Which of those two options is true?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ambassador from Israel was called in, I believe this morning, to speak to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

We share the member's concern. It is a situation that everyone regrets enormously.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***RCMP INVESTIGATIONS**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Human Resources Development stated that he had warned the RCMP and the Prime Minister's Office last spring of serious allegations concerning a Liberal Party of Canada fund raiser.

I am asking the minister whether he informed the solicitor general at that time.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the very day I learned of, or heard of, certain allegations of misappropriation of funds in the matter of which we speak, I immediately informed the RCMP of them, requesting it to investigate, but I did not inform the solicitor general of the day.

• (1420)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the solicitor general told us that he had not been informed of the RCMP investigation, but we know since yesterday what the Minister of Human Resources Development has repeated today, that he informed the RCMP and the PMO that an investigation relating to a fund raiser was under way.

I am asking the solicitor general for an explanation of how the Prime Minister knew, the RCMP knew, his colleague the Minister of Human Resources Development knew, but he in his capacity as solicitor general did not know what the RCMP was doing, when he is the one responsible for it.

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. It is not appropriate for the Solicitor General of Canada to be involved in an investigation by the RCMP.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, the former solicitor general explained in this House, in relation to the Airbus affair, that the way the system works, the first thing that happens when there is an investigation is that the RCMP informs the solicitor general, who then decides whether it is appropriate to advise the Prime Minister's office.

Since the system provides for the RCMP to inform the solicitor general, how can he stand up and tell us, as he did yesterday, that he was not informed?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can say it very clearly because I was not informed.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is an investigation that implicates the Liberal Party of Canada, implicates ministers and goes right to the heart of the matter of government integrity.

Does the solicitor general still contend that he was not informed by the RCMP because they did not feel it was appropriate to let him know about an investigation into the government's integrity?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was not that it was felt unnecessary. It was felt inappropriate.

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*[Translation]***JOB CREATION**

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

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised job creation would be a priority. In February, the Minister of Finance said interest rates had to be lower to promote job creation, but yesterday the same minister supported the Bank of Canada's decision to increase interest rates.

How many young people will be forced into unemployment before this government realizes that the real cause of the crisis is not inflation but the lack of jobs?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): As you know, Mr. Speaker, job creation has been quite strong in the past five or six months, but it now has to be maintained, which means sustained and sustainable growth.

To this end, yesterday, the Bank of Canada took its foot off the gas every so slightly so it would not have to hit the brakes too hard down the road.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unemployment is 9 percent, where it has been for seven lean years, and inflation is 1.8 percent. Before the election when inflation was 2.2 percent the finance minister said there were no inflationary pressures in Canada. Now the finance minister wants to choke off the bit of hope the unemployed have.

How can the minister justify a policy that condemns 1.4 million Canadians to continuing unemployment?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anybody who follows the economy knows full well that the major problem of large industrial countries has been a perpetuation of the boom and the bust cycle. In order to avoid that, it is very clear the

central banks have to act with a certain degree of lag time. That is what has happened.

If one wants to talk about government policies, let us take a look at the private sector. Since this government has taken office it has created over one million jobs. In this year alone there have been 260,000 jobs, the majority of them in the private sector.

* * *

RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the solicitor general denied any knowledge of an RCMP criminal investigation into the Liberal Party of Canada fund raising practices, despite the fact that his cabinet colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, brought the matter to the attention of the RCMP six months prior.

• (1425)

Will the solicitor general now confirm that Pierre Corbeil was a paid employee of the Liberal Party of Canada, contrary to the press release from the Liberal Party yesterday, and the duration of Mr. Corbeil's employment?

The Speaker: On the question as put, I do not know that a minister of the crown would necessarily know a member of a political party is involved one way or another. That is the way the question was formed.

If the question could be rephrased I would permit the solicitor general to answer it. Could the member rephrase the question.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of an individual under investigation by the RCMP, who is under his purview as solicitor general, by the name of Pierre Corbeil?

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there is an investigation. Surely the hon. member knows that because there is an investigation it would be inappropriate for me to speak specifically to that investigation.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, that being the fact, it is imperative Canadians have confidence in the integrity of the prime minister and the cabinet. The current RCMP investigation puts that confidence in question.

Has the clerk of the privy council been formally advised of this investigation by the RCMP? If so, what steps have been taken to maintain the integrity of the cabinet's deliberation.

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member no doubts knows, given that there is an ongoing investigation it would be inappropriate for me to identify people being investigated whether they be on this side of

Oral Questions

the House, whether they be on that side of the House or anywhere in Canada.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said a few minutes ago that these Canadian passports were forged. I would like to know if an official from his department has actually seen these passports to determine whether or not they are forged.

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, no.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if they have not seen the passports, I am wondering how the minister can determine that they are forged, make that assumption and say it in the House.

If they have not actually seen these passports, how in the world does anyone from the government know they are forged?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Edmonton knows that other people have seen the passports and that is why I have said we have not seen the passports.

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[Translation]

RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development told me a few minutes ago, in answer to my question, that he had warned the RCMP of an investigation with respect to a Liberal Party fundraiser last spring.

The newspapers also reported this morning that he had warned the Prime Minister's office last spring.

I would like him to rise in the House and confirm that he did indeed inform the Office of the Prime Minister that an investigation was under way into the allegedly illegal actions of a Liberal Party fundraiser.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was my responsibility, as soon as I got wind of these allegations, to inform the RCMP, and not my cabinet colleague, which would have been completely inappropriate. This was to be sure that the RCMP could do its job without political interference.

As I said yesterday, I can confirm in the House that, having made my decision and informed the RCMP, I wrote my March 5 letter to Philip Murray, in which I told him:

Oral Questions

[English]

“Allegations have come to my attention that at least five different proposals were approached by individuals”.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question was whether the Minister of Human Resources Development spoke about the matter, not to his colleague the solicitor general, but to the Prime Minister or any other of his colleagues, because yesterday we saw him hold a very rapid caucus with senior ministers from Quebec, as soon as a Conservative Party colleague had begun to ask the question and before the solicitor general had even begun to address it.

We have the impression that other ministers besides the Minister of Human Resources Development were aware of this investigation and we also have the impression that the Prime Minister was warned by the Minister of Human Resources Development that such an investigation was under way. Will he answer the question directly?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is rare in fact for the opposition to see a government that has acted with speed and integrity in the hours following the allegations about which I was informed.

I wrote RCMP Commissioner, Phil Murray, and asked him to do his job. Once I had made my decision and taken action in the form of the letter I sent him March 5, I so advised the chief of staff of the Prime Minister of Canada.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question on the passports. The minister just said a couple of minutes ago the words “other people have seen the passports”. Who are the other people?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising that question. My understanding, and I have just been passed a note to this effect, is that Canadian officials have seen the passports and they have been asked to establish that they are forged.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister again.

Canadian passports belong to the Canadian government. Do we have those passports in our control now and when are you going to have them back in this country?

The Speaker: The question should be posed always through the Chair. The hon. secretary of state.

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Unfortunately, I do not have a specific answer to that question. I will find out and I will report back to the hon. member.

* * *

[Translation]

RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works.

Was the Minister of Public Works, who is responsible for the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party, informed by his—

The Speaker: The question is out of order.

[English]

It is not the official responsibility in a portfolio for the minister to answer that on a political basis.

[Translation]

That is just the way it is. The hon. member for Roberval may put his question.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Did the minister inform his colleague, the Minister of Public Works, who is responsible for the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party, of this problem within the Liberal Party?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I definitely had a duty to do so.

Indeed, after making inquiries and asking the RCMP to do so, I of course told the leader of the Quebec wing, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Public Works, because when such allegations are made, it is extremely important that those who are in a position of authority be informed, so they can act as quickly as I did.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we want to get to the bottom of this passport affair.

Let us get this straight. We asked if these passports were forged or stolen or valid and the minister said they were forged. Then we asked had any Canadian officials actually seen the passports to determine that they were forged and he said no, other people had seen the passports. Then he got a note from somewhere and said

no, it was not other people and Canadian officials actually were investigating that they were forged.

We want to know what is the correct story. Are these—

The Speaker: The hon. secretary of state, if you would like to answer that question, go ahead.

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the whereabouts of the passports at this point are not known at least to myself. I am going to find that out and report back to the member.

Canadians have seen them and I understand that it is clear that they are forged but we have been asked to make certain that they are forged.

I appreciate that the member's question is otherwise a good one.

• (1435)

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister does not know where these passports are, how can he be determining that they are forged?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the member from the Conservative Party, I was a crown attorney for many years and we were trained to be very precise in our answers.

The whereabouts of the passports at this moment are not known to myself. It is being determined beyond a reasonable doubt to my knowledge that they are forged passports. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out who had the passports. I am sure that members know. When I find out where the passports are I will let the hon. member from B.C. know as quickly as I can.

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[Translation]

RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have learned out today that, on the issue of the fundraiser, the Minister of Human Resources Development knew, the RCMP knew, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services knew, the Prime Minister knew and the President of the Treasury Board knew.

My question is for the solicitor general. First, does he not find it strange to be about the only cabinet member who did not know? And second, is he absolutely sure he is indeed the solicitor general?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there were other people and the RCMP were aware. But most important, I am aware of the need to preserve the integrity of the position of the solicitor general.

Oral Questions

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The best way to fight crime is to engage communities across Canada in crime prevention at the community level and to attack the root causes of crime. During the last election campaign and in the Speech from the Throne the government talked about crime prevention programs, a most laudable goal. Can the minister assure this House and the people of Canada that this program will be driven by the local communities as it should be and not by bureaucrats from Ottawa?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can indeed reassure the hon. member that our new crime prevention initiative is going to be driven by local communities all over this country. As a government we were very proud that one of the major new initiatives of this government as it relates to creating safe communities and safe homes is in the area of crime prevention.

I look forward to working with all members of this House and I look forward to working with local communities all over this country to ensure that we have in place the strategies and policies to help Canadians feel safer in their local communities.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government is being completely evasive on this issue and we are wondering why. I think Canadians are wondering why. This has been in the news now for a week. Foreign Affairs has had ample opportunity to investigate.

Either the government simply does not know what is going on, or the government does know what is going on and is reluctant to tell this House. We ask which is it. Is it simply that the government does not know what is going on, or is there something about this that makes the government reluctant to share what it knows with this House?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing about this that makes the government reluctant to share with other Canadians what is going on. The government as I said takes the matter very seriously.

• (1440)

The whereabouts at the moment of the passports is not a key issue. The issue is that we are asking our ambassador to come back from Israel to discuss the matter. We have called in the Israeli ambassador here. We are taking the matter very seriously. The

Oral Questions

physical whereabouts of these two passports at the moment is not a big issue.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when will the minister tell the House where these passports are?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, about three minutes after I find out, which I will attempt to do right after question period, I will let the opposition know where the passports are.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I received a disturbing phone call this week regarding a seasonal worker who worked his hours in a 12-week period, qualified for EI, but because of the new legislation having included a 26-week period for calculation of the claim, this man is asked to live on a \$39 a week paycheque.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Does the minister recognize that there are unjust laws in the EI legislation and that it discriminates against seasonal workers and part time workers, taking away their dignity?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the case of seasonal workers is a concern to us and we are closely monitoring the employment insurance reform we undertook. I have said it on a number of occasions in this House.

The unemployment insurance system that was in place until our government showed the courage to change it and to adjust it to the new labour market situation was simply no longer adequate and no longer serving the best interests of Canadians. We had to undertake a major and comprehensive reform to replace passive measures with active ones and help the unemployed find work. But we are closely monitoring the situation.

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RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabasca, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after the initial shock, the Minister of Human Resources Development confirmed that he had indeed informed the RCMP of allegations of dubious fundraising practices.

Today, we have learned that in fact the minister spoke to several cabinet colleagues, including ministers from Quebec.

Could the minister tell this House when exactly he informed these other cabinet members, including the ministers from Quebec? When did he do it?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House and the opposition member that I informed my colleagues only after acting on the allegations which I had heard about that same day.

It is only after writing to Commissioner Murray, on March 5, that later in the evening I informed my colleagues of the decision and action I had taken, so they would be aware that some allegations affecting organizations for which they were also responsible were circulating. Obviously, this was the least I could do. It stands to reason.

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabasca, PC): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The minister just gave us confirmation of the fact that cabinet ministers were aware of the allegations; some of them probably knew the individual being investigated. Could he tell this House if he or other ministers toured businesses with this individual in Quebec, and in the Drummondville—Trois-Rivières area in particular, to raise funds for the Liberal Party of Canada?

The Speaker: The question, as worded, is out of order. I now recognize the hon. member for Beauséjour—Petitcodiac.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the deficit is under control and there is in excess of \$7.5 billion sitting in the employment insurance fund, there are still unemployed workers struggling to survive on a meagre \$39 a week.

Will the minister commit today to making the necessary changes to the Employment Insurance Act to put an end to the unfair treatment of seasonal and part time workers in the Atlantic region, in Quebec and across Canada?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition should commend the government for having had the courage to undertake a difficult but necessary reform to make our employment system responsive to modern market conditions.

• (1445)

We now have a more equitable system, a fairer system that takes people off a certain unfortunate form of dependency to help them get back into the labour market. We are putting very substantial amounts into the transitional job fund and, as several of my colleagues from the Atlantic region know full well, this fund is in the best interests of those who live in Atlantic Canada.

[English]

CALGARY DECLARATION

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Since the premiers so-called Calgary declaration in mid-September, the minister must have heard from many Canadians with their reactions. Can the minister tell us how Canadians are reacting to the principles in the Calgary declaration?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all parties in the House with one exception have never been as united for Canadian unity than they are now with nine of the premiers.

They are united for principles that Canadians support from British Columbia to Newfoundland. An Angus Reid poll yesterday showed strong support for a federation that respects the equality of provinces while recognizing that one of them is obviously unique in an anglophone North America.

* * *

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the justice minister implied that the system used to select our federal court justices has worked well for 130 years.

Well, an Angus Reid poll last summer indicated that 52 percent of Canadians had lost faith in the courts and today the *Globe and Mail* stated "We have a judicial appointment system that is out of control, devoid of accountability and free of public scrutiny."

Will the justice minister move immediately to establish an independent and open appointment process to restore Canadians' faith in our court system?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions in the House already, I believe that the appointment process for Supreme Court of Canada justices has provided us with some of the most distinguished jurists serving in the highest court of the land.

I have to tell the hon. member that the government does not determine its policies on the basis of *Globe and Mail* editorials. However, I have made it very clear that I see merit in ensuring that there is a wider consultation process in relation to the appointment of supreme court justices.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the justice minister if she would be prepared to share with the

Oral Questions

House her plans for when she is going to do this, who is going to be involved and the form it is going to take?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, I am open to considering how we can ensure greater consultation as I go about making recommendations for appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I encourage the hon. member and any other member in the House that if they have suggestions how I may hear from a greater number of Canadians, I would be happy to hear from them.

* * *

[Translation]

RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when pressed just now, the solicitor general told us that he knew that people in cabinet, people around him, the RCMP, were aware of the serious allegations against a Liberal party organizer.

Will the solicitor general confirm that he indeed stated that he was aware that some of his colleagues knew?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I became aware that other people were involved in this today in the House. I was not aware of an investigation. I was not advised of an investigation. The investigation is ongoing independently by the RCMP as it should be.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knew, the Minister of Human Resources Development knew, the Quebec ministers knew, the Prime Minister's lieutenant knew, the organizers knew, the RCMP knew. Everybody knew, just not their boss.

What is the solicitor general's problem? Either he is frighteningly incompetent, or he is trying to mislead this House.

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand very well the need to protect the integrity of the position of the solicitor general. The RCMP is conducting an arm's length investigation, as it should.

* * *

VIA RAIL

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Oral Questions

On September 3 a VIA Rail train crashed near Biggar, Saskatchewan injuring 64 and killing one. Yesterday in releasing an interim report on the accident, the Transportation Safety Board noted that its recommendations are the same ones it made three years ago following a crash at Brighton, Ontario.

The recommendations do not address the cuts to VIA maintenance in the last three years which have led to the closure of maintenance centres in Halifax and Toronto, the originating point of the train at Biggar.

Will the minister request VIA Rail to cancel any further cuts and layoffs to VIA maintenance until the final report of the investigation is completed?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say how grateful we are that the Transportation Safety Board has given a preliminary report on the unfortunate crash at Biggar.

This is an incident that we are all concerned about. We are also concerned that some of the original recommendations for safety were not followed. Immediately the Department of Transport took regulatory action against VIA and VIA is complying.

We will do the best to ensure that all the recommendations made by the board will be adhered to very quickly.

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this passes as more than being an incident. It is an absolute tragedy that someone had to die before we saw recommendations from the Transportation Safety Board being put into place.

Why did the government not ensure that the minimum recommendations from that previous accident were enforced?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, the Department of Transport is very vigorous in applying safety standards. Safety is the number one priority for the government in whatever mode of transport.

It appears that VIA did not undertake to make certain changes throughout its system. It did on some services and we are trying to find out why. We have asked VIA to come back and let us know what other actions it is going to take to comply with the board's request.

* * *

VETERANS

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

The government has cut the last post fund for veterans from \$26,000 to \$12,060. This has made it very difficult for veterans.

Will the minister assure the House that he will have his department review the cuts it made to the last post fund and deal with the difficulties and injustices it has caused to the spouses of those families?

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the question. I know that she has worked hard, like all of us in the House, in support of veterans.

I have been asked to assure the House that this situation will be reviewed. Veterans affairs are always reviewed to see what can be done for veterans. We recently overhauled the review board and that basically cuts the time in half. We continue to review items of interest.

The hon. member knows that a few years ago we introduced a bill that looked after merchant seamen. We will continue to do this on a regular basis.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, there has been \$182 million cut from the Department of Veterans Affairs' budget. This has made it most difficult for the veterans and their families.

Cuts to the last post fund have made it more difficult than some of the other cuts because it costs a lot more today to bury a veteran than it did 10 years ago.

Once again I ask the minister to please take a look at the last post fund to see if there is not some way we can bring back dignity for the veterans.

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the dignity of veterans will be utmost and top priority for the government.

* * *

CUSTOMS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Revenue dismissed allegations made by a 25-year customs official, Dennis Coffey, allegations of fraud, nepotism and abuse rampant in the Department of National Revenue.

● (1455)

Today we have obtained a sworn affidavit from Mr. Coffey which I am prepared to table in the House confirming his allegations and contradicting the minister.

Given that Revenue Canada has not denied Mr. Coffey's allegations, is the minister prepared to investigate this matter and if not, why not?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member asked this question yesterday and I responded. I want to repeat that response so that it is clear to him.

Oral Questions

I said yesterday that no preferential treatment is given to FedEx. Let me repeat it again. No preferential treatment is given to FedEx.

If the member has any evidence to the contrary other than allegations, he should table them in the House. We have not seen one iota of evidence from this member other than the unsubstantiated allegations that he has put forward.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I offered just a moment ago to table a sworn affidavit from a 25-year veteran of this minister's department.

That is evidence introduced before a quasi-judicial body of the government. One of the minister's top customs officers has threatened to muzzle and fire this officer of the minister's department for making these allegations.

Is that how the minister treats employees who try to expose fraud, waste and corruption in his department?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be very careful of the words that he uses.

I know this hon. member wants to pretend he is a rat packer, but he is certainly no Brian Tobin.

* * *

[Translation]

RCMP INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the solicitor general stated earlier with a totally straight face that he had discovered in this House that the Minister of Human Resources Development, other colleagues and the RCMP too all knew about this investigation.

Could he confirm, following all the questions he had in the House yesterday and the statements he made in the papers, that at no time and in no way did he discuss this matter since yesterday either with the RCMP, or—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt, but the hon. minister has the floor.

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm in answering the question from the hon. member that in fact I did not speak to the RCMP about this case.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are two parts to the question. He answered the part concerning the RCMP.

I ask him again: Did he, in the time between question period yesterday and today, discuss this matter with not some but many of his colleagues, since almost everyone in cabinet knew about it but him?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no. As I said yesterday in response to the question, the first I was aware of this was yesterday when the question was put.

* * *

INTEREST RATES

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance who, I guess like everyone else, was surprised yesterday to learn that interest rates are now on the way up again.

We have acknowledged that inflation, at 1.8 percent, is well within the parameters of the Bank of Canada's monetary policy. The minister says he has to take action because the inflation rate is at 1.8 percent.

How high do unemployment levels have to go before the minister also takes action on interest rates?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member knows that interest rates are at almost a 30-year low. Our interest rates are substantially lower than those in the United States.

We are not dealing with monetary tightening. The governor of the bank has simply eased off on the accelerator a little in order to maintain the tremendous economic recovery and the very strong job creation we are seeing.

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian children represent our country's future. Canadians are looking to their governments to help low income families and children and give children a good start so that they can realize their full potential as adults.

Can the Secretary of State for Children and Youth tell us what the federal government is doing to combat child poverty?

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that child poverty is a major issue and that it is a priority for all governments.

• (1500)

We are working with our territorial and provincial partners on a major reinvestment plan. We are increasing the national child benefit by \$850 million starting in July and an additional \$850 million. There are many projects and services that we offer for

Privilege

children, too many to mention, but I know that our hon. colleagues support us in our work on these programs for the children of Canada.

* * *

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Zoltan Gal, my brother Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the government House leader to advise this House as to the nature of the government's business for the remainder of this week and business for next week.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we shall continue for the rest of today and tomorrow the conclusion of the address debate.

On Monday we will commence second reading of Bill C-2, the Canada pension plan investment board legislation. This will be followed by Bill C-4 concerning the Canadian Wheat Board. When these items have been disposed of we would propose returning to Bill C-9, the Canada Marine Act which was introduced earlier today.

Members will have noted that there are now a number of bills on the Order Paper. As the week progresses I will be in communication with members opposite in regard to adding additional business. Next Thursday shall be an allotted day.

The Speaker: I have notice of a question of privilege. I will hear that before I hear any points of order.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I would like to say to other members of this House that I take points of privilege very seriously and have only decided to pursue this course of action after giving it a great deal of thought.

On Tuesday, September 30 the first draw for Private Members' Business in the 36th Parliament was held. A bill that I wished to

have in that draw was not eligible because it has not gone through first reading yet. There were very few changes to be made to this bill as it had been submitted in the last Parliament. However two and a half months after I requested it, the bill has not materialized.

My ability to discharge my parliamentary duties has been severely hampered due to the reduction in House staff responsible for the production of private members' bills. Private Members' Business is a means by which public matters the government is not dealing with can be brought forward by private members of this Chamber.

There are 301 members in this House most of whom may wish to have bills drafted, but there are only two legislative counsel on staff plus one on contract to do all the necessary drafting. The support staff who translate, edit and format the bills are not dedicated only to the production of private members' bills. Other House business can take precedence, including for example amendments to government legislation in committee. It is possible that most of their time could be taken up on other business and Private Members' Business would literally grind to a halt.

On July 9 I notified the House that I wished to reintroduce two bills from the last Parliament with minor or no modifications. Because House staff worked a great deal of overtime while the House was sitting, they were on holidays over the summer. This means no one was available to work on these requests for two months. During that time numerous other members also submitted requests for the drafting of private members' bills creating an enormous backlog. At the time of the draw there were around 170 private members' bills in the system with only 23 of them having reached the stage where they could be introduced in the House to be eligible for the draw. That means that there were almost 150 bills tied up in the backlog.

• (1505)

I wish to stress that I am in no way finding fault with the existing staff. To the contrary, they have done an extremely exemplary job under the circumstances and deserve to be commended in the highest manner possible. However despite their best efforts this happens every year and even more so at the beginning of a new Parliament or a new session. The House knows it is going to happen, yet this dire state of Private Members' Business has not been addressed. The inadequate resources devoted to private members' bills especially at peak periods adversely affects the ability of all members of this House to perform their parliamentary duties.

I would request that the House immediately allocate additional resources so this backlog of Private Members' Business can be cleared up as quickly as possible.

I conclude that this is not a point of privilege only for me. It is for all private members in this House.

The Speaker: This is not a problem which is absolutely new to the House. I would find at this point that this is not a question of

The Address

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

privilege. However might I suggest that the hon. member speak with his representative on the Board of Internal Economy because this could probably more properly be discussed there. I would respectfully make that suggestion.

As to whether it is a question of privilege or not, my judgment is that it is not.

Is this on another point of privilege?

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): On the same point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I would take it that there is probably new information because this is not a point of privilege. Do you wish to raise a point of privilege?

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I would like to convince you that it is a point of privilege and support my colleague in that manner.

The Speaker: I think, my colleague, that this could more properly be discussed in the Board of Internal Economy. Might I request that his intervention be put off perhaps to another time. Are you agreed?

Mr. Randy White: Agreed.

The Speaker: I am now going to deal with points of order. The member for Calgary Southeast.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

CUSTOMS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday in the House the Minister of National Revenue challenged me during question period at page 330 of *Hansard* to produce in the House facts and table them here regarding the question I asked both yesterday and today. He repeated that request today.

Therefore I seek the unanimous leave of the House to table a sworn affidavit from senior customs officer Dennis Coffey with respect to his appeal to the Public Service Employment Commission Appeal Board which substantiates the allegations which he has made.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have permission of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: You have heard the terms of the request. Is the House agreed that this affidavit be deposited here with the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Bill Matthews (Burin—St. George's, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order today flowing out of question period dealing with the Minister of Human Resources Development when in answering a question he referred to and quoted from a letter in response to the leader of the Bloc Quebecois.

I would like to submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister should be required through you to table the letter that he quoted from and referred to. While it is most unlikely that any member in this House of Commons or in any legislature or jurisdiction would stand in his place with a piece of paper and quote from a piece of paper on which there is nothing written, it has happened in the past.

Therefore, I would like to say to you, Your Honour, that the Minister of Human Resources Development should be required to table the letter that he referred to and quoted from in question period.

• (1510)

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, someone has gone to get the document in question. We will arrange to have it tabled as soon as possible because of course that is what the standing orders call for.

As to the allegation that the minister might have been reading from a blank piece of paper, the minister is a man of integrity and would not participate in any such activity.

The Speaker: We are getting into debate now.

The hon. member's point is well taken. The minister will be asked to table the document which he quoted from in the House. I believe that is the point which the hon. member wanted to make.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to our standing orders, I am pleased to table the letter which was referred to earlier today. It is a letter signed by the Minister of Human Resources Development and is dated March 5, 1997.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as Acting Speaker of the House of Commons. I am confident that you will assume your responsibility with great skill, integrity and competence as you have shown so far in your time in the House. You can be assured of my personal support. I wish you well.

The Address

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the prime minister and all members of the House on their election and re-election to this Parliament. As parliamentarians we have a tremendous task ahead of us to steer our nation into the 21st century.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I want my constituents to know that I am determined to work hard in voicing their concerns. I am proud and deeply honoured to be their elected representative for a second time. I will always be grateful for the trust and confidence they have placed in me over the years. It is my pleasure to continue to be of service to them.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my constituency staff who served me well in the last Parliament and who continue to provide the support I need; my Hill staff, Carole and Donald, my constituency staff, Anne Simone and Phil Sbrocchi, and all who worked to support me in my duties.

Etobicoke—Lakeshore is a beautiful place, a home to peoples of diverse backgrounds, a rich tapestry of multicultural unique neighbourhoods. Etobicoke—Lakeshore is well situated in the greater Toronto area and is in close proximity to the major transportation routes, to Pearson airport, the Toronto Island airport and the Toronto harbour. It is well served by major highways such as the Queen Elizabeth Way, Highway 427 and Highway 401.

The riding is as economically diverse as the people in it. Industries in the riding cut across many sectors. A diverse combination of small and medium size businesses provides services in key industrial areas such as manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade, business and health and social services.

● (1515)

In the late eighties and early nineties the economy of Etobicoke—Lakeshore suffered as companies felt the impact of the recession and the economic policies of the past government. I remember a time when storefronts were littered with for lease, power of sale and going out of business signs. But today we witness a fair degree of economic activity especially in the key sectors of Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

The Liberal government's strong commitment to fiscal responsibility as articulated in successive budgets, the red book and the throne speech has provided a stable political and a strong economic environment to allow these businesses to rebuild and strengthen their positions in Canada and in world markets.

The federal infrastructure program brought under \$12 million to Etobicoke—Lakeshore with an estimated 178 direct construction jobs. This resulted in improvements to roads, sewers and other infrastructure of the riding. The federal job strategy program has also had some positive impact on commercial activity and some of the social institutions in the community. I commend these economic initiatives by the government. However, there is still room for

greater economic growth in Etobicoke—Lakeshore. The need is still there for job creation opportunities for older workers and for young people.

In last week's Speech from the Throne the government noted that it will continue to take further action to encourage new investments, to create new jobs and to generate the national wealth necessary to assure Canadians a stable and secure future. I am very pleased that the government has made this commitment. There is hope and optimism for the industries and for my constituents in Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

In a consultation meeting with my constituents which I held fairly recently with a mixture of small and medium size businesses in Etobicoke—Lakeshore, I heard that the people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore want a country that is fiscally strong, safe and tolerant. They want a country where youth and adults can find gainful decent employment, a country where young people can realize their dreams. The commitment to invest 50 percent of the budgetary process to these social and economic initiatives shows the government's willingness to practise fiscal responsibility while it addresses these pressing problems.

I can assure the prime minister and the finance minister they will have my support and my constituents' support to stay the course of fiscal prudence and to find opportunities for young people. Our young people are the future of this country. As we head into the new millennium we must ensure that our youth have the opportunity to develop their abilities through education and adequate job training.

In the Speech from the Throne the government placed strong emphasis on these critical issues of concern to young people. Partner initiatives such as the youth internship program with the YMCA and career edge are steps in the right direction in assuring the youth of this nation get on track and stay on track.

I am equally proud that this Liberal government will establish a Canada millennium scholarship endowment fund and will work to reduce barriers to post-secondary education for young people by making further changes to Canada student loans programs. Our commitment to invest in knowledge and creativity must begin with the youth of this nation. Youth in my riding and across the country must be prepared to meet the challenges that lie ahead in a globally competitive economy.

A safe and just society is valued by my constituents and by all Canadians. I have heard from my constituents of Etobicoke—Lakeshore that they want to feel secure in their homes and in their communities.

● (1520)

There are a couple of local newspapers that publish weekly and bi-weekly which contain columns where the crimes committed on a weekly basis are listed. Those listings do cause concern and do give individuals a sense that their communities are unsafe.

We have to ensure that every citizen and every member of the constituency of Etobicoke—Lakeshore feels safe in their home and in their community.

I know many of my constituents are still apprehensive about their personal safety and their concerns are being addressed through crime prevention programs. They have taken the time to organize community based crime prevention initiatives through federal government funding of \$30 million. My constituents will benefit from this initiative and I am proud to be part of the team that believes that our criminal justice system and the safety of Canadians deserve attention and action.

I will continue to work for the people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore who want to see a united Canada. I know they look to me to work with my colleagues here in the House to ensure the future direction of Canada. I challenge all members, irrespective of party affiliation, to help in moulding a nation of which we can all be proud citizens.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to a person who is just an ordinary citizen, not particularly interested in politics, who turns on the TV to find our colleague across the way on the screen, praising the youth program being developed by the Minister of Human Resources Development, as I heard him doing—the minister seems to be confirming my words—that it is important for people to understand that the youth programs, the Human Resources Development programs, must reflect youth problems as much as possible.

What must be understood is that the problems very often differ from one region to the next. When the federal government comes up with programs, very often the problem is that it bases them on a single reality. I do not know if it is the reality as perceived by public servants or by politicians, but it is the reality of people with a view of the country that is very—

An hon. member: Outdated.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Outdated, perhaps, but a very global and very uniform view of the country.

I will ask one question of the hon. member across the way. Does she not consider that all of the youth initiatives taken by the government are merely interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction?

[*English*]

Mrs. Jean Augustine: Mr. Speaker, until the member's last statement I thought he was asking for some way in which we could have uniform programs across the country that would address the needs of young people. I was really applauding him for this.

I represent a constituency which has young people who attend colleges and universities right across this great land from one

The Address

province to another. They must have their credits transferred. They need the programs of uniformity of credentials. I understood he was referring to the fact that our young people must be given opportunities in all parts of the country to reach their full potential.

It is important to separate out the kinds of squabbles that are occurring right now which do not benefit our young people. While we are involved in these kinds of squabbles our young people are finding it difficult to have their own issues addressed.

I want to compliment the Minister of Human Resources Development.

● (1525)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. You look very regal today and I am sure you will rule the House with a fair hand.

I was listening to the member from across the way. She mentioned she has many manufacturing businesses, many retail businesses, small businesses and large businesses in her constituency, as I have. She mentioned that at a recent meeting they were quite happy with what is going on. They are thriving.

This is what I heard when I was campaigning and talking to these people in businesses in Lethbridge. They would really appreciate a tax break. I have been told that if we could give businesses a tax break, they would hire more people, they would reinvest in their businesses, they would expand and they would start new enterprises.

I would like to ask the member if this type of comment has come to her and if there is any plan by this government to do just that.

Mrs. Jean Augustine: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the kind of discussion that takes place once small business and business people are brought together.

What help do we need from the federal government to ensure that we have job creation in business? What can we do to help our own businesses to grow and what can we do to help communities so that we could employ more individuals?

Reinvestment, the issue of not having so much red tape, cutting out the bureaucracy, ensuring there are incentives within programs that would assist us are always on the table and those are the issues that I bring to the fore, that I share with my colleagues in the various forums and that the ministers use in their programs.

Their programs are good examples of what we need to do and more voices speaking for the businesses in my riding would ensure that we address some of those concerns.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in this new Parliament.

The Address

I would like to extend my very best congratulations and good wishes to you on your appointment to this important post. As you have heard from many other members, you enjoy the confidence of this House and we look forward to having you preside over some of these debates.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my constituents of Calgary—Nose Hill for their confidence in me and for returning me to this position as their elected representative in the Parliament of Canada.

I take my duties to them very seriously and want to do a good job of representing their interests and of being their voice in these debates.

To my constituents in Calgary—Nose Hill, a profound thank you and a commitment to them to act in their interests over the next term of Parliament.

I am the opposition critic for Human Resources Development, a very large portfolio of government which handles and administers the social programs of this country.

Because social issues are extremely important to Canadians, we have a very important job as official opposition in this House to hold the government accountable for what it is doing on behalf of Canadians and for the administration of their security and their futures.

Canadians take very great pride in our country's social stability and in the security that we enjoy. When we are sick we feel we can be looked after. When we are old we have hope that we will have enough income to have our needs met and to have a comfortable life.

These are only two of many areas where Canadians are proud that there is not the want and the disadvantage and the need as in other countries of the world that are not as fortunate as we have been.

• (1530)

The Reform Party places a very great emphasis on the social safety net for Canadians. Reformers have children to educate. Reformers get sick. Reformers have disasters happen where we become disabled and need additional assistance. Reformers get old and want to have pensions. We are vitally concerned as a party and as Canadians about this important area of Canadian society and Canadian life.

Part of what we have been doing over the last 10 years in trying to emphasize and push Canadian governments into getting our economic affairs under some sort of rational control is targeted to sustain the social security we have enjoyed in the past and enjoy now. Many Canadians see this security slipping away as we are

crippled by debt, deficit, runaway programs, and waste and abuse of the resources of the country.

The focus or end target of our strong fiscal message is security and sustaining of the social safety net we enjoy. Sometimes as Reformers we talk a lot about the means but not so much about the end which is vitally important to all of us.

Canadians have a history of hard work, thrift, saving part of our income for a rainy day and investing for the future. These characteristics were essential to the settlement, development and enrichment of this great country. These characteristics are exhibited today by new Canadians, people who continue to come to this country from all over the world to become citizens of Canada in order to build strong futures for themselves and for their children.

Canadians also have a sense of fairness. We like to see those who are disabled, disadvantaged or have experienced unexpected hardships succeed. We like to see the young given a fair start. We like to see those who work, who contribute and who save be rewarded.

Canadians dislike waste. They dislike seeing our tax dollars foolishly spent or abused. Canadians dislike seeing those in greatest need receive too little from the rest of society while some with substantial means receive too much.

I speak for a party committed to a political process which reflects the views and interests of regular Canadians rather than the political elites, a party whose principles and policies are formulated at the constituency level and must be approved by the membership, a party that publishes its principles and policies called the blue book for all to read and to consider.

They know what they are buying when they vote Reform. Often our policies and principles are distorted and misrepresented by opponents, but as we grow in maturity and in strength as a party more and more Canadians know the common sense and the solid policy underlying what we are doing as a party.

I also speak for a party whose leader consults with real people, not imaginary ones, about their interests and needs and has a long term vision for the country based on openness and compassion.

Reform Party principles and policies support a secure and sustainable social safety net including secure retirement incomes, insurance against unexpected job loss, and promotion of research and educational excellence. They ensure that families have the resources to care for their children. Reformers strongly believe that social benefits must be focused on those who truly need them and must be delivered in a compassionate manner.

Reformers also stress that programs must be soundly designed and managed. They must be financially sustainable and administered as much as possible without huge bureaucracies, masses of rules and regulations such as supposed universal benefits which are then followed by complex clawback rules.

• (1535)

All these traditional Liberal practices need to be reduced or eliminated. Co-operative arrangements with provinces, communities and the private sector need to be encouraged and expanded.

Canadians and Reformers are realistic. New realities emerge and Canadians see and understand them. The Liberal Party and the government are slow to recognize new things and even slower to act.

As Canada's opposition party, Reform has a duty and a responsibility to point out areas where the government is not adequately serving the interests of Canadians and to urge government to take corrective action.

The Liberal government is failing to grapple successfully with at least three emerging realities.

The first is that Canadians increasingly understand personal income taxes in Canada are unjustly high. The after tax income of Canadian families has declined by 7 percent since 1989. This translates to a drop in the income of the average Canadian family since the Liberals were elected in 1993 of \$3,000. Yet the government continues to waste money and to think up additional non-essential programs while Canadian families increasingly must go without.

The federal government has failed to be specific or to demonstrate convincing determination about cutting taxes for Canadians, allowing them to keep their own resources to care for their families.

A second reality is the consequences of Canada's federal debt. Liberal and Tory governments have gleefully borrowed everything they could get their hands on for the past 25 years. Borrowed money outstanding now stands at \$600 billion, with an annual interest bill of \$46 billion. This is the largest single item in the government's budget and it looms as a long term threat to Canadian social security. It is a mortgage on our children's future.

A third reality is that Canada's social programs need reform. Many of them are badly designed, unsustainable and even dysfunctional. The traditional Liberal, NDP and Tory approaches of throwing additional billions at problems is no longer a realistic solution, even though we see the government continuing to attempt to do that.

Canadians are concerned by what they see happening. How did we get into this fix? Who was asleep at the switch? How will our social programs be repaired? Who will pay for the errors of the past? What is reasonable and fair? These are important questions.

Let us talk about fairness for a moment. Government revenues to pay for social programs such as educating the young or paying for

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non-contributory benefits for the elderly come largely from taxes levied on those who are working. Canadians have always been willing to support the transfer of funds between generations. Intergenerational transfers, however, must be seen to be fair.

Are the excessive EI premiums levied on workers and businesses today fair? The answer in the minds of many Canadians is no.

Is the excessive tax hike and the resulting burden placed on generations *x* and even *y* fair? Again the answer coming back is no.

Government can be evaluated on many things including on how well it looks after the interests of all our citizens and how well it designs and manages programs, especially social programs.

The throne speech led us to expect government legislation during the 36th Parliament on proposed changes to the Canada pension plan, the new seniors benefit, a national child benefit system, the Canadian Labour Code, as well as new programs for people with disabilities, youth training, education and employment, expanding opportunities for aboriginals and health care.

One of the key blocks in our social safety net affecting every working Canadian is the Canada pension plan, so I would like to talk about it for a moment. The Canada pension plan has been with us since January 1, 1966 or almost 32 years.

• (1540)

Canadians are in favour of a contributory public pension plan. That is assuming that such a plan is well designed and managed. Unfortunately the CPP is neither. It is neither well designed nor has it been well managed.

The combined contribution rate for CPP was just 3.6 percent of earnings for the first 20 years of the plan, moved up to 5.6 percent by the 30th year, and will be 9.9 percent prior to its 40th birthday.

The architects of the plan promised Canadians that contributions would never exceed 5.5 percent. Already we see a margin of error of 80 percent in the forecast of the contribution rate. The inevitable conclusion is that the plan has been either badly designed or poorly managed, and in fact it is both.

Designers made huge errors in their projections of birth rate, numbers of contributors and rates of economic growth. The managers, subsequent Liberal and Tory governments, enriched benefits, added new benefits and invested the fund at low yields without adjusting contribution rates.

The first beneficiaries of the CPP received benefits averaging over 11 times greater than the value of their contributions, while those entering the plan today will receive a return of less than one-half of the value of their contributions. One generation receives a return over 20 times greater than another generation, and we have a difficult situation because of that.

The Address

Reform introduced a modern new redesign of this important plan which would provide good and fair pensions for all contributors at retirement. Our plan calls for individualized accounts which means that individuals own all the assets in their account and can leave them to their survivors, while still protecting the benefits of retired and near retired Canadians.

If young Canadians knew that each dollar they put into CPP would go into their own personal account and that they would receive it all back, including a fair market return on their investment, they would gladly support the plan. Our plan reduces intergenerational transfers which will become a major source of social stress. We see that already beginning with the current debate on changes to the plan.

Our plan would be open and transparent. Thus each individual would know the value of their assets in the plan at all times.

The transition from the present CPP to our super RRSP, which is what we have called our Reform plan, would take some time. Middle aged Canadians would have to be given options to stay in their present arrangements or transfer to the new plan. Several countries have already made this transition and we believe Canada can do so as well.

What I am suggesting to the government is not to just keep going down the same old road of poor plan design and eventual failure and crisis but to look around, look at new ideas and adopt a plan that would deliver fairness to future generations of Canadians.

This whole matter of the Canada pension plan will be debated in the House starting on Monday. I urge Canadians who are watching the debate today, if they do not watch any other debate the rest of the year—and some of us wonder why they would—to watch the one on Monday. It will affect every working Canadian, especially our children and our grandchildren. It will be a very important debate.

The latest product of the Liberal spin doctors is the seniors benefit which we understand will be introduced in this parliament. Apparently the program is designed partly by officials in the Department of Human Resources Development and partly by a number of focus groups under the direction of a political consulting firm. The political consulting firm essentially gave the government advice on what was politically saleable, but it appears that no one provided advice on what makes sense for Canadian seniors, for Canadian taxpayers or for future generations.

Among other things, in order to deliver extra dollars to the finance department so it could claim great success in its deficit fighting measures, some believe the tax back rates on this new federal seniors benefit will be irrational but certainly excessive. It will force Canadians to change their economic behaviour in other ways to avoid this penalty.

When people change their economic behaviour and hide retirement income, it simply increases the load on government with more demand for social programs.

• (1545)

The measure will be debated in the House and I urge Canadians to be alert to these changes. We believe there are many flaws in this proposed seniors benefit. For example, the provinces will lose a fairly large source of future tax revenue because the present old age security is taxable and the new seniors benefit is not taxable by the provinces.

We in the Reform Party will work hard in the committee and in the House to ensure that the seniors benefit legislation is right for seniors, taxpayers and for all Canadians.

Canadians are seeking a fresh new vision and plan to replace the failed directions of the past. The Reform Party was formed because the old parties no longer serve our interests. I am sad to say that includes four of the parties in the House.

The Reform Party was formed because the people want good jobs with good incomes as their best social security. They want generous help to be there for the disabled and those in need. However, they are fed up with programs that reward not need, but greed.

Younger Canadians want affordable education and fairness in their tax load. All of us want prompt, caring medical help when illness or accidents strike. We want a safety net if disaster befalls us, but believe we could better protect ourselves and our families against that if there was less government meddling in our lives, however well intentioned.

The Reform Party is finding new and better ways to deliver these results for Canadians. We are seeking out the best thinking and creative alternatives, both here and internationally, to preserve the security and well-being Canadians want and deserve. We will be a positive voice of new ideas and fresh directions as our country moves into the next century.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, while there is much on which I would like to comment, I will make a comment and then pose a question and ask for further expansion from the member for Calgary—Nose Hill.

Earlier today we heard a member from the NDP talk about fairness in taxation. I call their use of the phrase tax fairness a buzzword. We know the buzzword of fair taxation from that party brings with it a political agenda that somewhat represents the politics of envy, taxing the rich and what they used to call the corporate welfare bums and all the philosophy that goes with it.

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However, now there is a Reformer talking about fairness in tax load. I would like the member to explain and expand on the difference between the Reform approach to tax fairness versus the typical NDP approach.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, that is what is called hardball. There is an important point of debate here that Canadians are considering, which is the whole notion of transfers between different groups of people.

As the member just pointed out, the former debate was on what would be a fair transfer from people who have more resources to people who have fewer resources. There is now a shift on the axis of the debate because the transfers increasingly have been coming to Canadians who are older from Canadians who are younger and who are just entering the workforce.

The simple fact is that Canadians are an aging population right now. Being one of them I hesitate to belabour the point, however it does need to be made. By the year 2030 I understand there will be 40 percent more seniors than there are now. That means that 40 percent more of the Canadian public will be looking for publicly funded pensions and seniors benefits that have been promised.

• (1550)

Forty percent more Canadians will be making increased demands on our health system. I have already noticed that as you get older a few rust spots appear and you need more body work. This is one of the new realities we have been talking about. There will be some real tension if we do not realize there has been a paradigm shift.

Because of the generous social programs, older Canadians have had a lot of advantages that younger Canadians cannot even hope to have. I urge the government to be very clear. We need to sort this out and to balance it out quickly before there is some real social stress that will cause difficulty in our country.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member really believe that we have tax fairness in this country, that the Conrad Blacks and other wealthy people pay their fair share of taxes?

Mr. Jason Kenney: They pay more than their fair share.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom: Now they are saying they pay more than their fair share.

Does the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill agree that the millionaires pay more than their fair share in taxes? Does she agree with that position? Is that the official position of the Reform Party, that the millionaires in Canada pay more than they should be paying? Is that the kind of party that is representing people in this House? How can that relate to the ordinary people in my riding that live in the inner core of the city, that are suffering from day to day to put milk and food on the table?

Yet here is the Reform Party saying that millionaires pay too much in taxes. Millionaires pay too much in taxes is what they are saying. Does she agree with her fellow member that millionaires pay too much in taxes, those poor Conrad Blacks, those poor Frank Stronachs? Does she agree with that?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I think I got the gist of the question in the first 30 seconds but I am sure with the additional rhetoric that we really got it.

The NDP unfortunately is really out of touch with reality. NDP members keep going on and on about the Conrad Blacks. The fact of the matter is there is a bare handful of individuals like the person referred to by the member. These entrepreneurs and risk takers employ hundreds if not thousands of Canadians and pay enormous amounts of taxes.

If the member cares to look at some of the figures from the government he will see that the top 10 percent of income earners in this country pay half of the taxes. Mr. Speaker, do you know how much you have to earn to be in the top 10 percent of earners in this country?

Mr. John Solomon: That's not true, Diane.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I hope the member is listening to me. I hear some noise back there but I assume he does want to hear this information.

To be in the top 10 percent of earners in this country you have to earn \$50,000. If the member thinks that is big money then perhaps he should try to look at the cost of living. The people in this country who earn \$50,000 and more pay over half the taxes and they are in the top 10 percent.

I think the NDP needs to be a little more realistic when it comes out with some of this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join this debate. I have a two-part question for the member from Calgary.

Recently it was reported in the *Globe and Mail* that the good people of Alberta had been consulted on the proposed spending changes by the Klein government. I know that on the first round there were focus groups. The second round of discussions occurred at a forum. I saw people such as the former minister of finance, Don Mazankowski, as well as others, there. Average people from Alberta were consulted in this three day session. The conclusion was that they advised the Government of Alberta not to go for tax cuts. They said that they wanted instead more focus on health care and education.

Having gone through this exercise in Alberta and consulted with the people of Alberta, does the member from Calgary agree with

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the conclusions of this conference that the people of Alberta do not want any more tax cuts, that they want expenditures in health?

• (1555)

Are people wrong in their evaluation and how does she sit with that?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that Albertans would be too flattered to be classed in with Don Mazankowski as an average Albertan. I am happy to correct the hon. member.

The consultation with Albertans did not lead to the results and direction that he says they did. The majority of Albertans in the consultation said that any surpluses in the Alberta government coffers should go toward paying the debt of the province. They do not want a mortgage on the province, on our children and on our future.

The member may be referring to a particular group or interest lobby that held a meeting and came out with those other conclusions. There may be such groups, but the majority of Albertans in the consultation done with every household in the province came down four square for using that money to get rid of the mortgage on our future and our children's future. This is the way Canadians across the country would want the government to act and I urge them to consider that.

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the average income in the hon. member's riding of Calgary—Nose Hill is about \$63,000. In my riding in northern Saskatchewan the average income is about half of that, but the high prices of living in northern Saskatchewan is a reality.

Four litres of milk in some locations in northern Saskatchewan cost \$8.50. To try and supplement people's education and future is sometimes out of touch. Any hard time that we feel, there is always warmth and compassion with the New Democratic Party. We will find this in history.

Would the minister consider a fair and equitable portion of a tuition free education for all Canadians?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, warmth and compassion are good commodities but they do not put milk on the table. What puts milk on the table is money and money comes from having a good job with a good income. It also comes from having a fair tax burden so you can keep enough money to look after your family.

The thing that will not put milk on the table is the emerging multitude of government programs that take money away from working Canadians and leave little for them and their families.

The Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. government whip.

[*Translation*]

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the Members of the House of Commons to sit on the Special Joint Committee considering the various aspects of the draft resolution concerning the proposed amendment to section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867, concerning the school system in Quebec, be the following: Reg Alcock, Peter Goldring, Mauril Bélanger, Rahim Jaffer, Gerry Byrne, Marlene Jennings, Paul DeVillers, Réal Ménard, Nick Discepola, Val Meredith, Sheila Finestone, Denis Paradis, Christiane Gagnon, David Price, Yvon Godin, Paddy Torsney.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1600)

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an Address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his Speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me, as the member for Papineau—Saint-Denis, to take part in this debate on the throne speech that marks the beginning of our government's second term in office.

I would like to thank my constituents in Saint-Michel, Villeray and Parc Extension for their vote of confidence, and I can tell them today in the House that I will make sure I represent them well and with the respect they deserve.

A new wind of optimism is blowing across Canada. Canadians are feeling renewed confidence. They are realizing that it is time to accomplish many things when governments and citizens undertake together to build a stronger Canada. I am proud to be a member of a Parliament that, for the first time in 20 years, will see Canada achieve a balanced budget, a zero deficit, and eventually a surplus.

This turnaround of the country's financial situation is the doing of Canadians all the way from Saint John's to Victoria, who rolled up their sleeves to regain their freedom to choose, which had been threatened by increasingly higher deficits.

*The Address**[English]*

Together we progressed from what the international financial community once called a basket case to one of the most robust economies in the industrialized world. We are poised to have the strongest growth among the world's largest economies.

At the same time we have not lost sight of the human needs of Canadians. Canada's population is among the healthiest in the world and most Canadians enjoy a unparalleled quality of life. Both of these achievements, one social and the other economic, are testimony to the fact that we did not sacrifice our vision of Canada, a country that is strong and united, a country that values healthy children and strong families living in safe communities, a country where everyone believes in the dignity of work and the importance of self-reliance, a country in which young people have hope for a better future, a country where we share responsibility for each other, especially the most vulnerable among us, and a country where diversity is seen as a great source of strength.

It is a vision that inspires our government. It is the vision captured in the Speech from the Throne.

[Translation]

We will continue to build a society that holds dear the fundamental values of equity and equality. The pursuit of equity and equality enables Canadians to strike a balance in our twofold commitment to promote independence and responsibility to one another.

In Canada, we do not believe a choice must be made between independence and responsibility to one another. And as we progress, we must never lessen our vigilance. We must never neglect any individual or any region. This, to my mind, is the thrust of the throne speech: Canada works for all Canadians and continues to evolve in response to the increasingly changing needs of Canadians.

As Minister of Human Resources Development, every day I see the interdependence of social and economic policy. They are in fact inseparable. Economic growth does not occur in a vacuum. It is a human activity.

- (1605)

[English]

The government has represented Canadians with an integration plan of action, a measured and deliberate plan. It is a plan that invests in the social and economic priorities of Canadians, children and youth, health and knowledge, and it is a plan that respects Canadians' determination to see governments live within their means.

Our success depends on harnessing the energies of all Canadians, of all governments, federal, provincial and territorial, of the voluntary sector and of the private sector.

This is how we turn values into action. We can continue to build a country of which we can all be proud. This is how this government will continue to work to keep our country together.

Part of the new optimism is Canadians' renewed confidence in our capacity as a society to expand opportunity. Young people are looking for jobs with a future. Canadians with disabilities want the opportunity to participate fully in the economic and social life of this country.

Parents are trying to give their children what they need to flourish. Older Canadians want secure income support in retirement.

Businesses, large and small, are trying to secure a competitive advantage in an increasingly global marketplace. Men and women want an economy that creates jobs, not sheds them. Canadians in all regions want to ensure that people in need are not forgotten.

In our last mandate we took action to deal with these issues. In this mandate we will add the essential building blocks that are already in place.

Building Canada is the work of every day and it is the responsibility of all Canadians in every part of the country. That is why the Speech from the Throne stresses partnership.

[Translation]

A society that invests in its children can look to the future with confidence. Renowned experts in child development have established a link between economic performance and investment in human resources and children, in particular.

When we fail to invest sufficiently in the early years of child development, the country's future economic prosperity may suffer in two ways. First, economic growth may be frozen because the necessary human resources cannot be counted on. Second, society may have to assume higher costs later on as a direct consequence of the failure to invest in the early years.

[English]

In 1996 the prime minister and provincial and territorial first ministers made a commitment to improve the way governments work together to help children in poverty. The 1997 budget announced the first down payment of the Government of Canada toward a better way of providing income tax benefits and services to children in poor families.

The new Canada child tax benefit is the federal government's contribution to a new and exciting partnership with provincial and territorial governments.

The national child benefit system will provide more support to low income families struggling to provide their children with a good start in life.

The Address

Canadians want to work but our current support system duces some strange results. Parents on social assistance can stand to lose thousands of dollars in benefits for their children when they make the decision to leave welfare for work.

This built-in disincentive is called the welfare wall. The new national child benefit will help tear down this wall. Over time it will help reduce child poverty, strengthen families and enable governments to work further for Canada's children.

I am pleased to say that during the course of this mandate the Government of Canada will at least double its initial investment of \$850 million in this innovative program.

By investing in the national child benefit, Canadians are sharing the responsibility to get our children off to a good start in life. They are helping parents get into the workforce.

• (1610)

I will continue to work with provincial and territorial governments as they redirect some of their social assistance resources into complementary benefits and services to help children in low income families, especially the working poor.

By working together we are tackling a problem which no one order of government can solve alone. We have achieved a most significant advance in joint federal, provincial and territorial social policy in the last 30 years.

[*Translation*]

The throne speech stresses the importance of co-operation in partnerships. The national child benefit represents the best that this type of co-operation has to offer. It is not a mere example of federal-provincial co-operation, but the result of efforts by governments of all political stripes, whether Liberal, New Democratic or Conservative, working together to improve the well-being of our children and prepare a better future for them. When I look at this remarkable achievement, I realize why Canadians are more optimistic.

[*English*]

Money is only part of the answer. Children need a large investment of time and attention for healthy development. They grow up not just in a household but in a society. They need strong families and they need safe communities, good schools, good health care and opportunities to develop.

We have begun working with provincial governments to develop a national children's agenda to improve the well-being of Canada's children. We will continue to do that with businesses, voluntary groups and unions, with aboriginal groups and communities.

This exciting new agenda will make a difference to the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadian children, and by improving their lives we are laying the foundation for a better future.

Another key element of our plan is addressing the needs of youth. Canada's young people are the best educated, the most literate and the most technologically adept in our history. Their potential is as limitless as Canada itself. However, to succeed in today's economy young people need more education, better skills and relevant experience. They have to be prepared to learn throughout their lives.

In light of this fact let me share with the House three trends which have developed among young Canadians, as well as what the Government of Canada is doing to help them along.

The first trend is that a large portion of young Canadians can and will succeed on their own. They are staying in school. They are getting varied part time and summer work experience. They are starting their own businesses, or perhaps they are doing voluntary community work.

The only assistance these young people will likely need is access to information which will help them make wise decisions in their education and career choices. Through the government's youth employment strategy we can provide them with the information, services and support they need.

The Government of Canada will create a Canada-wide mentorship program. This program is based on the success of local mentorship programs where a young person can get connected on line or in person with a mentor who has professional experience in the field the young person wishes to explore.

[*Translation*]

Second, there are young Canadians who, after completing their studies, cannot find the work that would enable them to make a full contribution to society. Experience shows that when young Canadians are looking for that first job, they are confronted with a vicious circle: no experience, no job; no job, no experience.

This is why, we are providing, through programs such as our internship program and our summer student employment initiative, work experience for over 100,000 young Canadians, to make it easier for them to find permanent jobs. This is the boost they need to overcome this lack of experience and thus meet employers' requirements.

• (1615)

That is the hand up the Government of Canada and Human Resources Development Canada are prepared to give them.

*The Address**[English]*

There is a third group of young Canadians whose prospect of finding work in today's labour market has deteriorated dramatically. These are young Canadians who have low levels of education and skills. They need an opportunity to learn new skills such as literacy. These young people require social supports that can best be provided by their communities.

The first step is equipping them with these basic skills. Then they need their first job break. The Government of Canada can help them by bringing together those who can best provide these services.

The goal of many of our programs such as youth service Canada is to work with community and voluntary organizations in assisting young Canadians who had previously lost hope to become self-reliant members of society, and we are doing our very best.

Education is the key to success and we will work hard on post-secondary education to reduce barriers for so many of them with further changes to the Canada student loans program with increased assistance for students with dependants and new scholarships such as the Canada millennium scholarship endowment fund as announced by the prime minister.

We have also made a commitment to do more to see that Canadians with disabilities play a larger role in our economy. I want to tap into the enormous potential of people who can and want to contribute to our economy and society but who do need some support to do so. That is why we have committed to work with the provinces to redesign the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons program so that it does what it is supposed to do, give Canadians with disabilities a greater opportunity to participate in the workforce.

We have also introduced the opportunities fund to further the economic integration of persons with disabilities.

We believe very much in investing in Canada's human capital. These initiatives are tied together by a common thread. They are about getting the best we can from Canadians and they are about giving the best we can to Canadians. They are about balancing our commitment to self-reliance and our belief in mutual responsibility.

[Translation]

Before concluding, I would like to add a few words concerning how well the issue of the renewal of the Canadian social union is progressing. Every day, Quebecers tell me how satisfied they are with the progress made in renewing Canada's social union, of which a few of the main characteristics were mentioned earlier.

I am very pleased to hear these comments, as they show that our approach is successful in ensuring the best quality of life possible for all our fellow citizens.

The social union is an essential feature of Canada. It has contributed greatly to making Canada the best country in the world in which to live. A vast majority of Quebecers would really like—as polls indicate time and time again—Canada to work efficiently and harmoniously, would like co-operation and partnership to replace unproductive fights and what I call federal-provincial turf wars, and so on.

The social union is the ideal testing ground for our ability to work in partnership, modernize our programs, clarify the various roles played by the Government of Canada, share equitably our country's resources and strengthen our economic union. The various levels of government are also capable of reaching agreement when they are motivated by a clear desire to succeed.

Quebecers are fully aware of the fact that no economic union is possible without a social union to give it harmony, structure and strength. In fact, true economic union and social union go hand in hand. That is why the modernization of Canada's social union is in the immediate best interests of Quebecers and Canadians alike.

In this context, I find the Quebec premier's attitude toward the renewal of the social union deplorable. It is a marked departure from Quebec's traditional approach, from the grand tradition of Jean Lesage and Robert Bourassa, an approach traditionally characterized by a pragmatic approach, co-operation and striving toward results that will great benefit Quebecers.

• (1620)

[English]

The Speech from the Throne does chart a course for entering the 21st century. It calls on all governments and all Canadians to work together. It provides a plan for investing in our future, a future that reflects Canadians' determination to build a society based on fairness and equality. The cost of exclusion is far greater than the amounts we have committed to these programs.

[Translation]

I hope all the hon. members of this House will continue working with us for their own constituents and for all Canadians to ensure that our society remains not only one of the most prosperous in the world, but also one of the most progressive, most generous and most responsive to the needs of all its members, and the most vulnerable in particular.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister of Human Resources Development, and I noticed the tone he used. It was so melodious, it could almost be compared to a symphony orchestra. But it was not melodious enough to lull me, because it rang false all the way through.

Any observer of the Quebec reality can see that the Minister of Human Resources Development does not visit certain parts of

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Quebec very often. He carefully avoids those ridings he used to visit with his predecessor at HRDC. We all remember Minister Young—whom I can name since he is no longer a minister. There was also Minister Dingwall. Liberal members from the maritimes were all voted out of office, or almost. Poof, they disappeared just like that.

In Quebec, the member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, who played a leadership role in this House in the last Parliament and who backed the Employment Insurance Act, did not get re-elected either.

It takes some gall to come and talk about the future and how Canadian society is the best in the world when there are now 500,000 more children living in poverty than there were when the Liberals took office. It takes some gall on the part of a minister who is from Quebec to talk about the youth strategy and job creation. It takes some gall to talk about an even tighter social union and education, when, like this minister, one has sat in the National Assembly as an assistant to a former education minister.

But knowing all that, he discourses melodiously in both official languages, expecting us to applaud.

I will end on a question that is still topical. In light of the questions that the House heard today on the subject of party fundraising, as a Quebecker, would the minister agree, yes or no, that the federal government should take Quebec's lead and pass legislation limiting the funding of political parties to that provided by individuals? That would save the Liberal Party's skin.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that my colleague opposite, a member of the Bloc Québécois, is telling us what to make of the election results.

I would like to point out to him that our political party made gains in Quebec, while his lost 11 seats, dropping from 49 to 38, is in disarray, is rejected by our fellow Quebeckers, and now represents only a part of the province. I think the member should be a great deal more modest in his analysis of the election results.

I must, however, thank him for his very kind comments about my speech. He found that it was harmonious and elevated and had vision. I must tell him I am deeply touched by his kind words.

I am very happy that my work follows in the great footsteps of the likes of Lesage and Bourassa. I draw his attention to the magnificent passage written by Claude Castonguay recently, taking Quebec's premier to task for breaking with Quebeckers' great tradition of pragmatism in matters of social union, for not following in the steps of people like Jean Lesage and Robert Bourassa, who worked for the well-being of Quebeckers.

But I can reassure the member that, when it comes to current events, he has before him a minister who did his duty by informing the RCMP minutes after learning of certain allegations.

• (1625)

[English]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister on his remarks. This minister is a very accomplished and distinguished minister who has set a tone of constructiveness in his government. While I disagree with much of what he said, I believe that he is a constructive force for federalism in this country and I commend him on that.

This minister does talk a great deal about children and families, which is nice to hear. Liberals do like to talk about those issues but the unfortunate thing is they do not like to act very much on them. In particular, this minister talked about the child tax credit, a commendable albeit very modest effort on the part of this government.

I would like to ask this minister if he thinks it would not be a laudable public policy for the government to pursue tax fairness for families, that is to say to remove the intrinsic penalty that exists in the current code against single income families, families that choose to keep one parent at home to raise their children. There are millions of such Canadian families penalized by the fact that the child care deduction is limited to double income families.

Would the minister support measures such as converting the child care deduction into a refundable credit available to all families? Would he also agree in principle to raising the basic spousal exemption in the tax code to a level equivalent to the basic personal exemption so that stay at home parents are no longer penalized by this government's tax code?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very generous words about the work I am trying to do in favour of renewing Canadian federalism. It is very generous of him.

My job in the government is to provide programs and services to a number of people who are most vulnerable. The Department of Human Resources Development has about six million Canadian clients to whom we are trying to give a break which will allow them to have a better quality of life.

There could be a number of other measures that he can certainly discuss with the finance minister but my job in the government is to provide certain programs and services. I am glad that the member does actually recognize the benefit of the Canada child tax benefit. I was extremely sensitive to his remark about this maybe not being

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enough. Maybe we could get the support of the Reform Party in order to do more with the Canada child tax benefit.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was rather taken by the hon. minister's comments about the revenue departments of the provinces and the federal government working together. That sounds like a partnership between John Dillinger and Lucky Luciano.

He was talking about how literate Canadian youth are. This is a bit of a contradiction because he also remarked about the programs to increase literacy in the population. If he thinks Canadian youth now are more literate than they were in the past, I would say he is betraying his academic origins. He is not aware of what is out there. He has not tried to hire anybody lately, to try to find somebody who can write a coherent paragraph, who can spell and who knows a thing about grammar. That is not his department, that is for the provincial departments of education. However, I wish he would not make statements about the high degree of literacy of our population.

With respect to the Canada millennium endowment fund, I understand that access to these funds is not going to be based on merit but on something called need which will be defined by the bureaucrats in whatever way they choose. Now if that is wrong I would like to be corrected. If it is not based on merit then this thing is going to be a very useful educational tool because it means the young people will be taught at a very early age how to work the system the Canadian way.

• (1630)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I would ask hon. members to remember they should address each other through the Chair.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, I will take great pleasure in addressing you. You are a gentleman and I should have congratulated you on your appointment to the Chair when we began. You know that I was very pleased by your nomination. I must congratulate you.

I would like to clarify one thing that I said. The gentleman does see a contradiction between two of my paragraphs. I did say that this generation of Canadians is the best educated one. It is the one that has developed the most skills in computers, in so many other technical aspects that were not available to us and they are doing well. I am extremely proud of Canadian youth. They are doing well.

That does not stop us from recognizing across the land that some youth unfortunately have not been well served in school or did not find in their families or in their societies the support that allowed them to go far enough in school. Indeed there are problems related to illiteracy. The government is committed to giving these youth a second chance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lotbinière and, following that, all Bloc Québécois speakers will do the same with a colleague from our party.

Although I have already criticized the government since the June 2 election, this is my first formal speech in this new Parliament. While taking part in the debate on the address in reply to the throne speech, I want to thank my organizers, my supporters and especially the voters of Berthier—Montcalm, who have renewed their trust in me in a proportion almost identical to that of 1993. Thanks to them and to a wonderful team I have the honour of representing them once again in this House. They can count on my undivided attention, on my availability and on my friendship.

I must also thank my wife and my children for their support and for allowing me to be here to represent the Bloc Québécois of course, but more importantly to look out for the interests of the Quebec people. In my way, I want to contribute, in this House, to the creation of a country that we can call our own.

As for the throne speech, the Prime Minister said it would probably be the last one before the celebrations marking the new millennium. I will tell the Prime Minister—and I hope he will also make sure of it—that we will do our utmost to ensure that this is indeed the last throne speech before the next millennium. Because what we Bloc Québécois members want first and foremost is to have a country by the year 2000.

What does the throne speech tell us? Many things were said, but I can think of two essential points: first, all the allusions made in the two previous throne speeches of the Liberals to devolution, change, respect and realignment of federal-provincial powers have disappeared. These words are no longer used by the government.

When it started making cuts to transfers, to social programs, to health, to education and to social assistance, the government talked about devolution and about respecting the powers of the provinces.

• (1635)

But today, because we are seeing that there may possibly be a budget surplus, because of the slashes the Liberal government has made in these programs and because the taxpayers are in the process of getting this government out of the red, now the Liberals are back to their old bad habits.

With the expected budget surplus, they are paying out big bucks for the right to trample over provincial jurisdictions. I will not go into all of the examples there are in the Speech from the Throne, because my ten minutes would not be enough, but I will list three of them.

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First, they want to measure the academic readiness of our children. Today is not the first time they are being told that education is none of their business. Mr. Duplessis did battle on this in 1950. This is not yesterday's news. It is not just those wicked separatists, that awful Bloc, who are demanding this. It dates back to the fifties.

They also make no bones about wanting to get back into manpower training. Yet I thought they had just handed that over to the provinces. Now they want to make resources available to help young people get back in the work force. That has no concern of theirs. If they have money left over in their budget, let them give it back to the provinces from whom they stole it in the last budget.

They also want to set up some ten or twelve programs with a national slant, what they call Canada-wide programs. They have been told for more than 30 years that we in Quebec want nothing more to do with Canada-wide programs. Programs from sea to sea do not apply to Quebec. But they persist.

Where I come from, in my country of Quebec, we call that provocation. This federalist propaganda whose aim is visibility over efficiency has caused the leader of the Bloc Quebecois to say justifiably in his response to the throne speech that the speech was nothing more than big federalist talk. Unfortunately, that is the sad reality.

After bringing misery to the families of seasonal workers, after cutting payments to provinces and scuttling their budgets, the hangman becomes the generous lord of the manor distributing money over the heads of the provinces. It is disgusting and hypocritical.

Now the Liberal government is realizing that it cut too much and too quickly. Why not analyze the situation seriously? Why, with the expected budget surplus, does it not mend its ways by returning the money it took from the provinces in the area of health care, social assistance and education; why does it not lower taxes, lower employment insurance contributions and reform personal and corporate income tax as proposed in the 35th Parliament, as the Bloc put forward in its proposal, which was well received?

Why not go after poverty with a vengeance, improve the employment insurance plan and reverse all the cuts that were made?

The repayment of the debt should be debated. I agree with some members who have proposed a debate on the repayment of the debt. I think we should have a very serious debate on the matter.

For the time being, however, the focus should be on health, education, employment and the eradication of child poverty during this 36th Parliament. However, for this to be successful, the federal government should not meddle in these areas. It should give the money back to the provinces, as they know much better how to use this money where it is needed.

The second element of the throne speech that stands out in my mind, and it is of particular concern to me as justice critic, is the federal government's willingness to score political points by taking the hard line with Quebec. Why do I say hard line? Because the federal government intends to continue with its reference to the Supreme Court. It will carry on with its strategy of instilling fear about what might happen following a yes victory in Quebec.

On the one hand, the Liberals praise the merits of Canada, while on the other hand, they are trying to deny one of the most fundamental principles of democracy: the right to decide.

There is worse yet, and this took place after the Speech from the Throne was read. At his swearing-in ceremony, responding to journalists who asked him if there were plans for the Canadian armed forces to take action in Quebec following a majority vote in favour of sovereignty, the new chief of defence staff, General Maurice Baril, did not reject the idea out of hand. The general said neither yes nor no, but that the political question does not arise. He should have said, in a democratic country such as Canada: "There is no question of it, it is a purely political question". This is very disappointing in a country that considers itself a frontrunner when it comes to democracy.

● (1640)

There are all the strong-arm tactics that are still going on with respect to the issue of Quebec's sovereignty, and to possible consequences for them as well as for us. We never say that, the day after a yes vote, the first people interested in sitting down with Quebec would be my friends across the way. I will not say "my friends" because I do not want my constituents to hate me, but the government opposite would be the first, following telephone calls, probably from all the financiers in the world, to want to negotiate with a sovereign Quebec.

Another thing that upsets me about this throne speech is that the Liberals take credit for the entire Calgary declaration that Quebec is a unique society. We are more than that, and have been for some time. This is not just nasty separatists, or nasty members of the Bloc Quebecois saying so. I will run through a short list of premiers of Quebec who, over the years, have said more than once that we were more than the Liberals wanted us to be, that we were a people.

In 1950, during the opening speech at the federal-provincial constitutional conference—because that is the second national sport in Canada—Maurice Duplessis said: "Canadian confederation is a pact of union between two great nations". That was in 1950.

In 1960, Jean Lesage said that "provincial sovereignty must not be a negative concept incompatible with progress. Quebec is not defending the principle of provincial autonomy because a principle is involved, but for the more important reason that it views autonomy as the concrete condition not for its survival, which is

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henceforth assured, but for its affirmation as a people". So said Jean Lesage in 1963.

In 1968, Daniel Johnson senior said that "a new Constitution should be so devised that Canada is not just a federation of 10 provinces, but a federation of two nations equal in law and in fact".

I will conclude with one last quote from Mr. Johnson, again at a federal-provincial constitutional conference, in 1968: "The Constitution should not have as its sole purpose to federate territories, but also to associate in equality two linguistic and cultural communities, two founding peoples, two societies, two nations, in the sociological meaning of the term".

You will understand that, in Quebec, we say no, no, no and no, as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs would say, to the Calgary declaration.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member who has just finished speaking.

This afternoon, in this House, the Reform member for Calgary Southwest said that he believed millionaires in this country paid too much in taxes. Is the hon. member in agreement with this statement by the Reform member?

[English]

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this afternoon in the House the member for Calgary Southwest of the Reform Party expressed the point of view that millionaires were overtaxed in this country.

What I want to know is whether the Bloc Quebecois agrees with the Reform Party that millionaires are overtaxed, that Conrad Black pays too much in taxes. That is the position of the member for Calgary Southwest of the Reform Party. Is my friend from the Bloc in agreement with that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): On a point of order, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should produce a precise quote to show that any member of the Reform Party said that Conrad Black was overtaxed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The Chair finds it difficult to believe that that is a point of order. The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, unlike the Reform members, I find this an excellent question.

Unlike the Reform, I believe that it is not true that the rich in Canada pay too much income tax. On the contrary. The rich in Canada do not pay enough income tax. There is all manner of tax evasion. Even more than that, when it comes to such extremely important aspects as money laundering, who gains from it? Those with money. Canada is recognized world wide as the world capital for money laundering. What are the Liberals doing about it? Nothing at all.

• (1645)

It is almost as if they had both hands in the till themselves. The Liberals may need to wake up, and one day I will be asking them to co-operate with me—because I will be introducing a private member's bill on money laundering.

As for the hon. member's excellent question, I disagree totally with that, if the Reform indeed said it. I hope that they are not that out of touch with reality. If they did say it, however, I totally disagree with their position.

[English]

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always interested in the comments of the hon. member, having worked with him in the last parliament on the justice committee. I know the hon. member to be a lawyer. Therefore I am particularly interested in a couple of the comments he made pertaining to the position of the Bloc Quebecois.

One thing I believe he said—and he can correct me if I misunderstood him—was that somehow the Liberal Party was denying the democratic rights of the people of Quebec. I wonder if the hon. member even recognizes what democracy is, in view of the fact that the people of Quebec have very clearly expressed in two referenda that they wish to remain in Canada.

It seems to me it is the Bloc Quebecois that refuses to accept the democratic will of the people of Quebec by continually ignoring the results of two referenda, going back and going back until it hopes it will eventually get the answer it would like to get. It seems to me that is ignoring the democratic rights of the people of Quebec.

As a lawyer I would like the member to explain why he thinks it is inappropriate and incorrect to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada on matters of international law.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, I too have worked with the member on a number of occasions and I can confirm that he is highly intelligent. I do not understand why he is asking such questions today.

Two things. First, I did not discuss the subject of democracy in the matter of the two referendums in response to the throne speech, but I am pleased to answer. As regards democracy, yes there were indeed two referendums: one in 1980 and the other in 1995.

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In 1980, and here I will give a little course in history for those opposite who so quickly forget, the Prime Minister was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He told Quebecers to vote no for change. Quebecers voted no for change. What change was there in Quebec? There was a constitution, which we rejected, which the National Assembly unanimously rejected, and which was jammed down our throats. It was shoved down our throats with the words "Shut your trap, you Quebecers".

That is why there was another referendum in 1995. In between, they had their referendum on Charlottetown, which he forgot to mention, in which English Canada said no to Quebec because it was too much, and Quebec said no because it was not enough. They forgot that across the way.

In 1995, there was another referendum where—let me finish, I will not be long—there was no winner. It was 50:50. Here again there were promises from the Liberals, which never led anywhere and never will, because the federal system cannot be reformed. Quebec's only option is to vote yes in the next referendum, it is to become sovereign.

To answer his second question, neither the justices of the supreme court nor the government opposite can stop a people on the march toward its own country.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, Trade.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first allow me to thank the residents of the new riding of Lotbinière for electing me to represent them in the House of Commons.

• (1650)

This new riding is the result of major changes brought on by the readjustment of electoral boundaries. The riding is now made up of some 50 municipalities grouped in five RCMs which I would like to salute. There is the RCM of l'Érable, whose main municipalities are Plessisville and Princeville which, incidentally, is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding; the rural section of the RCM of Bécancour, which includes the municipalities of Sainte-Sophie de Lévrard and Les Becquets; the RCM of Arthabaska, which includes the municipality of Daveluyville; and the RCM of Lotbinière, with its scenic municipalities located along the St. Lawrence River, namely Leclerville, Lotbinière, Sainte-Croix and Saint-Antoine de Tilly, and a municipality of the RCM of Chutes de la Chaudière, Saint-Lambert.

I would also like to salute the small community of Joly, where I come from. Even though it only has a population of 1000, on June 2, I became the second citizen of that municipality to get elected as a member of Parliament. The first one was Adrien Lambert, who sat in the House of Commons from 1968 to 1979.

I would now like to comment on the throne speech, a document which includes no firm commitment, except for the sad fact that the federal government intends to become a very centralizing entity.

This piece of federalist propaganda clearly shows the intentions of the current Liberal government: an unprecedented invasion of areas under provincial jurisdiction.

Instead of redistributing the surplus to the provinces, which were hit hard with cuts during the Liberal government's first term of office, this government is getting ready to ignore completely its so-called partners, the provinces, and hand this money over to citizens directly, with no regard for real needs in health and education, particularly in Quebec.

No, Quebec does not want a return to the era of Trudeau, who, it will be remembered, created a Ministry of Fitness and even a Ministry of Urban Affairs; all to hamstring the Lévesque government.

We in the Bloc Québécois are going to fight to put a stop to this sinister plan by the Liberal government.

The financial decisions of this government have even been felt directly in my riding. On August 25, 1,000 people marched through the streets in support of keeping open a seniors' residence in Saint-Flavien. The demonstrators did not understand why they were being forced to make this difficult choice.

The reason is very simple: the federal government's cuts in turn reduce the amounts earmarked by the Government of Quebec for health care in Quebec. We have here another Liberal government ploy: do everything possible to discredit the Government of Quebec, but Quebecers are proud and will continue to support Quebec's sovereignty proposal.

I now draw your attention to employment insurance. With all the changes introduced by the Minister of Human Resources Development, what used to be unemployment insurance has now become poverty insurance.

Right now, in both my riding offices, in Laurier-Station and Plessisville, I am getting calls from people. They are worried, anxious about the approaching winter. They do not know whether they will still be eligible for employment insurance; fathers, single mothers, young people who have worked hard to get off welfare will find themselves forced back on to it. The present government supports this policy. That is unacceptable.

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In recent years, the Liberals and Conservatives have literally emptied the riding of Lotbinière of all federal services. In Plessisville the Employment Canada office was closed, over local protests. Now unemployed people, students, have to travel up to 100 km to get services. Another unacceptable situation.

I am asking the Liberal government to correct this error and to restore to my riding the services to which my constituents are entitled. I am asking it to correct the errors of the past.

Whether the Liberals or the Conservatives are in power makes no difference.

• (1655)

Moreover, we saw last week where the interests of the Conservatives lie, when their MPs and their leader, when the Conservative MPs from Quebec voted against the existence of the Quebec people. This is the party that wanted to win over Quebecers during the last campaign by pretending to be there to defend our interests. The Conservatives shed their disguises this past week. Now we know their true colours.

I am surprised, moreover, to see how the Liberal government is copying from Quebec: partnership, drug insurance, youth employment strategy—copied from Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi. Let me tell you, the day is not far off when the Liberals are going to start talking about the sovereignty of Canada. I understand them. Try to find two federalist who agree on what federalism means. It is impossible. They are still looking for a definition, which as years go by is becoming increasingly ambiguous.

We in the Bloc Québécois, we Quebecers, know what we want and where we are going. Year after year, René Lévesque's plan is gaining ground. Between 1980 and 1995, the yes vote in Lotbinière went from 37 percent to 50 percent, and in the next referendum the sovereigntist vote will be even stronger both in Lotbinière and across the province of Quebec.

The minister of provincial meddling will have to find a factor other than 50 percent in order not to recognize the next referendum in Quebec because there will be an overwhelming majority in favour of the yes side.

I would like to tell you that we have hope on this side. We know we will enter the third millennium as a country, Quebec. We will get out of this centralizing government which is shackling us. Quebecers are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, they know that soon they will be free from the federal yoke.

To conclude, let me tell you what the Bloc's priorities will be for the years to come: Quebec, Quebec, Quebec, and Quebec.

[English]

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just a brief comment. I listened with great interest to the points made by the previous speaker from the Bloc. Those members often use, as did this member, notions of democracy.

I noticed with great interest only a few days ago that the hon. member from the Bloc spoke about cuts to government funding and services. He used great emotion and passion to make speeches that a sovereign Quebec would not have these kinds of problems. The poor would be taken care of. The students who he talked about would have free education. The thousand people who rallied in the streets would never occur in the promised land of the separatists.

The hon. member would be aware that only a few days ago the rural municipalities of Quebec marched publicly to demonstrate against the premier. In a very undemocratic fashion he was imposing, in an authoritarian way, cuts to the municipalities of Quebec and forcing them to make these changes.

When the Quebec media asked him whether he would relent on it because it was a crushing blow, notwithstanding the marching in the streets he said "Absolutely not. I won't be deterred. I am pushing forward".

If the hon. member wants that gentleman to be the first president of Quebec, is that what the people of rural Quebec can expect from him and from the premier of Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I am stunned to hear my colleague opposite talk about this kind of imposition when, since 1993, the Liberal government has unilaterally and savagely cut transfers to the provinces, which means that if Quebec wants to balance its own budget, it is forced to unload part of its fiscal responsibilities onto the municipalities.

• (1700)

I would like to say to him that if the federal government paid its dues, including the \$2 billion for the harmonization of the GST and the billions of dollars we have been deprived of because of the cuts, not only would we not be short of funds, but we would not be doing any unloading onto the municipalities and the Quebec government would already have a balanced budget, even before you did, a budget that would be a lot stronger than yours.

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether to laugh or cry this afternoon. The "It's the fault of the federal government" tape is playing once again.

I would just make one correction to what my colleague said, and I will be doing this often. There should be no talk of "we the people

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of Quebec”, because I am one of the people of Quebec and because 62 percent of the people of Quebec voted for a federalist party in the last election.

So, it is nice for the people of Lotbinière to have you here, but one thing is sure, you cannot talk on behalf of “we the people of Quebec”. If you want to say “we the separatists” or “we the people of the Bloc Québécois”, that is all right, that is your problem. But we—myself and the people in my riding of Bourassa—are federalist and very proud to be Canadian and we voted over 66 percent for the no side. The community is over 80 percent francophone, and we too are “we the people of Quebec”.

I have a question for the member. I would like to know whether he agrees with his friends Guy Bouthillier of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste—another extremist—and Raymond Villeneuve, a former FLQ member who beats up people in Ville LaSalle in the name of an independent Quebec, when they said at a recent press conference: “We have to prepare, we have to raise an army in Quebec and be ready for any eventuality, we have to have our guns ready if need be”. Does he agree with that? Then, we can talk about democracy and decent things.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague, the hon. member for Bourassa, by asking him a question. Is he in favour of partition? It is the whole debate about partition that is firing up passions in Quebec.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as our Deputy Speaker. I say to you how much I am going to enjoy working with you knowing that you will preside with a firm and fair hand over the workings of this Chamber. I would also like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I would begin by saying how proud I am of the vision and the commitment to Canadians that we find outlined in the Speech from the Throne. I would like to say how proud I am to be part of a government that has found a way to at once reflect the priorities of Canadians but in a fiscally responsible way. I would like to say how proud I am to be part of a country Canada that is proceeding toward the 21st century with a renewed optimism, with a sense of hope and a sense of direction.

It was only four years ago when we could not say these things, when that hope and that optimism was not part of the Canadian psyche. It behoves us to reflect on how indeed we have come to the point of optimism at which we find ourselves.

I would suggest it has a lot to do with the way in which our government has partnered with Canadians. I think of the work of my colleague the Minister of Finance and his decision to include Canadians in the budgetary process, to have them sit at the table in prebudget consultations to debate the issues that have faced us as

we have come to be able to manage our difficult fiscal circumstances.

Engaging Canadians in their governance, including them, has allowed us to make the right decisions and has now brought us to a point where for the first time in 30 years our government can begin to think about the choices that we want to make to build a stronger Canada for the 21st century.

• (1705)

As we have identified the priorities of Canadians, we know indeed that what they want is to be able to continue to live in what is one of the greatest countries in the world, to find ways and means of increasing the democracy that has become renowned around the world.

What are the priorities that Canadians are asking us to address? They want the government to focus on children and youth. They want the government to focus on our health care system, a system that has come to define us as a nation. Canadians want us to understand work and innovation and how changes in work, and knowledge and new technologies are impacting our economy and our relationship with it.

But members can imagine how proud I am as the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that in the Speech from the Throne we also identify the priorities that Canadians put on aboriginal peoples. Canadians want us to address aboriginal children and youth. They want us to understand aboriginal health and the impact it is having on their communities. Canadians want us to understand the relationship that aboriginal people have with work and innovation.

Canadians understand and 80 percent have told us in a 1996 Angus Reid poll that they want aboriginal issues to be high or medium priority for their federal government. They believe that the status quo, our approach and our relationship with aboriginal people is not good enough and it must change.

Canadians understand when we talk about aboriginal children and youth that the demographics of indigenous communities are such that the populations are growing at twice the rate of non-aboriginal communities. They understand that fully 60 percent of the population in aboriginal communities is under the age of 25.

The circumstances that present themselves to indigenous people are like those that we faced as non-aboriginal Canadians in the fifties and sixties, but the hopes and the dreams that we had in the fifties and sixties are not the hopes and the dreams that aboriginal people have.

When we think about aboriginal health, Canadians know that the suicide rate for young aboriginals is upwards of five times as great as it is for myself and for members. They know that the life expectancy for them is six or seven years less than it is for us. They know that for aboriginal people the incidence of TB and diabetes is

two to three times higher than it is for other Canadians and they do not accept this. Canadians believe that we can and must do better.

When we look at work and innovation and consider the circumstances facing indigenous communities, we know that the unemployment levels are upwards of 83 percent. We know that the average income is somewhere around \$8,800 and falling. The circumstances are not good and the status quo, our approach is not good enough either.

As I have had the opportunity to cross the country and engage in conversations with other partners, other members of Canadian society who want to be part of a new relationship, I am optimistic about the strategies that our provinces and territories are focusing on. They believe that by supportive methods, encouraging economic development and partnering with aboriginal people we can make progress. They look at the changes they have made for example to their social assistance programs that have reduced the dependency and focused on building trampolines so that Canadians can be partners and participate in the economy. They are saying we need to do the same for aboriginal people.

Provinces and territories are understanding there is a role for them to play as we try to make life better for aboriginal Canadians. The private sector has also been most encouraging.

I think of B.C. Hydro and some of the strategies that the leadership and management of that company are engaging in to encourage a changed relationship, a stronger partnership with aboriginal people.

I think of the BHP mining company. We have diamonds in the north. The company that is opening that new resource understands it can build new resource models, new mining models that recognize that aboriginal people who are there on the land need to have access to the resources and benefit from these new riches that are now going to be part and parcel of this Canada we know and love.

• (1710)

Aboriginal people themselves believe that we need a new relationship. They believe that the structural relationship the federal government has had with them is not good enough. Their commitment to this change is probably no clearer anywhere than in the royal commission's report on aboriginal peoples.

I have not had a chance to publicly congratulate the commissioners of that report and I am glad to have the opportunity to do so now. There are different interpretations of the royal commission's report on aboriginal peoples. For me having read it and understood it, the underlying message that comes out of that impressive piece

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of research and documentation is that there needs to be structural change in our relationship with indigenous people here in Canada.

The commissioners identify that it is no longer acceptable for us to continue in a paternalistic way, to provide only programs that create dependency. They provide for us a model of a new relationship. It is very important. It says we must begin by mutually recognizing the existence of each other. We must add to that a mutual respect for our similarities and our differences. But very much a part of that model are the words responsibility and sharing. The fiduciary responsibility that we have as the crown with aboriginal people must be reflective of responsibility and sharing.

These are very important initiatives. The work of the royal commission can serve to guide us as we flesh out and build a new framework for the relationship.

We are not starting from ground zero. At this point I would like to reflect on some of the very important initiatives that were introduced to this House and in our relationship by the former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Hon. Ron Irwin. That minister identified that we did have to change our relationship. One of the most fundamental initiatives he undertook was to push us toward understanding the inherent right to self-government that aboriginal people have.

This belief is founded on an understanding of the treaty relationship, this very sacred relationship that the crown has with First Nations. When people ask me what it means to be Canadian, I can tell them to look to our very beginning, to look to the early days when the British and the French landed on the shores of our country and met the First Nations, the indigenous people.

What was our approach? It was not an approach that took us to war. It was an approach of peace. It was an understanding that through treaties, through a partnership we could all live in this great land and benefit and be productive. That treaty relationship is fundamental because it recognizes that when my ancestors came here there were governments that were working effectively and providing for their people. We agreed to write a treaty.

In understanding that, and in reading the report of the royal commission and in understanding how we are going to make life better for aboriginal Canadians we know they have to have concrete autonomy. We have to return jurisdiction so that as they find solutions for education, as they find solutions for housing, they will be reflective of tradition, of the aboriginal tradition, the beliefs, the attachment to the land.

We have increasing numbers of indications that this approach is working. Not only are we restoring the treaty relationship in provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta but in provinces like British Columbia where we did not get around to writing treaties we are now writing modern treaties. I look to the Nisga'a agree-

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ment and the strategies that are in place there to build a strong relationship between the people of that First Nation and this country Canada. We go to the Yukon where we have indeed signed self-government agreements.

First Nations are joining together in appropriate ways to build communities that are large enough to have the capacity to structure important models of governance that will help build a strong future for their people.

• (1715)

There are other initiatives which were implemented by the government reflective of the structural change. We have to target and improve the capability of aboriginal communities to support themselves. The models we build have to be reflective of that responsibility.

In our new housing strategy that issue of responsibility is clear. In partnership with the CMHC money is available. The aboriginal people make contributions to the development and building of these homes.

We focus on economic development. We recognize that the old model of social assistance, a tool of dependency, is not good enough. The modern tools of economic development are ones which we have to focus on and to ensure that aboriginal people have access to the resources that have made this country great.

I think of the relationship of building strong aboriginal government with a focus on developing the capacity for a transparent and accountable aboriginal government. The importance of this is to ensure that improvement in First Nations communities will be seen, will be tangible and will reflect the needs of the members of those First Nations.

We also have to understand that we need to build a new fiscal relationship structurally different from the one we have now and more reflective of the need for predictable funding in an ocean of fiscal transfers. We have to explore the strategies of own source of revenues and taxation. We have to challenge ourselves to include aboriginal people's access to resources, mining and forestry so they something with which to develop and grow.

I am encouraged by what I see, by the comments and the directions of the leadership of our First Nations and aboriginal people. I am optimistic of the strength of partnerships that we can build between the federal government and the aboriginal people, including other partners such as the provinces, the territories, the private sector and individual Canadians.

I do not believe there has ever been a time such as now for us to find solutions, modern solutions, to a circumstance that none of us is particularly proud of, a history and a relationship that must change.

As the minister I am but a facilitator. I am one partner. Our challenge as members of this House will be to understand the roles that we as individuals can play in bringing our communities together, municipalities with First Nations. We can find strategies that we can share and that will be effective and responsible, knowing that this is the best country to live in not only for non-aboriginal Canadians but for aboriginals as well.

I implore the members of the House to work with me as we identify a new framework, a new capacity to work productively, proactively and strategically together with First Nations leadership, to build a new relationship and a strong future for all Canadians.

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her very impassioned comments. They are consistent with some of the comments we heard from the minister earlier.

I find these people speak from their heart. They have the ability to paint a picture which they believe in but which I do not think it is quite accurate.

I ask that they consider allowing the Canadian people to be the ones who paint the picture. The presentations which I heard this afternoon, as a new member in this House, seem to imply that we have arrived, we are there, as a Canadian people and it is now time to move on to new government programs.

I point to the throne speech with 29 new spending initiatives and very little reference to paying down the debt or relieving Canadians from the tax burden they carry.

• (1720)

I am concerned that they are talking about more government investment. We have had years and years of government investment and that has not done it for us. I am concerned when they talk about partnerships, because government partnerships mean that somebody is left out of the partnership. Usually the one left out of the partnership is the struggling entrepreneur whose tax dollars are paying for one who is allowed into the partnership. This is not going to stimulate the innovation and entrepreneurial drive that was referenced in the throne speech. It is counterproductive.

I ask the Liberals to consider what the Canadian people are saying and I refer them to one of their own recent polls done by Earncliffe that points out that 57 percent of Canadian people feel the government has done a poor job in reducing government waste.

I would also point out that the number one priority for Canadians from the government's own survey is the reduction of government spending. Yet we have a throne speech with 29 new spending increases.

I want to encourage the minister and the people on that side of the House to stop misleading the Canadian people with the picture that we have arrived. I would be much more encouraged if I had heard a much stronger commitment in the throne speech to relieving my grandchildren of the burden of this national debt,

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giving my children the opportunity that tax relief would allow them in a more innovative and entrepreneurial environment.

Hon. Jane Stewart: Mr. Speaker, fundamental to the Speech from the Throne is the underpinning that we have to build strategies and programs that are reflective of our fiscal means and which accommodate our resources. We have not gone through four years of very difficult times to forget that everything we do must be affordable and reflective of the fiscal reality.

I also remind the hon. member that the role of government is not to balance the budget as an end in itself. The role of government is to respond to the needs of Canadians, to make life better for Canadians. I suggest to him that the approach and the strategy we have provided allow us to take very serious account of our fiscal reality, of the resources available to us to make sure we do not ever again spend too much, but to reflect the needs of Canadians and make choices that are reflective of Canadian priorities.

A hallmark of the government has been our capacity to understand and ensure ourselves of the priorities of Canadians and to show that we can respond to those in a fiscally responsible way.

All the aspects the hon. member reflects are part of the Speech from the Throne except for the understanding that the management of the deficit and the debt is not an end in itself. Managing those is instrumental and a requirement for us to continue to build a great country and respond to the needs of the people of a great country who want to continue to have the best country in the world in which to live.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The tone was excellent, the kind of tone that befits the issues she intends to defend. I had the opportunity to hear her speak on other occasions, outside this House, and she displayed on those occasions the same attitude she is displaying today.

I do not know if it comes from being a woman, but her image is completely different from that of the former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, who came across as very aggressive. This makes for a welcome change. I agree with everything she said, for instance, about poverty among aboriginal people in Canada, about health, suicide and so on.

• (1725)

It is true. I know because, when I was sitting on the human resources development committee in the early part of my former mandate, I saw the problems she is talking about. However, the royal commission, which tabled an extensive report, indicated huge

amounts are involved. I think she had better say whether or not she is prepared to go as far as recommended by the royal commission on Indian affairs. Is she prepared to act on the commission's recommendations?

Speaking of understanding and this understanding attitude I welcome—we really need it in this House—is the minister prepared to recognize, in the same positive and open manner, that we are a people?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my comments, the work of the royal commission is a tremendous body of knowledge which is valuable not only to me as the minister responsible for Indian affairs but to other partners as well, the provinces, First Nations and Canadians.

When we look at the over 440 recommendations that are a part of that document, really only 89 are strictly under the purview of the federal government. They are much more far reaching and broad than saying that the federal government has this and this to do.

As I said, while many people have different definitions of the work of the royal commission, fundamental to that work is a clear indication that the structural relationship has to change. The way we have worked together in the past has not provided us with the benefits one might expect.

Their message is that we have to be much broader. We have to include more people in solving the difficulties which face our aboriginal Canadians.

The sense is that if we partner together effectively, if we build a relationship with First Nations and ask for their input and advice on taking the recommendations of the royal commission and building a plan of action together, engaging the provinces and the private sector, including Canadians in that process, we will find the solutions we need to ensure that aboriginal people are able to benefit from the wealth and prosperity of Canada.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to stand in the House. It is a bit of an intimidating experience. I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment and the minister on her new responsibilities.

The appointment as Conservative critic for Indian affairs and northern development is an appointment I take very seriously. I think we should all take a moment to reflect on the responsibilities of a critic.

The responsibility of a critic is not just to jump to their feet every time the government stands, or rather sits; the responsibility of a critic, number one, is to be positive and, number two, to look for defects in what the government is saying. Certainly a critic has an innate responsibility to be responsible in their comments. I am not

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sure that is always recognized in the House. It is something we would all look forward to seeing a bit more of.

There were a few comments made by the hon. minister about the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. There were many good points brought up by that commission. There were also some negative points. The fact that we are individuals gives us the ability to disagree with certain points and to agree with certain points.

There are a few things the minister referred to which bear reflecting on again.

We have a number of statistics. When we hear the word statistics we quite often lose sight of the fact that those statistics involve people, men, women and children. They are not just numbers in somebody's book. We are dealing with human lives and futures.

• (1730)

When they understand that they are dealing with over 600 First Nations' communities, that there are a lot of pressing problems, that there is rampant child poverty, that 30 percent of the aboriginal community is under the age of 15 years, as politicians, if they do not understand anything else about that, they will understand that many of them will vote in the next election. There is a long journey.

There are a couple of points we should not forget. We have to proceed on this and we have to proceed together. We have to keep the principles of accountability and transparency, which were mentioned in the throne speech.

We can do three things. We can stagnate. We can continue to do what we have done. We can stand still and not move forward or we can move forward together.

Hon. Jane Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments of the critic of the Conservative Party and thank him for his intervention.

He reflects precisely my point of view, that indeed we, as members of Parliament, have a role to play in building with First Nations the strategies for the future. I look forward to working with him as we work together with First Nations to find that framework.

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate you on your appointment to your new job. We actually did not think this was going to happen until we occupied the other side of the House. I am sure that you bring expertise and fairness to the position. I look forward to a long tenure with you.

While I am congratulating and thanking people, I would certainly like to thank the people of the grand old constituency of Wetaskiwin for returning me to the House of Commons for the second time. This is a real endorsement of our party's policies, our leader and our platform. If I may be so bold, it is probably an endorsement of myself as the candidate.

That did not come about strictly by accident. It came about as a result of a lot of hard work. I would like to thank those people who spent so much time, effort and shoe leather getting me elected. They did an exemplary job and I would like to recognize them here in the House.

When I was going around in my constituency during the election campaign, I talked to a lot of people in the coffee shops, on the doorsteps and on the farms throughout the constituency. Their concern was that they felt they had more government than they could afford, that the debt was certainly a huge problem, that it was a millstone around Canadians' necks. They told me that they would like a fresh start. Coincidentally, that is exactly on what we campaigned.

Therefore, it is incumbent on us to do our utmost to give Canadians a fresh start and to ease the tax burden. As the labour critic for the Reform Party, I noticed that the throne speech was sadly lacking in the area of labour.

Being a farmer, labour as it relates to me most directly is in the shipment of grain to port. Of course, a lot of other products have to go to port. We discover that these shipments can be interrupted either through work stoppage, that is a strike or a lockout.

I was most disappointed that the government did not take an opportunity to put into the throne speech some sort of final offer selection dispute settlement mechanism. I think this is of utmost importance. The loss of markets that we suffer each time there is a work disruption is an immeasurable commodity. Although we can measure certain amounts of lost markets, we cannot measure the entire impact on the economy.

• (1735)

Mr. Speaker, if it is not too late I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary West.

What about the amendments to the Canada Labour Code? We expect them to be tabled in the House very soon. Those amendments would be an excellent opportunity to see a final offer selection arbitration settlement mechanism take place.

This mechanism would affect about 700,000 federal workers, people who do not necessarily work for the federal government but who come under the jurisdiction of the federal labour code. That represents about 10 percent of the Canadian workforce. These people are mostly involved in the movement of goods, services or capital. They are people who work in the airline industry, the banking industry, the railroads and the post office.

We think it is of utmost importance that we have a mechanism to settle these disputes and yet we are not getting any kind of co-operation from the federal government. The federal government will use final offer selection arbitration once they have legislated either a locked out group or a struck group back to work. If it is good enough to use after these people are legislated back to work,

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then why not make it available to the parties before the work stoppage starts?

How would that work? The parties involved would agree on who their arbitrator was. They would present to the arbitrator the matters that were agreed on, the matters that are outstanding and their final position on those outstanding items. The arbitrator then would choose all of one position or all of the other position, no compromise position.

To me, this is a tool that can be equally used by labour or by management. If it is used to its ultimate, as I have said in this House many times before, it will not be used at all. Both parties know that they have to bargain in a most earnest situation. They have to arrive at the best possible bottom line. There would be no fudging, no hedging, just the bottom line. If they do not, then an arbitrator can be imposed on them.

Some people have said this takes away the right to strike and disrupts and interferes with the bargaining process. Quite the contrary. Groups that are either locked out or on strike will have their bargaining process far more compromised through back to work legislation than they ever would with final offer selection arbitration.

I was most disappointed that we did not hear any mention of this during the Speech from the Throne. It is high time we adopted this. As I mentioned, Bill C-66 as it was known in the last Parliament, died in the Senate. Therefore I expect that the minister will reintroduce it in the House in the coming weeks. I am going to push very strongly to see that there are some changes made along the lines of final offer selection arbitration.

Canada is in a global marketplace. We have to establish our reputation as a reliable supplier of goods. Not only do we have to supply the best possible commodities, which we do, there is no problem with that, but we have to supply them on a regular, consistent and reliable basis. If we do not, our customers are certainly going to be looking elsewhere. It is like being in the supermarket business, if it is not on the shelf, it is pretty difficult to sell.

• (1740)

I am looking forward to seeing the bill come back to the House for debate, which I am sure will be any day now, at which time we will be addressing it and making all sorts of improvements to it, not the least of which is final offer selection arbitration.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was quite intrigued by the comments of the member opposite on the approach of final offer selection arbitration.

I wonder if the member opposite has any data on the results of final offer arbitration or arbitration awards generally. Do they

generally tilt in favour of the union or do they generally tilt in favour of management?

The data that I have seen most recently indicated that arbitration tends to tilt in favour of labour. That may be a very good thing, but if one is looking at cost, if one is concerned about the fiscal ramifications, I wonder if the hon. member has any information which would indicate that arbitration tends to tilt one way or the other.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, that certainly opens up a great debate. We could probably talk about that for some time. I agree that I have seen some information which tends to indicate that final offer selection arbitration tends to favour labour slightly.

However, every work disruption and every strike results in labour getting some improvements in its situation, either in working conditions, benefits or wages. I think that while some of the information does seem to tend to favour the unions, it would at least settle a strike.

Having to take the drastic step of passing back to work legislation, which, by the way, some government members have already decided, and have said so in the newspapers, is the way to handle the postal strike which has not happened yet, will have a tremendous detrimental effect on the bargaining process.

We should have some apparatus in place that is an item that either labour or management can put in its tool box and require them to bargain this situation right down to the nitty-gritty.

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must commend the member. The president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union president, local 832, would be pleased. He was instrumental in bringing into law in Manitoba that settlement process. It was immediately repealed by the Conservative government because he was right. It kept parties honest and the Conservative government and employers had a problem with that. Without question, it was a process that did keep people honest and it did favour labour because government and employers were being dishonest in their negotiations.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question there but in reply to my colleague's comments, I can only underscore the need to have some sort of process in place to encourage the parties to come to an agreement on their own. A negotiated settlement is probably the best settlement. There is no probably about it, it is the best settlement. Any time that two parties can negotiate and settle their differences without any interference from outside is the best way to go.

• (1745)

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to address the Speech from the Throne, this being

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my first speech in the House. I wish to thank the voters of Calgary West for choosing me to be their voice in Ottawa.

When one drives east along Bow Trail toward city centre one cannot help but admire the concrete and steel of Calgary's new downtown rising up toward the blue sky of Alberta. One has to marvel at Calgary's energy, her productivity, and take note of how the city has grown and prospered. No matter how many tax dollars, government jobs or military bases Ottawa has deprived Calgary of, we still have a low unemployment rate, low taxes and a hunger for Canada's lowest income tax rate.

The meaner Ottawa gets, the leaner Calgary becomes. We now have a city that thrives upon private industry, not the fat of the federal government. I am proud to represent a city that still exemplifies the pioneer spirit from the roughnecks who drill for oil to the settlers who moved west in horse drawn carts made of wood. Indeed my own family moved west around the turn of the century to plough its section of land.

Speaking of my family, I would like to thank mom and dad along with all the others who helped in my election. I have my father to thank for my start in politics. He would let me stay up past my scheduled bedtime, but only if I watched the evening news with him and answered questions about what I had observed, to which he often offered the right political spin.

Let me tell the House a story about when I was in diapers. A mess began to develop. It got worse over time. Nearly \$700 billion later we call it the accumulated national debt. The man who started the mess was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. When I look across to the Liberal benches I see some of his accomplices. The current prime minister was Trudeau's minister of finance and under Trudeau he learned to spend, indeed he liked to spend. He taxed and he spent until his heart's content, so much so that he still cannot wean himself from the nasty habits he developed under the man who started the wave in Salmon Arm.

Then came the mandarin from Manitoba, the whiner from Winnipeg who now lavishes upon himself as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He has begged for political pork, dined diplomats and grovelled for government goodies. Who could forget the hyena from Hamilton who shrieked and shrilled her way under the public's skin and who is now eligible for her \$2.8 million gold plated MP pension plan?

I would like to talk about the department that just grew and grew. His bureaucrat parents named him manpower and immigration, but their own rules made his first name politically incorrect so they changed it to citizenship and immigration. The bureaucrats kept on feeding him and tending to his every gurgle, burp and expansion. They proudly watched as their pet department grew into a strapping example of government largesse.

As a right of passage they named him employment and immigration, a title that made the bureaucrats burst with pride, but even the bureaucrats noticed that their fully grown program had developed a nasty streak. Instead of solving the problems he was created to solve he actually made them worse. Unemployment was permanently doubling that of our neighbours to the south. Multiple generations of families were beginning to get hooked on the spiralling dependency that he was pushing. The bureaucrats changed his name to human resources development, but they could not hide what had happened. Their little pet had grown into a \$57 billion monster.

● (1750)

Members are probably asking what went wrong when the monster roamed unchecked across the land. The government renamed unemployment insurance, employment insurance, but that did not change the want for work or make good on its 1993 election promises. The government tossed out band-aids, candies and bromides, but it got a bad case of inaction when it came to repairing the structural problems.

For example, UI charges repeat claimants the same premiums as someone who works but has never collected. No actuarially sound insurance plan would have high risk users pay the same or even less than low risk users. Even more UI is distributed disproportionately according to region. Nova Scotia alone has five different regions of eligibility. People living and working within an hour of one another have different eligibility requirements. This begs a question. Does the government have credibility on the jobs issue?

The Liberals have presided over the highest level of unemployment in recent history. They are now into their 82nd month of unemployment above 9 percent. UI has become a payroll tax with overpayments now over \$7 billion per year. For the average Canadian worker that amounts to \$400 a year in overpayments.

A total of close to \$14 billion has been hoarded by the Minister of Finance so that he can gloat about deficit reduction. He even brags about his 43 tax increases and how he has taken \$26 billion more from us.

How about an insurance program that is actuarially sound and free from political interference? How about at least lowering the payroll tax that kills jobs? Alas, there is more program mismanagement.

Can we trust the Liberals with our pensions? Canadians under 35 years old do not believe we will have a pension. Why? Because the government has dug an unfunded pension liability of over half a trillion dollars. That is why the government is so gung ho about RRSPs.

Even if the Canada pension plan survives Liberal mismanagement, people my age will receive less than a 50 cents return on every dollar they throw into it. The government is ripping off young people. They want to take 10 percent of our wages for a

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program that will not be around when we need it. If CPP did survive under Liberal mismanagement it would only pay out \$8,800 per year, even with maximum contributions.

In contrast the same contributions invested at a 6 percent rate of return, the numbers the government claims for the CPP, would create their own pension yielding \$26,000 per year. Please do not ask us to trust the government. Let us opt out of its pyramid scheme and wrest our money from its corrupting grasp.

Yet I fear there is even more. The Liberals pride themselves on the political machine vote buying tactics. Why they even preened about increasing the size of the bureaucracy by 3,000 temporary bureaucrats with \$90 million of taxpayer money.

Then there was the billion dollar student handout. For every single student this handout is intended to help, the program hurts nine more. Increasing debt or the size of government and taxes only deprives young people of work. Young people want structural repairs that will create real jobs, not promises that result in less work and higher taxes.

Cut taxes to stimulate investment, growth and jobs. Stop the pyramid scheme to burden young people with pension debt. Link student loans to social insurance numbers. This would reduce default problems and therefore increase the likelihood and dollar value ceilings on private sector student loans.

This story of the department that grew and grew reminds me of three questions that all politicians should ask before they start feeding a program.

• (1755)

First, how much should it cost? Second, does it benefit all Canadians or cater to a special interest? In other words, is it just a narrowly focused vote buying tactic? Third, would fellow Canadians vote for the program if the question was put to them?

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the hon. member for Calgary West on his maiden speech. Let me also disagree with the content of much of his speech.

On the issue of reforming the Canada pension plan, there was an accrued liability and we could not afford to continue on a pay as you go basis. Reform of the Canada pension plan was put in place by the federal government with agreement from the provincial governments. It is important to note that.

I recognize that the Reform Party, in its policies, would get rid of the Canada pension plan. It was to turn it into a super RRSP. If the people happened to have Bre-X in their super RRSPs they would retire with no pension.

It is very clear that Canadians on the whole want the Canada pension plan. It was the subject of the election campaign. The plan will be there for younger Canadians.

Earlier today I talked about spending some money, and I am proud of it. One of the things I talked about spending money on was students, universities, research and development. I think the member, when talking about spending money, should focus on the program. The University of Waterloo and Sir Wilfrid Laurier University are in my riding, as well as Conestoga College.

Sure, that is spending money, but it is also investing in the future of our young people and in the future of our country. Hopefully the member can make the distinction. Most members of the House were not here prior to 1993. I think he should also acknowledge that.

Mr. Rob Anders: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member opposite admits that the CPP needs reform.

He also talked about how the plan was improperly set up in the first place, in a sense, and admitted basically that it was a pyramid scheme. At least with that I say he is beginning to address the problem.

When he talks about investment does he really mean squandering? With the money that has been put into the plan, he and his party have run up a half trillion dollar debt. The Fraser Institute puts the number at \$1 trillion. His own government puts it at over \$500 billion.

Who am I to trust? Am I to trust the members across the way who have done such a poor job with the money they have been entrusted with, or am I to trust the people themselves to look after a plan? I would trust myself and other Canadians far more than I would trust the government with the money.

Once again I quote the statistic for those young people who are watching and listening today. If they put full maximum contributions into the CPP they will get only \$8,800 a year. If they collect from 65 until 75, should they live to 75, they will only get \$88,000 out of that plan. If they had their own plan they would get \$26,000 a year or \$260,000 by the time they turn 75.

That is far different from what the Minister of Canadian Heritage will get with the \$2.8 million pension she will collect by the time she turns 75, or the \$3.4 million that Brian Tobin, who is now collecting money as the Premier of Newfoundland, will get. It is a travesty. They should be ashamed.

• (1800)

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate you on your appointment as Acting Speaker. I look forward to working within the rules of this House and supporting you in your role.

*The Address**[Translation]*

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to be able to comment on the recent throne speech. For the second time in fourteen months, the people of Etobicoke North have given me the opportunity to represent them in the House of Commons. I thank them for their strong vote of confidence and I promise to do everything I can to perform my duties with honesty during this 36th Parliament of Canada.

[English]

The throne speech sets the government's directional course and lays out the priorities for this Parliament. I believe it has done this very well. It has responded to the needs of Canadians and to the needs of the constituents in Etobicoke North.

People in my riding frequently refer to three major concerns and priorities: first, the need for the economy to generate more jobs so that more Canadians, in particular young Canadians, can re-enter the workforce; second, the need to resolve our national unity problem so that we can move forward and remove the last major impediment to economic growth in Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Canada; and third, the need to restore confidence in our health care system.

The throne speech addresses these key issues very completely but before I expand on that, I would like to comment on the overall context of the throne speech. That is where we are today and where we have come from. When charting a course for the future, we really need to know where we are today and where we have been.

Our journey to fiscal responsibility and economic renewal has been a very difficult one. The road was rough and winding. We had to make difficult choices about which way to go but I am proud to say that our destination is in sight. If we stay on this road, our children's future and Canada's future will be secure.

We are seeing the very positive results today. Canadian interest rates are at their lowest in decades. Inflation has been beaten down and is firmly under control. We are more competitive as a nation. Consumer spending is up and so is business investment. Make no mistake, good jobs are here and more are coming. In summary, the hard work of all Canadians is beginning to pay off, but our job is not yet complete.

[Translation]

In my riding and in other regions of Canada, there are business representatives that tell me they are unable to recruit people with the necessary skills for new positions. The tragic irony of all this is that this is happening at a time when many Canadians, and particularly young Canadians, are unable to find quality jobs.

[English]

I was delighted therefore to note that our throne speech committed our government "to work with the provinces, universities and colleges, the high tech industry and other rapidly growing sectors of the economy to better forecast the number and types of jobs that will be available and to develop a plan for ensuring that young people are appropriately educated to fill them".

I was particularly pleased to see the reference to colleges. I believe that there are many opportunities available for technicians and people with trades in a number of our industrial sectors.

That is why I am supporting the establishment of a telecommunications learning institute in Etobicoke in association with Humber College. Such an institute will focus on research and training so that our workforce skills are leading edge and we are prepared for the latest advancements in communications technology.

While our colleges have a major role to play, clearly our universities do as well. The jobs of the future will increasingly be knowledge based jobs and our ability as a nation to foster a culture of innovation through research, development and entrepreneurship will determine our future economic growth.

That is why the formation of the \$800 million Canada Foundation for Innovation that our government established in the last budget is so important. So too is the recent announcement in our government's throne speech to establish a Canada millennium scholarship endowment fund. These scholarships will make post-secondary education more accessible and affordable and will help young Canadians prepare for the knowledge based society of the next century.

There is another serious issue that in my view is still a threat when it comes to job creation and unemployment. I refer to it as structural unemployment.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Gone are the days when the Canadian economy was expanding and thousands of jobs were created automatically. Sure, our economy is currently vibrant and it creates many jobs. However, the country and the government are facing the challenge of bringing unemployment back to the lowest possible level.

[English]

Perhaps we can never achieve an unemployment rate of 5 percent but perhaps we can. We should look very carefully at those countries that have achieved very low rates of unemployment without triggering unwanted inflation, countries like the United States, Holland, Great Britain and others. To be sure, because of

our unique Canadian society we cannot transplant these solutions here but surely we can learn something from their experiences.

Changes in the global economy and changes in the workplace are at the root of structural unemployment. Countries that understand these developments are best positioned to create the public policy environment to deal with them. There are certainly many changes occurring.

Automation is replacing people with technology. We see it every day of our lives whether it is at the supermarket, or when we do computerized banking or whether it is robotics in the manufacturing sector. Organizations throughout the western world are making their organizations flatter by eliminating levels of management and by redesigning, re-engineering and rightsizing, as the term is used, their structure. There are changes occurring in the workplace such as the use of overtime hours, the use of part time versus full time workers, more contract employees and there are many other trends.

Many of these changes are characterized as necessary because of the increasingly competitive global economy. At the same time however it is interesting to note that stock markets in Canada and the United States and industry analysts are discounting the positive impacts of downsizing initiatives. In fact the evidence seems to point to the fact that companies that are focused more on growing their business and not so much on cost cutting have experienced better profitability performance over the last few years.

I applaud Canadian business leaders like Courtney Pratt, the president of Noranda, when they speak about business' multi-stakeholder responsibilities and the need for business to invest in people.

[*Translation*]

We know that in Europe, the exceptionally high unemployment rates in countries such as Germany and France are due to what economists call, and this is an understatement, the labour market's lack of flexibility. The expression refers to social benefits, manpower mobility, the ability to cope with flexible work patterns, etc.

[*English*]

We should learn something from these experiences.

There are a number of other initiatives that I believe would spur employment in this country. For example in Canada we could introduce tax incentives at minimal cost to the federal treasury to encourage employees to own shares in their own company. In the United States and elsewhere these schemes are referred to as employee share ownership plans or ESOPs. There is a very aggressive and well developed tax incentive program for ESOPs in

The Address

the United States and in the United Kingdom. In Canada at this point in time we have no similar regime.

Studies in the United States and Canada comparing ESOP versus non-ESOP companies have consistently shown ESOP companies to be superior performers in profitability and job growth. ESOPs if properly implemented across Canada would make good public policy and would inspire and encourage Canadians to build a better and more compassionate Canada for all Canadians. The results would be both immediate and long term.

To conclude I must say that at the same time that we move aggressively on the economic front we must work very hard on the political front to ensure that we remain a united country from sea to sea. Constituents in my riding are tired of this continuing debate and they want to put the national unity issue to rest. They see how the uncertainty about Quebec's future in Canada is having a negative impact on the economic prospects in Ontario, in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

At a public meeting I called in my riding a number of months ago to coincide with the release of the health forum report, I was made very aware of the concerns many Canadians have about the responsiveness and the accessibility of our health care system. Medicare is uniquely Canadian and very worthy of our support and attention. We must initiate public policies to restore the confidence of Canadians in our health care system and I pledge to do my utmost to achieve that end.

Mr. Speaker, I have exhausted my time and I thank you and this House for this opportunity.

• (1810)

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned in his remarks the need to resolve the national unity problem. I submit that the national unity problem will never be resolved until we deal adequately and fairly with our aboriginal people.

I was pleased to hear earlier that the government is committed to working in partnership with our aboriginal people. I would submit that there is a very practical opportunity for the government to do this in a very real fashion.

The Pic River First Nation submitted a land claim and this claim was rejected after a legal review by the Department of Justice. The Pic River First Nation feels that this legal review was seriously flawed and they are seeking an independent legal review of their land claim. They have launched a court action but they are quite willing to forgo court action if the government will agree to work together with them in partnership to have an independent legal review of their land claim.

I would submit that this is an opportunity for the government to show and put meaning to the words in the throne speech, to work

The Address

realistically in partnership with the First Nations, to resolve this outstanding land claim rather than force this First Nations group to go through a lengthy court action. The deadline date for this would be October 9. I would urge the government to move in the direction of resolving this issue before that time.

I further feel that for Canada to resolve the national unity issue we have to deal fairly with all peoples and that means looking at the aboriginal situation in a fair and reasonable way. A first step to admit that we want to obtain national unity would be for Canada to issue an apology to the aboriginal people for the manner in which we have historically treated aboriginal people over the years.

Mr. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I have had the good fortune in my experience in life to have visited and worked in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and other parts of Canada. I have developed a great respect for our native peoples and the contribution they make to the overall culture of our country.

While I am not familiar with the specifics of the case in his riding, I think he probably heard the comments earlier by our Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. If it was like the reaction of my own, I was moved by the compassion and willingness to develop models and solutions that will be workable into the next millennium. I know that will involve working very closely and getting the co-operation of the provinces and territories and other stakeholder groups to make that happen.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Etobicoke North mentioned that he is in favour of tax incentives. It is a marvellous idea. It is one that the Liberal government tried in the 1970s to generate economic growth. Instead what it did was it helped to create a \$600 billion debt and stagnant unemployment today.

Instead of tax incentives, why does the member not encourage his government to give Canadians tax relief? Instead of picking winners and losers in the economy, why does the member not encourage his government to let Canadians decide what to do with their own money?

Does this minister believe that Canadian taxpayers, small business people and homemakers know better how to spend an extra dollar than do the Liberal politicians and bureaucrats?

Mr. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Calgary Southeast, I thank him for the promotion which I have taken note of.

In terms of tax relief, let us look at the United States. I was down there recently at a conference on employee share ownership. The United States is probably the market economy of the world and employee share ownership plans are absolutely taking off. It is a

huge movement. What it is saying is that the workers and people in all levels of management have a piece of the action. The result is there is better productivity and greater profits. More profits mean more growth and more growth means more jobs. Therefore with a tiny tweak in terms of a tax incentive which would have very minimal cost to the treasury, we could actually accomplish some great things and get a lot more Canadians back to work.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, like others I want to congratulate you and welcome you to the Chair.

● (1815)

I want to thank the constituents of Malpeque for having the confidence to re-elect me to this 36th Parliament.

As my constituents know very well, the last four years were not easy in our thrust to put the country in a secure financial position for the future. The reality is that in Atlantic Canada, where there has been a greater dependency on government programs, we have felt the pain of cuts and program changes more vividly than in other areas of the country.

My constituents have shown their willingness to accept what had to be done. However, they are also telling me that they are at their limit in terms of program elimination and cost recovery. Constituents of Malpeque want us in this term to ensure a balance between our economic and social agenda. They maintain we need a strong central government to carry out such initiatives. They welcome and support the latest initiatives of the government on the unity file.

Our plan during the election set out our values and priorities, a growing economy, a modernized health care system and investing in knowledge to equip Canadians to compete in a changing world. We also offered during the election a workable plan for enhancing the unity of our country and securing our future.

The throne speech begins the task of implementing those commitments in quality care, increasing the cash floor which is of particular importance in Prince Edward Island, education, knowledge, innovation, the commitment of \$2 billion for the youth employment strategy and in trade where agriculture, fisheries, tourism and aerospace production are of particular importance to my riding and to Prince Edward Island.

The commitment of the Government of Canada to adopt its programs to reflect the social economic realities of rural Canada is of particular importance. Given these facts, I am still both anxious and optimistic about the future. I am anxious because I have seen the amount of pressure that those with economic power can place on government. We saw that here the other day in the debate on supply as the right-wingers from across the floor argued for tax

breaks for the wealthy when we should be investing in programs that meet the needs of ordinary Canadians.

Before long we will have the ability to make decisions based on our people's needs rather than those of the international bankers and bond holders. That gives me optimism for the future. We have regained the ability to address the priorities of Canadians. We did it with a fair bit of pain. We regained that ability, but how will the ultimate decisions be made?

I believe we must recognize as parliamentarians what we are up against in making such decisions. That is the pressure from the economic right and the strategies it employs to undermine our ability as parliamentarians to represent fairly the needs of people. They somehow manage to portray the needs of the economy above the needs of people. We need a strong economy but it cannot and should not be the absolute in and of itself.

In one sense I am speaking on the broader issue of democracy, of politics and of the needs of people in society to support and participate in our parliamentary democracy, not just those who have economic power and sway.

In the last decade our various political institutions have come under considerable attack, often very subtly, by those who have much to gain if the political institutions of the land can be undermined. Politicians are attacked as well and not just on their ideas; sometimes the person and the business itself.

As we move toward the next millennium both within Canada and globally we are really in a battle of democracy versus the market.

• (1820)

Let me put this as concisely as I can. With all the trade agreements, the linking of the markets in the financial sense, it has caused power to shift. Let me put it this way and compare it to space. The economic space has grown and the political space has narrowed.

I believe if that space is out of balance between economics and politics we are all in trouble in terms of meeting the needs of the people in our nations. In other words, if the market has all the power then all we can really be is a consumer.

This is summed up best by Arthur Shafer in Peter Newman's *The Canadian Revolution*:

The values of the marketplace have infiltrated every institution in Canada, the family, the church, the legal system. Anti-human, commercial values are dominating every sphere of life. Now that we're coming into economic hard times, the sense of each man for himself, save your own skin, get whatever advantage you can is going to sink public spiritedness and make it much more difficult to preserve our sense of obligation to the community.

The Address

This pressure on the essence of government is also explained appropriately by John Ralson Saul in his book *The Unconscious Civilization*:

People become so obsessed by hating government that they forget it is meant to be their government and is the only powerful public force they have purchase on.

That is what makes the neo-conservative and market force argument so disingenuous. Their remarkably successful demonization of the public sector has turned much of the citizenry against their own mechanism. They have been enrolled in the cause of interests that have no particular concern for citizen's welfare. Instead, the citizen is reduced to the status of a subject at the foot of the throne of the marketplace.

My point is that the individual and the government are linked together by an artery. If we act to sever that artery by replacing or opposing a central role for government, we cease to be individuals and revert to the status of subject.

I have outlined the foregoing to put into context the kind of environment in which we will work in the House and this Parliament. We have to recognize from where and why that pressure comes. I certainly believe in a strong role for government. I believe that the public sector actually creates value in our society through its institutions, its programs, its public services and its workforce.

Part of the reason we see this subtle attack on this institution and government itself is that some in the private sector know that if they can shift that responsibility then they can profit by doing so.

It is the desire of some in the corporate sector to move back to a time when individual problems, regardless of circumstances, were an individual responsibility. We cannot allow that to happen.

As Thomas Jefferson stated, the care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government.

The corporate sector recognizes that if government can be moved out of the way there is a profit to be made in the offering of what is now a public service. One of the best ways to achieve its goal is to substitute markets for those public programs now authorized through democratic institutions.

I put these points on the table to show what I believe is one of the greatest pressures on this institution. To protect ourselves from being subverted by that pressure I refer members to page 140 of *Hansard* and the remarks of my colleague from Hillsborough when he talked about more power being put to members of this assembly. That would certainly lessen the power of the bureaucracies within Ottawa and would also lessen the ability of those with economic clout to pressure cabinet ministers to make decisions. What we really need is real debate in this House and for the decisions to be made here.

I believe we can better achieve our objectives as stated in the throne speech by assuring, as the hon. member for Hillsborough had argued in his remarks, that greater power is put in the hands of the members of House of Commons. I think it is one of the most fundamental things we must do.

Adjournment Debate

• (1825)

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to listen to the speech by the hon. member who is a dairy farmer. You get some good home farm advice. But I wonder whether the Liberal members are redundant. Except for their trained seal capacity to vote as told they have all been spewing the same bland stuff that was in that throne speech, and there is nothing there.

I especially take great exception to the fact that almost every one of them has said, as we heard during the election campaign, "we have our fiscal house in order". We keep hearing that. I do not know how to say this diplomatically or in a parliamentary way but it ain't true. We do not have our fiscal house in order.

The debt has been increasing. I am a teacher and I would love to have an overhead projector here. If we look at the size of the debt, instead of going up one way on a graph as it did from the previous government, it has now gone another way. The Liberals take credit for this wee little turn in the graph.

The fact is under this government the debt still went up from \$500 billion to \$600 billion. Instead of paying \$40 billion a year in interest we are now paying \$47 billion a year in interest. They keep on repeating this and it has worked. A lot of people in Canada think it is true that our fiscal house is in order.

I want to give them a mild applause for at least making that little turn, but it is not good enough. I would like to ask this member to respond specifically to my question. How can he keep saying we are all okay when in fact they have been responsible for adding yet another 20 percent, another \$100 billion, to the debt during their previous term?

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Maybe he needs some down home farm examples so he can understand how annual deficit and accumulated debt really work.

Let me compare it to a farm. In terms of my farm or the farm of any member over there, we have had capital investment in terms of our mortgages, equipment and so on. We pay our interest payments as the year goes by. But what is very important is the operating capital in terms of being able to use that capital to operate so we can pay the interest on our mortgages and remain in business in a very productive and progressive way.

What we have achieved in comparison to that is that we have paid off our operating debt. We have the accumulated debt to pay in the future. On an operating basis we have surpluses of moneys with which we can gradually pay down that debt. As we said in the election campaign we can split it 50:50, put some of it toward debt reduction and tax reductions and with the other 50 percent we will make investments in terms of social and economic programs. That is major progress.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and agreed with a great deal of it except for the first bumpy part at the beginning when he was doing the hail the government's throne speech business about modernizing the health care system and all that sort of stuff. Why on earth is he still a Liberal? Why on earth did he ever become a Liberal?

Why on earth did someone who was once the president of the National Farmers Union ever become a Liberal when the fact is everything he said with the exception of the bumps at the beginning is something that New Democrats have been saying day in and day out in this Parliament for years? We are the only market critical party in this Chamber. The government of which he is a part has signed free trade agreement after free trade agreement enshrining the very ethic that he just spoke against.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I could not answer that charge fully in 30 seconds.

I recognize we cannot do as the NDP always wants to do, which is to write cheques and never find any way of paying the bills. I come from Prince Edward Island and trade is extremely important. We have established some rules whereby we can trade and ensure that our people are treated fairly.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved

TRADE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will just pick up from where I left off.

I happen to be rising pursuant to a question I asked the Minister for International Trade about the multilateral agreement on investment, which has everything to do with what the hon. member for Malpeque was just talking about, that is, restricting the power of government even further than the power of national governments have already been restricted by the various free trade agreements which the government has already entered into.

Adjournment Debate

The other day I asked the Minister for International Trade a question about when and how and if the government was going to permit the public to have some say in what the government's stance would be in the negotiations with respect to the multilateral agreement on investment. These negotiations have been ongoing for two years in Paris, in the context of the OECD. They started in April 1995. They were actually scheduled to end in April 1997.

If the Liberals had had their way we would have had a negotiated agreement—done, finished, fait accompli—by April 1997 and they would never have even let us know it was happening.

We could not have relied on the official opposition or even the third party in the last Parliament to have raised such matters because they all bow down to the same altar of the multinational corporations and the global economic order that was created for the benefit of investors, and to hell with the workers and everybody else.

We finally have a Parliament in which these kinds of issues can and will be raised.

I want to hear from the government how it intends to involve the Canadian public. What will the government's stance be at the multilateral agreement on investment negotiations?

We know from the draft, as it stands, that the MAI intends to drastically reduce the power of governments to intervene in the economy on behalf of the common good, the public interest, regional development, research and development and all the other ways in which governments have sought to act in the interests of the Canadian people.

The government has the ability to seek certain exemptions in respect of social, educational, health, cultural and other areas of concern, such as government procurement, et cetera.

We need to know what the government is going to do very quickly because the negotiations are scheduled to end in April of 1998. If the Canadian public is to be meaningfully involved, there needs to be a process now. We do not want to be looking at an agreement which has already been negotiated, where the government has put the Canadian public in a take-it-or-leave-it position. We want to be able to say now to the government, in various public ways, what it is it should be insisting on in those negotiations.

If the government continues to insist on being at those negotiations, at the very least it should be doing what the Canadian people insist it be doing, and that is making sure that our ability as a people and our ability as a government to act in our own interests is protected by the various exemptions which the government should be seeking in the MAI negotiations.

I look forward to hearing from the parliamentary secretary exactly what the government's position on this will be. What exemptions is the government seeking?

• (1835)

What are the deal breakers? What are the things that they absolutely have to have or there will be no deal in Paris?

I see you rising, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I have already exceeded my time. I hope not because I have the greatest respect for the time limits put on me. I will sit down and look forward to what the government member has to say.

Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, foreign direct investment currently accounts for one in ten jobs in Canada. It is estimated that each additional \$1 billion in foreign direct investment helps to create 45,000 new jobs over five years. Encouraging more investment in Canada is one of the best ways to create jobs. Is that not the goal of the NDP?

The government has in place a comprehensive, consultative process and is committed to ensuring the opportunity for full public discussion on the proposed MAI. The member opposite has already been provided with a personal briefing on the MAI, as were all critics. In addition to a general media briefing, all members of Parliament and senators have been sent two copies of an information package on the MAI.

The minister will also be writing to the chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade to arrange his appearance before the committee.

Provincial officials are consulted through conference calls and negotiated debriefings. They have full access to working documents.

The business groups that have been consulted to date include the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Council of International Business and the Business Council for National Issues. Consultations have also taken place with groups representing specific sectors of the Canadian economy, including culture, energy, mining, telecommunications and agrifood.

With respect to non-governmental organizations, the government has to date, consulted with the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Auto Workers and has been in contact with the World Wildlife Fund.

As the negotiations approach the deadline for completion in the coming year, the scope of consultations will be broadened to include additional NGOs, especially those concerned with labour and environment issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.37 p.m.)

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