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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 1, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 1, 1999

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past July it was my pleasure to host a one day forum on the homeless in London, Ontario.

The Minister of Labour, as part of her special assignment on homelessness, spent a very informative day with us in our city.

A wide cross-section of agencies which deal with the homeless described the nature of the problem in London and district. Several homeless people also had an opportunity to speak directly to the minister.

I wish to thank and congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Labour, for her tremendous dedication and hard work in preparing for the government a plan of action to deal with the problem of homelessness. Of course, to effect such a plan significant additional funding will be required in the next budget.

I am confident that our current Minister of Finance will make this serious problem a priority for more funding so that we can eradicate homelessness and provide for every Canadian a proper home in which to live.

TRADE

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this week representatives of 135 sovereign nations are gathered in Seattle to launch the next set of global trade negotiations.

Canada, which exports more than 40% of its gross domestic product, has a vital interest in these talks, especially with regard to unfair subsidization of European and American agricultural products.

Habitual Canadian and American protesters, most of them warmly dressed, well fed, middle class and comfortable, have adopted opposition to global commerce as their cause of the week and they are trying to shut down the talks.

I wonder how many of those sanctimonious obstructionists in cutesy costumes have ever shown the courage of their conviction by refusing to buy products from countries where labour is routinely exploited. Do they buy \$50 North American shirts, or do they go for the made in China product at \$12?

* * *

WORLD AIDS DAY

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World AIDS Day, a day to pause and reflect upon this devastating disease and renew our resolve to overcome it.

The theme for this year's public awareness campaign is "Listen, Learn, Live!", which aims to raise awareness about the need to strengthen AIDS programs for children and young people.

According to the 1999 UN AIDS update, an estimated 570,000 children aged 14 or younger became infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide. Over 90% were babies born to HIV positive women.

There are too many children being affected by HIV/AIDS. We must redouble our efforts to eradicate AIDS and to educate our young people about this deadly disease.

In the spirit of the "Listen, Learn, Live!" campaign the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Develop-

S. O. 31

ment, in collaboration with the Canadian Public Health Association and the Canadian Society of International Health, provide parliamentarians with information on HIV/AIDS.

I encourage all members of the House to visit the information kiosk.

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[Translation]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at its convention last weekend, the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada passed a resolution in favour of volunteerism in Canada.

• (1405)

Volunteers play a vital role in our society, working with the disabled, with newcomers, with the disadvantaged and the poor, and with people in crisis.

The Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada has therefore called upon the Government of Canada to offer concrete encouragement to volunteer action. This concern confirms the great importance we attach to the two fundamental values underlying the Liberal program: equity and justice.

I salute the communities of my riding, and Cowansville in particular, represented here today by its mayor, for their involvement with volunteerism.

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WORLD AIDS DAY

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are marking World AIDS Day in Laval, with sadness yet with some hope as well.

Sida-Vie Laval and Maison Dominique are hosting a special event this evening at which the paintings of Lise de Maisonneuve will be offered for sale, with part of the proceeds going to these two organizations.

The evening will also mark the official opening of Maison Dominique. The victims of this terrible infection, and their loved ones, will now have two resources available to them in Laval.

More than 35 million people in the world are living with HIV or AIDS, including 54,000 Canadians, and another 6 million join their ranks every year, among them over 4,000 Canadians. There are already close to 120 known cases in Laval.

Until this scourge is eradicated, organizations such as Sida-Vie Laval and Maison Dominique make it possible for victims to lead more normal lives and for them and their loved ones to better cope with what is happening to them.

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I had the pleasure of participating in a grassroots democratic meeting on the Nisga'a agreement in Vancouver sponsored by the official opposition.

Contrary to the Liberal government's version of democracy, with stacked witness lists and no public forum, this meeting was open to all who wished to appear. Yes, there were experts who put forward their opinion on various aspects of the agreement. More importantly, the microphone was open for anyone who wished to voice their opinion on this controversial agreement.

Democracy is not just about an opportunity to vote every four or five years. Democracy is intended to be a verb, where there is participation and action and free debate by the common people represented here in the House of Commons. At the conclusion of the debate, a result is reached that is absent of class distinction or arbitrary decisions by a select few, most notably in the Prime Minister's office. All too often the Liberals seem to be afraid to listen and consult with the very people who employ them, the citizens of Canada.

Last Friday was democracy in action. I only wish that the members across the way could have been there to see it.

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[Translation]

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 1988, World AIDS Day has held a special place in the fight against AIDS.

It gives each of us the opportunity to express our messages of compassion, hope, respect and solidarity to all AIDS victims.

While we are now more familiar with AIDS, it still elicits strong prejudice. We must therefore work together to fight the unjustifiable discrimination that all too often confronts the victims of HIV and AIDS.

Triple therapy represents a real hope now, but its prohibitive cost makes it available for the moment in developed countries only. AIDS therefore continues its ravages throughout the world, especially in Africa.

While the number of AIDS cases in Quebec has dropped in recent years, the number of HIV infections has not. We still do not have a vaccine or successful treatment for AIDS. Prevention remains the only way to fight this ill.

On December 1, let us join together in the fight against AIDS.

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[English]

DR. ROBERT BIRGENEAU

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, St. Michael's College School has done it again. The Basilian fathers can be proud.

Dr. Robert Birgeneau has just been chosen to be the 14th president of the University of Toronto. His appointment has been acclaimed as brilliant by the Ontario Council of Universities.

Dr. Birgeneau is a Toronto native and a citizen of Canada. He received his B.Sc. in mathematics from the University of Toronto and his Ph.D. in physics from Yale. He was on the faculty of Yale for one year and then at Oxford University for a year through the National Research Council.

Dr. Birgeneau has been the dean of science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology since 1991, and while there he brought MIT's physics department to the top. He said yesterday "One of my deepest commitments is to ensure that every qualified student who wants an education from the University of Toronto gets one, regardless of their financial situation".

We welcome him back to Toronto, to the University of Toronto, and we wish him and his wife Mary the very best.

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• (1410)

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today is World AIDS Day, yet from Bangkok to Bombay, Capetown to Vancouver, the deadly disease wrecks havoc.

In Canada the rate of infection, particularly amongst our youth, is appallingly high. In fact, a recent survey shows that 27% of youth did not know anything about AIDS whatsoever, many believing that it affected only intravenous drug abusers.

Internationally the virus is wrecking havoc. In the next five years it has been estimated that one-tenth of the Russian population will be HIV positive. In Africa, life expectancy has dropped from 65 years to 40 years. Many pregnant women who need drugs to protect their unborn children do not have access to them, so the babies get it too.

We need a cure. We need education. We need action to deal with this scourge and to stop the epidemic of AIDS. Let us hope that next year we will have good news, that the tide will change to reverse this illness, that less and less people will be infected and that more and more lives will be saved.

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WORLD AIDS DAY

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on World AIDS Day to bring attention to an important initiative by Health Canada to promote AIDS awareness.

Last month the Minister of Health taped a segment with the popular music band, Wide Mouth Mason, to raise youth awareness of this disease and how it can be prevented. This initiative marks an important awareness of the necessity of targeting messages to youth in ways they can best relate.

The minister said earlier today at the release of his second annual report to Canadians on the progress made on the Canadian strategy on HIV/AIDS, "We must reach out to Canada's young people and listen and learn with them, as the future path of this disease is in their hands".

The segment will continue to air on MuchMusic and will help to ensure that we will be able to provide meaningful information to our youth on the importance of safe sex or abstinence in preventing AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

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[Translation]

SCOTLAND

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was St. Andrew's day. It gives me the opportunity to congratulate Scotland and the Scots on the distance they have come in recent years.

In the September 1997 referendum, the Scottish people chose to revive their parliament, which had not existed since 1707. The Parliament of Scotland opened its doors on July 1 of this year.

For the first time in centuries, the people of Scotland celebrated St. Andrew's day by putting their national pride in their own political institutions.

Throughout centuries of English domination, the Scots have kept their soul and their identity. Patiently, they awaited the hour of their rebirth. It was peaceful and democratic.

On the question of the referendum, George Reid, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Scotland, said the following at Mont-Tremblant this October:

[English]

"Certainly the position in our country is that it would be 50% plus one, and that is clear for the British government too".

[Translation]

Greetings to all our Scottish friends, for whom Quebecers feel both friendship and affection.

*Oral Questions**[English]***CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, all members of the House have received thousands of letters and signatures on petitions regarding the issue of child pornography.

In their letters and petitions, my constituents quite rightly make the point that not only is pornography degrading to the individuals depicted in it, it has a negative effect on the moral fabric of our society generally. This is doubly so when we consider the issue of child pornography. The use and abuse of children for that purpose is so degrading and reprehensible that it deserves special attention by government.

Therefore, I call on the government to take the necessary legal and legislative actions required to curb the production and distribution of pornography, especially child pornography. Canada is a free society, but with freedom comes responsibility. On the issue of child pornography in particular, I feel the time has come for government and all of us here to work to bring child pornography to an end.

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NATIONAL UNITY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with support for Quebec sovereignty in decline, the Prime Minister had an opportunity to renew federalism and to build a Canada that works better for all of its citizens. But all by himself, without consulting other federalist leaders, he made another choice. He chose not to strengthen federalism but instead to fuel sovereignist sentiments.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister's threat to take unilateral action runs the risk of rekindling the sovereignist flame and threatening Canada's future.

The supreme court found that clarity is a condition to all negotiations on secession.

I am in favour of a united Canada, but if the sovereignists hold a referendum, the National Assembly will have to ensure that clarity is the order of the day.

* * *

● (1415)

*[English]***CANADIAN SPECIAL OLYMPICS 2000**

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in two months Ottawa will have the honour of hosting the Canadian Special Olympics 2000 Winter Games.

What a wonderful way to greet the new millennium. These athletes train hard in their chosen sports. Many compete nationally and go on to the world stage.

There is much truth in the Special Olympics oath: "Let me win but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt".

On behalf of all members in the House, I welcome the Team Canada Special Olympics athletes in Ottawa today. These are some of the special Olympians who represented Canada this summer in North Carolina.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[English]***AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general's report harshly criticizes the government for its mismanagement of various agencies and services, but it applauds the government in one notable area, the efficiency with which the government collects \$21 billion a year from Canadians through the GST.

Is it not ironic that the party that advocated the abolition of the GST is now impressing the auditors with the effectiveness with which it collects the tax.

Why is the government better at collecting taxes than it is at cutting, abolishing and scrapping them?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had a debate a long time ago. The hon. member should read very carefully the red book number one where we made our policy very clear on that.

I am very happy to accept the words of the Leader of the Opposition complimenting the government for being very effective in making sure Canadians pay their due to the government.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal would be proud of collecting taxes. The auditor general has also joined business and labour critics in condemning the government's mishandling of employment insurance, particularly the payroll taxes that support it. He says "parliament and the public are left to speculate about the factors driving decisions concerning one of the government's largest and most visible programs". They are left to speculate because the government is imposing payroll taxes far higher than those required to support the program.

Oral Questions

EI no longer means employment insurance. It means extra income for the finance minister.

Why is the government so good at collecting payroll taxes and so bad at reducing them?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have reduced them. When we started it was \$3.07 and it was projected to be \$3.30. We have reduced it every year and keep reducing it all the time.

The hon. member should know that when we were in opposition—something that we are not projecting to happen soon—we remember that at that time the UI fund was in a deficit position. In those terrible days, the taxpayers had to take from the consolidated revenue fund to pay the deficit that we do not—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers are not impressed.

I have a copy of a bill from a Saskatchewan farmer who recently bought \$531 of gasoline for his farm. When provincial sales tax, federal excise taxes and GST were added, his bill came to \$1,137. That is more than \$600 in taxes. In other words, the taxes were almost \$100 more than the gasoline, and the government says it is helping the farmers.

The farmer asks, why is the government so good at collecting taxes and so bad at cutting them?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will tell that farmer that when we started as a government, he had to pay 11% interest on the loan he had on his farm.

It is because we have given a balanced budget and good management that he started saving thousands and thousands of dollars every year because the interest rates are lower.

* * *

• (1420)

GOVERNMENT REVENUES

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the government, farmers are losing their farms. The government is so good at taxing people; it has turned it into an export.

When Castro was casting around for the most oppressive tax system in the world, guess which one he chose? Guess who is paying for it?

The government has spent \$5 million to show the dictatorship in communist Cuba a thing or two about squeezing the last peso out of destitute Cubans.

Why has the government become so good at taking down taxpayers that we are now the envy of dictatorships around the world?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are the envy of most economies around the world because our economy is doing so well.

The hon. member talks about exports. Let me give him an example. The numbers came out yesterday. Real goods and services exports surged 15% in the last quarter alone.

The leader of the opposition talks about the GST. Yes, our revenues are up because consumer confidence is up, and Canadians are buying. Our revenues are up because the economy is firing on all cylinders.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government's revenues are up because taxes are at record high levels, thanks to the minister.

Canada's tax system might be a great help to dictators like Castro, but it is a pox on the people of Cuba. What did the people of Cuba ever do to the minister that he has taken the extreme measure of siccing Revenue Canada on them? Oh, the humanity. What did they do?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand why the Reform Party is focusing on Cuba. It is because they cannot criticize this government.

Let us take a look. The numbers came out yesterday. Canada's gross domestic product advanced 4.7 in the third quarter. That is four quarters in a row. Our business investment is up an average of 12%. We are now creating jobs at a faster rate than any other G-7 country.

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[Translation]

REFERENDUMS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Radio-Canada reported that the government was putting the finishing touches to a bill setting the conditions and rules for a future Quebec referendum.

Will the Prime Minister confirm the existence of such a bill to the House and tell us whether he intends to introduce it before Christmas?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will not have any legislation on how the referendum should be conducted.

If there is a referendum—and 72% of Quebecers hope that there will not be—it will be conducted according to the provisions of the provincial referendum legislation.

What we are saying is that we will state clearly the conditions applying to any future negotiations well in advance.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has also forgotten to mention that the poll he keeps referring to revealed that 66% of Quebecers would like him to step down.

An hon. member: Now that is a clear majority.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: In his speech to Liberal delegates on the weekend, the Prime Minister held up Newfoundland's last two referendums as examples where the questions had been clear.

We know that 52% of Newfoundlanders voted in favour of joining confederation. Clearly, 50% plus one was the rule used.

How then does the Prime Minister explain that the same rule of 50% plus one would not apply now, if the question were clear?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had done his homework, he would know that, in an initial referendum, 86% of Newfoundlanders voted to separate from Great Britain. The percentage for separating from Great Britain was 86%.

Then, in a second referendum, they had to decide whether they wanted to be an independent country, or a province of Canada. But on the separation question, only 14% voted to remain part of Great Britain.

• (1425)

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister justifies wanting to get involved in the Quebec referendum process by saying that the supreme court used the expression "clear majority" 25 times in its ruling and more than 10 times in its conclusion.

Did the Prime Minister ever wonder why the justices, who had a golden opportunity to clarify things, never questioned the 50% plus one rule?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the court was very clear on that issue. It did not mention any numbers, but said that there had to be a clear majority. Had the court meant a simple majority, it would have referred to a majority. There would have been no need to qualify that majority by adding the word "clear".

A majority is a majority. In my opinion, a clear majority means much more than a simple majority.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if what the court had in mind was not 50% plus one, it would have talked about a qualified majority.

Long before the reference to the supreme court, the Prime Minister's intention not to recognize the 50% plus one rule should the yes side win was known to all, including the supreme court justices.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why, under the circumstances, the supreme court did not deem necessary to set a rule other than the 50% plus one?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to quote one line from the ruling and I would like the hon. member to think about it. The court wrote "Democracy means more than simple majority rule".

I think this statement is pretty clear. And it is in the ruling. I have told this House and all Canadians repeatedly during the referendum campaign that I would never negotiate independence on the basis of a one vote majority. No self-respecting head of government would agree to break up a country without a real consensus.

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[English]

LABOUR STANDARDS

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister stated that labour standards do not belong in trade agreements, send them to the ILO. By contrast, President Clinton stated yesterday that core labour standards should be part of every trade agreement and we ought not to buy from countries that oppress workers with poor labour conditions and lack of a living income.

Does the Prime Minister stand by his statement that labour standards do not belong in trade agreements or does he agree with President Clinton?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that we insisted before we agreed to NAFTA that the labour conditions be in the agreement. They were not before we formed the government and we insisted on having them there.

I just want to report at this moment that the Minister for International Trade has been named today to be the head of the WTO working group on trade in developing countries, just to show the House of Commons the reputation of Canada with other countries.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us hope that the trade minister stiffens his backbone and begins standing up for labour rights and environmental protection. It is pathetic when the Canadian government has to take lessons in social justice from the Americans.

Listen to what else President Clinton said yesterday: "They're going to have to open up the WTO process so that the voices of labour and the environment can be heard". Yet for our Prime Minister, labour issues belong at the ILO and environmental issues just are not on the table.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that trade and labour, that trade and environment are inextricably linked?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): That is what we demanded before we signed the NAFTA agreement. We were opposed to the previous NAFTA agreement because they were not talking about the environment, because they were not talking about labour conditions and because they were not talking about water.

We showed our colours long before the hon. member got up to ask these questions.

* * *

• (1430)

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, in his report tabled yesterday the auditor general said there might be a link between the awarding of contracts by the government and donations to the Liberal Party of Canada.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Are there any links between moneys awarded to companies through the TJF fund and financial contributions to Liberal members?

The Speaker: Order, please. I think that is a question about a political party, as I heard it, and I would rule the question out of order. Does the member have another question?

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, in Papineau—Saint-Denis, represented by her predecessor at HRDC, a company by the name of Rougier Inc., which received \$81,000 from the TJF program, gave Liberal candidates of Montreal in the 1997 election a total amount of \$8,400. Then in 1998, after receiving a TJF amount, it increased the donation to the Liberal Party of Canada by \$1,000 and received contracts of over \$40,000.

Are there any links between donations to the Liberal Party of Canada and getting—

The Speaker: The question is out of order.

* * *

HEALTH

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government has absolutely no idea what it is actually spending on health care. It knows that it slashed \$21 billion from the health care budget, but other than that the details are getting pretty sketchy.

The auditor general says that the federal government has no idea whether its health care spending ever makes it to the waiting lines or the emergency rooms. The truth is that it ain't even coming close.

Why does the government care so little about the health of Canadians that it does not even bother to monitor where Canadian health tax dollars are going?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general made some very useful recommendations yesterday. In fact we are already implementing some of them. On this very point the member should know that we are now acting to fill that gap.

Last February the government announced that it was to invest significant sums in developing an information system so that every year we would get an annual report on the state of the health care system in Canada, including the amounts spent by all governments.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that is right, but this is not something new that the auditor general has talked about. It should be acted on before he even thinks of reporting how despicable it is.

The auditor general also says that there are weaknesses in the surveillance of diseases and injuries which are compromising the ability of Health Canada to protect Canadians. That is what it is all about.

After confiscating half the income of Canadians on taxes one would think the government would take it upon itself to try to protect Canadians from health risks. Why is the government so good at cutting and so bad at caring?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we announced in the last budget that we were increasing by \$11.5 billion over the next five years the transfers to provinces. We did that only after they all agreed that every nickel would be devoted to health and nothing else.

Part of our commitment, as the Prime Minister has often said, is to have a report card that will tell Canadians what they are getting for their money in the health care system. We believe not only in caring but in accountability.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Transport expressed surprise that the President of InterCanadian did not lay the blame for its difficult situation on the management team of the company. According to him, they are the ones responsible for the difficulties the company has been experiencing.

How can the minister justify his lack of interest in saving the 900 jobs at InterCanadian, while he has been involved for some months to a greater extent than necessary in trying to save Canadian Airlines?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely simplistic for the company to attempt to

Oral Questions

put the responsibility on the federal government for the financial difficulties of InterCanadian, or to attribute it to the battle between Air Canada and Canadian Airlines, without assuming any responsibility itself. InterCanadian bought Air Atlantic, and this was a very troubled company.

As I have already said, InterCanadian's problems were very evident a year ago.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport's explanation for the difficult situation of InterCanadian is excess capacity on regional routes.

• (1435)

In this regard, how can he explain that he is still refusing to say he will not grant a regional licence to a future carrier based in Hamilton? Would it not be totally logical to take a clear position in this matter?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Hamilton service is part of the Air Canada proposal, which is being examined by the Standing Committee on Transport at this time. The hon. member sits on that committee.

However, I must emphasize the fact that there is excess capacity on the regional routes, in Quebec particularly. I am told, for instance, that there are 400 available seats on the Sept-Îles—Montreal route weekly, but only 80 passengers.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the HRD minister about a \$1 million transitional jobs fund grant to set up a call centre in her riding.

The company was told that it would not be eligible for a TJF grant if it set up next door in Sarnia, which is strange because the unemployment rate in Sarnia was 25% higher and the unemployment rate in the minister's riding did not qualify under TJF rules.

Yesterday the minister dodged the question, so I will ask her again today. Does the minister think she has a right to rip off the TJF and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make clear to the House that no rules were broken on the application for transitional jobs funds in my riding.

I also want to make it clear that by implying that is so the hon. member is suggesting that the member for Kootenay—Columbia with an unemployment rate of 10.5% in his riding, who received \$3.5 million to create 291 jobs in his riding, was breaking the rules. She is suggesting that the member for Okanagan—Shuswap with an unemployment rate of 10.5% in his riding, who received \$800,000 for the creation of 46 jobs, was breaking the rules.

Perhaps the hon. member would like to turn around and talk to her own members about the importance of the transitional jobs fund.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am talking to the minister who is responsible for the fund. I might say that if the minister's department is giving out funds when the grants do not qualify she should be doing something about it.

Why does this minister not just acknowledge that she is getting special treatment from this fund and tell Canadians what she intends to do to make sure that their money is not misused in this way?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no special treatment here. I want to clarify for the House that in many ridings where the unemployment level was less than 12%, where indeed there were areas of high unemployment, TJF projects were approved. They include the riding of Nanaimo—Alberni, the riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, and the riding of Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan.

Transitional jobs fund moneys have been approved in ridings right across the country where unemployment levels have been high. It is as a result of those projects that we are seeing success and a reduced unemployment level.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN HIV/AIDS LEGAL NETWORK

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network released a report on injection drug users and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The report indicates that Canada's repressive approach, which treats drug users like offenders, deters these users from making use of public health services.

Does the minister agree that the Controlled Drugs Act is a serious impediment to the establishment of needle exchange centres with safe material that is not infected, a situation which is not compatible with an effective strategy in the fight against AIDS?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday I met Ralf Jürgens, who wrote the report with his team. I discussed his recommendations and I promised to provide a

detailed answer in the coming months. Mr. Jürgens made interesting and meaningful recommendations, and his report is now under consideration.

• (1440)

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House now what he intends to do with the recommendation of the Canadian Legal Network to amend the Controlled Drugs Act, so that injecting devices used under the supervision of a health professional are not deemed to be a designated substance under the act? We would like an answer now.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my view, the most important thing is to have treatments available for those who need them.

I would rather provide an answer after careful consideration of the report. I will examine it and discuss it with my officials and I will provide an answer at the appropriate time.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians continually read about how armed forces operations have been hampered by the failures of the antiquated Sea King helicopter. It is really no wonder. The 1994 defence white paper stated that the Sea King helicopter was at the end of its operational life.

The government promised to put into service a replacement by the end of the decade. We have four weeks left. My question is for the government and for the Prime Minister. Where is the replacement for the Sea King helicopter?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the maritime helicopter project is our top priority in terms of equipment, and we are in the process of developing a procurement strategy.

This project is based on a statement of requirements, but several other issues must be examined and other departments must be consulted. The government will make an announcement when these issues have been resolved.

[English]

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government is putting Canadians at risk. The white paper clearly promised to put into service a replacement for the Sea King

helicopter by the end of the decade, not to tender a contract but to find a replacement for the Sea King by the end of the decade.

The government has reneged on its promise, which has caused reduction in our armed forces capability and has put air crew at risk. Why has the government broken this promise?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really surprised by the hon. member's question.

The minister appeared before the committee the other day and he made it very clear that the new helicopters will become operational around the year 2005, if I am not mistaken. This is what the minister said. Until then, we will rely on the Sea King helicopters.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously passed the following motion:

That the National Assembly call on the federal Minister of Justice to suspend passage of Bill C-3 so that she can better evaluate the provinces' enforcement of the measures provided in the Young Offenders Act and so that Quebec can maintain its strategy of intervention based on the needs of young people and favouring prevention and rehabilitation.

My question is very simple. How does the Minister of Justice intend to respond to the unanimous motion by the National Assembly of Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact on Thursday and Friday I will have the opportunity to discuss the renewal of our youth justice system with provincial and territorial colleagues, including the Attorney General of Quebec. I look forward to that opportunity.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, AIDS is a disease that reaches across all borders. This year 2.6 million men, women and children will die from AIDS. Some 95% of those infected with HIV live in developing countries with limited resources to fight back.

What is Canada doing to help AIDS victims and to prevent further spread of the virus in developing countries?

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of World AIDS Day I have

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announced \$50 million in new funding to help in the war against HIV-AIDS in Africa where the pandemic has been more severe to date.

Some 33.6 million people in the world are HIV positive and 70% of them are in Africa. In the next 10 short years more than 40 million children will be orphaned in Africa. I also announced today an international HIV-AIDS conference in the year 2000.

* * *

• (1445)

RCMP

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1997 Corporal Robert Read discovered evidence of a cover-up by RCMP officers in a visa scam investigation in Canada's Hong Kong office. He made serious allegations of criminal misconduct but he could not get the RCMP to review his allegations. Read has been told he is being suspended for repeating his allegations in the province this summer, yet the RCMP still has not investigated the cover-up.

Will the solicitor general appoint a special prosecutor to investigate these serious charges?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any allegation of wrongdoing that is brought to the RCMP is operational, and if it is to be investigated the RCMP will decide what measures to take.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I see. So the RCMP investigates itself in spite of the fact that there is this serious allegation by one of its own members.

This issue goes to the heart of Canada's security. We are talking about allegations of a visa scam that has allowed triad gang members to freely enter Canada. They got free entry by compromising Canada's computer security system in Hong Kong. These are serious allegations.

Why will the minister not take them seriously and appoint a special prosecutor?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is well aware that if there is any problem with the operations of the RCMP, there is a complaints division that he can apply to, the Public Complaints Commission. I do not run the operations of the RCMP.

* * *

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment failed to take responsibility and show to leadership in protecting Canada's water resources. The minister

failed to reach an agreement with five of the provinces and these are the minister's own words when he conceded that our water resources are vulnerable as a result. Will he now do the responsible thing, the right thing, and enact a federal ban on all water exports?

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if only the hon. member would talk to his provincial colleagues in British Columbia.

This government believes that the issue of water exports is an environmental issue not a trade issue. Eight provincial governments and territorial governments agreed with the federal government in a national water accord.

We fully expect four other provinces to come onside once they have consulted with their own cabinets. I would encourage the Government of British Columbia to get onboard because we are doing the right thing.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, who will remember back in February of this year when the House of Commons, with the government's support, supported a motion calling for federal legislation banning bulk water exports. That was a motion of the House that was virtually supported by all political parties. The Prime Minister will certainly be aware that Canada has the constitutional authority to regulate international trade and to ban bulk water exports.

Why does the Prime Minister not do what all Canadians actually want him to do, show leadership on this issue and introduce the appropriate legislation that the House called for?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the information of the hon. member, the Prime Minister has shown leadership. In fact, there is a bill already in the House that will be coming up for second reading as soon as it can be arranged among House leaders.

* * *

TRANSITIONAL JOBS FUND

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, things must not only be right but they must appear to be right. In March 1997 a company called Bas Iris received over \$8 million from the transitional jobs fund. That company is based in the riding of Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies. It gave over \$5,000 to the government candidate in the election and over \$1,000 to the governing party.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development not agree that it is inappropriate for companies receiving funds from a government program to turn around and give money back to a political party that gave it the money?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I will agree with is that the transitional jobs fund has done an extraordinary job at making sure Canadians get back to work. What I will agree with is that for \$300 million we have been able to leverage over \$2 billion to ensure there is work for Canadians who have not had it in ridings right across the country.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, there are many in the House who are in the Christmas spirit, but the Minister of Human Resources Development seems to forget that it is better to give than to receive.

The minister continues to deny even the possibility that the TJF money was handed over inappropriately.

• (1450)

In the spirit of the upcoming holiday, will the minister guarantee that her New Year's resolution will be to ensure that the Canada jobs fund money will only go to those ridings with serious and legitimate unemployment problems?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly where they have gone.

* * *

[Translation]

RESEARCH

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this knowledge-based revolution, the future will belong to those countries with the best and most innovative human resources.

This means that there is nothing more important than the research done in our universities.

My question is for the Secretary of State for Science, Research and Development. What does the Government of Canada intend to do to intensify research in Canada?

Hon. Gilbert Normand (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following the throne speech, the Prime Minister announced an investment of \$180 million over three years to establish 2,000 university research chairs in order to support our universities.

Following the budget, the Minister of Finance increased the budget of the Canadian foundation for innovation to \$1 billion. Last week, the Minister of Health announced the creation of the Canadian institutes of health research.

I myself announced last week a \$1 million prize, the Gerhard Herzberg prize for research, a prize that may be awarded in amounts of \$200,000 a year for five years to continue research.

[English]

RCMP

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the solicitor general, following on the question of my colleague.

The solicitor general says that Corporal Read should go to the Public Complaints Commission with his concerns. Corporal Read went to the Public Complaints Commission in 1998. He was told that was the inappropriate body to investigate this. We have the RCMP officials investigating one of their own members who is laying criminal complaints against them.

Is it not time that the solicitor general looked at this very seriously and appointed an independent prosecutor to get to the bottom of this issue?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP are currently conducting a criminal investigation. The commissioner has also assured me that he has assigned a senior officer to this investigation.

* * *

[Translation]

POLLUTION

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech, the government promised to address pollution-related problems and to support innovative clean-up technologies.

But a recently published study revealed that the city of Jonquière holds the somewhat dubious title of the city with the highest concentrations of toxic products, such as PAHs, dioxins and furans.

Will the Prime Minister undertake to keep his promises and move quickly to free up funds so that the industries and communities in the Jonquière region can improve the quality of the air we breathe?

[English]

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the province of Quebec trying to ameliorate the situation in Jonquière. The province has assumed some responsibility and we hope it will live up to that responsibility.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this World AIDS Day it is important to note that HIV infections are going up and that half of the new cases are

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related to drug injection use. What do we get from the minister? We get more studies but no action.

He refers to the Canadian HIV-AIDS legal network, which has made a very specific recommendation of getting the government to move on to a public health strategy and start to deal with this as a public health crisis, and the minister says that he needs to study it.

Will the minister finally make a commitment to change to a harm reduction health strategy and act promptly on the recommendations of this latest report?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy and it is a good one. It involves \$42 million a year to fight HIV-AIDS. It will prevent HIV infections. It will help researchers to find treatments and, one day, a cure. It will support community groups that provide assistance to people in communities across the country who are HIV positive or suffering from AIDS.

Part of the strategy is the creation of an AIDS ministerial council made up of 20 people from across the country who advise the government on whether we are doing it right. That report was a good one and we are studying its recommendations. We have a strategy that is working.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

REFERENDUMS

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, for over a week now, the referendum debate has raged more fiercely than ever. All this talk has created expectations, positive or negative, concerns, anger, even disappointment.

Many people are asking themselves the following question: Unless this is nothing more than an empty and divisive debate, could the Prime Minister tell us where is the beef?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how long will it take the Progressive Conservatives to understand that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, the reason there is a referendum debate is because of the first article in the Parti Québécois' program, because the PQ keeps saying that it wants to hold a referendum at a time of its choosing, using the confused and illegal procedure of 1995, and because the right of Quebecers to be full-fledged Canadians is jeopardized until they have taken a clear decision to the contrary.

It is time the Progressive Conservative Party behaved like a party with pan-Canadian responsibilities.

* * *

ANGLOPHONE COMMUNITY IN QUEBEC

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's newspapers report that the PQ government does not intend to renew its framework agreement with the Canadian government relating to social services and health care for the anglophone community of Quebec.

If that is true, it is truly a disgrace. I would like to know what the Minister of Canadian Heritage intends to do to protect the rights of Quebec anglophones.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether or not the report is correct, but I do know that the anglophone community in Quebec can rest assured that the Government of Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage intends to continue to offer assistance to ensure that services are available to this community as we do for the francophone community.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are prepared to continue this agreement, just as we are prepared to help the Government of Ontario with respect to its francophone community, and to help the governments of the other provinces in Canada to do the same.

The irony of this, however, if it is true, is that the person who would be terminating these agreements would be the same one who created them, as can be seen from the letter Lucien Bouchard sent to Gil Rémillard in 1988.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

* * *

[English]

RCMP

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

He mentioned that the commissioner told him the name of the individual investigating Corporal Read. Does the solicitor general not know that this individual is one of those accused by Corporal Read of the same crimes? It is like the fox looking after the chicken coop.

These triad leaders have power, so much power that Timothy Fu, one of those accused, said that his brother was shown in a picture

shaking hands with the Prime Minister. This shows the power these triads and underworld people have.

Can the solicitor general—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. My colleagues, we are going to listen to this question. The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast.

• (1500)

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, in view of the powers that these triads have and the stories that are coming out of Canada, will the solicitor general not agree they should not be investigated by the RCMP, but an independent prosecutor?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CSIS also always investigates any people that enter this country. CSIS investigates all types of national security. There is an investigation. There will be a report and I will receive the report.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Today is a rather special day for us here in the House and for some guests that we have. I would like to draw the attention of all hon. members to the presence in our gallery of a very special group of people. They are the Canadian Special Olympic athletes. I want to introduce them to you because they are special to all of us. I would like you to hold your applause and as I call their names, I would ask them to stand and stay standing until I mention all of the names of the athletes: Bev Beals, Sherry Toporowski, Julie Keldsen, Ryan Courtemanche, Judy Weage, Marc Thériault, Jason Ballantyne, Jeremy Mueller, Curtis Tymko, Matthew Guptil, Jason Pope, Chris Doty, Lynn Marie McLean, Harvey Arcangelletti, Derek Dumbrell, Lynn-Marie Maclean, and their coaches. Would their coaches please stand too.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

• (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the very lively question period you ruled two questions out of order concerning matters which were raised in the report of the auditor general yesterday.

It may be that you did not hear my question, which had to do with actions by a government department in awarding crown funds. These are clearly matters within the competence of the minister, and the minister is accountable for these funds.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: During the course of question period, I am called on to make decisions many times about the questions themselves. In fact every question has to, I guess to use the words, pass muster.

From what I heard and could make out, I judged these questions to be out of order. For that reason I refer the hon. member to 409(7) of our rule book, and I would just leave it there.

I have another point of order I will listen to.

DECORUM

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my point of order arises out of what happened at the end of question period. Every member in the House has an obligation to support the Speaker of the House when he is trying to restore decorum in this place.

Today we had a lot of people in the gallery from all across the country, and young people. We have set a terrible example of parliament. It is a very black eye for parliament.

• (1510)

Mr. Speaker, what I suggest is that you might want to consider conferring with the House leaders and the whips as to how we are to maintain order in the House. It is the obligation of all of us to support the Speaker in maintaining some decorum and some order in this place as a place that represents all the people of Canada. The display we saw today was embarrassing and disgusting in terms of the reputation of this place.

The Speaker: My colleagues, perhaps the best way for us to keep decorum is to treat each other with greater civility when we are in question period and during debates. Of course, I will take all of these interventions, consider them and will act in due course.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the standing orders, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions.

* * *

CANADIAN LAND MINE FUND

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, the first annual report of the Canadian Land Mine Fund.

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As this report shows, our efforts have gone a long way toward clearing land and helping victims rebuild their lives. We support mine action programs in 19 countries and are now working with other nations to create a new norm against the use of this weapon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during question period, I quoted from a National Assembly motion on the Young Offenders Act.

I am requesting the unanimous consent of the House to table the motion, and the transcription of what was said in the National Assembly this morning, for the information of the minister, who obviously had not read it.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

This report asks the government to implement a five year plan in the next budget and to significantly increase the funding for the Canadian forces. I note that all parties, except the Bloc Québécois, supported this motion.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs proceeded to the consideration of the mandate of the Department of the National Defence. The committee has agreed to report to the House with these recommendations.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee does request a government response.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this 12th report later this day.

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-17, an act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals, disarming a peace officer and other amendments) and the Firearms Act (technical amendments).

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

* * *

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-18, an act to amend the Criminal Code (impaired driving causing death and other matters).

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

* * *

ACT TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF CHEMICAL PESTICIDES FOR NON-ESSENTIAL PURPOSES

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-388, an act to prohibit the use of chemical pesticides for non-essential purposes.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to introduce this bill in this House. This is the second bill I introduce.

This bill seeks to impose a moratorium on the use of chemical pesticides for esthetic purposes on home lawns and gardens and on recreational facilities such as parks and golf courses, until scientific evidence that they are not harmful is submitted to parliament and approved by a parliamentary committee.

There is currently no scientific evidence that the use of chemical pesticides for non-essential purposes is not harmful to health, particularly the health of children and people at risk. This is why I am introducing this bill. I hope to get the support of both sides of the House.

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

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure

Routine Proceedings

and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

THE SENATE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour to present a petition with a long list of rationale.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to take whatever action is necessary to see that the Senate of Canada is abolished once and for all.

THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour to present another petition signed by quite a few petitioners from Kamloops.

Our founding fathers depended upon God and exhibited faith in God for wisdom and guidance as they established this dominion. To exempt one of the greatest resources of our founding fathers who possessed faith in God is a disaster they personally want to avoid.

Therefore they call upon the Parliament of Canada to do whatever is necessary to keep our heritage intact, which includes the reference of our founding fathers to the supremacy of God in the constitution.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of some of the constituents in the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke I present a petition that reads in part that parliament take necessary measures to ensure that—

• (1520)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member knows that he cannot read the petition. He will want to comply with the rules and give the House a brief summary.

Mr. Hec Clouthier: It will be a very brief summary.

The Deputy Speaker: It had better be a brief summary and not a reading of part of the petition.

Mr. Hec Clouthier: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence on this matter. The petitioners request that the federal government take all necessary measures to eradicate child pornography.

NISGA'A AGREEMENT

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure today to table four petitions.

The first petition contains 134 signatures of people mostly from the Vernon and Armstrong areas of my riding. They are asking parliament to reject the Nisga'a treaty because it may divide Canadians forever.

TAXATION

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by 249 persons from the riding of Okanagan—Shuswap.

They ask for tax relief of 25% over the next three years, leading the way to job creation, economic growth and the reduction of poverty.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am pleased to table today is signed by 278 people from the riding of Okanagan—Shuswap.

They ask parliament to change Canada's immigration laws to quickly separate genuine refugees from those trying to take advantage of our system.

GASOLINE

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition I wish to table today is from more than 1,000 people from the riding of Okanagan—Shuswap.

They are concerned about the environmental effects of the Canadian Coast Guard authorizing the sale of gasoline through a gas station floating in the narrows of the Shuswap Lake. They ask parliament to ban floating gas stations on Shuswap Lake.

TAIWAN

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour to present the following petition signed by 26 interested Canadians.

The petitioners pray and request that parliament support Taiwan's membership in the World Health Organization. Taiwan has been unfairly barred from any participation in World Health Organization activity since 1972.

Taiwan's membership in the World Health Organization is a basic human right for all Taiwanese people. Last year this basic human right was denied again. This is the third year in a row that the Taiwanese bid was rejected, disregarding the basic health rights of the 22 million people of Taiwan.

THE SENATE

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they just keep rolling in. I have a petition signed by many people who say that the Senate is undemocratic, unelected, unac-

Routine Proceedings

countable and costs us about \$50 million plus a year and that it usurps the role of ordinary members of parliament elected to the House of Commons.

Therefore the petitioners want steps taken now to abolish the Senate.

EQUALITY

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today I take great pride in presenting a petition put forth by over 1,200 concerned Canadians mostly from the province of Quebec.

The petitioners ask our government to affirm that all Canadians are equal under all circumstances and without exception in the province of Quebec and throughout Canada.

They wish to remind the government to enact only legislation that affirms the equality of each and every individual under the laws of Canada.

THE SENATE

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce a petition today signed by several dozen people from Dartmouth who would like to see the Senate of Canada abolished.

They believe that it is undemocratic, unaccountable to the people and a colossal waste of money to the taxpayer.

LOUIS RIEL

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to table two petitions today. The first one is from Victoria in the province of British Columbia.

Several hundred people ask that parliament respect the facts of history and refrain from passing any act or bill that seeks to rewrite history regarding Louis Riel.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from people in my riding. It pertains to the Divorce Act and asks parliament to take into consideration immediately the recommendations of the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access of December 8, 1998.

SNOWBIRDS

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition to the House on behalf of residents largely from Moose Jaw but also from other communities in Saskatchewan.

They ask that the government take all necessary action to ensure that the continued and stable funding of the 431 air demonstration squadron Snowbirds remains a priority.

• (1525)

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two petitions today signed by people mostly from the community of Westlock in my riding.

The petitioners object to the deplorable failure of the government to protect children from the exploitation and abuse of those who produce child pornography and to introduce the notwithstanding clause to bring back subparagraph 163.1(4) of the criminal code.

HEPATITIS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—East-ern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess this is a case where you have saved the best for last.

Pursuant to Standing Order 36 it gives me great pleasure to present again a wave of signatures from across the country, this time from Niagara Falls and Port Colborne, Ontario.

These very informed people wish to inform the House that the disease of hepatitis affects over 600,000 Canadians. They pray that parliament support Bill C-232, surprisingly one of my own, to make the month of May hepatitis awareness month.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 7 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 7—**Mr. Peter MacKay:**

With respect to RCMP officers of civilians classified under the person year exemption status: (a) how many are there; (b) how were they appointed; (c) where are they located; (d) what are their job descriptions; (e) what are their responsibilities; (f) what is the cost to the Canadian government of these officers' expenses and salaries; (g) who assigns their project and on what projects are these officers currently working; and (h) to whom and how often do these officers report their work?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib): With respect to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, officers or civilians classified under the person year exemption status, the information is as follows:

(a) There are currently 156 regular and 5 civilian members occupying full time equivalent exempt from classification, FTEEC, positions for a total of 161 members.

(b) RCMP members currently occupying a FTEEC position are selected on the basis of their qualifications and/or experience in a field specific to one of the various assignments in the FTEEC program.

(c) Of the 161 RCMP regular and civilian members currently occupying FTEEC positions, four of the five civilian members are located at headquarters in Ottawa and one is located in Vancouver, B.C. Of the 156 regular members occupying FTEEC positions, a total of 31 are currently posted in foreign countries as liaison officers. The remaining 125 regular members are distributed throughout Canada.

Liaison Officers in Foreign Countries:

United States	4	France	3	Italy	2
Austria	1	Spain	1	Germany	1
India	1	Thailand	2	Switzerland	1
England	3	Pakistan	1	Russia	1
Indonesia	1	Netherlands	1	Bogota	3
Mexico	1	Jamaica	1	Peru	1
China	2				

Regular Members in RCMP Divisions:

Headquarters—53
A Division, NCR Ottawa, Ontario—2
B Division, Newfoundland—4
C Division, Québec—4
D Division, Manitoba—7
E Division, British Columbia—21
F Division, Saskatchewan—5
G Division, Northwest Territories—2
H Division, Nova Scotia—7
J Division, New Brunswick—8
K Division, Alberta—8
L Division, Prince Edward Island—1
M Division, Yukon—2
Depot, Regina, Saskatchewan—1

(d) FTEEC positions do not have a job description per se. A job description will only be required if and when a decision is made to classify such a position, which occurs occasionally.

(e) The responsibilities of the RCMP members holding a person year exemption status differ from one assignment to the other. The following are the various FTEEC responsibilities to which the 161 RCMP members are currently assigned.

Secondment Assignment:

This is an assignment of duties outside the RCMP for a maximum period of two years. These types of assignments enable the RCMP to develop a certain expertise and provide a link for the RCMP with other organizations at the federal, provincial and municipal levels.

Special Project Assignment:

This is an assignment to duties within the RCMP for a maximum period of two years. Such an assignment enables a member to

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conduct or participate in a specific project which does not form part of the RCMP continuing function.

Training and Development Assignment:

An assignment to provide or develop knowledge, skills and expertise in job related technical areas through on the job training and/or attendance at technical institutions.

Division Staff Relations Representatives Assignment:

This is an assignment to comply with the need for more effective internal communication respecting staff relations within the RCMP. The member is elected to a two-year term and is eligible for re-election.

Member Assistance Program, MAP, Co-ordinator Assignment:

An assignment to allow for the posting of qualified members, independent of rank, possessing knowledge and related experience together with appropriate personality characteristics to MAP co-ordinator positions in the RCMP. Selection of co-ordinator is made in conjunction with our Health Services Directorate.

Foreign Service Liaison Officer Assignment:

An assignment to allow for posting of liaison officers in foreign countries who have the required foreign language skills, job related skills and personal attributes, including family configuration that are necessary in such foreign postings.

(f) The cost associated with the FTEEC program was approximately \$11,899,485.00 in salaries and other related expenses for the 1998-1999 fiscal year.

Secondment Assignment:

Funds for secondment assignments within the federal government are recovered from the department to which the member is seconded. Secondment to external agencies incurs no cost to the federal government.

Special Project Assignment:

Special projects are funded from existing funded positions within the RCMP. As such, members are paid by the directorates-divisions from which they are reassigned.

Training and Development Assignment:

As per special project assignment.

Division Staff Relations Representatives Assignment:

These assignments are funded internally from the existing RCMP budget.

Member Assistance Program, MAP, Co-ordinator Assignment:

These assignments are funded internally within the RCMP's budget.

Foreign Service Liaison Officer Assignment:

Funds for this program are allocated through the Treasury Board.

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(g) Members are assigned to one of the various assignment found in the FTEEC program by their director and/or commanding officer. Current FTEEC program assignment are identified above in item (e). As for the projects, these are referred to as special projects. Several members are assigned to projects within the RCMP such as: the security committee for the francophone summit in Moncton, the Year 2000 project, the alignment task force, the security committee for the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, the Canadian firearms project and other short term initiatives.

(h) These members normally report to their immediate supervisors or project managers. The frequency of reporting their work is not a component of the monitoring process of the FTECC program.

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Did I miss the introduction of private members' bills?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member did.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, then I seek unanimous consent of the House to revert to that item.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I assume the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska will be seconding the hon. member's bill.

Mr. André Bachand: Of course.

* * *

CANADA SHIPPING ACT

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-389, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act (discharge of ballast water).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank all members of the House. I guess we have friends on both sides of the House. I appreciate their generosity.

The bill amends the Canada Shipping Act. Its purpose is to prevent the accidental introduction of living organisms that are not natural to Canada into Canadian waters by the discharge of ship ballast water.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADIAN TOURISM COMMISSION ACT

The House resumed from November 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, an act to establish the Canadian Tourism Commission, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak to Bill C-5, an act to establish the Canadian Tourism Commission, and I want to do so because, unfortunately, we are once again looking at a bill that is a shocking example of duplication. The purpose of the bill is to enhance federal visibility in a sector that clearly falls within Quebec's jurisdiction. It is a sector of Quebec that is extremely well organized and that is working well, because the stakeholders work together.

What does the bill accomplish? It establishes a Canadian Tourism Commission.

• (1530)

As the bill clearly states, this Canadian Tourism Commission is a corporation. And what is it being established to do? What are its objects? The bill states, and I quote:

(a) sustain a vibrant and profitable Canadian tourism industry;

I would point out that this initial objective is a complete mystery to me. Since when is it the business of a crown corporation to "sustain a vibrant and profitable" industry? Enough has been said in this House and elsewhere that it should be clear that private businesses, whatever their size, will, through their own efforts, find a way to become vibrant and profitable.

The government's role is to support them through measures that are not specific to any one industry, but that apply generally to all industries, as does the Small Business Loans Act, or Technology Partnerships Canada, in the case of federal measures. There are many other measures that are available in the provinces and in Quebec to support investment and help identify markets.

I wonder why our colleagues on this side, to the right, that is the members of the Reform Party, are not surprised that the first object of the commission, as a crown corporation, is to sustain “a vibrant and profitable Canadian tourism industry”. Except for that first one, all the other objects, and I will read them, are already covered by Quebec law. And if there are similar laws in the other provinces, these objects must also be included in them. What are the other objects? They read, and I quote:

(b) market Canada as a desirable tourist destination;

It goes without saying that the Quebec law says “market Quebec as a desirable tourist destination”. Quebec is indeed a desirable tourist destination. What is the next object? It reads, and I quote:

(c) support a cooperative relationship between the private sector and the governments of Canada, the provinces and the territories with respect to Canadian tourism;

To co-operate is also an important object of Tourisme Québec, which is in a position to do so.

Finally, the last object reads, and I quote:

(d) provide information about Canadian tourism—

In Quebec, it is information about Quebec tourism.

—to the private sector and to the governments of Canada, the provinces and the territories.

In reading this, we must ask ourselves the question: What is the mandate of Tourisme Québec? Its mandate is:

—to guide and co-ordinate public and private initiatives regarding tourism; to develop a knowledge of tourism products and of tourists; to support the improvement and development of Quebec’s tourist supply; to organize and support the promotion of Quebec and of its tourism products on the various markets; to inform clients on tourism products in Quebec; to build and operate public facilities for tourism.

As we can see, Tourisme Québec has a broader mandate, but it includes all the mandates given to that corporation, which would be known as the Canadian Tourism Commission. Frankly, why is the government getting involved in this area?

• (1535)

Of course, the government is saying that there was already a commission, but it did not have the same status. It is not for nothing that the government is suddenly transforming it into a crown corporation, with its own legislation, that will report to the Minister of Industry.

When I look at this bill, I have to wonder: Why is the government again bringing us such duplication? How will it co-ordinate on a Canada-wide basis what is already extremely well co-ordinated within Quebec? Why is it bent on having a Canadian Tourism Commission?

I read the preamble and I think I have it figured out. This will come as a surprise. This is the Canadian Tourism Commission we are talking about. The preamble starts out as follows:

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Whereas the Canadian tourism industry is vital to the social and cultural identity and integrity of Canada;

Frankly, I nearly fell off my chair. I will read it again “the Canadian tourism industry is vital to the [—]identity”.

There will be identity problems if the government pushes ahead with its plans for a Canadian Tourism Commission. It does not trust Quebec, Alberta or British Columbia to look after their own tourist industry. Programs need to be co-ordinated in order to make the most of the funds available. That is fine. We know, however, that there are tourism targets for each of the provinces. Each has its interests and its own attractions. But now we hear that “the Canadian tourism industry is vital to the social and cultural identity and integrity of Canada”. Frankly, it take’s one’s breath away.

This is beginning to make less and less sense. I have read several reports of a task force set up by the former Clerk of the Privy Council to prepare Canada for 2005, and several references are made to Canadians’ serious identity problem. I saw it mentioned more than once.

For Quebecers, it was both disturbing and surprising to read, page after page, how much the Canadian identity would be threatened by the fact that our economic links would be more on a north-south axis, by the fact that a vast majority of Canadians would watch American television programs, and so on and so forth.

But I think it is going much too far to perceive the problem as so serious that the Canadian tourist industry should be considered an essential component of that identity. This kind of exaggeration baffles the mind.

Concerning this first part of the preamble, it is easy to understand that Tourisme Québec does not want to give rise to identity squabbles, but simply sell a distinctive tourist destination. Tourisme Québec is banking on Quebec’s difference.

• (1540)

We are proud of Quebec City, which was founded in 1608 by Champlain and is the national capital of Quebecers. We are proud of our past. And we encourage tourists to come and visit us in Quebec.

Are we to understand that, from now on, Quebec’s invitation to tourists should be sent via Ottawa, and that we should invite them to come and visit “la belle province”? Is that the basic tenet?

It cannot be, because Canada does not have the means to stop Quebec from selling its own tourist attractions. But one thing is for sure: this will create a great deal of confusion. Instead of ensuring better co-ordination, the bill will be confusing for many businesses that work perfectly well with Tourisme Québec. They will not know who to turn to.

Government Orders

Far from improving the opportunities for Quebec's tourist industry, which is a very major one, the bill could prevent this from happening and could even be harmful to the industry.

I cannot leave the first paragraph of the preamble without adding, at the very least, that it is extremely irritating and annoying to see how on the merest details—not to mention basic rights—concerning tourism, we must once again wage a battle to make the government understand that we can take care of this on our own in Quebec.

Of course, we can discuss with the other provinces, but this is not the issue here. When a national commission, a big crown corporation, with a budget we do not even talk about, is given the same powers as Tourisme Québec, this can only be called duplication.

The bill states also that the Canadian tourism industry makes an essential contribution to the economic well-being of Canadians; this is also true for Quebec. And we believe that the better we are organized in Quebec, the better Tourisme Québec can fulfil its mandate, and that the more the federal government gives to the provinces in terms of adequate transfers, the more we will be able to develop our tourism industry.

Does this mean that the federal government would use its large surpluses to give to the Canadian tourism commission funds that would otherwise not go to the provinces, to Quebec? If that is the case, this is utterly shameful. The federal government is misusing its spending power, and this means that all the structures we set up, which are beginning to work well, all the preparation, all the consensus building could be bypassed or, as I have already said, duplicated by the Canadian tourism commission.

I remind the House that there are regional tourist associations and that each one must produce a plan. This system works. There are discussions in each region. Not everybody agrees on priorities, but that is to be expected, because that is what consensus building is all about. People make concessions to reach a consensus. It is a remarkable effort.

The last part of the preamble states:

Whereas it is desirable to strengthen Canada's commitment to Canadian tourism by establishing a Tourism Commission that would work with the governments of the provinces and the territories—

Work how?

—to promote the interests—

Through this centralized agency.

• (1545)

The Bloc Québécois strongly opposes the bill because it will create duplication and is useless. It even borders on the counterproductive, because duplication is counterproductive.

It is always better to have clear priorities. It is always better to have one strategy than two. This is true for economic development. Not a single company could survive with two strategies. An industry, tourism in particular, must have one strategy and only one.

We are morally tired—I think that is the most accurate way I can put it this afternoon—of the constant desire of the government to encroach, to centralize, to bandy “Canada, Canada, Canada, Canada, Canada” about everywhere, and of reading that Canada's tourism industry is essential to Canada's identity.

I am tired, as a Quebecer and at the age I have reached, of hearing, day in and day out in the House, especially on days like this one, that this country clearly has no time for the people of Quebec, who are proud to be a people and who want to get themselves organized. There is no room for them either.

We are in the throes of a full constitutional debate revived by the Prime Minister. He says he wants to get on with other things, but he has revived the constitutional debate. The truth is we think they want to stick us in a corner and stamp the word Canada on us. They would tolerate La Belle Province.

In the meantime, a people is in the process of being forged, forged in adversity. It is an independent, a distinct and proud people increasingly capable of achievement and increasingly aware that Canada is a yoke they want to put on it.

Of course, not everyone speaks of this all the time in the buses and the metro, but one cannot stretch the elastic too far before it flies back into the face of the person holding it.

I will conclude. I think I have said the main things I wanted to say. This bill is an example of what must not be done. If the government really wants to have it for the other nine provinces, let it include the right to opt out. If there is money, it should be left to Quebec. But the government must stop trying to force us into a model we do not want, when we have one that works.

[English]

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick comment to make. All I heard from the hon. member, aside from of course stating separatist aspirations, was forcing, forcing, forcing. Nobody has forced anybody into this wonderful arrangement upon which we are embarking. All the stakeholders came together, Quebec included, and their representatives.

The member talked about duplication. It is not a matter of creating something. This was already there. We are simply fine tuning it to crown corporation status, which is basically what all the stakeholders asked, including Quebec, which is granted a seat on the board, as are all other representatives, so that collectively we

can market not only the beautiful province of Quebec but the entire country.

• (1550)

There is no duplication. The system already exists. We simply want to work much closer with our provincial partners, who will have the opportunity to promote and enhance the tourism industry.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that I know there is a commission. I mentioned it in my speech.

What I am emphasizing is that there is a good reason for making changes to it. All the mandates given to the commission—and he should be sensitive to this—apart from the first, which is unacceptable for a crown agency, are mandates already being carried out by Tourisme Québec.

The first thing the commission is mandated to do is to sustain a vibrant and profitable Canadian tourism industry. Come on. Support the industry, yes, do as Quebec has and do blanket publicity for the whole group, but not ensure that they are profitable. That has never been the mandate of any crown agency.

As for the other mandates, they are the jurisdiction of Tourisme Québec. I can do no more than repeat what I have already said, which he does not accept. I would have liked to hear his comments on the preamble.

[*English*]

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I notice from the intervention by the parliamentary secretary that the government at times can interpret acquiescence to mean agreement, because by using federal government spending power it is buying something.

The member for Mercier talked about duplication of effort and abuse of federal spending power. I would like her to elaborate on how this is an abuse of federal spending power. I am sure she has a couple of examples to elucidate that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, what I said is that, if the government makes use of this commission to invest money that would not be used elsewhere, everything they want to do with this commission, everything in its mandate, is already being done in Quebec, where tourism is organized around a collaborative effort. What is lacking, as it is in the fields of education and health, is money.

If a commission is established and money is put into it, this is going to derail the process. That is what I have said.

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In my opinion, this is abusive, because this is an area that must prosper. The economy is involved, deeply involved. Tourism is a \$5.4 billion industry in Quebec, far from negligible. It ranks sixth in terms of exports, and is therefore an important industry.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thought you were boycotting me. I was getting scared; I was surprised because this is not a habit of yours.

I have a two tiered question for my hon. colleague, our critic for foreign affairs, something it is important to remind the House of.

I know she does some excellent work and has to represent Quebec and the sovereignist movement all over the world. She has had the opportunity on several occasions to visit embassies abroad, where there are often offices of the Canadian tourism commission.

I would like her to tell us a little about how she sees things. When she visited these offices, what was the image of Quebec shown abroad?

Not too long ago, I was the critic for international trade, I also had the privilege to visit these offices. Canada is a big country and when one tries to promote tourism for almost all the provinces, some of them are left aside, and it happened quite often that I saw little or no information about Quebec.

I would also like to make another comment. By trying to repatriate everything to the federal level—I have seen this in different English provinces—does the federal government not give quite clearly the impression that provincial jurisdictions are second class jurisdictions, that it is the one who has to do the real work and leave minor details and trivia to local authorities, which are expected to carry out the orders taken by the superior minds, as they see it, in the central government?

• (1555)

All the government's bills smack of its smug attitude toward all institutions. As the hon. member for Mercier said quite clearly, in Quebec, there is another example of a principle that works. Tourisme Québec has been around for a very long time. It has developed through regional divisions, and this is working. I would like to hear the hon. member on these two issues.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the second question first.

I agree with the member and this will not come as a surprise to him. The impression we glean from what was said over and over again in this place is that the federal government always does everything better. It is said to be the government of all the provinces for some reason or other; perhaps because it is bigger. This would apparently make it the real government. That is contrary to a federal system that is truly based on the participation of all of its components, which are each the best at what they do.

Government Orders

When a federation starts thinking that the central government is the only one able to do everything, it is on the verge of shifting from being a federation to having a central government with the others becoming regional governments. This reflects more closely what I am seeing take shape in Canada: a large central government with regions. We can even think that this might be the fate of the Canadian federation if Quebec were to become an associated partner.

As far as the first question is concerned, my colleague has been involved in international trade issues longer than I have. I only visited very briefly a few embassies, but each time, I make sure to monitor closely how products from Quebec are faring.

[English]

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, the bill we are debating concerns the Canadian Tourism Commission. It will change the legal status of the Canadian Tourism Commission from that of a special operating agency to that of a crown corporation.

The words "crown corporation" raise the anxiety level in the House when heard by some, because from time to time we have taken a close look at some crown corporations. We have put them under close scrutiny because of their lack of management skills. Canada Post comes to mind.

Some argue that if we are ever to get Canada Post moving into the 21st century we will have to make it a private entity which will no longer operate under legislation concerning crown corporations.

Obviously the member was here during the Air Canada debate when it was changed from a crown agency, put on the market and bought by shareholders. As well, Petro-Canada was a crown agency which was privatized.

Information we have received from our researchers tells us that in 1997-98 the Canadian Tourism Commission spent \$146 million. Of that, \$63 million came from the federal government and \$83 million from private sector partners. Most of the budget was spent on marketing, with smaller amounts being spent on administration, research and product development.

• (1600)

The government is arguing, not the commission, that the commission does not have enough autonomy. When we are talking about autonomy, we are actually talking about the decision to chart its own destiny or set its own course. However, there is nothing in the bill that would lead me to believe that there will be more autonomy.

This commission will be structured like a crown corporation and will be at arm's length from the government. However, knowing the government, we will probably be standing in this place in the

near future talking about the privatization of this very agency once the private sector gets to examine this so-called autonomy.

The commission will be set up in such a way that the chairperson will be appointed by who? Will it be by private sector interests? No. The governor in council, meaning the Prime Minister of Canada, will pick the chairperson of the commission. What does that tell us about autonomy? He or she will be under the callous hands of the Prime Minister within six months.

The president of this new organization, believe it or not, will be appointed by, who else? The Prime Minister of Canada, the governor in council. There is not much distance between the new president, the new chairperson and the Prime Minister and the cabinet. It goes back to my opening comments in terms of autonomy. I cannot see much autonomy there.

Let us further read the bill. The question I would ask is whether anyone in the House has read the bill. I mention that because today during petitions at least two NDP members, God bless their souls, presented petitions with regard to the Senate. I do not agree entirely with their position on the Senate but they are talking about an organization that is appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada. Talk about accountability. I know what the Bloc members are saying about the bill, but I think the bill requires close scrutiny. I hope the NDP members take a look at clause 9 on page 3 of the bill.

We have gone from the chairperson to the president. What else happens in any kind of a commission? The next logical jump would be to the directors, would it not? Where would the directors come from? I know we do not dare to say it out loud, but they are appointed by the minister with the approval of the Prime Minister. Talk about autonomy. Does anyone see any autonomy in the bill, any distance from the Prime Minister's office? For the love of me, I cannot.

My argument is that one of the reasons the government wants to move it out of the department is because the department comes under the purview of the Public Service Administration Act. In other words, we have civil servants who are not quite as easy to push around as appointed folks. When push comes to shove, who will the commission be listening to or taking directions from? I suggest it will be the Prime Minister of Canada and his cabinet.

This is not the first bill to come to the House in the last couple of weeks, which leads me to believe that we are heading for an election probably sooner than later. The other bill that is before us is the Canadian institutes of health research. It is the same situation from the president on down. All the members of the advisory board are appointed by, who else? The old Prime Minister of Canada himself. Sir John A. Macdonald would roll over in his grave if he knew that.

• (1605)

Have we not moved somewhere beyond the point where every member of a commission or a board is appointed by one man and

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by one man only? That is the argument the NDP uses with regard to the senate. It is somewhat the same argument that the Reformers use with regard to the Senate. We are not all fundamentally opposed to the Senate. Most of us would like to reform the Senate, but the Canadian people should have a choice. However, surely there has to be a better way of doing it than this.

This ain't all, as they would say back home. These appointments are all by pleasure. Mr. Speaker, do you know what pleasure means? It means that when the Prime Minister wakes up in the morning and decides he still likes you, then you are still there. If he gets out on the wrong side of the bed, then you are gone. You are history. There is no autonomy in that. There is no arm's length from government in that type of institution. We see it over there on the back benches of the Liberal party. The Prime Minister says "jump" and the members say "how high", or the Prime Minister says "don't come down until I tell you to". That is exactly what will happen with this board, and I do not like it.

Let us take a look at their remuneration. We always start at the top with the president and then work down through. The president will be paid the remuneration that the governor in council may fix. The Prime Minister of Canada will determine what this person makes. Not only that, he will determine how long he or she will collect his or her paycheque. The chairperson and the private sector directors, other than the president, shall be paid the fees that the governor in council may fix. It is the same thing. Governor in council is a fancy word for the Prime Minister of Canada. It is basically the Prime Minister and cabinet making a decision, but it is one man.

Witness the debate that is raging now in the House between the Prime Minister and the premier of Quebec on the 50 plus one and his stance in regard to any constitutional initiative on Quebec and the referendum. That is a one man decision. It is a one man band leading the way down through the town with not too many followers even from his own cabinet, which is sort of a suicidal march.

I know I am getting off the topic, but there has to be a better way to do this. We are moving into the new millennium. We are moving into the 21st century and we are still using the outdated institutions of the past to proceed into a new century. If we are talking about reform in the House, it could start right here when we are debating bills like this.

I mentioned earlier the CIHR. It sounds like the call numbers or letters of a radio station.

An hon. member: Country music.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Country music, but this is a really sad country song. It will bring tears to our eyes.

The Canadian institutes of health research is supposed to be modelled after the American example. The minister and his people

are taking credit for redesigning the wheel, but this is basically a model that they picked up in the U.S. They brought it in, wrapped their arms around it and called it their own. Obviously they did not invent this new institute. What they have invented, and I brought this out yesterday in committee, is the structure. In the United States, the public and members of the legislative bodies, senators and members of the House of Representatives, have some input into who goes on those boards or institutes. In Canada, the Minister of Health introduced a bill a week ago today, Bill C-13, structured in the same fashion as the bill we are talking about today.

• (1610)

Nobody argues that we have to pay attention to tourism in the country. It is a big generator of jobs. What scares many of us in the House is that the government is going to politicize the very commission that is asking for more autonomy, if we can believe what the government is saying.

I do not think there will be any autonomy or any arm's length relationship from government. I think we will have the strong hand of the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister of Canada, over this commission. This bill has serious flaws that have to be addressed either in the House or in committee.

It is hard to run in the face of motherhood. This is sort of like a motherhood bill. This is what the government is talking about. It is all good in the eyes of the government. There is nothing negative here. This is a good news bill.

Let me go through some of the points that we might argue are good news. The commission may establish a head office anywhere in Canada. That is fine, but what about Chicoutimi as a head office? What would be the chances of Chicoutimi being the head office of this new commission? I am just thinking out loud, but being in the Prime Minister's hometown I think it would have a pretty good kick at the can.

The commission may not finance, acquire or construct facilities related to tourism. That is a good point. In other words, it will not be able to turn the Prime Minister's summer home into a hotel. That is good news, unless the Minister for Human Resources Development Canada gets her hands on the application. Maybe then it can do that. Anything is possible in the Prime Minister's riding.

The commission may enter into agreements with other governments. That is fine. It may create new corporations as a result of these agreements. So it does not end here. There must be a hidden clause in there that even I might have missed under close scrutiny. It may create new corporations as a result of those agreements as long as they are consistent with its mandate and do not involve financing or construction of tourism facilities.

The commission's annual corporate plan will be approved by the ministers of industry and the treasury board. That is good.

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I hope there is a mechanism in here, which I did not see in the bill, where the commission has to actually come before the House and the auditor general for scrutiny. I hope there is a provision in the bill where it does have to table a report annually on the floor of the House of Commons. I do not see it in there, but I will ask my colleagues in the NDP, the Bloc, the Reform and the Conservative Parties to search through the bill while I am on my feet. I did not see that.

The board of directors will continue to have up to 26 representatives. Goodness gracious, that is almost a quarter of the appointments that the Prime Minister gets to make in the Senate. Imagine, 26 new appointments. On the eve of an election, it sounds good does it not, Mr. Speaker? I would not be surprised if you were appointed to that board.

In addition to that, we have the chairperson and the president and up to 16 private sector directors in six regions. I did go through how that is going to be apportioned, and I think some members have a problem with that, as I guess they should. These will be appointed, as I mentioned before, by the minister on the advice of the board or the committee. There will be one director representing the provincial governments in each of the six regions. The president, the chair and the directors will all serve at pleasure. That means as long as the Prime Minister of Canada is happy.

• (1615)

We have witnessed what has happened in some government departments and agencies when the Prime Minister and a particular minister are not happy with them. I am not talking about not doing their jobs or not showing up for the job. I am talking about civil servants, some of them senior civil servants, who just happen to disagree with the government. The Prime Minister has taken the baseball bat to their kneecaps on occasion simply to get rid of them.

I am not exaggerating. I have mentioned names in the House of individuals who have had longstanding, long ongoing battles with the government. In fact, some of them have taken it to the Human Rights Commission and won their cases. These are people who are protected by the Civil Service Act. This new commission, no protection.

I think this new commission is ripe for political manipulation. I think the House deserves closer scrutiny and more debate on the bill. I do not think it is a bill that can simply be rammed through the House. I call on every member in the House to read this bill clause by clause and stand up on their hind legs and argue for a new and better way of doing this.

I think the bill deserves more scrutiny than what it is getting. I do not think we can simply give the government a blank cheque based on its performance with commissions and boards like this in the past. Let us intelligently debate this in committee, bring forth some amendments which the government might consider and improve this bill before we get to third and final reading.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my hon. colleague for his speech.

When we talk about tourism, there is one very important thing that we have to keep in mind, which is the fact that there are several different regions in this vast country of Canada as well as in Quebec, and there is a competitive element involved. A number of regions are increasingly trying to attract more tourists. These regions are not all the same.

Now that the federal government wants to gain control of tourism, it could very easily end up discriminating in favour of some regions and against others.

I would like to know what my hon. colleague thinks about the possibility that the federal government might do what it did in terms of regional development and discriminate in favour of one region and against another, as has too often been the case in Quebec. What does the hon. member think about a government, which has often chosen to promote some regions and ignore others, getting involved in tourism?

[English]

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, that just shows that great minds think alike. I think the hon. member's point is worth noting. That is in fact what can happen because they can politicize this commission. We must think about that, 103 members of parliament in Ontario alone. One has to win the province of Ontario to form the government in this country.

This may be stretching it, but can we not envision the Prime Minister looking at political opportunity and using this commission to his best advantage in terms of where to put the advertising dollars and what portions of the country to promote. Obviously, there is not support in every province.

Mr. George Proud: I have heard.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Good point. Nova Scotia, which is the tourism capital of eastern Canada. I hate to say that because it should be New Brunswick and possibly P.E.I. I think there is a big risk in that very thing happening.

• (1620)

We have to remember there are 500,000 Canadians employed directly in tourism in Canada. What is the multiplier? It would be at least a multiplier of four or five, a big engine of economic growth in Atlantic Canada and other parts of Canada as well. The member's point is well taken.

There is a very clear risk when we have the directors and the president of the commission appointed by the Prime Minister of

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Canada. That is a very strong possibility. That is a point well taken. That has to be considered when we are looking at amendments to this bill. There must be a better way to set up this organization rather than having one man dictate who the members will be. That individual would be the Prime Minister of Canada and he would be dictating who would be on the commission.

Let us re-examine and improve this bill and reduce the risk of the very thing the member said might happen from happening.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN TOURISM COMMISSION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, an act to establish the Canadian Tourism Commission, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what the member had to say. He touched a bit on the constitutional issue, as he was supposed to do, openly criticizing, as his party did, the Prime Minister's attitude with regard to referendum rules, and I congratulate him for that. Saying that the rules should be different from those applied in past referendums on the political future of Quebec and Canada is a serious attack on democracy.

On the issue of tourism, I would also like to know if the member thinks that the federal government is once again trying to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction, not only in Quebec but in other provinces as well, and that, by doing so, it is breaking another one of its commitments, namely the commitment to withdraw from the tourism sector. We were told on several occasions that tourism was a provincial jurisdiction.

• (1625)

In fact, under the Conservative government, the Charlottetown accord contained a provision saying that the federal government would withdraw from the tourism sector and would not interfere again in this area under provincial jurisdiction.

I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say on that subject, in other words whether his party still believes that tourism should be exclusively under provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is a role for the federal government in tourism. I do not question the need for that role as custodians for the entire country. I am not arguing that point.

What I am arguing is the construction of the very commission we are debating here today. I do not believe that that will lead to good management practices. I think it can lead to political manipulation,

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe you will find consent for the following travel motion:

That, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, be authorized to travel to western Canada (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta), from December 5, to December 11, 1999, in relation to its study on the effectiveness of long term safety nets and other national initiatives to provide the stability and environment necessary for stable growth in the agricultural industry and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, there are things in the explanations my hon. colleague provided the House that need to be clarified, like the dates and the names of the members taking part in this trip and their destination.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member has indicated that he was talking about the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. He was referring to the members of this committee, therefore.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Could we get more information about where are they going and how long their trip will last?

The Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member referring to the whole committee?

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: No.

[*English*]

Mr. John O'Reilly: Mr. Speaker, there are nine members listed, with all parties being represented. The dates are December 5 to December 11, 1999.

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if you wish, in every province including the province of Quebec. On that basis, I do not support the construction as laid out in this design paper we have before us entitled Bill C-5.

I think it could be taken back to the drawing board, keeping in mind that there is a significant role in tourism for the federal government, but not under this plan. I think it is slightly flawed, to say the least.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it would be advisable to check whether we have a quorum to continue the proceedings of the House.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum. We may resume.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Muisse (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague for New Brunswick Southwest just mentioned that Nova Scotia is one of those fine tourism places. I have to say I cannot disagree with him. I think of the beautiful Annapolis Valley. I think of the Bay of Fundy. I think of the fine lobster we have in my part of the country. I think of the great apples we have, all the parks and all the fine beaches.

My hon. colleague also mentioned that the head office for this new organization would be somewhere in Canada. I am wondering if my hon. colleague would support this headquarters being located possibly in my fine riding of West Nova.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I am not in the driver's seat. Under the act, as presented, the Prime Minister of Canada will be able to use his influence to determine where that might be.

The town that comes to my mind, looking at the Prime Minister and his past practices, would be Chicoutimi. I would not be surprised that it would wind up in Chicoutimi. Under the act, it could be any place in Canada, but I am sure there is going to be a little bit of arm twisting to put it a little closer to the Prime Minister's home.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-5, an act to establish the Canadian Tourism Commission.

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to acknowledge the great growth of the Canadian tourism market over the past number of years. In many parts of the country, tourism accounts for perhaps fourth or third, sometimes even second or first, among the industries that produce dollars. From the unique locations that have a story to tell, the many historical points across this land of ours, to

the remote locations of ecotourism, Canada has a lot to offer the world.

• (1630)

All across the country there are tourism boards which are mainly made up of volunteers looking to promote their own local highlights. From small town Saskatchewan to urban Montreal and all the points east, west, north and south the country has much to offer. We ought to be exploiting the scenic beauty and the many historical sites around the nation.

I will take some time to read into the record this afternoon a bit about the community in which I live. The story of Chemainus, British Columbia, is one of the success of tourism in the nation.

Those who do not know where Chemainus is located ought to know. It is located about one hour north of Victoria, British Columbia, on beautiful Vancouver Island. Many people are looking forward to making that part of the country their final destination. It is a great place to live and I suspect, although I do not know yet, that it is probably a good place to die.

The local tourism information centre describes the history of Chemainus as a small town having relied for over 100 years on the lumber industry for its existence. In 1980 concern about MacMillan Bloedel's inevitable downsizing prompted the community to begin discussions on revitalizing the downtown core, with the hope of developing some form of tourism.

Taking advantage of a provincial downtown revitalization program, the town fathers developed a business improvement plan now known as the mural project. They recommended painting large, high quality murals depicting the logging and lumber history of Chemainus on the exterior walls of various buildings.

The first mural was painted in 1982 by Vancouver Island artist Frank Lewis. These amazing professionally painted murals, all painted from authentic historical photos of the settlers, vividly depict the history of the Chemainus valley including the forest industry and first nations chiefs.

In addition to the magnificent murals Chemainus now boasts a new 270 seat family dinner theatre, many fascinating shops, and is home to many talented artisans. By the third year it was estimated that the murals were attracting somewhere in the neighbourhood of 15,000 tourists. Today over 400,000 people visit Chemainus annually to see the 33 world famous murals. A sign on the edge of town reads "Welcome to the community that is known as the little town that did".

Chemainus is a success story of determination, courage and vision. For over 100 years the town had solely depended on the forest industry for its existence. Confronted with the downsizing of the forest industry in the early 1980s, the community began embarking on the transition to diversify its economy. Along with the city fathers there was one man who was the driving force

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behind the original Chemainus mural project, Karl Shultz. Many people could learn a lot from Karl. His credo is never let those who say it cannot be done stand in the way of those who are doing it.

Many people looked at Chemainus in those days and declared that turning the town into an outdoor art gallery simply could not and should not be done. Fortunately the people who were busy trying to do it were too busy to get discouraged. That is why Chemainus is known today as the little town that did.

• (1635)

During this transition Chemainus went from a 120 year old sawmill town with no tourists in 1981 to a thriving tourist destination with over 450,000 tourists by the year 1988, and from 40 local businesses to over 300 today. Chemainus has gone from being left off the maps of the world to becoming internationally famous.

Members can imagine that municipal revenues have more than tripled what they were a little over a decade ago. From the work of one man to a dedicated group of community minded volunteers Chemainus is indeed the little town that did.

Chemainus received the prestigious British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award for the Americas in London, England. It was featured on radio with 1.5 million listeners hearing the story on the British travel TV show *Wish You Were Here*. They were viewed by 15 million people and appeared in the London *Times* with a readership of 3.5 million.

In Japan the popular quiz show *Naruhodo the World*, with 10 million viewers, featured the Chemainus Art Gallery. As well there was an eight page article in the May 1994 issue of the *Smithsonian Magazine*.

This is just one small town with one story to tell in the tourist industry across Canada. It is what the dream and determination of dedicated people coming together in a common cause can do.

Chemainus is a prime example of the success of entrepreneurial spirit that captures the heart and soul of many Canadians across the country today. In fact, many Canadians have come to the conclusion that if we do not do it, it will not get done. That is simply the way it is.

In the midst of speaking about the bill I ask why there is the need to have one more crown corporation to do the work being done so well by groups of people like the citizens of Chemainus. I have no doubt that the Canadian Tourism Commission plays an important role at the international level, but I really wonder whether it is the government's business to be involved in such things.

Why am I concerned? Simply put, it comes down to who can perform the task best and at what financial cost. If we go over the history of Canada, the involvement of the Canadian government in the economic life of the country and the stories that are told about

government crown corporations, surely we will learn some lessons from the past. Whether crown corporations are federal or provincial, over a period of years their budgets and bureaucracies are virtually out of control. It is certainly out of the control of the ordinary Canadian taxpayer who ends up funding these projects.

The board of directors is now largely made up of private industry members. It is in their best interest to continue to promote Canada as a tourist destination. Why not simply let them continue doing the job without the apron strings of government? Let them do what they can do best. We have the obvious example of the Chemainus success story. Surely it can be repeated over and over and over again across the nation.

While my colleagues and I in the official opposition firmly support the creation of efficiency in government and the delivery of government programs, I cannot support the move to establish the Canadian Tourist Commission as a crown corporation.

• (1640)

My opposition is based mainly upon lack of public accountability. At a time when the public is demanding greater accountability of its tax dollars at work, we should not be allowing the creation of another crown corporation which does not have the need to come before parliament to account for how it spends its money.

Some of my colleagues in the House have already pointed out the problem of too much political influence by the government in crown corporations. That political influence starts right at the Prime Minister's Office. It goes down through the various departments and their ministers to the grassroots. Before we know it power is vested in a small group of people taking control of all crown corporations.

We already have a situation where the Prime Minister's Office has far too much power. Are Canadian taxpayers aware that the Prime Minister's Office has the power to make over 5,000 appointments from supreme court justices to senators in the other house and down through parliamentary secretaries to members of committees? It goes on and on. We have vested far too much power in the hands of a few. Crown corporations are just another way of keeping a tight rein on that power.

As I have shown with my hometown of Chemainus, local businesses and municipal leaders have been able to take what was a desperate situation in the early 1980s and turn the community into an international success story. I invite members to join me next summer in Chemainus to see what the private sector can do and see what real success and community pride are.

The Canadian Tourism Commission could learn a lot from Chemainus. The government could learn a lot from the little town that did.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the story of Chemainus. It sounds like a wonderful

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place. I would be happy to visit it some day. We have these points of light across the country. It is a great country to visit. Yet, when I travel abroad we are seen as a country that plays at tourism. We do not treat it with all the respect that it perhaps needs.

This commission and its predecessor are all relatively new. I remember when the commission first started a number of years ago. The Canadian government as a federal jurisdiction basically withdrew from these areas and Canadian tourism shrunk accordingly.

Realistically the hon. member knows that people will not simply come from Europe to visit Chemainus. They will visit many other tourist areas in the country. If there is one thing the government can do effectively, it can co-ordinate tourist areas to find destinations to which people want to travel and designate marketing areas, for instance the European Union, southeast Asia and so forth, in which to tell our story.

I am interested in one problem we have with the European Union because I am interested in the area of trade. The European Union still thinks that in Canada we mine and cut down trees. It is very important, not only for tourism but for trade, that we change that image or vision.

I disagree with the member. He seems to feel that if we privatize everything industry will know best. I can tell the member that if industry knew best it would have done this years ago, but it did not. It has failed to coalesce those areas in our country and market them as a country, rather than just Chemainus.

• (1645)

His party is fixated on the idea of privatizing everything, that somehow if we give it over to private industry it will know best, and maybe it will in some ways. However, what we will find is that the big players will benefit, the airlines and the international hotels, and not the Chemainuses of this world.

Does the member not see the importance of having a national tourism authority?

He talked about accountability. I am very sensitive to that as well. However, the commission will come under the Financial Administration Act. The auditor general will audit the books of the crown corporation, and there are ways to make crown corporations efficient and effective.

Does the member not think there is a good use for this and that Chemainus will be better off if we have a crown corporation set up for tourism?

Mr. Reed Elley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions. I am sure he will not be offended if I correct his pronunciation of my hometown. It is Chemainus. Seamus is that Irish character from a different land.

Between my hon. colleague and myself there is obviously a fundamental difference in philosophy and approach. We in this party believe very strongly in free enterprise, that people who are motivated by low tax regimes and opportunities for business create a good business climate. They make the best decisions and do the right things in terms of driving the economy of the country.

Government does not drive the economy of the country. Big business does not really drive the economy. What drives the economy are thousands of small businessmen across the nation, entrepreneurial in nature and outlook, who take hold of an idea and run with it. They are the ones who are closest to the ground and to the delivery of services. They are the ones who know best how to do this.

I point out to my colleague that in the little town of Chemainus, of the 450,000 visitors who come each year, the highest number come from Japan and the second highest number come from Germany, an Asian nation and a European nation. Obviously the people of Chemainus and their little tourism group have done their work. They have been overseas to visit these markets. They have done their work and they have attracted people.

I do not know why that experience cannot be duplicated right across the country. My contention still remains that if we get government involved in things like crown corporations, sooner or later they rob people of initiative at the grassroots level by trying to do the job in a huge way that can be best done locally.

My colleague and I have a fundamental difference, and I guess we will both have to live with it.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for his most passionate speech about his hometown of Chemainus. I can tell by the twinkle in your eye, Mr. Speaker, that you will be booking your next vacation to Chemainus. I know that warms the heart of my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan.

My colleague spoke quite eloquently about his hometown and all the hard work that has been done to create this thriving tourism hot spot.

• (1650)

As I said to my hon. colleague yesterday who made a similar speech on this topic, when it comes to the level of jurisdiction, I believe there is a role for all three levels of government, the municipal, provincial and federal government, in promoting tourism. Obviously tourism falls into provincial jurisdiction.

Does my hon. colleague think we could respect a balance between the provinces and the federal government in the role of promoting tourism in light of these changes?

Mr. Reed Elley: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments and the good wishes of my hon. colleague.

This is a very big issue across Canada. We have spoken about provincial jurisdiction, referenda and possible threats of breaking up the country in the House every day this week and last week. This is a very important issue in terms of the kind of roles the provinces and the federal government play in areas like tourism.

Again, we have a fundamental difference with our Liberal colleagues on this issue. Reformers do not want to play the role of big brother from a federal perspective. We want to play the role of brothers and sisters equally across the country. The provincial prerogative to deliver services should be left to the provinces because those services can better be delivered at the local level.

That is why the Reform Party in the last year or so has put forth the one Canada proposal. We call it “La Troisième Voie”. It is a third way of looking at this. There should be equality among provinces. Perhaps we could return to some of the original concepts that this great nation was built on, such as allowing the provinces to do those things which were guaranteed. Over the years the federal government, playing big brother, has taken them away. Health care is one of them, and now look at the state we are in.

We have to return to the fundamental reasons for which this country was built and create again a sense of equality so that we can walk side by side with our heads held high and keep this country together, united in the areas that make us great.

Tourism is basically a provincial responsibility and the federal government should stay out of it as much as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I think we are debating an extremely important matter. I call for a quorum count.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1655)

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum. Resuming debate.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-5, an act to establish the Canadian Tourism Commission.

Several of my colleagues have already explained the Bloc Québécois’ view of the bill. The bill can be summed up as follows.

It creates a sort of crown corporation, to be known as the Canadian Tourism Commission. If we look at the summary which appears at the beginning of the bill, and again in clause 5, we read that the commission’s objects are to:

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(a) sustain a vibrant and profitable Canadian tourism industry;

(b) market Canada as a desirable tourist destination;

(c) support a cooperative relationship between the private sector and the governments of Canada, the provinces and the territories with respect to Canadian tourism; and

(d) provide information about Canadian tourism to the private sector and to the governments of Canada, the provinces and the territories.

Since 1995 Canada has had a tourism commission, although it was not formally instituted like the one proposed in the bill.

The commission will have the same mandate it always did, which is to develop, direct, administer and implement programs to increase and promote tourism at home and abroad.

For the present government, any and all means are acceptable when it comes to fighting Quebec sovereignty. Or, to put it another way, anything goes. The end justifies the means.

Never before, as far as we can remember, has Canada worked so hard at gaining visibility, at selling itself, as it has since the Bloc Québécois arrived in Ottawa.

It is not much of a stretch to then conclude that one of the unavowed objectives of this bill is to encourage and enhance the visibility of the Government of Canada, and to bolster the spirit of national unity it holds so dear. There may be some laudable intentions behind this bill, and these are expressed in the preamble to the bill proper.

For instance, the Government of Canada announces its intention to “work with the governments of the provinces and the territories and the Canadian tourism industry to promote the interests of that industry”.

However, the majority of the “whereases” set out in the preamble are of such a nature as to give me pause as far as the real intentions of the Government of Canada are concerned. Every time it gets a chance it repeats over and over again that it wishes to respect provincial jurisdiction, but here we have in writing:

Whereas the Canadian tourism industry is vital to the social and cultural identity and integrity of Canada;

Whereas the Canadian tourism industry makes an essential contribution . . . to the economic objectives of the Government of Canada

With such “whereases”, what about Quebec’s cultural identity? What might happen if the economic goals of Canada and Quebec differ?

Why such a bill, when the provinces, especially Quebec, already have their own infrastructure, their own well developed tourism network, and their own strategy, which is better suited to the needs and characteristics of their respective territories?

How could the needs of each province be better served by a Canadian tourism commission that will be expected to promote

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several competing products? How will the commission allot its promotion budget among various tourism products?

Let us have a closer look at the bill.

• (1700)

First, clauses 7 to 14 provide for the organization of the board of directors, which will consist of not more than 26 directors. The Deputy Minister of Industry is, *ex officio*, a director of the commission. The chairperson, who will hold office on a part time basis, and the president, who will hold office on a full time basis, will both be appointed by the governor in council for a term of not more than five years.

With the approval of the governor in council and on the advice of a committee established by the board of directors, the Minister of Industry will appoint 16 private sector directors for a term of not more than three years. Nine will be private sector representatives and seven will be tourism operators and represent the various regions. The appointment of the latter will be done in the manner prescribed in the act.

It is stipulated that there will be two from the maritimes, one from Quebec, one from Ontario, one from British Columbia and the Yukon, one from the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and one from Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

The same process will be used to select private sector representatives who, before being appointed by the Minister of Industry, will first be designated by the provincial or territorial ministers responsible for tourism. These directors will either be deputy ministers or the equivalent or heads of provincial or territorial agencies.

What is surprising in this part of the bill is clause 11(5), which gives three definitions. It is obvious that the bill was drafted in a hurry. I would like somebody to shed some light on this for me some day.

I would now like to look at the three definitions in clause 11(5): private sector director, tourism operator and private sector representative. These three expressions are defined and clause 11(5) specifies that "The definitions in this subsection apply in this section".

I have read these three definitions over and over again but I could not make anything out of them. I do not possess the necessary philological knowledge to make an expert comment on this text, nor the expertise to compare the French and English definitions. Perhaps members can follow me as I go through these extraordinary definitions.

A private sector director is a tourism operator. A tourism operator is an owner or a manager of a private sector tourism

business. The private sector director is a private sector representative. Why use two terms that mean the same thing?

I am really surprised. La Palisse himself could not have done better, and he was the expert on truisms. A private sector director is a private sector representative. Is this not obvious?

What is the owner or manager of a business if not a private sector director? Again, I do not have the answer, because this is the definition given. The bill says that the director is an operator and that the operator is an owner or a manager of a private sector tourism business.

The third definition is that of the private sector representative. This is quite the find: the private sector representative is a tourism operator. Can anyone tell me the difference between a private sector director who is a tourism operator and a private sector representative who is a tourism operator? How will we distinguish between the two on the board?

• (1705)

This is a new element that will open the door to arbitrary decisions and political patronage. I must say that the English version of that definition sheds a different light, since it specifies that the person to be appointed will have to have the expertise required to satisfy the board's needs. This means that the person appointed may be someone who is really needed and not a person who is being rewarded for political reasons.

When the time comes to conduct a clause by clause review of the bill and to propose amendments, it would be appropriate for the government to take a serious look at clause 11(5) and to make the necessary changes so that the definitions are, as the Prime Minister likes to say, very clear, very precise and mutually exclusive. Dictionaries exist to provide definitions which are usually mutually exclusive.

This is not a dictionary of synonyms. It is a series of definitions to define which people will sit on the commission's board and what their duties will be. Perhaps the legislator intends to have vague, imprecise, obscure and mutually inclusive definitions to be in a position to appoint friends of the government, regardless of their qualifications.

The government has its work cut out for it, because it has a bad habit of refusing any suggestions for amendments, however brilliant, from the opposition parties. It will therefore have to go back to the drawing board if we are to know exactly whom it has in mind.

Clauses 15 to 28 cover the other features of the bill, such as the duties of the chairperson and the chief executive officer, head office and meetings, remuneration and fees, and compensation. Clause 26 specifies that:

26.(1) The Commission may enter into an agreement with the government of any province or territory to carry out its objects.

Then, beginning with clause 29, the bill launches into a series of transitional provisions for transferring the activities of the former commission to the new one. The last four clauses contain the consequential amendments to the Access to Information Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the Financial Administration Act and, finally, the Privacy Act.

I drew the House's attention to the fact that one act has again been omitted; every time a commission or agency is established, we want to see a specific reference to the Official Languages Act. Once again, the government has left out this piece of legislation. We might once again see that translated into facts, when the advertizing fails to point out that tourism in Canada can be done in French or in English, depending on where the tourist registers.

Some will claim that mentioning that act in this bill is not necessary since Canada is officially a bilingual country, but I really wish that an amendment along those lines be seriously considered at committee stage.

Now that we have a fairly good idea of the bill's contents, let us see what kind of a political impact it could have. With the establishment of this commission, the government provides itself with a parallel organization that will allow it to escape accountability. Of course, the commission will report to Parliament like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada do.

Having an organization reporting to Parliament is very useful: all the scandals occurring are overlooked. A report is produced and someone opposite rises in the House and says "I have the honour to table, in both official languages, this report". But accountability is really avoided. Parliament will be informed through the commission's board of directors. But the minister will always find a way to walk away from ministerial responsibility.

We are witnessing the implementation of a new way of managing public assets and funds. This time, a commission is created; last year, it was agencies: the Revenue Agency, the Canadian Parks Agency and the Agri-Food Agency.

• (1710)

What distinction does the government make between a commission and an agency? I did not find the answer. It is as if the country were asking a third party to monitor all the actions of its politicians. A commission or an agency is almost the equivalent of a contracting out system. Who will account for the actions of the commission?

The bill provides that, within the limits of the Financial Administration Act, the commission will be given greater leeway to purchase the goods and services necessary for the programs established by the board of directors.

The new system will make it easier to contract out consulting and advertising services. One can readily see that it will be easier

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for the commission to act from outside a department rather than from inside. Easier to operate also means easier to elude the control of the House.

To understand the Bloc's opposition to this bill, one must realize that, for us, Tourism Canada is a duplication of Tourisme Québec, which is already in place and functions very well.

In several speeches made by its members and in the throne speech, the Liberal government promised to withdraw from provincial jurisdictions. This bill shows today that visibility comes first, regardless of the cost.

Can the vision of the federal government in terms of tourism development really compete with the diversified and positive vision of Quebec?

Will the goals of the commission and the actions it will take support the strategy put forward by Tourism Quebec? Can we trust that this commission will work at consolidating the tourism centres of Montreal and Quebec City when we know an agreement could not even be achieved on the expansion of the Palais des Congrès in Montreal? Yet it is the driving force of the tourism strategy in the greater Montreal area. How can we rely on this new commission?

The greater Montreal area and Quebec City play a strategic role in the Quebec tourism industry. They are showcasing the province of Quebec for the benefit of foreign markets. Montreal's international reputation is based on its economic and cultural strength. Tourism has greatly sustained and promoted this strength.

Quebec's distinctive culture has been the focus of our tourism strategy for many years now. Quebec has been able to successfully feature its cultural uniqueness through many of its attractions and events. Will the commission continue on that track?

Quebec is known for its distinct culture in North America. Quebec's tourism policy is based on this characteristic. Tourism Quebec is one of Quebec's main engines in promoting its distinctiveness on the world markets. Will the new commission be able to do the same?

Instead of pushing for the federal government to get involved, would it not be better to financially support the provinces that, especially where Quebec is concerned, have proven quite successful in this area?

The Bloc will vote against this bill mainly because it duplicates what is already being done, and quite successfully, in the provinces and because, on the face of it, this bill looks like a new propaganda tool for the Liberal government to gain more visibility.

[English]

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member's intervention and speech.

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First of all, I would like to touch on the issue of accountability because that has come up a number of times in debate. This comes under the Financial Administration Act. By doing that, it will come under the ambit of the audit of the auditor general. I wonder why the member dismisses that. The auditor general is fairly well respected by parliament. In fact, he just gave a report the other day, accounting a number of areas, some of them not all that complimentary to the government but at the same time giving us, as parliamentarians, the ability to look into these organizations and recommend changes that would improve their efficiency and effectiveness and basically be of value to the taxpayers of Canada.

• (1715)

First, I want to ask the member what more accountability she would like to see. Does she not respect the auditor general? Does she think the auditor general is not doing an effective job?

Second is the issue of duplication. I understand Tourisme Québec is a very effective organization in bringing tourists to Quebec. Surely the member would respect the concept that when people travel to other countries, they often want to experience a multiplicity, a multifaceted experience when they visit those areas. While we are a huge geographical country, it seems to me that if people come to Ontario, they would also like to go to Quebec. The same thing when we go to the maritime provinces, we would like to experience Quebec.

When I travel to Europe, I do not just go to France while I am there. Since I expended such a great amount of money to get there, I like to also go to other European countries. I have done the same thing in Africa and India. I would assume that tourists coming to Canada would like to experience the same thing.

Why can the member not see tourism, a crown corporation, being a major benefit? It is not a duplication in the sense that all those people that would have come via Tourisme Québec would also come from Tourism Canada. They are identical people. In fact, Quebec will benefit by the fact that there is another marketing tool out there, whether it is in Europe, Asia or the United States. It can only be a positive thing for Quebec and for the rest of Canada that we complement each other in our tourist ventures and that we try to increase our economic well-being, whether it is in Quebec or Ontario, or anywhere else in this country.

I wonder why the member has such blinders on and sees this as a fence around Quebec and that only Quebec could possibly enjoy the tourist trade of people coming to Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment and his questions. But I would like to come back to certain aspects based not on theory but on experience.

Often, when we ask questions of the government, it tells us it cannot answer a particular question because it is a matter for the board of directors, whether we are talking of Telefilm Canada, the CBC, or another corporation.

For those crown corporations, agencies or commissions that have boards of directors, this is the board's primary responsibility. There are crown corporations like Telefilm Canada, for example, that escape the scrutiny of the auditor general, unlike the CBC, where the auditor general has the legislative mandate to conduct an audit every five years. This is not the case for Telefilm Canada or for the National Film Board, and they somehow escape the scrutiny of the auditor general.

It is not enough to say that, where public finances are concerned, reference is made to very specific legislation. We must go beyond that. If we want to make absolutely sure that the auditor general will be able to take a close look at the commission's finances, it must be spelled out in the bill. Otherwise, he could very well not be able to do so.

So it seems extremely important to me to consider all these questions and to find the necessary answers that will guarantee the kind of transparency we want, so that the commission can have all the credit it will certainly deserve if it helps Montreal get a bigger convention centre.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I must inform the House that, starting now, the length of speeches will be 10 minutes.

• (1720)

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are bills that are introduced in the House the purpose and even the necessity of which is easy for all to see. With other bills, we have reservations on a few points or even fundamental differences, but at least we can understand their purpose and significance. In this case it is exactly the opposite. Let me explain. It is easy to understand.

This bill is based on the first four paragraphs of the preamble. I will go through them, and members will see that, as a matter of fact, it is based on next to nothing.

I will explain. Here is the first paragraph in French:

—que l'industrie touristique canadienne est essentielle à l'identité et à l'intégrité sociale et culturelle du Canada;

Did members get that? The tourism industry is vital to the Canadian identity. What happens if the tourist industry disappears? Will the Canadian identity disappear too? Should we infer that it could not survive? This is not a mistranslation. I checked the English version, because I suspected a mistranslation. I could not believe anybody could write that the tourism industry was vital to Canadian unity, so I checked the English version. Here it is:

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[English]

Whereas the Canadian tourism industry is vital to the social and cultural identity and integrity of Canada;

[Translation]

Without the tourism industry, will the social and cultural identity and the integrity of Canada disappear? Come on. This does not seem very serious. I cannot believe that it is so fragile and so dependent on foreign visitors. In other words, if foreigners do not come to see us, Canada no longer has a cultural identity and social integrity.

Hon. members will admit that whoever wrote this probably had a bad night and was somewhat out of his or her mind. It is unthinkable to find a whereas as hare-brained as this one, if I can put it that way, at the beginning of the bill. Let us get serious.

I looked at the second whereas, absolutely convinced that I would now find something substantial. This is what it is said:

Whereas the Canadian tourism industry makes an essential contribution to the economic well-being of Canadians and to the economic objectives of the Government of Canada;

This is true, but not only of the tourism industry. Does this mean that we have to create a Canadian commission for every industry that makes a major contribution to the economic well-being of Canadians and to the economic objectives of the Government of Canada?

That is what the whereas is all about. It is one of the reasons this bill is before us. If this is so important for the tourist industry, would it not be equally important for any other? I have to say that I do not believe we could name a single industry that did not make a vital contribution to the economic well-being of the people who derive their livelihood from it, the people of Canada or of Quebec.

Let hon. members name one industry that we could do without because it has no importance. I agree the importance of some may be relative, but the importance of tourism is certainly considerable. Yet how many more are also of great importance to the economic well-being of ordinary people? Are we to have a commission for each?

That is the second whereas in the preamble, and hon. members will agree with me that it is pretty weak. It could apply to anything at all, not just the tourist industry in particular. Who in heaven's name wrote this? Who is the one that had this brilliant idea? It makes no sense.

Perhaps the third whereas will offer us some clarification and will show us that this bill is really a serious one, that there are really pressing reasons for it to be passed.

● (1725)

It reads as follows:

Whereas the Canadian tourism industry consists of mainly small and medium-sized businesses that are essential to Canada's goals for entrepreneurial development and job creation;

Most jobs in Canada and in Quebec are in small and medium sized business, not just those in tourism. For instance, neighbourhood convenience stores are important. Are they going to create a Canadian convenience store commission? How about getting serious here. This third pillar is being presented as a fundamental argument in support of the bill. This pillar is just as far off as the first two.

Only one pillar is left, now—the fourth one. Let us examine it.

Whereas it is desirable to strengthen Canada's commitment to Canadian tourism [—]

Whereas it is desirable to strengthen Canada's commitment? Is it really desirable to do so? This is an unwarranted affirmation; or I am missing something.

I have looked. Perhaps it was explained on the preceding page why it was desirable; perhaps. But there is no explanation to be found in the recommendation or in the summary. Who said it was desirable to strengthen Canada's commitment to Canadian tourism? Who made this statement? Where does it come from? Can anyone explain why?

I do not want anyone to get me wrong. I think tourism is an important industry in the economic fabric of Canada and Quebec, and in my own riding I am an ardent proponent of tourism. As a matter of fact, money spent promoting tourism produces the biggest, and the fastest, bang for the buck. And, in my riding, investments in this sector have paid off handsomely.

But does it necessarily follow that it is desirable to strengthen Canada's commitment? If Canada wants to use my tax dollars and those of the average Canadian to help the tourism industry, it does not need to establish a commission. It seems to me this is only common sense.

This bill rests on four pillars; four extremely fragile pillars that make no sense. I do not know who wrote these four 'whereases'. Obviously, the person did not examine the matter seriously. It does not come across as serious; neither I nor anyone else is convinced.

But there is one thing in the bill that struck me—the fact that there will be a board of directors. And that, to all intents and purposes, the directors will be appointed by the Prime Minister.

Then I began to see the light. The four pillars just mentioned, the four "whereases", are not the important thing here. The important thing is those 16 persons who will be appointed to the board of directors. That is the important issue.

Let us get serious. The tourist industry has been developing quite well for a long time now both in Quebec and in Canada. Quebec

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has created institutions, developed tools. Municipalities, urban communities and agencies have all worked hard to promote the tourist industry.

If the federal government, with our tax money, wants to support the tourist industry, I am all for it. But if the federal government wants to do some window dressing just to reward its friends, then I have to be against it. Tourism is much more than that; it is more important, much more important than this useless creature.

This bill insults our intelligence; it is an insult to taxpayers and to all Canadians and Quebecers. This bill should never have been introduced. It should never have been drafted. It should be withdrawn.

I will of course vote against it; I know all my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois will do the same and I encourage all members in this House to vote against it. I see my time is up. I thank all members for their attention and I hope they will agree with what I said.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

TREATIES ACT

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ) moved that Bill C-214, an act to provide for the participation of the House of Commons when treaties are concluded, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce Bill C-214 providing for the participation of the House of Commons when treaties are concluded. I would like to ask all members of the House of Commons to support this bill so that it can one day become law.

A vote for this bill would give a new voice to all members, would confer increased legitimacy on treaties and finally would democratize the process by which the state assumes international obligations.

As I speak, the 135 member states of the World Trade Organization are gathered in Seattle to launch the millennium round of

negotiations and start international trade negotiations that will end in the signing of many treaties.

These treaties will create international obligations for the states that are parties to them, and will have to be implemented through legislation the House of Commons will have to consider, the same way it had to pass implementing legislation for the agreements reached during the Uruguay round, which preceded the current millennium round of negotiations.

Other negotiations are in fact going on, whether on bilateral treaties on social security or investment protection, or on multilateral treaties on disarmament, human rights or trade.

These negotiations will also lead to international treaties that will have a significant impact on people's lives, on businesses and also on government institutions. The number of such treaties is constantly increasing.

During a study that I conducted in 1992 for the Commission des questions afférentes à l'accession du Québec à la souveraineté, I found 1,388 treaties that were in effect in Canada on April 30, 1991. From 1992 to 1998, at least 644 other treaties came into effect, and we must now add the 84 treaties for which measures were taken in 1999.

While globalization has something to do with the increase in the number of international legal treaties, it should not diminish the legislative sovereignty of the House of Commons and deprive it of its authority to look at the content of these numerous treaties.

Such a power is necessary for important treaties, those which are likely to have a significant and lasting impact on our country.

This is why clause 7 of Bill C-214 provides that no treaty shall be ratified by Canada unless the House of Commons has first approved the treaty by resolution.

Such approval would be necessary for important treaties, as defined in clause 2 of the bill that I am tabling in the House. An important treaty includes any treaty whose implementation requires the enactment of an act of parliament, treaties creating international institutions, treaties on international trade and many other treaties listed in the bill.

• (1735)

As set out in clause 7(2) of this bill, approval by the House of Commons would not include the power to amend the text of a treaty, because the approval would be on the text of a treaty already signed. This would preserve the government's margin of manoeuvrability in negotiations and would allow it to sign treaties without fear that the House of Commons would subsequently reject terms that had already been validated by signing.

The purpose of such a clause is, moreover, to restore—and I stress this, to restore—a parliamentary practice whereby major

treaties were approved by resolution of this House, a practice first implemented in 1923 at the instigation of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, and confirmed for treaties in general, and treaties relating to military and economic sanctions in particular, in 1926.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King stated, moreover, that the practice meant that “with the exception of treaties of lesser importance or in cases of extreme urgency, the Senate and the House of Commons are invited to approve treaties, conventions and formal agreements before ratification by or on behalf of Canada”.

The last instance of a treaty deemed important was back in 1966, when the House of Commons and the Senate approved the Auto Pact, on January 16, 1966 and January 30, 1966 respectively. Since that time, the Government of Canada has not submitted any treaty to this House for approval, although it has implied in certain documents, certain memoranda from the Department of Foreign Affairs, that such a practice is still in effect.

Despite their importance, neither the Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Canada, nor NAFTA, nor the recent treaties on landmines and disarmament, were approved by this House before the government expressed its consent to be bound by them. Thirty-three years have elapsed since parliament really had a say in the process leading to the signing of treaties and when it could make a detailed examination of the treaties subject to its approval.

Bill C-214 also provides, in clause 8, that the tabling of treaties be based on legal requirement instead of being left at the discretion of the government of the day. Inspired by the British Ponsonby rule, but based on no particular legislative or constitutional rule, the tabling of treaties in the Parliament of Canada was done sporadically and interrupted without explanation in 1990. Even extradition treaties, which had to be tabled pursuant to section 7 of the Extradition Act, were not tabled. In this case, the government clearly violated a legislative obligation to table extradition treaties.

Following my remarks on this subject after my election on June 2, 1997, the practice of tabling has resumed: the Minister of Foreign Affairs forwarded to the Clerk of the House of Commons, on January 8, 1999, seven extradition treaties, accompanied by a list of these treaties and a letter indicating that they were being tabled pursuant to Standing Order 32(1).

• (1740)

I must add, however, that section 7 of the Extradition Act has been abrogated. The obligation to table treaties was abrogated by Bill C-40, in spite of my strong opposition and my attempt to amend section 8 of the bill during its examination on November 23, 1998 by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, by replacing its wording with the wording of section 7 of the old act.

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In addition, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs tabled, on April 13, 1999, the treaties concluded by Canada in 1995-96, accompanied by a list of these treaties. Only a few days ago—and I guess they did it in anticipation of today's debate—on November 26 and 29, treaties signed in 1991 and 1992 and in 1989 and 1990 were tabled by the parliamentary secretary. We are still waiting for the treaties signed in 1993 and 1994 and in 1997 and 1998, not to mention the 84 treaties on which measures were taken this year, none of which has yet been tabled in the House.

Canadian parliamentarians should not be subject to the arbitrariness of the government in this regard and should be informed of all international treaties signed by Canada, through their being tabled in the House.

To make these treaties easier to understand, they should include as an attachment explanatory memorandum containing, as provided under clause 8(3) of Bill C-214, a statement of Canada's obligations under the treaty, a summary of any legislation that must be enacted by parliament in order to implement the treaty and other relevant information.

By adopting this provision, the House of Commons would not be innovating, since three other Commonwealth parliaments, namely those of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the mother of all the Commonwealth parliaments, adopted similar rules and explanatory memoranda were sent to all parliamentarians.

Bill C-214 also includes provisions requiring the government to publish treaties rapidly and to post them as quickly as possible on a government website.

The purpose of clauses 11 and 14 is to ensure that treaties are published within certain time limits, that is, in the *Canada Gazette* not later than 21 days after being ratified, in the *Canada Treaties Series* not later than three months after being ratified and in an electronic version even more rapidly, as would be necessary, that is, not later than seven days after being ratified.

The current publication practices are so inadequate and there is so little transparency that no treaty is reproduced in the *Canada Gazette* except for extradition treaties and that only 32 of the 34 treaties on which measures were taken in 1999 were published in the *Canada Treaties Series*. I checked this a few hours ago with the Library of Parliament and none of these treaties are on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs, with the exception—and I also checked this as of today—of the North American free trade agreement, which is mentioned under the heading “Regional and Bilateral Agreements”.

This bill would correct an obvious deficiency, allowing ordinary citizens as well as parliamentarians to have access to international treaties.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-214 also contains four clauses on the negotiation and the conclusion of treaties that I would like to bring to the attention of this House.

• (1745)

While recognizing the respective jurisdictions of the federal and provincial governments regarding the conclusion of treaties in areas under the exclusive authority of either level of government—I must mention at this point that we consider the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine in this respect to be in accordance with the Canadian Constitution—clauses 5 and 6 of the bill are aimed at fostering co-operation between the federal government and the provinces when the treaties being negotiated are joint treaties in an area under the authority of both the federal and provincial levels of government. Treaties of this kind are numerous.

In fact, clause 5 of the bill provides that the federal government will have to enter into an agreement with each provincial government on the manner in which it will consult the provincial governments.

In fact, the premiers asked for this kind of agreement during their annual conference that was held in August. Clause 5 reflects the desire of 10 provinces which want to see an end to improvisation in this respect, and the federal government commit, in a formal and permanent manner, through an agreement among governments, to involve the provinces in the negotiating process and the conclusion of international treaties that have a significant impact on provincial governments and legislatures.

Before I conclude with the presentation of Bill C-214, I want to thank my parliamentary intern, Mr. Gibran van Ert, who helped me to draft this bill last spring and got so interested in this field that he has decided to address this issue in the master thesis he will be working on this year at the University of Toronto, highlighting some of the work of two renown internationalists, Mr. Alan Gotlieb and Mrs. Anne-Marie Jacomy-Millette.

I also want to thank my parliamentary assistant, Éric Normandeau, for all the preparatory work he did on this bill every step of the way and for his continued support and loyalty. Lastly, I would like to thank legislative counsel Louis-Philippe Côté who put Bill C-214 in perfect legal form.

In conclusion, I advocate changes to the treaty process and I want to convince the federal government and the parliamentarians, even those in opposition, that the time has come to reform the obsolete process being used by the government. The process has been changed elsewhere in the Commonwealth, but not here, in the House of Commons.

As elected representatives, we have to change the process in order to give our fellow citizens the opportunity to express their views on international treaties. In the short term, we need to change

the process used in the House of Commons and I intend to advocate changes to the role the House of Commons plays in negotiating and implementing international treaties.

As we move into the next century, is it not our duty, where treaties are concerned, to meet this democratic challenge?

[English]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-214, an act to provide for the participation of the House of Commons when international treaties are concluded.

• (1750)

I support the bill. I encourage everyone in the House of Commons to support it. There is a real lack of consultation and approval in the treaty making process. I wonder if people watching and listening to the debate today realize how much the House of Commons is cut out of the action when it comes to international treaties.

We get a chance to vote on an odd treaty which comes before the House, maybe a free trade agreement, but between 1994 and 1999 during the life of the government it has signed 470 international treaties and has ratified 295 treaties.

Most members of the House of Commons have never seen them and know almost nothing about them because the government handles them behind closed doors. The negotiations take place behind closed doors. The signing takes place behind closed doors. I do not even know who signs them. We do not even know who negotiates on our behalf. The government takes a group of NGOs, a big group of bureaucrats and a whole bunch of other people, and they all head over on a big bus to sign the deal. Then we do not learn about it until we read about it in the papers.

This is what the bill is meant to address. It is a perfect redress to this lack of democracy. What is happening right now has happened for too long in the House of Commons. Too much power has been vested in the Prime Minister and in his cabinet and not enough power is spread around to other members of the House.

The bill properly addresses the requirement of the government to be part of international agreements and negotiations but to come back to the House for consultation and approval. This is a good balance for the government and the House of Commons when assembled together.

The Reform Party believes that Canadians have a right to be consulted about international treaties. We believe it should happen through their duly elected representatives in parliament. We also believe that public debate, public discussion and public input are ways to improve treaties and to improve public participation in our

democratic process. This is not something to be feared or something to be hidden or something to run from. The bill adequately addresses those points.

Canadians expect the House of Commons to advance solutions. Not just the bureaucrats, not just the government, but the entire House of Commons should put our minds and our best ideas together on all issues, certainly on international treaties which affect all of us in our day to day lives. Presently that expectation is not being met.

Bill C-214 sets out to change the problematic process of hidden negotiations. There was the problem which the government faced last year concerning all the rumours surrounding the MAI. Concerns were expressed about what the government was negotiating and proposing. What was our position in the negotiations? When it comes back, will we have a chance to ratify it before we are signed on to an agreement that will affect everyone in Canada?

The bill would ensure that it comes back to the House to be debated and talked about. We will approve it as an entire House. The government may decide to push it through with its vote, but at least we would have a debate and at least we would have a vote. Then Canadians would have a full hearing and a full airing of these important discussions.

The bill provides that all important international treaties must be tabled in the House of Commons for approval by resolution. No treaty may be ratified unless approved. This is a good balance between the necessity for the government to negotiate, to do fine work on behalf of all Canadians and through their representatives in the House of Commons to put a final stamp on it showing that we think it is a good idea.

The bill also provides that every international treaty shall be tabled for 21 sitting days prior to ratification. In other words, we will all have a chance to look at it. We will all have a chance to go through it with a fine tooth comb if that is our wish. Very importantly, an explanatory memorandum accompanies the bill, something which explains why it is in the best interest of Canada, whether there are tax implications, how it will affect Canadians, whether there are estimated expenditures to which the government might be obligating Canada, and all such things that Canadians expect us to keep an eye on. Under the current system they do not get the opportunity. This bill does not stop the government from doing its job; it just entitles all Canadians and all of us who are duly elected representatives to scrutinize these 400 or 500 international treaties that Canada has signed on to.

• (1755)

This bill proposes that the government not be permitted to ratify or modify a treaty without House of Commons approval, after the treaty has been tabled for 21 days. That would provide a good opportunity to go through the details.

Private Members' Business

Reform agrees with the provisions of the bill, but we would like the legislation to go even further. Before I explain that I would like to state our policy on treaty negotiations. Our policy book states that parliament should be asked to approve all agreements or declarations before they are ratified as Canadian positions. We think it is a good idea to include parliamentarians early on in the process.

I wrote a dissenting opinion following the foreign policy review in 1994. I wrote 40 or 50 pages which I am sure the Speaker has in his library. I wrote about the dismay that many of us felt when the government continued to sign agreements. In one case, the hon. André Ouellet announced Canada's support for a United Nations standing army, even while the standing committee was reviewing Canada's foreign policy.

The Prime Minister made a major policy address on the need for UN reform two weeks before the committee reported its findings to parliament. That undermines and undercuts the role of parliamentarians and places all the power and influence in the Prime Minister's hands. In this bill the Prime Minister would have a role, the cabinet would have a role, but the House of Commons would also have a role in the making of international treaties.

We only have to look at what happened in Seattle these last couple of days to see how important people feel international agreements have become. They are in many ways more important than the day to day business we do in the House because the hundreds of treaties that are signed by the government on our behalf make commitments on behalf of all Canadians on issues like trade, human rights, women's issues, family issues and the environment. They commit the House and Canada to billions and billions of dollars and legislative responses on any number of issues and Canadians do not have a chance to see them first. They should have that opportunity.

In our recently released foreign policy review, which was released by our foreign affairs critic a week or so ago, there is a four point proposal. The review goes into some detail, but I will quickly say that parliamentary ratification would be needed for all treaties. We would require an impact statement similar to the one outlined in this bill. We also ask that these international agreements work to strengthen co-operative federalism. If an agreement affects provincial jurisdiction, the provinces should be brought in early to make sure they understand the impact it will have on the provinces. That is one way to improve federalism. Perhaps it is a solution the Prime Minister should be thinking about.

All of these discussions and debates would help to better inform the public of what it is that Canada is doing on the international stage. Canada does a lot of good work. Most of these treaties would be routinely endorsed, but Canadians need to know about them. The best way to let them know is to have debates in the House of Commons.

Private Members' Business

I support this bill, and happily so, but I urge that we consider in the days to come even more ways of increasing the accountability of international treaties. We would like to see a national interest impact analysis, very similar to the one proposed in this bill's explanatory memorandum, but we would also like to see a family impact statement. How would this affect the family? Would it have tax implications? How would it affect children? Those things should be discussed and debated. The government should table them in the House when it tables the bill.

Our foreign affairs minister said earlier this year in New York, when he was talking about the security council, that we want to make the council more transparent, more democratic and more open. The trends have been going the other way. Our job is to express our concerns and introduce alternate options.

• (1800)

More transparency, more democracy and more accountability are what the bill will bring to the House of Commons and I am happy to support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate at second reading stage of Bill C-214, sponsored by the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

This bill deals with the Canadian practice with regard to the conclusion of treaties, an important element of the Government of Canada's prerogative.

First of all, I must tell the House that the government does not intend to support Bill C-214 for the following reasons.

This bill seriously affects the division of powers in Canada and questions certain priority aspects of Canada's foreign policy.

Today, the international context has a direct impact on the daily lives of Canadians. They are increasingly mobile and travel around the world to work and do business. Since an increasing number of problems go beyond traditional boundaries, countries adopt more and more a concerted approach to solve these problems, whether they relate to the fight against crime, the promotion of peace, disarmament, environmental protection, sustainable development or international trade.

This concerted approach leads to an ongoing international dialogue and to an increasing number of international agreements, as evidenced by the fact that Canada signs about 100 treaties each year. At this moment, Canada is party—and our colleague mentioned some figures a few moments ago—to nearly 3,000 bilateral and multilateral instruments.

To inform Parliament of the obligations stemming from these treaties, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade already tables in the House—and I did so myself in the last few days—as well as in the Senate the text of all treaties that have been implemented and do not require special legislation.

Moreover, all these treaties are also provided in electronic format to both Houses and to the Library of Parliament for consultation by all MPs and senators. Not only do parliamentarians receive all this information, but they play an active role in the implementation of treaties that Canada wishes to ratify.

Canadian constitutional law clearly establishes that the negotiation and the signature of a treaty, that is the act by which Canada wishes to be bound by a treaty, is strictly the purview of the federal executive branch. However, the legislative branch is still responsible for implementing the ensuing obligations.

If a treaty results in changes to current laws or in the enactment of new ones, the lawmaker alone can take such action. Depending on the jurisdiction, implementing legislation must be passed by parliament or provincial legislatures.

This role is essential because, in the absence of any participation from the legislative branch, the international commitments made by Canada would never be followed up on for lack of internal enactments.

Because of this implementation power, parliament is regularly required to study and discuss treaties. We need only think of the bill to implement the land mines convention, which banned land mines and provided for their destruction, the bill to implement the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, which I will deal with later, or the Corruption Of Foreign Public Officials Act that gives effect to the OECD convention on combating bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions.

[*English*]

I would also like to highlight the fact that while we believe that legislative changes are not necessary, in practice the role of parliament in treaty making continues to evolve. The hon. member is aware that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and its subcommittee examined and made recommendations to the government on the multilateral agreement on investment, on the WTO and the FTAA negotiations. They make recommendations prior to the conclusion of any agreement.

Another example would be that parliament last spring debated Bill S-22, implementing legislation of an agreement with the Americans, prior to the conclusion of the agreement, in order to give parliament greater latitude in determining what powers Canada would provide American customs officers in Canadian airports.

• (1805)

Therefore, parliament does play a role, not in every case, but in many important cases prior to the conclusion of an agreement.

[*Translation*]

With regard to treaties dealing with areas under provincial jurisdiction, constitutional law already requires that the Government of Canada secure the support of provinces before ratifying an international treaty requiring implementation through provincial legislation.

For example, the federal government consults provincial governments in relation to Hague conventions dealing with private international law and in relation to the development of the Canadian negotiating position on environmental protection conventions. Provincial representatives are sometimes part of Canadian delegations, when treaties concerning the provinces are negotiated.

Bill C-214 creates nothing new in that area, but it imposes a tight framework on the Government of Canada for consulting its provincial partners.

Also, Bill C-214 refers to the royal prerogative of Her Majesty in right of a province with respect to the negotiation and signing of treaties. It is clearly established in Canada that no such provincial prerogative exists and that the prerogative with respect to the negotiation and signing of any international treaty lies exclusively with the Canadian federal executive branch.

Furthermore, Bill C-214 adversely affects Canadian foreign policy. Crises throughout the world must not be used for partisan purposes on the national political scene. The Government of Canada, which is accountable to parliament, is responsible for the country's foreign affairs. In order to be heard and to be perceived as a leader, it must have a single voice on the international scene.

For example, the partisan decision of the U.S. Senate, with its Republican majority, not to sign the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty stunned Canada and the whole international community, dimmed the hopes for peace and international stability generated by the treaty, and dealt a serious blow to the United States' reputation, even though President Clinton himself openly supported ratification of the treaty.

This show of disunity by our American neighbours is a clear illustration of what happens when sterile party politics find their way into the conduct of a country's foreign affairs. Canada does not wish to undergo such a drastic change in the conduct of its foreign affairs.

Moreover, Bill C-214 would slow down the treaty ratification process and prevent Canada from being a leader in the development of international conventions. Here is an example of obstacles that Bill C-214 could create.

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The land mines convention, which was signed right here in Ottawa, is an international priority for Canada. We were the first country to sign that treaty, in December 1997. However, if Bill C-214 had been in effect at the time, that would not have been possible.

Canada must have a treaty ratification process that allows it to achieve its foreign policy objectives and to deal quickly and effectively with changing and urgent situations. The current process meets these imperatives.

Let me give the House an example of the flexibility provided by the current Canadian system that serves the interests of Canada.

To promote business in the air transport industry, for instance, the government regularly signs air transport agreements with other countries. Under these agreements, commercial carriers from one signatory state can use the airspace of another signatory state, which increases the number of destination points the carriers of both countries can offer.

Quite often, these agreements are implemented even before the countries can have them officially ratified, so that the carriers of both countries can benefit from the terms of the agreements as soon as possible. If we were to abide by the process and the restricting delays stipulated by the hon. member in his bill, we would not be able to implement the agreements on a temporary basis.

• (1810)

In conclusion, I think Bill C-214 provides for an overly complex and inefficient procedure to replace a treaty negotiation process that, so far, has well served Canadians, parliamentarians, and Canada throughout the world.

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to congratulate the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry for the good job he has done on this issue. It is one the Bloc Québécois, particularly the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, has been addressing for years. Why? Because it has to do with the whole issue of respect for federal and provincial jurisdictions.

We should bear in mind that what goes around, comes around. We have had an opportunity to be at the helm a few times and we will no doubt have an opportunity, as a political party, to be at the helm in the near future.

The member for Beauharnois—Salaberry pointed out that the two parties that have formed the successive governments since Confederation have basically taken the same approach to treaties.

That having been said, I think there is a need to evolve. In the case of very specific treaties with a major impact on the life of Canadians, elected representatives should have a much greater say not during the negotiation phase, but before they are ratified.

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Earlier, the millennium round at Seattle was mentioned. Considering today's technology, it is preferable to let people know before they decide to go and get the information themselves. I think it is necessary to do so for the sake of public peace.

Although I am not a procedural expert, what I can say about this bill is that we should bear in mind two things when we talk about it being divided into two bills.

First, about the role of Parliament. From the outset, parliamentarians must be involved. The parliamentary secretary gave the example of ratification after 21 days in the case of the airline industry. But these treaties are not part of the description or the philosophy of an important treaty. It is a cinch; international trade agreements are not listed as important treaties, by tradition. The examples given by the parliamentary secretary were not good ones.

In connection with Bill C-214, the parliamentary secretary said "But the provinces were consulted on the implementation measures". I hope that they were because it is their responsibility. But that is not being taken away by Bill C-214. The whole matter of implementation of treaties is still there. What is being called for is for parliamentarians to be consulted before ratification of a treaty, so that they can give it some examination. There would then be no surprises, because they would be familiar with it.

If I am to believe the hon. parliamentary secretary, the government is so good that the members of parliament will just look at the treaty—without being able to change its wording—and will surely support it, because generally treaties signed by the government are perfect. Afterward, we will go to our ridings to be like ambassadors testifying to the good job this government is doing internationally.

We could serve the cause of the party in power by approving every international treaty. The parliamentary secretary could make use of the opposition. It might be a good thing.

That said, in connection with parliament, Bill C-214 is incomplete, and I do not mean that as a criticism. It is highly complicated, nevertheless. As for all the consultation, all the negotiation between provinces and the implementation, the decision has to be made on how this will be handled. Will it be limited to the standing foreign affairs committee or will a new committee be established? Will it be a Senate committee? What will the role of the Senate be in all this? Nevertheless, the aim of Bill C-214 is to say: "With everything that is going on, could we not see to it that parliamentarians are involved?"

The parliamentary system we are living under—and I want to get back to the example given by the parliamentary secretary with respect to what happened in the United States—is quite different from the United States' political system. As we saw today, more

often than not the parliamentary system allows the government to create an alliance on a particular issue and get a majority.

In the United States, there is a republican, bicameral system where the houses are renewed one third at a time over the years, which can lead to some imbalance.

In spite of all its flaws, our parliamentary system has one quality: it provides political stability to the party in power.

• (1815)

Therefore, the government should not be afraid. Historically, and the same goes for provincial legislatures, more often than not, the government in power is a majority government.

We do not want to make the government fall over an international treaty; rather, we want to be informed. We cannot change them, but we can understand them. And this should be done quickly. Transparency and involvement at the international level, this is what it is all about.

The member for Beauharnois—Salaberry is not asking to negotiate for the government. This is not what we are asking for. We say: "when the negotiations are over." This was a very short time, because 21 days is not long. The land mines treaty, for instance, could have been signed faster. The signing was to take place in Ottawa. It had to suit the ministers' schedules. The weather had to be nice, not too cool and not too hot. The signing was held up so all the guests could be present. If the government is capable of being polite and open to guests, could it be open a little to parliamentarians, the representatives of the people? That is how it works when treaties are being signed.

Ask the directors of ceremonies in the various departments. They wait. They can put off a signing for several months because the minister is not there. It would be possible to have 21 days or a few months or just a few weeks to look at them together.

On Bill C-214, this is self evident. The government has picked up bad habits. The two parties that have taken turns in power certainly have. That does not mean they cannot be fixed so that we can go in the right direction.

What concerns me most is that portion of the bill that deals with the provinces. I understand and I do not understand. The member for Beauharnois—Salaberry is much more knowledgeable and experienced than I am in this field. However, I hesitate a bit on this issue, because we know that increasingly, with changes in society, the issue of jurisdiction is becoming increasingly grey.

Increasingly, we are seeing that globalization has an impact on trial court and even supreme court rulings. Increasingly, opinion is divided and things are not clear. Let us take the example of the environment. Recently, a Bloc Québécois member spoke about matters relating to the fishery. He said: "If the fish washes ashore,

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whose is it? If it is floating on the surface, whose is it? If it is on the bottom and only just got there, whose is it?" This is an excellent example.

On a jurisdictional level, there is still the problem of knowing whose fish it is. We do not need a constitutional conference to sort this out but, increasingly, in the case of an environmental treaty, there is no doubt that provincial jurisdictions are just as affected as federal ones.

I recall an attempt by the Bloc Québécois. There was a memorable speech by the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, who said that Quebec could and should have a say in negotiations. We were discussing asbestos at the WTO, and Quebec wanted a place at the negotiating table. However, as I see it, there are two ways to interpret clauses 4 and 5. The bill says that Canada shall not—and here I am referring to clause 5, which provides for an agreement on the manner of consultation with the provinces—negotiate or conclude a treaty unless there is a consultation agreement.

It means that the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry admits that the federal government has the prerogative of the international negotiations and it is quite well. But in the consultation scheme, would the provinces be given the right to negotiate or to sit at the table for all important treaties?

These questions should be asked, and they are quite interesting. It goes to prove that we are open to the possibility of sharing the knowledge we have on the international treaties being negotiated by the federal government.

• (1820)

I realize my time is up. We are going to support Bill C-214 even if there are still grey areas. But the most important point here is that, in this Parliament, we see to it that members are respected, after all the recommendations by committees to the effect that people should be given information. We should start in this House, and at the international level.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be exceedingly brief this afternoon. On behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus I wanted to be on the record on this subject. I think I should tell the House that we had another speaker lined up who has been detained at a meeting and is unable to be with us.

I listened very intently to the debate so far. I want to begin by congratulating the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry for putting forward this important private member's bill and for the cogent arguments and research that accompanied it. I think it is an extremely important private member's bill.

I agree as well with the comments that have been made by the Reform Party and the spokesperson for the Conservative Party and

therefore am disappointed in the remarks from the government members opposite as to why they cannot bring themselves to support this bill.

The important point for me is that the enactment of such a bill would provide that Canada may not ratify an important treaty unless the House of Commons has first approved the treaty by resolution, pursuant to the rules of procedure of the House of Commons.

I dare say that in this country or in the world there are few governments that have more power within the executive branch than in this House of Commons. Because of our system of appointing senators and other problems that we have had vis-a-vis the constitution, we effectively have very little checks and balances with which to restrain or detain the government in important issues. This would be one way in which parliamentarians could and should have a say in doing those kinds of things.

I wanted to get on the record and say that the New Democratic Party caucus supports this private member's bill. We congratulate the member from the Bloc for bringing it forward. We are very disappointed with the reaction from the government members opposite.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have some problems with this resolution and I will treat them very quickly.

There is a failure to study empirically Canadian practice and to recognize the distinction between self-executing and non-self-executing treaties. About 99% of the treaties made by Canada since the war are non-self-executing. That is to say, to be implemented in Canadian law they require laws passed by parliament.

I am amazed to hear the official opposition say they do not know anything about it. Have they been asleep? They have had a foreign affairs committee. It is competent to hear these matters. Its members are competent to raise the matters when the laws come before the House. Somebody has been playing Rip Van Winkle and it does not reflect very credibly on the opposition people to say that.

In Canada we have in a certain sense fused what used to be the highly formal act of ratification with the legislative implementation. I confirm this with the land mines treaty when there was an issue we wanted to be the first to ratify because we sponsored that treaty. However, it had to wait on our legislation by parliament and we ended up, I think, number three. But, there is the fact. Every treaty made in effect comes before parliament and before the foreign affairs committee.

The second point which I will make is I am amazed again by this study of comparative law. It is the first lesson. I am reminded of what Sir Austen Chamberlain said "Comparative law is a trap for

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the unwary and a signpost for the guilty". He was saying it to something else, but there it is.

How can you compare positive law snatched from one society to another society unless they are congruent in terms of their legal systems?

• (1825)

The Canadian system and the German system are totally different from the British, Australian and anything else. The member who introduced this bill would be horrified if he had the American, Australian or other systems in force here. Those systems establish the supremacy of federal law implementing a treaty. By the very fact of making a treaty, one gets the power to legislate. The Canadian is in the inverse and in 1957 the German court studying our experience said it would follow the same.

So every treaty for implementation requires federal legislation and, if it touches provincial powers, provincial legislation. When one gets to issues like fisheries, it will take several years of patient negotiation, frustrating negotiation sometimes, with the provinces. Let me simply make that point.

The third position I would make is simply this. It is not a good plan to seek to do by indirection what can be done by the front door. I read this very carefully and I find that article 6 of the bill on treaties either is uttered *per incuriam* with a lack of knowledge of Canadian constitutional law, which I do not believe, or it is an exercise in *espièglerie*.

Let us face the facts. There is no such thing as a treaty made by a province under Canadian law. It just does not exist. Therefore, in the interstices of a clause buried in the middle of a projected law, how can one purport to make a constitutional amendment? It just cannot be done.

So much of this is an act of supererogation, of stating what parliament already does. I look at those several hundreds hours in

the foreign affairs committees on the MAI. Backward and forward, it was exhaustively discussed. There was the landmines treaty with input from the official opposition and others, which the minister acknowledged.

I would have said that apart from clause 6, this is an example of what Quintus Horatius Flaccus said, "Parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus". Briefly translated, as Shakespeare did somewhat freely, it means "Sound and fury signifying nothing new".

I am also tempted by the suggestion that it was perhaps an interesting exercise in doing by the back door what should have been done by the front door. It is an interesting exercise.

I would advise the hon. member, whom I respect for his qualities and his sense of humour, to come back again with a better draft. I would also suggest putting students to exercises more fully rooted in sociological jurisprudence. That is to say, he should make sure the societies they study are cognate before taking away their positive law. Comparative law is not an exercise in butterfly collections as one has here, with one monster butterfly from one society and one from another. There has to be a certain relevance.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to call it 6.30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

It being 6.30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.29 p.m.)

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