



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 136 • NUMBER 046 • 2nd SESSION • 36th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 10, 2000

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 10, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we will be once again debating the infamous Bill C-20. Following the tabling by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of this bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten it.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs having tabled Bill C-20, denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I want to table a document that could greatly enlighten the House. It is an article that was published in the December 14 edition of *Le Quotidien* newspaper and entitled “Chrétien and Dion, names that history will not remember”. I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table that document.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1005)

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of this bill, which is revolting and unworthy of this place, I

ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document entitled “A separated Quebec morally and legally entitled to use the Canadian dollar”.

This article will enlighten the House and shed new light on the future of a sovereign Quebec.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the hon. member table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, further to the tabling by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying the basic rights of Quebecers, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that could enlighten the House.

It is an article that was published in *Le Devoir* on January 27, under the title “Ontario after a yes vote”.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Further to the tabling by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a study conducted by the C.D. Howe Institute on the currency of an independent Quebec.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the hon. member table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have here an extremely important document that can enlighten our Liberal friends on the discussion on Bill C-20 initiated before Christmas.

I ask for the support of my colleagues opposite to table this document which, I am sure, will enlighten them on this issue.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Point of Order

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the tabling by the intergovernmental affairs minister, an unsavoury individual as you know, of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten the House.

This is an article published last November 29 in *Le Quotidien* and entitled “Sovereignty, Chrétien fights against a shadow”.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d’Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the weekly paper *La Voix de l’Est* of last December 31, there was an article entitled “When clarity becomes obscure”.

I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this article.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to permit these members to table whatever they have in their hands this morning and then let us get on with the show.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before members on the other side bark no, I would like them to let me read the title of my document.

Following the tabling by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House—

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Before barking no, let me finish. I seek unanimous consent to table a document that will enlighten the House. This is a document on the Canadian dollar and Quebec separation.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their basic rights, I ask the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that could enlighten the House.

It is the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada relating to the Quebec Secession Reference.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the hon. member table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1010)

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be recognized along with my colleagues. I too would like to table a document, one entitled “An Historical Overview of Monetary Unions Between Sovereign Countries”, following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of his bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction by the ineffable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that could enlighten the House.

It is an article from *La Presse*, published on December 24 and entitled “Quebec’s reply to Chrétien”.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that could enlighten the House.

It is a document entitled “Quebec Today”.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask for unanimous consent to table a document which will enlighten the House.

This is an article which was published in—

An hon. member: No.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne: I am not done yet, Mr. Speaker. My colleague says no, but he does not even know what I will be tabling.

An hon. member: It shows how serious they are.

Mrs. Pierrette Venne: This article published November last in *Le Soleil* is entitled “Chrétien turns rug salesman”.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction of Bill C-20, I wish to table an article from *La Presse* in order to enlighten the ignorant people on the other side—

The Speaker: My dear colleague, would you please refrain from using the expression ignorant people. It is unacceptable. I ask the hon. member to give us the title of the document.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I used the expression ignorant people and you accepted it. I would like to replace the French term ignorant by the French term innocent.

I would like to quote the dictionary, which I happen to have here. The word ignorant means: lacking knowledge—uninformed—

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent from the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know your decision following my reading the definition for the word ignorant in the dictionary. I was not using it in a derogatory manner, but rather within the meaning given in the dictionary, which is lacking knowledge.

The Speaker: That is exactly why, dear colleague, I did not ask you to withdraw it.

Point of Order

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of Bill C-20, which denies the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table the report of the chief electoral officer of Quebec on the results of the referendum—

The Speaker: Does the member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document, which will enlighten the House.

It is an article published in *Le Devoir* on December 1. Its heading is as follows “Chrétien’s Hard Line and Bouchard’s Response”—

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1015)

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have here a document which my friends across the way will certainly find interesting.

It is a quotation from the memoirs of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the former Prime Minister of Canada and the mentor of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table the document.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have here an article published in *La Presse* on November 29. In order to enlighten members across the way, I ask for unanimous consent to table this article, entitled “Chrétien’s outburst helps out Bouchard, says Dumont”.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the tabling by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs,

Point of Order

who never smiles, of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten it. It is entitled "Quebec, the partner of the future in America".

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the last time I wanted to table a document, members opposite rejected my request without giving it proper consideration, since you asked for unanimous consent before I could even say what it was all about. I hope to have more luck this time.

Following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their basic rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document which could enlighten members in this House. This is an article published on February 1 in *Le Devoir* and entitled "Quebec made its nest in Davos".

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have here an article which will certainly enlighten members in this House. This article was published on January 6 in *Le Soleil* and is entitled "Bill on rules for referendum".

So, following the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their basic rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the information of the government House leader in particular, I would like to table a document, which is a speech made by his friend Mr. Jean Charest, leader of the opposition in the Quebec National Assembly, showing how undemocratic Bill C-20 is.

I ask for unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this day when the government intends to gag the House at the second reading stage, and in the presence of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the government House leader, I ask

for the unanimous consent of the House to have Bill C-20 withdrawn.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1020)

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the introduction, by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten it. It is an article published in *Le Devoir* last January 27 and entitled "Ontario after a yes vote".

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have here a document entitled "Le maintien d'une union monétaire avec un Québec séparé", in which Bernard Landry said that, if Austria or Belgium can have their own currency, why not Quebec. I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document.

I ask this as a result of the introduction, by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before you interrupt me, with your permission, I would like to read the introduction to my document entitled—

The Speaker: Dear colleague, I believe the title will be enough.

Mr. Ghislain Fournier: Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs introduced a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document in order to enlighten the House. It is entitled *Petite histoire du Québec* and it is very interesting.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I know you have a great sense of justice. Therefore, since you gave my colleague permis-

sion to read the title of the document he wanted to submit to the unanimous consent of the House, you will surely allow me to read the title of the article I wanted to present to the House earlier.

The Speaker: We will do that tomorrow. The hon. member will have the opportunity to do so tomorrow. Members have the floor once, and that is enough.

We will now move on to Routine Proceedings.

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 Standing Order 36, I have the honour to table in both official languages the government's response to nine petitions.

I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1110)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 666)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assadourian
Augustine	Bakopanos
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Boudria
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Caplan	Carroll

Catterall
Chan
Clouthier
Collenette
Cotler
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Duhamel
Eggleton
Folco
Fry
Galloway
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Harb
Ianno
Jackson
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lavigne
Leung
Lincoln
MacAulay
Malhi
Manley
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Minna
Murray
Nault
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Redman
Richardson
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
Shepherd
St. Denis
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wilfert

Routine Proceedings

Cauchon
Charbonneau
Coderre
Coppes
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Drouin
Easter
Finlay
Fontana
Gagliano
Godfrey
Graham
Guarmieri
Harvard
Itfody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lastewka
Lee
Limoges
Longfield
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
Matthews
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proud
Provenzano
Reed
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Sgro
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thibeault
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood—140

NAYS

Members

Anders	Asselin
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Blaikie
Bigras	Brien
Borotsik	Cadman
Brison	Cardin
Canuel	Chatters
Casson	Crête
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	de Savoye
Davies	Desjarlais
Debien	Dockrill
Desrochers	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)	Epp
Dumas	Gagnon
Fournier	Girard-Bujold
Gauthier	Godin (Châteauguay)
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Grewal
Goldring	Gruending
Grey (Edmonton North)	Guimond
Guay	

Government Orders

Hanger	Hardy
Harvey	Herron
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Jaffer
Johnston	Jones
Keddy (South Shore)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Konrad	Lalonde
Laurin	Lebel
Lill	Loubier
Lunn	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mancini	Marceau
Marchand	Mark
McDonough	Ménard
Mercier	Meredith
Morrison	Muise
Nystrom	Obhrai
Pankiw	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Price	Proctor
Reynolds	Rocheleau
Sauvageau	Scott (Skeena)
Solberg	St-Hilaire
St-Jacques	Stoffer
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp	Vautour
Venne	Wasylcia-Leis
Wayne	Williams—95

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS[*Translation*]

AN ACT TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE REQUIREMENT FOR CLARITY AS SET OUT IN THE OPINION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA IN THE QUEBEC SECESSION REFERENCE

BILL C-20—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I move:

That in relation to Bill C-20, An Act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill and, fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on the day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

Some hon. members: Shame, shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Order, please. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Call in the members.

• (1200)

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

(Division No. 667)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assadourian
Augustine	Bakopanos
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Caplan
Carroll	Catterall
Cauchon	Chan
Charbonneau	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clouthier	Coderre
Collenette	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepolo
Dromisky	Drouin
Duhamel	Easter
Eggleton	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Galloway	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West)	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Ianno	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Keys	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Leung	Limoges
Lincoln	Longfield
MacAulay	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Matthews	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McTeague
McWhinney	Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Brien (Labrador)	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt

Government Orders

Proud
Provenzano
Reed
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Sgro
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thibeault
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood—141

Proulx
Redman
Richardson
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
Shepherd
St. Denis
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wilfert

[English]

Mr. David Chatters: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The government has just closed off debate for the 59th time. Before we proceed any further, the public needs to know what the government is doing to its opposition.

Thanks to our new procedural book, which I thank the clerks for putting together as I think it is truly a masterpiece, I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to page 563 by Marleau and Montpetit which says:

While the term “time allocation” connotes ideas of time management more than it does closure, a motion to allocate time may be used as a guillotine by the government.

They got it right. While the government House leader tries to convince us otherwise, we all know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The Chair provided a fair amount of time for the member for Athabasca to make his point of order because he had the wisdom to introduce his point of order in referring to the new book on procedure as a masterpiece. How could I interfere?

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I will also compliment the table and the authors of this new book, which will, I am sure, give all members of the House and all Canadians a greater understanding of procedure.

My point of order refers to the legislation on which we have just seen the debate slammed shut. This legislation is supposed to be so important to the country that the Prime Minister seeks to foist it on the country.

We have just debated legislation over the past number of hours and on one previous occasion in the House that was, in essence, changed by a recent amendment by the Bloc. We all know the Bloc's intention is to remove the legislation for a separatist cause.

There has been no opportunity to debate an amendment brought forward by a federalist party, the Progressive Conservative Party. I seek unanimous consent to move an amendment from a federalist party so that we can debate this in a way that Canadians will understand that this legislation has nothing to do with clarity. It is about furthering the separatist cause.

• (1205)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am not sure if that should be taken as part of the time for debate. It is certainly not a point of order.

The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough has the right as a member to move a motion and request unanimous consent at any time. We will move the motion formally.

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Asselin
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Blaikie
Brien
Cadman
Cardin
Casson
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Davies
Debien
Desrochers
Doyle
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Dumas
Epp
Gagnon
Girard-Bujold
Godin (Châteauguay)
Grewal
Gruending
Guimond
Hardy
Harvey
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)
Konrad
Laurin
Lill
Lunn
Mancini
Marchand
McDonough
Mercier
Morrison
Nystrom
Pankiw
Picard (Drummond)
Price
Reynolds
Robinson
Sauvageau
Solomon
St-Jacques
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp
Venne
Wayne

Anders
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Benoit
Bigras
Borotsik
Brisson
Canuel
Casey
Chatters
Crête
de Savoye
Desjarlais
Dockrill
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe
Duncan
Fournier
Gauthier
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goldring
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guay
Hanger
Harris
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Jones
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lebel
Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Marceau
Mark
Ménard
Meredith
Muise
Obhrai
Perron
Plamondon
Proctor
Riis
Rocheleau
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Stoffer
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vautour
Wasylycia-Leis
Williams—102

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I declare the motion carried.

Government Orders

Does the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough have the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion?

An hon. member: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to draw to your attention two points of order. I refer you to Erskine May, 22nd edition—on the same point as the other day, but never mind that—page 498.

Essentially, this deals with the title of a bill and the corollary that should be found in the contents of the bill. I will read it, and please excuse my accent, because it is in English. There is no French edition.

[*English*]

The title of the bill must correspond with the notice of presentation, or the order of leave, and the bill itself must be prepared pursuant to the order of leave or resolution and in proper form. If it should appear that these rules have not been observed, the bill cannot be proceeded with, if the irregularity is in any way substantial. Where the title of the bill as presented to the House refers to purposes which are found not to be mentioned in the clauses of the bill submitted for publication, the proper course is to withdraw the original bill and present a new one with an appropriate long title.

[*Translation*]

The title of the bill refers to the secession of Quebec, but the word “Quebec” does not appear in the body of the bill. There is reference to clarity, but according to the Supreme Court, there is no element of clarity.

I would also like to point out, also in Erskine May, 22nd edition, on page 46, under “Form of a bill”, something that is important and ought to be taken into consideration. It is very important.

[*English*]

A public bill is in the form of a draft statute, and when first printed should therefore be consistent with existing law—

—les lois existantes en vigueur au Canada—

—or contain such amendments or repeals as are necessary to render it capable of implementation.

[*Translation*]

In Bill C-20, the government has even restated that there is no legislation in Canada allowing a province to secede, nothing in the existing legislation of Canada nor in the Canadian constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask, through you, that this bill be withdrawn. It is contrary to the rules established by this House, the statutes of this country and the Constitution of this country.

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to both points raised by the hon. member. On his first point, he said that he wants to introduce a reasoned amendment to amend the bill. An amendment to be introduced while we are at second reading is a reasoned amendment.

Having settled that and to prove my point, someone no less than a former prime minister, the Right Hon. Joe Clark, otherwise known as the member for opposition gallery southeast, has written to the Prime Minister on this very topic referring to this as a reasoned amendment.

We cannot, by way of a reasoned amendment, amend a bill. A reasoned amendment does not amend anything except the motion of a bill not the bill itself. That has to be done either in committee or at report stage. Therefore, the amendment that the hon. member is referring to is impossible under the rules.

I will cite our new procedural manual, which is now being referred to as the M and M. It states that a reasoned amendment, another type of amendment that may be moved at second reading, allows a member to state the reasons why he or she opposes the second reading of the bill. In other words, we cannot amend a bill by doing this, we can only oppose it.

• (1210)

I think that disposes of the first issue because we cannot amend a bill by way of an amendment at second reading. An amendment at second reading is a reasoned amendment, the effect of which is only to oppose a bill.

On the issue of the title of Bill C-20 in reference to Erskine May, the hon. member across refers to page 461. The citation states “A public bill is in the form of a draft statute, and when first printed—”. It only becomes a statute once it has received royal assent and then it needs proclamation by His Excellency pursuant to an order in council, unless it is in the bill, in order to become law. It goes on to say it should “be consistent with existing law or contain such amendments—as are necessary—”.

The reference here is that if we have a bill that amends an existing law it must state in it which existing law it amends. Therefore, if we did not have that, there would be no way of reconciling the bill with the statute to which it will be later appended. As it pertains to a bill creating new law as opposed to amending existing list, this of course does not apply.

In reference to how the title itself works, this is an act to give effect to the requirement for clarity, which is self-evident, and the reference to Quebec secession is the reference of the supreme court. This is to give effect to a supreme court issue and this is the greater explanation of what the supreme court reference is about. That is the reason why it is stated that way. I submit that this bill is perfectly in order.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I would like to thank hon. members for participating in this and enlightening everyone else, including those of the television audience who are still awake.

We have already dealt with the first part of this in the request for unanimous consent, which was not forthcoming.

The second part of this has to do with the nature of the title and content of the bill. As members know, during clause by clause in committee the title is dealt with and may or may not be amended at the pleasure of the committee, so that would be dealt with in committee.

In the opinion of the Chair, the bill is in order and we will proceed to debate.

SECOND READING

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday of this week the Bloc Québécois, between points of order, the seeking of dozens of unanimous consents and the refusal to extend hours of debate created a clear impression that they are afraid of debating Bill C-20. We will see whether the Bloc members are still afraid of debate today, and I mean democratic debate in this Chamber.

On December 10, 1999 the member for Roberval spoke on this bill. I would like to devote a few minutes to some of his arguments.

The member for Roberval evoked 1982, he made reference to the so-called night of the long knives, and he evoked events about which very few are actually qualified to speak with credibility. One who is qualified is former Prime Minister Trudeau, who writes in "Against The Current", a book edited by Gérard Pelletier, apropos of the night of the long knives:

During the 1980-82 constitutional exercise, the federal government proposed to cut the Gordian knot by arguing that the sovereignty of Canada ultimately resided neither in the provinces nor in the federal government, but in the Canadian people.

The provincial governments collectively rejected that view, even objecting to the use of the words "the people of Canada" in a preamble to the constitution, and proposing instead a description of Canada as a country made up of "provinces... freely united", thus returning to the selfsame concept that had prevented patriation in 1927.

• (1215)

In his speech the member for Roberval went on to invoke democracy. He spoke of the sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of Quebecers. Evidently he does not see democracy as an inclusive word for all citizens affected within the entire nation

where a separation is being proposed. In fact, the sword of Damocles of which he spoke hangs over everybody's head: his, mine and everyone else's.

In his speech the member for Roberval also announced that the responsibility for the clarity of the question rests with Quebec. Such a responsibility was not famously discharged the last time, was it? Actually, it was so badly done that the supreme court, whose declaration was welcomed even by the present premier of Quebec, found it necessary to explicitly stress the importance that such a question in the future be put clearly. Evidently the supreme court was not impressed with the clarity of the question in 1995.

The level of indignation of the member for Roberval, who is otherwise a very likeable fellow, reached stratospheric heights when he said that never again would the members of the Bloc Québécois allow the federal government to try to take away responsibility from the National Assembly of Quebec. What nonsense. No responsibility has been taken away.

Carefully read the first line of the bill. It states: "An act to give effect to the requirements for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada". Yes, the Quebec national assembly is referred to in the first paragraph of the preamble, where we find a very important democratic point. It says that there is no right under international law or under the constitution of Canada for the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally. Why is the word unilateral so important? Because any proposal to break up Canada is a matter of the utmost gravity and is of fundamental importance to all of its citizens. Hence the importance that the question when asked be free of ambiguity and the answer be supported by a clear majority.

I do not want to cause the member for Roberval a heart attack by saying what in the view of many a clear majority should be, but because the matter is of grave importance to all Canadians a truly democratic approach would be to consult all Canadians from coast to coast. The same should apply to British Columbia, should one day the spectre of separation appear there, or any other province for that matter.

The member for Roberval accuses the federal government of wanting to make sure Quebec cannot "democratically" overcome certain obstacles. I respectfully submit that it is the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois that are actually acting in an anti-democratic fashion. I say so for two reasons.

First, in their view the Quebec nationalists see the referendum question as a provincial matter only, but it is not. It affects the entire nation because it means the amputation of a very important and significant part of the national body. Before an amputation takes place we must consult all parts affected, not just the part to be amputated. This elementary democratic principle has not yet penetrated the collective brains of the Bloc Québécois.

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Second, Canada is a country which consists of aboriginal people, immigrants and their descendants. Let us take one group, the immigrants. I belong to that group. At least five million post-war immigrants have come to this country. Have they come to Ontario? No. Have they come to Quebec? No. Have they come to British Columbia? No. They and I have come to Canada. We have chosen Canada as a whole. We have settled in Canada because we were attracted to Canada, its spaces, mountains, forests, oceans and rolling hills. We became Canadian citizens not by accident of birth but by choice. We can see why it is unconvincing, for a party which claims to be democratic, to become indignant, as in the case of the member for Roberval.

• (1220)

Instead of putting up obstacles, the federal government is acting on behalf of all Canadians, as directed by the Supreme Court.

The Bloc Québécois is losing touch with reality. Gone are the times of Duplessis. Today's Quebec is highly educated, modern, with tremendous cultural, technical and industrial strength, and of course economic potential. Quebecers understand the advantages of a bilingual Canada which is capable of speaking to the world in two major trading and cultural languages.

It seems to me that the member for Roberval and his colleagues are underestimating Quebecers, their intelligence and their vision of Canada and the world. If Quebecers are still being victimized it is by the Bloc and the Parti Québécois.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau wrote these words, which I mentioned earlier, and they still apply today:

So it goes that, with myths and delusions, the Quebec nationalist elites falsify history to prove that all Quebec's political failures are someone else's fault: the conquest, the obscurantism of Duplessis' times, slowness to enter the modern age, illiteracy, and all the rest. It is never our leader's fault; it has to be blamed on some ominous plot against us.

There is a message here for the member for Roberval and his colleagues. I urge them to get with it, to enter the 21st century, to take their families to see the Rocky Mountains, the Pacific coast, the Arctic Ocean and the beautiful maritimes. These regions belong to them, the members of the Bloc Québécois, every square centimetre, in the same way as every square centimetre of Quebec belongs to the other 29,999,000 Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will try to contain my reaction somewhat. However, the Liberal member who just spoke is essentially saying one thing: he is accusing us of allegedly not wanting to debate the bill.

The fact is, he is the first member of his party to speak after a gag order was imposed to limit second reading today. This is a patent contradiction. What does he have to say on this?

How can he accuse the Bloc Québécois of shying away from debate when he just voted in favor of time allocation? Incidentally, his party is the only one to have done so. This is undemocratic.

Besides, we in the Bloc Québécois wish that a parliamentary committee would travel to Quebec and elsewhere to hear what Canadians and Quebecers have to say on this matter.

I would like his opinion, as one who seems to think of himself as a great democrat. It is time for him to prove it by saying "Yes, I agree that a committee should travel to hear people on this. This is highly democratic." He who spoke in favour of debate should be all for it, since debate is so important.

I also react to hearing over and over speeches like the ones Trudeau used to make. He would say things like "Ours is such a beautiful country, with the Rockies and Atlantic salmon. Why would you want to leave?"

I sincerely hope that we will hear better arguments than those.

Hon. Charles Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I obviously touched a nerve with the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

• (1225)

I am pleased to answer his question by saying that last Monday, in this House, during the debate on Bill C-20, members of the Bloc Québécois started rising on points of order, making dozens of requests for unanimous consent of this House to table documents. They even rejected a proposal by a government member to debate Bill C-20 into the evening, all night if necessary. This is on record in the *House of Commons Debates*.

The Bloc Québécois members clearly gave me and all those who have been following this debate the impression that they are afraid to have a democratic debate, because they tried by all possible means to interfere and prevent members from speaking—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. There are two minutes left for questions or comments from the member for Chicoutimi, and one minute for a response.

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Without any partisanship, Mr. Speaker, I bet this bill will barely live long enough for the committee to complete its consideration of it.

In its advisory opinion, the supreme court stated that all political actors in Canada should be involved in the process: the Senate, provincial legislatures, the national assembly naturally, and aboriginal peoples.

Since all these partners in the Canadian federation should be asked for their views both on the question and on the majority, how are we to reconcile potential diverging views? The bill does not say

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a word on the way diverging views should be reconciled. We are left in the dark, because there is nothing in the bill on this.

Hon. Charles Caccia: Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member for Chicoutimi, but his question is an hypothetical question, and I do not intend to answer hypothetical questions in the House.

I should finish my earlier remarks by saying that when we debated Bill C-20 on Monday, the Bloc Quebecois resorted to the most ridiculous tactics to slow down the debate. That is the answer I can give.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I must advise hon. members that debate will now be limited to 10 minutes, with no questions and comments.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-20, which has become known thus far as the clarity act.

While I believe that many aspects of this bill are important and even sound, I intend to show that referring to any clarity in this bill, as the government has tried to do in recent months, is a profound misnomer.

The central purpose for Bill C-20 is to give effect to the requirement for clarity, as set out in the 1998 opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec secession reference. As well, this enactment provides for the House of Commons to determine the clarity of a referendum question on the secession of a province and sets out some of the factors to be considered in making this determination. This has become an important part of this debate, which I will address later in my remarks.

Further on that point, this bill prohibits the Government of Canada from entering into negotiations on the terms on which a province might cease to be a part of Canada if the House of Commons determines that the referendum question is not clear. As well, Bill C-20 allows parliament to determine, following the referendum on secession in a province, if a clear majority of the population of the province has clearly expressed a will to cease to be a part of Canada, and sets out the factors to be considered in making its determination.

This bill would enable the Government of Canada to enter into any negotiations with the province in the event that a clear majority of the province's citizens clearly expressed a province's will to secede.

• (1230)

In the event that all the above conditions were satisfied in a yes referendum vote on secession, the bill recognizes that the secession

of a province from Canada requires an amendment to the Constitution of Canada, which in turn would require negotiations involving all provincial governments and the Government of Canada.

The bill recognizes that there is no current provision in the constitution to effect the secession of a province from Canada unilaterally and that an amendment to the constitution would be required, which in turn would require negotiations involving at least all the governments of all provinces and the Government of Canada.

To summarize, the goal of the so-called clarity act so far is supposedly to provide a clear question in a referendum on a province's secession from Canada and to identify a clear majority in such a referendum. Yet neither of these issues have been clarified by the government in the bill.

Beyond these questions the official opposition, along with Canadians, is wondering why the government has not focused more constructively on plan A, that is to say why the Liberals are stubbornly refusing to make effective changes to the federal system. Canadians really have no idea where the government is coming from nor where it is going within the so-called clarity act.

What is clear to anyone who has witnessed the history of the last five to ten years of this debate is that the Reform Party is the only party that has offered a constructive and a consistent position on how Canada's federation could be renewed. It is unfortunate that this cannot be said about the federal Liberals.

Before I go any further to address the bill in particular, I think it would be instructive for the House to revisit the recent history of this debate. I am sure the House remembers the advice of the Prime Minister leading up to the 1995 referendum on sovereignty. "Don't worry, be happy", was his favourite slogan. At the same time the official opposition stepped up to the plate trying to advance serious debate about what Canadians should be aware of in the event of a yes side majority.

However, back in 1995 the Reform Party was criticized by many for showing leadership and courage on the issue, and mostly by the members of the current government. Lo and behold it was this government which, in the Prime Minister's own words, has decided to get tough with the separatists. Instead of getting tough the Prime Minister should get smart and start offering real solutions to real problems facing the provinces. Does he not see that his get tough approach in Quebec is only fanning the flames of a dying fire?

Getting back to the 1995 referendum it was the Reform Party that led the debate. While we were trying to enlighten the government on the growing malaise in Quebec, the Prime Minister was repeating his don't worry, be happy mantra. As we all know, his inexplicable inaction almost produced a devastating result in that referendum.

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Following the referendum it was again the official opposition which led the debate, turning the focus of the debate away from the negative results from secession into positive nation building efforts by trying to reconstruct the federation.

We introduced the new Canada act which I had the pleasure of debating in Quebec last year with my dear friend from Témiscamingue. The new Canada act offers many solutions that would end the problems of regional alienation within this great nation. I am sure that it will be a matter of time, or at least another five years, until the Liberals decide to adopt our position once again.

Thank goodness Canadians will not have to wait five years. With the creation of the Canadian alliance a few weekends ago it will not be long until the government will be brought to its knees by a government with integrity, a government committed to lower taxes, democratic reform and reforming the federation. The official opposition through the Leader of the Opposition and our critic on intergovernmental affairs, the member for Macleod, has made our position crystal clear on the two parts of the proposed legislation.

[*Translation*]

First off, what is a clear majority? The official opposition recognizes the rule of 50% plus one and has done so since the process started. It would be shameful and certainly questionable if the government were to change a universally recognized rule at this point. The rules cannot be changed in the middle of the game.

This government's poor administration has dissatisfied Quebecers to the point that they felt they had no choice but to separate from Canada. Since the start of this upheaval the government has caused, the rule of 50% plus one has never been questioned.

• (1235)

It would be a huge mistake and irresponsible if the government were to change its position now. I have also heard the argument that 50% plus one would not be enough to break up the country.

A number of members opposite have also said repeatedly that, within the Reform Party, it takes a two-thirds majority of all members to make significant changes. So they wonder how the Reformers can support the concept of 50% plus one.

If this government wants to follow the Reformers—and I know it does because it is constantly doing it—then it should submit the issue of a clear majority to all Canadians through a national referendum. Why? In the case of our party, it is the grassroots that decided that a two-thirds majority would be required. Unless this government is prepared to ask Canadians whether they want to change the foundation of democracy, a 50% plus one majority must be the rule.

I want to go back to what constitutes a clear question. There are two important issues here. The first one concerns the procedure for

drafting the question. The second one has to do with the very substance of that question.

Before discussing these two points, I want to refer to an aspect of the supreme court opinion on this issue. As I mentioned earlier, the supreme court ruled that Canada would have an obligation to negotiate if there were a clear majority on a clear question. Should the yes side win, this bill provides the House of Commons with the necessary basis to debate the question and determine if that question and the outcome of any future referendum on the secession of a province reflects the legitimate and democratic will of the population.

The problem is that I wonder if the government can debate openly and in good faith in this House. Such an exercise would probably prove to be yet another masquerade, another scheme of the sort that the Liberals have become experts at over the past seven years.

This then begs another question. If the Liberals are—

Mr. Daniel Turp: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the debates are so important for the future of Quebec and of Canada, there should at least be a quorum in the House. I note that there are few members across the way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I will check for quorum immediately.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I see that we now have a quorum. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

[*English*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Madam Speaker, I will go through some more points, especially when they refer to the question. This brings me to the important point of the clear question. The official opposition believes that if we get the process right we will also arrive at the right questions.

What is the process to a clear question? I believe there is a common sense approach to getting the process right. I believe that true clarity in a question can only be achieved through a consensus drive approach, which would see the federal government co-operate with the province to write a question. A question cannot and should not in fairness be unilaterally written by either the federal government or a province. Only through a consensus approach will there be a clear question to the satisfaction of both the federal government and the province.

It is important that the government take note of the importance of getting the process right. The government must make the

connection between the process and the question. It is in the best interest of both parties to have some consensus on a clear question.

Why do I believe this? Suppose for a moment that the yes side were to win a referendum. In order for this result to be respected, I believe it would be critically important for the rest of the country to have seen the process in both asking and answering the question being carried out in good faith.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Turp: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I do not think that we have a quorum. I would like to know whether a government that is imposing a motion—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): We will check immediately.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I see that we now have a quorum.

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are a number of reasons I wished to take part in this debate on the bill to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec secession reference. The possible secession of a province is something to which we cannot remain indifferent.

Our government believes that it must ensure that there are clear procedures in place for the conduct of any referendum having to do with the separation of a province. Our determination in this regard is justified by the very importance of what is at stake. Our government's position is based on the opinion released by the Supreme Court of Canada on August 20, 1998. This opinion urged us, as politicians, to assume our responsibilities. That is what our government is doing.

The principal points in the opinion were as follows: neither international nor Canadian law gives Quebec the right to secede unilaterally. Secession of Quebec from the rest of Canada cannot be achieved unilaterally, that is to say, without negotiations according to the Canadian constitution.

In international law there can be no right to secession by virtue of the principle of self-determination of a people except in the case of a people that is governed as part of a colonial empire, subject to foreign subjugation and domination. According to the court, "such exceptional circumstances are manifestly inapplicable to Quebec".

The other political stakeholders would not be obliged to negotiate except if a clear majority in Quebec were to clearly express its desire to no longer be part of Canada.

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It is up to all of the political stakeholders to determine what is a clear question and what is a clear majority in a vote on secession.

The purpose of the court opinion was not to contest the legitimacy of a referendum consultation, nor to prevent Quebecers from speaking out on their political future. Nor did it in any way question the right of Quebecers to decide their future. Its purpose was, instead, to obtain clarifications on certain matters of law.

We do not wish to deny Quebecers the right to make the choice to leave Canada. We do, however, believe that the process should be clear and should allow Quebecers to express their wishes in total clarity. The supreme court opinion contributes to this. The important element of the court's opinion concerns the requirement of a clear question and a clear majority. The expression clear question comes up no fewer than 18 times in the opinion, and clear majority 19 times.

The court makes the obligation to negotiate conditional on a clear majority having voted in the affirmative in response to a clear question on secession. It is the job of the political actors to determine the clarity required. This is why the federal government has a role to play in this matter.

The clarity of the question is essential to the functioning of a democratic referendum. Public consultation in the independence process elsewhere in the world has always involved a simple and clear question. There is in fact no example of successful secession based on a small majority in a referendum.

The potential consequences of Quebec's secession are such that they require the clearest possible referendum process. Quebecers must not lose their country on a misunderstanding, through ambiguity. We cannot ask them to sign a blank cheque. This is in fact what nearly happened in the last referendum campaign.

We must avoid this in the future. Quebecers are entitled to know the scope of the decision they will have to take in a future referendum. And it is the responsibility of the political actors, including the Government of Canada, to see to that.

• (1245)

The court confirmed that all political actors have the obligation to negotiate in good faith the terms of Quebec's secession, in the event of a clear question and a clear majority. This is in paragraph 88. But it is also very specific in paragraph 96 about the difficulties that such a scenario would create. I quote:

Of course, secession would give rise to many issues of great complexity and difficulty. These would have to be resolved within the overall framework of the rule of law, thereby assuring Canadians resident in Quebec and elsewhere a measure of stability in what would likely be a period of considerable upheaval and uncertainty.

This is paragraph 96. The court mentions that the negotiations that would follow a clear majority vote in favour of secession

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“would address the potential act of secession as well as its possible terms should in fact secession proceed”. This can be found in paragraph 151. These negotiations would therefore be on the process leading to secession, not on a hypothetical project of association, as claimed by some secessionist leaders. The reference makes no mention of association.

Rightly so, the court says there is no “assumption that an agreement reconciling all relevant rights and obligations would actually be reached”. This is paragraph 97.

The court’s opinion suggests that everything would be on the table should there be negotiations on secession, including the division of the national debt, the protection of linguistic and cultural minorities, aboriginal peoples, et cetera. The bill confirms that view.

The opinion also alludes to territorial integrity, and I quote:

Nobody seriously suggests that our national existence, seamless in so many aspects, could be effortlessly separated along what are now the provincial boundaries of Quebec.

As we can see, a secession would have major and multiple consequences. To go that route by relying on ambiguity would be extremely irresponsible.

The supreme court opinion protects the legal and democratic rights of Canadians for the future. It defines the legal framework within which democratic decisions must be made. It clearly states the principles under which Canada has evolved and prospered, namely, federalism, democracy, constitutionalism, the rule of law and respect for minorities.

We care too much about our country to lose it because of a misunderstanding. The supreme court opinion has clarified certain points of law, but it cannot in and of itself create a framework for the responsibilities of the Government of Canada, should it have to, unfortunately, begin negotiations which could lead to the separation of a province.

Separatists criticize us for doing our duty. Yet, those who elected us are asking us to do our duty. This is what we are doing by introducing this bill.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, this bill is too important to let pass some of the observations made here since the debate first began.

The bill referred to so casually by the members opposite as the clarity bill is in fact a bill whose requirement is the docility of Quebecers; docility because the question in the next referendum will no longer be decided upon freely and democratically by representatives of Quebecers in the national assembly, but will be

submitted under the terms of clause 1 to the House of Commons 30 days after it is decided upon in the national assembly.

If we go by what happened in 1995, this means that right in the middle of a referendum campaign, when Quebecers have agreed, through the national assembly, on a referendum question, and have begun to debate that question and what it means, the House of Commons, the majority of whose members represent the rest of Canada, and not Quebec, the English Canadian majority, will have decided that this question is not valid.

• (1250)

Quebecers are not being taken seriously. Their intelligence is being questioned. That too is the result.

This bill introduced by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, a Quebecer, tells us that Quebecers are not intelligent enough to decide whether or not a question is clear or to make an informed choice in any referendum debate concerning this issue.

This is one of the worst blows inflicted on Quebecers in the history of Canadian federalism and one of the worst threats to Quebec’s freedom to decide its own future.

Under clause 2, the Quebecers’ decision would have to be approved by the Canadian House of Commons, with an English Canadian majority. After the national assembly has adopted a question that it considered clear, and after Quebecers have had a clear debate on a clear issue, the House of Commons could determine, under clause 2, whether the majority in a positive referendum on sovereignty, according to particular criteria, is acceptable or not for the majority in the rest of Canada.

That is also another blow for freedom and democracy in Quebec.

There are all kinds of cloudy criteria. They call this a bill on clarity. It could be called a bill on variable cloudiness.

They talk about the size of the majority, the percentage of eligible voters voting for the referendum, and any other factor considered relevant. It is another way of saying that no majority of any size will ever be acceptable for parliament, for Liberals and for all other federalists in the House. For these people, the democratic rule of 50% plus one is not valid any more.

On top of that, the clause says that various views will be considered both on the clarity of the question and the results of the referendum. They will take into account views of political parties in the national assembly, of provincial and territorial governments throughout Canada, and of the Senate. Many people find this last point revolting.

They would ask the views of the Senate, an archaic institution which is undemocratic and even antidemocratic, on a fundamental

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issue of democracy concerning Quebecers and their freedom of choice. We have never seen the like in the short history of the Canadian parliament.

This is an all out attack against the national assembly. Bill C-20 is also an attack on the quality, the honesty and the intelligence of Quebec voters. It is a serious infringement of democracy.

Let me set out a scenario that could have happened in an imaginary world. If the Quebec National Assembly, under a Parti Québécois government, had wanted to pass similar legislation to set the parameters for the federalist vote—as Bill C-20 is setting parameters for the sovereigntist vote, but not for the federalist vote—to provide that the small majority of 50,000 federalist votes in Quebec that defeated the sovereigntist proposal in 1995 had to be reviewed and monitored to be found acceptable, that would have been called racist.

There would have been outraged headlines everywhere in the media, first in the anglophone media and then in the others. Most of them, except for *Le Devoir*, have federalist owners and their columnists are often federalist too.

If the national assembly had decided to set parameters for the federalist vote and to question the majority vote of 50,000 against sovereignty in 1995, if it had reviewed the majority votes to see whether there was a clear enough opposition to the creation of the new country that Quebec would have become and if it had questioned the results and rejected them, I bet it would have made the front page and that the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois would have been called racists.

However, that is what Bill C-20 does, through a token Quebecer, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and 25 other accomplices.

• (1255)

To present things this way is unacceptable. This bill is almost racist. It tells us that Quebecers are not intelligent enough to choose a question and to make decisions on the future of Quebec on their own.

It seems that the same definition of democracy does not apply to Quebecers and the rest of Canadians, because only the sovereigntist vote, the vote on the future of the Quebec province, is being limited in such a way, not the federalist vote, and not a vote taken outside Quebec.

It is unfortunate because, throughout history, officials, members of conquered people, hastened to do the dirty work of the conquerors or their descendants. Here in the House of Commons, we have 26 Liberal members from Quebec, two of whom, the Prime

Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, are doing the dirty work of the majority of English Canada against Quebec.

It pays to spit on Quebec. It pays to stomp on Quebecers. During the last referendum campaign, when did the Reform Party start to gain popularity? When it began to stomp on Quebecers. And now, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, opposite, is turning into a hero in English Canada. Why? Because he stomps on Quebecers. He is a Quebecer, just like the Prime Minister of Canada. He does the dirty work against Quebec, stomps on Quebecers and he once said that to be forced to stay in Canada Quebecers had to be hurt economically.

Sadly, no Liberal member from Quebec has spoken in the House against such practices, against such an affront to Quebec democracy and such a breach to Canadian democracy.

Do not think that foreign observers have not done the same analysis I just did by reversing roles and saying “The national assembly is setting parameters for the federalist vote”, and this brings us back to the House of Commons. How is it that it is more acceptable in Canada, through the media, which are controlled mainly by federalist interests, to have a bill against Quebec, Quebec democracy and Quebecers’ freedom of choice rather than the other way around?

Do people not believe that this sort of bill goes against the tradition of democracy in Canada?

I ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, since he is here—even if he does not seem to be listening because he is better off to do so—why does he not respond favourably to the request made by the Bloc Québécois? If he will not withdraw this bill immediately—which we all wish he would, because it is an objectionable bill—at least will the legislative committee that will be struck to study the bill be allowed to begin its work by hearing from everybody in Quebec and in Canada who wants to address this issue? There are Canadians who do not agree and who came to tell us so, including a group of 90 intellectuals, and representatives from lobby groups. They said they do not agree with this undemocratic breach by the federal government. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs should allow this committee to hear from all witnesses across Quebec and Canada.

Second, this committee should travel across Quebec and Canada and, third, all these hearings should be televised to really inform the public about this breach of Canadian democracy and Quebecers’ freedom of choice.

If the minister tells us, with his Prime Minister, that Quebec is behind him, he should stop being afraid and he should travel with us. We will then see if, at the end of the process, he will still be self-confident and as arrogant as he was this week, calling women’s groups, unions, teachers’ groups and writers’ groups “mothball groups”.

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[English]

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, my French is not good enough for me to make a speech in that language on an issue as important as the clarity bill.

My riding of Scarborough East is home to more than 100,000 people, 40% of whom have neither English nor French as their first language.

• (1300)

My constituents are very confused. They came to Canada from other countries because Canada is the best country in the world. They cannot understand the problem.

[English]

Many of us who have lived here for generations share that confusion and also do not understand the problem. Endless referenda on vague questions about what?

The confusion of the people of Scarborough East is understandable. In fact I note that even Mario Dumont was confused, one of those who signed the so-called deal referred to in the question. He now says that he has not nor has he ever been a sovereignist. If he is confused, one can imagine what the people of Scarborough East feel like. Are they going or are they staying? Are they merely voting for strategic purposes? For my entire lifetime as a Canadian, this debate has gone on and frankly, in our neck of the woods people keep asking what will make Quebec happy.

There is a malaise in the land. There is a desire to bring some finality to the debate. I for one welcome the resolution and therefore see the introduction of this bill as a welcome first step in moving the debate forward.

Madam Speaker, I do not know if you have had an opportunity to read the book *Reflections of a Siamese Twin* by John Ralston Saul. One particular quotation struck me as unique:

We are gripped by a fear of non-conformity. We are overcome by a desperate desire to present ourselves as a natural and completed experiment, monolithic, normal, just another one of the standard nation-states. It is as if we were Siamese twins, with one body, two heads and two separate but interrelated personalities. Together they are very interesting. But in some way most people want them to be separated or deny the importance of one or the other. They want us to be normalized. Banalized. We are unable to accept the remarkable originality of the Canadian experiment—to accept that Canada's central characteristic—its greatest strength—is its complexity.

Therein summarizes some of the frustrations that make Canada what it is today. It is a unique country in that it has two founding races, two founding cultures and two founding languages.

I also take the opportunity to quote from the minister in his introduction of the bill:

This bill is reasonable, and is in everybody's interest, including that of my fellow Quebecers who desire Quebec independence. They can and must acknowledge that their plan for political independence can only be realized in clarity and legality. To act otherwise, to reach independence through ambiguity, with no legal safety net, is to show disrespect for Quebecers and to doom the independence initiative to failure, to an impasse that would be disappointing and costly for everyone.

I always find it useful to read the bill, a strange concept I realize, and review the preamble as it provides guidance to those of us who wish to debate it and to try to understand what is in the mind of the mover and ultimately of parliament. I refer to three of the whereas clauses:

Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed that there is no right, under international law or under the Constitution of Canada, for the National Assembly, legislature or government of Quebec to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally;

Whereas any proposal relating to the break-up of a democratic state is a matter of the utmost gravity and is of fundamental importance to all of its citizens;

I would emphasize all of its citizens and as I represent the riding of Scarborough East, the people of Scarborough East, because any breakup of our country would have a significant impact on all of Canada and its citizens.

Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has determined that the result of a referendum on the secession of a province from Canada must be free of ambiguity both in terms of the question asked and in terms of the support it achieves if that result is to be taken as an expression of the democratic will that would give rise to an obligation to enter into negotiations that might lead to secession;

• (1305)

What is the problem? Can anyone really be against clarity? Apparently they can.

In my view, the bill is profoundly democratic. It sets out a process without predetermining a result. It allows for the constituent assemblies to express themselves. By the constituent assemblies I mean all of the democratic institutions that we have in this country. We have had 150 years of democratic government. If we decide we are going to break up, then all of its constituent assemblies need to decide that. It avoids the limitations of referenda which are necessarily simple questions and simple answers. It recognizes that breaking up a country is a very serious business. It gives all Canadians a voice in the process through their members of parliament.

I know it is heresy among some members opposite that other Canadians should have an opinion, that they should have a say, that they should have a vote in the breakup of their country which they and their ancestors worked so hard to make work and built together as a unique country, one well worth saving. In our own strange way if we choose to break up, surely the process should be clear and free of ambiguity.

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Therefore, I find myself in support of the bill and have a great deal of support from the constituents of my riding. I congratulate the minister for bringing forth this bill. Hopefully it will bring us one step closer to a resolution on this issue.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Calgary East to participate in the debate on Bill C-20, the clarity act.

Frankly, I believe that the vast majority of Canadians would like to see a resolution of the unity debate one way or another. Since I arrived in this country, like thousands of other immigrants who now call Canada home, I have been mesmerized by this debate.

In many ways the debate on separation is unique to Canada. In other countries of the world, when a group of people threaten to separate, they are labelled as traitors. Many countries have the death penalty for that, but in Canada the debate has been held in a civil manner and the issues are on the table for discussion. This is a credit to the Canadian people and to this country.

It is impossible to deny the seriousness of the potential breakup of our country. That is precisely why it is absolutely necessary to have clarity on this issue, to have the pros and cons clearly set out so that Canadians and Quebecers both know the result of their decisions and that it is seen as a fair and equitable process. If in the end it is not seen as a fair and just process, it will not be viewed as legitimate and will lead to a negative and confrontational attitude which will further divide the country.

There has been no doubt in the minds of most Canadians that the last referendum question had a double meaning and did not adequately define what separation from Canada would mean.

The Reform Party said that there was a need for a clear question for legitimacy and a plan B approach should Quebecers express their will to separate from Canada. This was attacked by advocates of the soft approach to federalism. The PC Party and its leader Joe Clark are advocates of this soft approach.

Canadians view the soft approach as the main reason the 1995 referendum was as close as it was. The 1995 referendum was a wake-up call to the Prime Minister and to the Liberal government.

• (1310)

I remember that night. As most Canadians did, I watched the results at home with my family. I watched with tremendous apprehension not fully understanding what it would mean if Quebecers voted to leave Canada. I think pride in our country won that night but it was a dangerous point in our country's history and a wake-up call for the country.

We cannot deny the tremendous contributions Quebecers have made to this country since Confederation. We cannot deny that French Canadians are the proud builders of this nation. Their cultural and language diversity have enriched our nation and I hope they will continue to do so. But it is the belief of the official opposition that this can best be achieved by expanding provincial powers and not through federal government handouts and legislation.

Quebec has the right to constantly challenge the federal government on areas of jurisdiction but in the case of the clarity bill, I believe Canadians through parliament have the right to ask Quebecers for a clear question and to define what it means to have a clear majority should another referendum be held. The clarity bill does improve the chances that a referendum on secession by any province will be conducted fairly. That is why my colleagues and I have agreed to support the bill.

The official opposition has suggested what a possible question could be. I believe it is a reasonable question and that it should be inserted into the bill as an example. The question simply states: Should, insert the name of the province, separate from Canada and become an independent country with no special legal ties to Canada, yes or no?

On the issue of what constitutes a clear majority, the government owes Canadians an answer. The Prime Minister and the intergovernmental affairs minister are quick to say that a clear majority is a number greater than 50% plus one but they are not prepared to say what that number is. Again the official opposition is prepared to be clear on this issue and to put the number at 50% plus one of the ballots cast. Of course the flip side of this is simply that if 50% plus one of the vote can split the country, then 50% plus one could split the province as well.

Quebecers' aspirations must be met as must the aspirations of other provinces and the first nations. It is important for there to be measures in the bill to improve the federation. The official opposition and specifically the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Calgary Southwest, have done a tremendous amount of work on developing ideas on reforming the federation. These ideas are at the core of the Reform Party and of the new Canadian alliance.

Our plan for renewing the federation is contained in part A of the new Canada act. The fundamentals of the new Canada act are designed to treat all Canadians with fairness and equality, to promote equality of opportunity for all Canadians, to respect the equality rights and the dignity of all Canadians as well as their various needs, and to recognize that all provinces despite their differences have the same legal standing.

The new Canada act contains provisions for a better sharing of powers under the constitution; reduced federal spending powers in areas of provincial jurisdiction; a dispute settlement mechanism; a change in policies and programs for the aboriginal people; and

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democratic reform of federal institutions, especially the House of Commons, the Senate and the supreme court to make these institutions more accountable to Canadians.

I believe along with my colleagues in the official opposition that these changes are required to improve the federation and to create conditions in this country that are not limited to separation or the status quo. They are changes that would improve the federation by placing more power in the hands of the provinces.

I personally think the federal government can do a great deal more to promote the benefits of remaining in Canada to Quebecers.

Clearly the economic benefits of being in Canada are already having a positive impact on the province of Quebec. Montreal is sharing in the economic boom of North America. Jobs are being created, investment dollars are pouring in and real estate prices are climbing. These are positive signs for federalism and working together to ensure a strong Canada for the future of our children and grandchildren.

• (1315)

To conclude, I with my colleagues will support Bill C-20 because it sets out clear and fair rules for a referendum.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have just set foot into the 21st century, and I would like to take this opportunity to speak to Bill C-20, which deals with the requirement of clarity in the event of a referendum on the secession of Quebec.

I would, moreover, invite all my colleagues here in the House to reflect seriously on this matter and to bring their reason and good judgment to bear in understanding the legitimacy of this bill and in putting an end to the troubling ambiguity of the sovereignist project.

Bill C-20 is a call for clarity, clarity in our individual and collective choices, clarity in our feelings, and clarity above all in the expression of our will to all Canadians, to remain united in order to face the economic, social and cultural challenges facing us.

I would like to remind all members of the House of Commons that, in bringing in this bill, the Government of Canada is acting responsibly and with the greatest respect for Canada's political institutions. This bill does not in any way represent a threat to the integrity of either the national assembly of Quebec or any other legislative assembly in the other provinces and the territories of our country.

In its opinion on the secession of Quebec, the Supreme Court of Canada stated, and I quote:

However, it will be for the political actors to determine what constitutes "a clear majority on a clear question" in the circumstances under which a future referendum vote may be taken.

The Government of Canada being one of those actors, it therefore has a responsibility to ensure that the integrity of our country is neither threatened nor, indeed, made to disintegrate as a result of political manipulation and semantics concealing the true intent and scope of the referendum choice.

In the throne speech of last October 12, our government reaffirmed its commitment to all Canadians in Quebec and all other Canadians to ensure that the principle of clarity set out by the Supreme Court of Canada is respected.

For our government, there is no doubt that the most sensible and reasonable way to meet its commitment is to include in an act of parliament the requirement for clarity set out by the Supreme Court of Canada with regard to both the referendum question and the result of the vote.

Therefore, the Government of Canada is just doing its duty to the people of Quebec and other Canadian provinces and territories by making sure that the spirit of the supreme court's decision is reflected in legislation designed to remove any ambiguity as to the choice that could be made by the people of part of its territory in a referendum.

The legitimacy of Canada's decision to embark on this path cannot be challenged. Need I remind the House that the court's task was to clarify the legal framework within which political decisions must be made under the constitution and not, as some would have us believe, to usurp the prerogatives of the political forces acting within that framework?

The Canadian government's approach does not threaten the integrity of provincial institutions, including the National Assembly of Quebec. On the contrary, it is aimed at preserving the integrity of the parliament and the government of all Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who is the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, has introduced a bill that concerns Quebec.

• (1320)

I see that the Liberal Party members are not interested in the minister's bill. They are absent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member knows very well we do not comment on—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Order, please.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Order, please.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Order, please. That is enough. The hon. member who rose on a point of order knows full well that we do not comment in the House of Commons on the absence or presence of members. So we shall resume debate with the hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

Mr. Nick Discepolo: I will continue with my remarks, Madam Speaker. Such a statement in support of clarity in a law voted on by the representatives of the people of Canada, who are all democratically elected and who, therefore, speak for the people, cannot but serve democracy and the rights and freedoms of all the citizens of our country.

In its opinion, the supreme court reminds us of the issues of a decision on the secession of a province or a territory of Canada, and I quote:

In the 131 years since Confederation, the people of the provinces and territories have created close ties of interdependence (economically, socially, politically and culturally) based on shared values that include federalism, democracy, constitutionalism and the rule of law, and respect for minorities. A democratic decision of Quebecers in favour of secession would put those relationships at risk.

This statement reflects the true impact of a secession, which would affect not only the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of Quebec, but of all of Canada. It would be an irreversible decision which could not, for all intents and purposes, be reconsidered in any way, in spite of what the Bloc Québécois leader may have said about this in the past.

When a portion of a country's population decides to separate from the rest of the population, it is because that group believes, rightly or wrongly, that it is impossible to continue to live in that country, that its living conditions and the full enjoyment of its rights and freedoms are in jeopardy. Is this currently the case in Quebec? I doubt it very much. Are the talents, skills and pride of Quebecers not drawn on, and are they not, as they should be, a fundamental component of our country's success and of its recognition around the world?

Our entry into the 21st century is marked by an economic, social and cultural interdependence that is essential to the development of our resources and to our quality of life. Is the success of each region of Canada, which are all so unique and distinctive, not a guarantee of our country's economic, social and cultural success?

Our country is a whole in which all the parts contribute to its identity and to the promotion of its values. Bill C-20 ensures that it

will only be possible to alter our country's integrity if one of its regions were to decide unambiguously, through the expression of the will of a clear majority of its population on a clear question, to separate from the rest of the country and to assume the economic, social, cultural, political and financial responsibilities resulting from such a decision.

This is what we would call a clear choice, void of any ambiguity. It would be a choice based on reason, good judgement and intelligence. It would not be a choice made as a result of manipulation to get the public all confused about its deep convictions and its interests.

The Government of Canada sincerely believes that we must claim the right to preserve the integrity of all the institutions on our territory. We must also, and I say it again because this is critical, preserve the integrity of the rights and freedoms of all those who live in our country, regardless of their origin and beliefs.

• (1325)

All political actors agree that clarity is essential in a referendum about secession. A clear question is one which leaves no room for doubt in the mind of the person who must answer it.

All political actors also agree with the supreme court's opinion that the principle of clarity also applies to the result of a referendum vote on secession. A clear majority is the expression of a will that leaves politicians and all citizens in no doubt as to how results are to be interpreted and what the vote means. One does not half leave a country. One leaves it completely, forever, irrevocably.

One leaves because the decision taken by a large majority of the population prevails on any legitimate opposition to secession and because the government is accordingly justified in giving effect to that will, without irreducibly threatening social order.

Any negotiations that would end this union, that would destroy the links uniting us all, would certainly not be easy and would leave their share of wounds and bitterness.

With Bill C-20, however, our government wants to ensure that, in the event of secession, both the public and the so-called political actors will base their actions on reason, good judgment and common understanding.

Today our country is a world leader in its efforts to build a new economic order that will benefit us all.

Let us stop wallowing around in the murkiness of the Parti Québécois' political project and unite forces to take up the major education, health and economic development challenges awaiting us in all communities in Canada.

Reason and common sense must prevail. Let us leave behind the ambiguity of the Parti Québécois' project. We all stand to gain.

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Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor, even on such a very sad day. In fact, to be perfectly honest, it is not so much the day that is very sad as the parliamentary record of the government over there.

I would never have believed I would be rising to speak to a bill like Bill C-20, boldly titled an act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference.

The contents of this bill are despotic in themselves, and its principle alone is sufficient to justify our vehement opposition. If the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs wants to talk of clarity, yes his bill is clear. There is not even any subtlety in it. The federal government wants to prevent the Quebec people from freely deciding its future. In my opinion, what is clear is that the bill is nothing less than a coup d'état aimed at Quebec democracy.

This bill questions the basic rules of democracy. In introducing Bill C-20, the Canadian government is trying to impose a veto on the decisions Quebecers will be taking democratically on their political future. Such a thing has never been seen.

Canada struts about on the international scene loudly proclaiming its democratic principles, while not even bothering to respect them at home. What a fine example.

Just about three years ago now, when I chose to get into politics, my purpose was of course to promote sovereignty, but also to come here to Ottawa in order to defend Quebec's interests.

I can remember how hopeful I was at that time. Yes, hopeful that we would manage, as people motivated by democratic principles, to exchange views and reach agreement that Quebecers had to be allowed to decide their own future according to their own will.

Democratically elected, a legitimate mandate in my hands, I never thought I would be participating one day in this sham of democracy.

May I remind the House that, as John F. Kennedy put it so well, the true politician hangs on to his ideals as he loses his illusions. Thanks to the government opposite, I have lost my illusions. However, I am keeping my ideal, which is independence for Quebec.

In 1997, I still thought that words like right, equality, respect and justice meant something to the people of Canada and their representatives.

• (1330)

I thought, naively perhaps, that these principles were worth something. Well, today, with Bill C-20, the government across from us is proving the opposite. In any case, certainly the Prime Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Bill C-20 constitutes a serious and unprecedented attack against the democratic principles Quebecers have set for themselves and against the institutions they have created. It is an attack against Quebec's freedom of choice. And yet, for the past 30 years the political debate over the future of Quebec has been marked by a profound respect of the rules of democracy. Today the Liberal government is denying this democratic tradition.

But really, what else can we expect from a party governing with arrogance and disdain for so many years? What can we expect from a government that has no sense of justice? Should we really be surprised by the tactics of the Liberal government, since the current Prime Minister is behind all the attacks against Quebec and was more importantly one of the artisans of the night of the long knives? Can we expect anything else? This is a government that has proven its lack of any sense of democracy, preferring to manage the country's business without consultation, without transparency and without concern for the opinion of others.

This government is trying to make political gains in the rest of Canada on the backs of the people of Quebec and to the detriment of the most basic respect for democracy.

I remind the House that the sovereignist movement has great respect for democracy and for the state of law. There is a broad consensus in Quebec in this regard.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, would it be possible to ask the good member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges to be quiet, to listen and to learn something?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): As always, I call on all members on both sides of the House to listen respectfully, along with me, to the member speaking.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Madam Speaker, not only do they wish to gag us but they are all but preventing us from speaking in this institution, which is very disagreeable. I continue.

No interest is more important than freedom, including freedom of speech. This freedom is the ability of Quebecers to decide their collective future, the freedom to elect a responsible government in Quebec—even if it is sovereignist—the freedom to have the Government of Quebec considered responsible and legitimate, the freedom to decide on the referendum question that suits us, the freedom not to be confined by an untenable status quo, the freedom to choose a country. These are the values to which I and my country, Quebec, subscribe.

No obstacle to this freedom can be accepted or imposed by anyone, particularly not by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. The Bloc Québécois, all its members, all its supporters and all democrats in Quebec, intend to rise up against this assault on Quebec. There is no question of the people of Quebec agreeing to

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bow down to the shameless and disrespectful tactics of the Liberal government.

Agreeing to Bill C-20 would be agreeing to sell one's soul, to turn one's back on democracy.

I am deeply convinced that no one in Quebec wants to remain in a country that bears more of a resemblance to a dictatorship than a country that respects democratically elected institutions and the will of the people.

The true meaning of democracy for the young people of my generation, and what I wish for Quebec, what I wish for my country, Quebec, is different from what the people over there are proposing. Seeing just how far the federal government is prepared to go to deny the legitimate right of Quebec to decide on its own future and to deny the most basic rules of democracy, I am convinced that the Quebec people, with pride in their values, will soon choose—clarity law or no clarity law—to have their own country.

More than ever, I am convinced that sovereignty can truly change and improve things, for the foundations of our project are built on an affirmation of the democratic principle, although the same cannot be said about the people across the way.

To see how the federal government is acting, can my generation, or the population in general, really be faulted for no longer believing in the world of politics and its present institutions?

In referring this issue to the supreme court, in presenting Bill C-20, a bill that is against all international precedent, the federal government is merely making many members of my generation even more cynical about politics. Shame on the federal government.

• (1335)

Shame on the government for its refusal to listen to reason, for its refusal to respect democracy, for its rejection of the right of the Quebec people and its worthy representatives to be listened to and respected. By systematically denying the existence of the Quebec people, the federal government is denying the vital democratic principle of the right of peoples to decide their own future.

Democracy is meaningless without true representation and true debates. Democracy must not simply be a principle to which lip service is given. It must also be a principle which is respected. It must be present in actions as well. The federal government has no right to ignore democracy with impunity whenever it suits it to do so. And this is what it is doing with Bill C-20. In so doing, the government is giving the rest of Canada a new form of veto on the political and constitutional future of Quebec. Never.

With Bill C-20, the federal government is on the wrong track and there will be no turning back. What will there be left to do after Bill C-20? What is the next step for the Liberal government? To lock

the doors of the national assembly to prevent Quebecers from being represented? To flood the whole province with Canadian flags carrying the message “Thou shalt honour Canada”? While the federal government is at it, why not ask members of the national assembly to sing O Canada at the beginning of their proceedings? No way.

What will happen after this show of force? The public can expect the worst from the government opposite.

We Quebecers still believe that democracy is what binds our society. If Canada no longer believes in democracy, it is its own business, but it is also a good reason for us Quebecers to become sovereign.

It is now clear that the federal framework is keeping us from truly thriving. To me, democracy is not a technical issue that only concerns a small elite, but the affirmation of a common will to live. It seems clear that if there is such a common will, it is in Quebec.

Quebec's sovereignty is above all an act of freedom. To long for sovereignty is to want Quebecers to have full control over their destiny through transparent institutions where their officials will debate the real issues.

Again, the federal government is on the wrong track with Bill C-20. There will be no turning back but, above all, the government is admitting that it has nothing to propose to Quebecers and that it is unable to meet their fundamental aspirations.

Quebec's sovereignty is a democratic, modern and unifying project.

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin with a statement made by a well-known politician, who said in 1992 that for a win by the yes side to be legitimate it must have at least 58% of the votes to take into account the votes of anglophones and allophones.

Before our friends opposite start criticizing this statement, I will tell them that it was made by none other than the present Deputy Premier of Quebec, Bernard Landry.

This statement should surprise no one in this House. In 1992 the referendum campaign on the Charlottetown accord was in full swing. The separatists were on the no side at that time and told anyone who would listen that a 50% plus one majority would not be enough. Why? Because, as Mr. Landry said, the votes of anglophones and allophones, which he already considered lost, had to be taken into account. According to him, a win by the yes side would have been justified in this case only if such a level of support was to be found among the francophone population.

This is not the first time we have the opportunity to ponder such statements which, members will admit, are somewhat cynical. To all intents and purposes, taking into account the votes of anglophones and allophones is tantamount to weighing the votes,

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meaning that the vote of a francophone is worth more than the vote of a Quebecer from a different cultural community.

Personally, I always believed that, from the moment they are granted Canadian citizenship, voters are all subject to the same rules and their votes all have the same political weight. To consider people according to their race, their language or their religion is to play a dangerous game with feelings that lead to intolerance.

This type of statement says a lot about the PQ's idea of democracy.

• (1340)

In the eyes of separatists, there will always be two kinds of Quebecers: the real ones, who are for the independence option, and the imposters, who consist, on the one hand, of the francophone group which rejects separation and, on the other, of Quebecers from all corners of the international community.

This is why they cannot identify with the independence project and refuse to listen to the siren call sent out with each passing referendum.

The bill before us, as its name indicates, seeks to clarify the rules that would guide the Government of Canada in its actions if a province proposed a secession project to its citizens. This bill is a necessity and that is why we are so determined to have it passed.

Statements such as those by Bernard Landry, which I have already cited, cannot fail to move those for whom democracy is truly important. In our view, it is unacceptable to say that 50% plus one is enough to separate, when a constitutional reform project would require, as Mr. Landry said, applying some sort of twisted logic, 58% of the vote.

This is a criticism levelled by separatists themselves. They criticize us for maintaining that the majority required for secession must be greater than that required to join a federation, to take one example.

In effect, that is our belief, and I will illustrate with an example that the separatists frequently trot out in support of their argument, the case of Newfoundland. In a nutshell, if 52% was good for Newfoundland, why is 50% plus one not enough for Quebec to secede?

Let us agree on one thing from the start. The two situations were very different. In 1949 Newfoundland was a colony of Great Britain. There was, so to speak, not the solid interdependence between Newfoundland and Great Britain that exists between Quebec and Canada. And so, Quebec's separation would be much more complex than was Newfoundland's joining Canada. The risks of injustice would therefore be much greater as well.

We must not confuse the 52% of Newfoundlanders already mentioned with the very great majority of those who voted in favour of breaking with the United Kingdom. In fact, the separa-

tists never say that an initial referendum held on June 3, 1948 proposed three options to Newfoundlanders: extension of their dependence for an additional five years; independence without financial assistance from London or entry to the Canadian federation.

Barely 14% of the electorate voted to extend dependence. In other words, 86% of the electorate voted in favour of breaking colonial ties with London. That, it must be said, was quite clear.

Another referendum was then held on the two remaining options: independence without financial assistance from London or joining the Canadian Confederation. On July 22, 1948, 52% of Newfoundlanders chose one of the two radical changes—Canadian Confederation. Under the circumstances, the Canadian authorities decided to welcome Newfoundland and today still we know we made the right decision.

So, as we have just seen, the essential difference between Newfoundland in 1948 and the separatist option in Quebec today is that Newfoundland did not break up a country when it joined Canada. It terminated a temporary colonial link. Quebec's secession from Canada would break up Canada, permanently. This is one fundamental reason the same percentage cannot be sought in two such different cases.

Another reason has already been cited by a number of my colleagues on this side of the House—international precedent. Since 1945, in 13 cases of moves to independence in which a referendum was held, excluding colonial contexts, the average majority obtained was 92%. I did indeed say 92%. The lowest was 72%. This is a long way from the 50% that Messrs. Bouchard, Parizeau, Landry and company are so desperately clinging to.

Another reason I have not much time to spend on, but which precludes too quick a comparison between the cases of Newfoundland and Quebec: the questions put to Newfoundlanders were clear; those put to Quebecers in the last two referendums on sovereignty were not.

• (1345)

Quebecers are entitled to know that they will not lose Canada without clearly renouncing it. Secession could not be negotiated without the assurance that secession is really what Quebecers want. This is why the government must establish the rules to govern its conduct in order to ensure that Quebecers should have nothing less than a clear question to answer. Secession is unthinkable without clarity of the referendum result, clarity of the question and clarity of the support obtained.

That is why it would be far preferable, if not essential, for the question and the majority to be sufficiently clear to leave no doubt as to the meaning to be taken from any referendum that might be held. This is why we have this bill before us.

I have trouble understanding the separatists' argument. Do they really believe that we would wait with our arms folded for Canada

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to come to an end, without ensuring that this was what Quebecers wanted? We are on the side of democracy. We are in favour of clarity, not confusion. We are not ones to make use of all manner of strategies, with varying degrees of subtlety, to accomplish our ends, unlike some.

The Supreme Court opinion clearly specified that, as political actors, it was our duty to ensure that if there were a referendum it would be held in clarity and that the issues were very clear for everyone.

As we keep on saying, Canada is too wonderful a country to be lost on the basis of a misunderstanding. We are betting on clarity, and on democracy. We have no fear that, with clarity, Quebecers will resolutely choose to remain within Canada, the best country in the world.

[*English*]

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in this debate as I believe the debate on Bill C-20 is a very important one for the House. This is a very serious bill because it contemplates the potential breakup of our country. It is a very serious debate. Not too many years ago the House of Commons would not have even debated a bill of this sort without contemplating, in terms of legislation, the process of breaking up the country.

I remember very well back in 1981 when the constitution was patriated with the charter of rights. I was a member of the committee. A deliberate decision was made not to put a formula in it on amending process in order to have part of the country exit from Canada. There is no constitutional means to exit from the country in terms of the constitution. That was deliberate. In those days we would not have contemplated a bill like this one before the House of Commons. We are doing something here that is very serious in terms of the future of Canada.

I was disappointed today when the government brought in time allocation for one reason. I think we need a lot of time to have a proper debate, a proper consultation about this very serious issue before the House. Our party is in the process of consulting members and constituents across the country, chaired by the member for Palliser, about what probable amendments we could move to the bill to make it a better bill that is good for all of Canada.

The minister and the House know that we support the bill at second reading in principle, but it is our obligation as parliamentarians to make sure we have the best possible bill for the future of the country. I say that because we have had many potholes along the constitutional trail in the past. Members will recall that patriation was very divisive.

The prime minister of the day, Mr. Trudeau, came in with a bill originally supported by the provinces of Ontario and New Bruns-

wick but opposed by the other eight provinces. After a great debate in the House of Commons and a special Senate-House of Commons committee, the bill ended up being challenged in the Supreme Court of Canada.

The supreme court deliberated on the bill for quite some time and came down with a decision that the bill, if I remember correctly, was legal in terms of the constitutional changes but did not follow proper convention or practice in terms of the constitution of the country.

• (1350)

That forced the prime minister of the day to come back to the House of Commons and introduce several amendments to the patriation act which had been suggested by people across the country. That could have been done before being forced to do so by the Supreme Court of Canada, but it happened only after the intervention of the supreme court. After about a year or so it got through the process. I think there is a danger here that this bill could be expedited too quickly through the whole process.

In terms of the alligators in the constitutional swamp, the Meech Lake accord also taught us quite a bit about the need for as much constitutional consultation with the people of the country as possible. That failure was very unfortunate back in June 1990 because it was the failure of the Meech Lake accord that sprung the birth officially of the Bloc Quebecois in terms of the disappointment of a lot of Quebecers to the accord not going through. It also set us back constitutionally a long time.

Eventually that led to the Charlottetown agreement. Again I think the House and the players at that time tried to put too much in the accord, and eventually of course it did not pass. It led to the spring of the Bloc Quebecois. It led to I suppose the first big jump in support across western Canada of the Reform Party in response to a backlash against what happened in Charlottetown.

If we look throughout history there are many examples of mistakes that were made, partly because there was too much haste and the lack of consultation along the way with the people of the country about proper amendments and a proper process that should be adhered to in any kind of serious constitutional change. This is in many ways the most serious of all. Even although it is not constitutional, it contemplates the potential road map to the breakup of our country, which indeed is extremely serious.

This bill is in response to the supreme court. That is what we are debating today. The bill tries to implement the supreme court decision about a clear question and a clear majority, but one should also say that one mistake that has been made in the past is that too many people have not, I suppose, adhered to what I think is the basic fundamental principle of the legitimate self-determination of the people of Quebec. There is the right of self-determination of a people in this country.

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I do believe also that we have to recognize the uniqueness, the differences and the distinctiveness of the province of Quebec. There is some evolution in that direction, I know there is, but I think those things have to be said at the outset when we are debating a bill of this sort.

We should keep in mind that the bill tries to balance what I think are two very fundamental principles and tries to recognize the co-existence of those two fundamental principles. One principle is the right of the National Assembly of Quebec to ask any question any time it wants on any particular issue. This bill does not thwart the ability of the National Assembly of Quebec to ask any question it wants at any time and in any wording it wants on any particular issue. It can do that.

On the other side, the bill says that the Parliament of Canada also has an obligation on behalf of all of Canada before the parliament contemplates a negotiation that may lead to the secession of our country and the separation of our country to determine whether or not that question has been clear vis-à-vis secession and whether or not that question has had a clear majority in terms of the expression of the people of the province of Quebec. These two fundamental principles co-exist and it is important to acknowledge that.

I do not have much time this afternoon so I want to raise four questions which I think we should look at very carefully as we consult our constituents and people across the country and move into the committee phase.

First, the way the bill is worded, does it suffice in terms of a clear question? In my opinion it does. Others may not agree, but I think that is a question we have to look at. Is the question clear in terms of how the bill is worded? Is it the proper way of doing it?

Second, we must look at what the bill says in terms of what is a clear majority. Here I think the answer is more vague. It leaves it up to future parliaments to determine whether or not there is a clear majority. Maybe that parliament would make a wise decision. Maybe that parliament would not be responsible. I do not know. We should look at whether, within the confines of the supreme court decision and within the confines of fundamental democracy, we can more clearly define what a clear majority might be.

I will give hon. members an example of what I mean.

• (1355)

We could have a referendum question passed by 50% plus one, with a 90% turnout, meaning 45% of the people in Quebec said yes to a clear question on separation. We could also have 80% of the people say yes to a clear question but only 50% of the people turn out, which means 40% of the people voted for separation.

How do we decide which of those is the most clear expression? I do not know the answer to that question, but I think the committee

has an obligation to see if we can define a bit more clearly what a clear majority should be for any future referendum that might be held in the province of Quebec.

In my remaining two minutes I want to make two more points. A fairly direct amendment could be made to this bill. I think the minister may agree to this one. The first nations people, the aboriginal people, should be given higher recognition in terms of the role they would play in a potential process of consultation. That is something we should do. Any division of the country will affect the aboriginal people, particularly those in the area that would be divided. I do not think their role is high enough and prominent enough in the consultation process. That is one amendment we should look at to make sure that they are properly and fully consulted.

The last point is that one institution the minister is to consult fully is the unelected Senate. In a democracy, for a question this important, this is giving an unelected body a role that is much too prominent. That should be changed.

In terms of trying to refine and define them in accordance to what is best for our country, these are four areas we should look at in committee.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being nearly 2 p.m., the House will now proceed to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge Black History Month and to congratulate Canadians from coast to coast celebrating in communities with a variety of cultural events.

In 1995 the Government of Canada declared February to be Black History Month. This gives us the opportunity to celebrate cultural, social, economic and political contributions of blacks and to celebrate the 166th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in British colonies.

I am pleased that in my riding of Kitchener Centre and in the surrounding area a number of special events are being planned. The Black History Association of the Waterloo—Wellington region are sponsoring lectures at Holy Trinity Anglican Church and Marantha Evangelical Church in celebration of this month.

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The Congress of Black Women are sponsoring a story telling evening and the Caribbean Canadian Cultural Association will be holding a who's who in the black community event to honour young people, especially those who are contributing significantly to the Kitchener community.

I encourage all members of the House to take some time to participate in black history events that are being hosted across the country.

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HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the HRDC mess developed with prime ministerial approval during the tenure of the member for Papineau—Saint-Denis. Now he is safely out of range as Minister for International Trade and the hapless member for Brant has been left to carry the can.

Like the Conservatives' unfortunate Kim Campbell, this poor soul is the chosen patsy for her predecessor and her party. All the time we thought that her ministerial appointment was a perk based on cronyism and nepotism when in fact it appears that she was actually set up by the Prime Minister.

* * *

POLISH COMBATANTS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 60 years ago more than 1.7 million Polish soldiers and citizens were arrested and deported simply because they were Polish. The men and women who were taken by the Soviet Secret Police were sent to the far reaches of the Soviet Union to work in forced labour camps or placed in political prisons where many were executed or died of hunger, cold, disease and exhaustion during the second world war.

Tonight at the Polish Combatants Association, the Toronto branch of the Alliance of the Polish Eastern Provinces and its president, Mr. Wladyslaw Dziemianczuk, as well as the Polish Canadian community of Parkdale—High Park, will commemorate this tragic event at a ceremony where a memorial plaque will be unveiled.

● (1400)

Dedicated to all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom, it will serve to remind future generations of the horrors of war and the cost of the freedoms that others are able to enjoy today because of their sacrifice.

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ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise today to welcome all Canadians into the second century of the atomic age.

The atomic age was born in Canada 55 years ago when the first peacetime reactor in the world came into operation at Chalk River in my great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. In 1952 Atomic Energy of Canada Limited became a crown corporation to develop peaceful applications of nuclear energy for Canada and the world.

AECL built the town of Deep River, and feelings run deep about the benefits of AECL and CANDU technology. The proposed Canadian neutron facility, with support from the National Research Council, will provide much needed material research and development to ensure that Canada continues to dominate in the atomic age.

Our sagacious Prime Minister has stated: "As the millennium dawns, I remain convinced that the future of CANDU is bright indeed, both at home and abroad".

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ANNETTE HELENE AUGUSTINE

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute today to Mrs. Annette Helene Augustine, an exceptional member of the Thunder Bay community.

Yesterday, among her friends and family, Mrs. Augustine received the Order of Canada in recognition of her achievements and unselfish contributions.

Beginning in the 1960s she displayed remarkable courage, lobbied tirelessly for improved social services and the establishment of first class educational, recreational and cultural facilities in northern Ontario.

With her husband, Dr. John Augustine, they worked diligently for the provincial recognition and programs for perceptually handicapped children, the Thunder Bay museum and the Thunder Bay National Art Gallery for Native Art.

Mrs. Augustine has devoted countless hours and energy to the enhancement of the quality of life in Thunder Bay, and is a most worthy recipient. I invite all members of the House to join me in congratulating this wonderful Canadian, Annette Helene Augustine.

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CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the final edition of the Fraser report on change in the Canadian Forces was issued yesterday.

I am disappointed that such a prestigious committee chairman was mandated not to look at the real problems in the military but to tinker with a decaying force structure. The result is a report that is irrelevant and out of touch.

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Why did the government shackle this committee? Though I applaud the notion of monitoring change in our military, this report will not lead to any of the changes that are desperately needed to save the Canadian Forces from oblivion.

The Fraser report does not even identify the two fundamental problems that are destroying our military: chronic underfunding and demilitarization.

For decades social experimentation has impaired combat capability. The government has treated military personnel as civilians in uniform. This report is about changing oil when the engine requires a complete overhaul.

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[Translation]

DR. JOCELYN DEMERS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Dr. Jocelyn Demers, a resident of Boucherville, was honored for a prolific and brilliant career dedicated to fighting cancer, particularly childhood cancer.

His skills, superior expertise, determination and love of life and human nature are widely recognized. Dr. Demers, who is a member of the Conseil québécois de lutte contre le cancer, is leading a relentless fight against this terrible disease.

One of the most eloquent illustrations of his desire to promote the well-being of sick children and their families is undoubtedly the building of the Manoir Ronald McDonald, in Montreal. Thanks to Dr. Demers and to many other stakeholders, the families of sick children can now stay at a facility that is very close to the hospital.

The professionalism demonstrated by dedicated specialists like Dr. Demers enables countless people to continue to believe that life is beautiful in spite of all the hardships.

Dr. Demers, congratulations and thank you.

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[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today 173 more workers were pushed out the door at the CBC, following 3,000 who have already gone down the road.

The mother corp says it is due to money problems, but people know that it is due to a government which ignores culture and the role it plays in a nation. Now is the time to reinvest in the CBC, not stand by as cuts tear out our cultural bones.

• (1405)

The CBC is our largest stage, our most loved book, our most revered painting and our most recognized song. It is where Canadians tell each other stories.

For Canada to have an independent future in a world of globalization and media convergence we need to strengthen public broadcasting. We need to invest resources in protecting culture. We need to invest our surplus in protecting culture.

To all who listened to the CBC this morning or who watched *The National* last night, please do not sit idly by and let our public broadcaster die on the vine. Please protect our culture.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, agriculture is in a crisis. Currently in Saskatchewan there is a sit-in in the provincial legislature.

The causes of the crisis are numerous. International subsidies by the Europeans and the Americans place our farmers at a competitive disadvantage. We have a grain transportation system that is broken and needs to be fixed. Grain marketing problems and the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board are preventing value added processing. User fees imposed on farmers by the Canadian Grain Commission and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency could be removed by the government. Most of all, the high taxes that the government imposes are directly faced by farmers. As the end users they have no place to pass on their costs. Half the cost of farm inputs, such as fertilizers and chemicals, consists of taxes.

Why does the government not act immediately to cut taxes to take the burden off farmers, to remove the unfair user fees which they are paying, to reform the marketing system and to fix the grain transportation system?

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[Translation]

GLOBAL ENERGY REGULATION FORUM

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in May, Montreal will host an international forum on energy regulation, which will be attended by industries, regulatory agencies, consumer associations and experts in economy.

The purpose of this forum is to exchange ideas on the various mechanisms to regulate energy efficiently. Globalization, deregulation and environmental issues will also be on the agenda.

This is an important event, considering the challenges facing every sector as we enter into this new millennium, including the energy sector.

Canada is a key player internationally in the areas of energy and economy. Montreal has every reason to be proud to have been selected to host this important gathering.

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We wish good luck to the organizers of that forum.

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MEMBER FOR AHUNTSIC

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday in Montreal, the Greek community gathered to pay tribute to the member for Ahuntsic, who was awarded the Order of the Phoenix, presented by the ambassador of Greece on behalf of the president of the Hellenic Republic.

[English]

We, the Liberal caucus of the House, are proud to have among our ranks a member such as her.

[Translation]

All our congratulations.

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FARM AID

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out how the Government of Canada works with the provinces to help farmers manage the risks inherent in agriculture.

Last year, the Government of Canada committed a maximum of \$1.1 billion for 1998 and 1999 to help farmers deal with the revenue crisis.

On January 13, our government announced additional spending of up to \$500 million a year for two years to establish a new shared cost national disaster relief program.

As we can see, the Government of Canada is acting effectively and creatively to help Canadian producers and ensure a quality of life for them.

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BILL C-20

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, PC): Mr. Speaker, after a quick look at Bill C-20, you will agree with me that it smacks of improvization and shows a lack of respect for Canadian federalism, the Parliament of Canada, the national assembly and provincial jurisdictions.

Furthermore, the bill is poorly drafted, and looks more like an election platform than a serious piece of legislation. The Liberal cabinet is ignoring major issues in its desire to achieve its political ends at all costs.

Is Quebec's desire to separate a priority for Quebecers and Canadians? No. According to the results of an Angus Reid poll released Monday, only 11% of people gave national unity as their priority, putting it in eighth place. The number one priority for 55% of Canadians is and remains health.

The present government is obviously not listening to Canadians. It should withdraw its bill and redo its homework so that it responds to the real needs of Canadians.

• (1410)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservative Party was thrown out of office in 1993 it left a sorry legacy of high unemployment, high taxes, high deficit and high interest rates. Canadians had lost complete confidence in the Conservatives' ability to manage the economy and further the interests of our nation. The unemployment rate was 11.4% and Canadians faced a \$42 billion deficit, the highest in Canadian history.

Today, after six years of Liberal management, the country has turned around. The unemployment rate is 6.8%, 4.6% lower than when we took office. Over 1.7 million jobs have been created in the private sector since this Liberal government took office. Our government's jobs and growth strategy has created more jobs in just six years than in nine years under Tory prime ministers Mulroney and Campbell—

The Speaker: The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if Canadians think that the one billion dollar boondoggle at human resources smacks of political payoff, they should also know that questionable use of taxpayers' resources by way of grants is not exclusive to HRDC.

At a time when the RCMP has faced budgetary cutbacks of \$169 million and some 430 frontline B.C. RCMP positions go lacking, affecting their ability to investigate and fight crime, the Minister of Justice has \$32 million to spend on crime prevention. Guess where \$2 million of this is going. It is going to none other than national lobby groups, no doubt with impeccable Liberal credentials.

The Minister of Justice gave \$2 million to such crime fighters as the Canadian Bankers Association, the Canadian Automobile Dealers Association, the Insurance Council of Canada and the Retail Council of Canada.

Maybe an audit should be conducted into the crimes they solved. Maybe the Liberal House leader has it in his binder.

*Oral Questions***PORCUPINE CARIBOU AGREEMENT**

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for centuries the lives of the Gwich'in people of Yukon and Alaska have been ecologically connected to the migration of the porcupine caribou herd. Their name means people of the caribou.

Now, while the caribou are safely in their wintering grounds, it is a little known fact but the Gwich'in people themselves have been making an annual migration to the southern United States. They have been going there for years to lobby to preserve the calving grounds of the caribou and they just left Washington yesterday.

In 1987 the Porcupine Caribou Agreement was signed by both countries to protect the herd. Canada created two national parks, Aulavik and Vuntut, to safeguard the calving grounds.

The U.S. still allows oil drilling in the Arctic wildlife refuge and these sensitive and ancient calving grounds are under unnecessary pressure. Just 2% of the refuge needs to be protected and it needs to be done now.

Canada has been true to its word. We must make sure the U.S. is true to its commitment. I implore all members of parliament to think about the Gwich'in who need our help and to raise this issue until the caribou are safe.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-20

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, sovereignists are not alone in denouncing Bill C-20 as anti-democratic. Early this week, they were joined by other Canadians.

Now a former U.S. diplomat has criticized the federal government for its anti-democratic tactic. David Jones says that the purpose of Bill C-20 is to strengthen the legal chains binding Quebec to Canada.

The former minister, an advisor to the American Embassy in Ottawa, wonders about the concept of majority as understood in Bill C-20. Is a clear majority 50% plus one, 66%, or 75%, he wonders, and says that nobody knows.

He even concludes that, with this bill, no referendum results will be accepted as clear.

In short, another person who thinks that the bill on clarity is a masterpiece of ambiguity.

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FISHERIES INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC): Mr. Speaker, on January 21, southeastern New Brunswick was struck by a severe blizzard with high winds. Several docks sustained heavy damage, possibly thousands of dollars worth.

The disaster happened three weeks ago and yet the federal government continues to ignore the extent of the damage. The department's silence on this is just one more example of its lack of understanding of the fishing industry and of its importance to our communities.

Today the fishers again feel that they have been abandoned by this government. We must not lose sight of the fact that this is the same Liberal government that shirked its responsibility by abandoning the docks.

• (1415)

Abdicating its responsibilities with respect to the fishing wharves resulted—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[English]

Ms. Angela Vautour: Mr. Speaker, I find it very difficult to speak when everybody in the House is screaming.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I agree with the hon. member. She has every right to be heard. She may continue with her statement.

[Translation]

Ms. Angela Vautour: Mr. Speaker, the government's abdication of responsibilities with respect to the fishing wharves resulted in serious problems, which persist today. It must be not be forgotten that an unsafe wharf is a danger for fishers, for tourists, for the general population who use it.

The port authority committees are calling for repairs to be made as well as for an action plan to be put in place immediately so that their fisheries infrastructure will be operational and ready for the opening of the spring fisheries.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the HRDC audit took a random sampling of only 1% of the department's total cases. It uncovered a billion dollar bungle. With that, we can just guess where it will lead.

The Prime Minister likes to pretend that those 37 cases cited are the limit of its problems. Unfortunately, we know it is just the tip of the iceberg.

Oral Questions

Yesterday he claimed that the total overpayment was simply \$251, that the protection of taxpayers was okay and that everything was going to be all right. My foot. How were taxpayers so protected when \$2 million went to self-confessed embezzler, Pierre Thibault, in his own riding?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, by her question, continues to show the House that she does not understand the intent of the audit we are speaking of.

This audit was undertaken to check the administrative practices of grants and contributions in the Department of Human Resources Development. What it said was that our administrative practices needed to be improved.

Today I was at the committee where I made it clear that we have a six point action plan that will fix this problem. I know it is going to work.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about administrative deficiencies. We are certainly seeing a whole lot more than that. The Prime Minister has doled out cash in his own riding for years. It is hard to expect high standards from ministers when their boss is breaking the rules left, right and centre.

Pierre Thibault was promised \$600,000 of that money without even filing any paperwork with Human Resources Development. That was the same month the 1997 election was called.

Is the Prime Minister protecting his minister because he knows he has been directly involved with this billion dollar bungle?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's insinuations are totally unwarranted and baseless. The Prime Minister is not personally doling out money. He is not directing any improper conduct. He wants things to be done properly.

If one listens to the Minister of Human Resources Development, one will see that she has in place a six point program approved by the auditor general to deal with any administrative problems that have been identified.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the six point plan sounds like a miracle. It should have been in place a long time ago. This has been going on for years.

There is a huge correlation here between who gets grants and who makes donations to the Prime Minister's campaign. Thirty-three per cent of those donors to the Prime Minister's personal campaign can be linked to grants, contributions or contracts. That is one-third or one out of three.

I would like to ask this again and we would like an answer. Is he protecting the minister because he knows he had a hand in this boondoggle, or is he just afraid that he is going to kill the goose that lays the golden egg? Which is it?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, day after day the hon. member is laying eggs with her questions. Furthermore, they are definitely not filled with gold.

• (1420)

On the other hand, if we look at the *Globe and Mail* and the Reform Party's own chart on the transitional jobs fund it shows that grant approvals under the transitional jobs fund actually went down before the last election. Does this party not believe in its own report? The Reform members do not know what they are talking about.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has a shameful record of interfering in HRDC handouts and he does share the blame for this billion dollar bungle.

For example, an HRDC memo directed that Thibault be given money because the Prime Minister asked for it. It says "It is a difficult decision as we depart from regional guidelines. I would like to give another answer but I have no choice".

How can the Prime Minister justify using public moneys as his private slush fund?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the assertions of the hon. member are totally unfounded and incorrect.

Let us understand that she is talking about the transitional jobs fund. There are many partners involved in those projects. In every case the province, the Government of Quebec, has to approve these projects.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what does the minister mean by unfounded? I read from the memo sent out of her own office. It says "It is a difficult decision as, in the two cases, we depart from regional guidelines. Sometimes difficult choices have to be made but in this case we have to maintain the proposed level of financing. I would like to give another answer but I have no choice. The Prime Minister promised this at a press conference".

How can the minister stand up and say that these charges are unfounded and blow them off?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is talking about the transitional jobs fund, she will know that the federal government is just but one partner in all those undertakings. She will also know

Oral Questions

that in every case the Government of Quebec must concur. We know that government is no friend of our Prime Minister.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-20

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have received the answer of the leader of the government in the House regarding the committee on Bill C-20.

The government refuses to let the committee travel throughout Quebec and Canada. Yet, committees often travel across the country to discuss various issues. I can think of the prebudget consultations, the Nisga'a treaty and the free trade agreement. There was even a committee that visited prisons. Soon a committee will leave to discuss fisheries, and it will even go to Washington.

Why does the government refuse to allow the committee on Bill C-20, a bill dealing with the democratic rights of Quebec, to travel throughout Quebec and Canada to hear what the public has to say?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. member opposite and to his parliamentary leader, the decision in this regard is made by the whole House, but there must first be a recommendation from the parliamentary committee.

I also stated the government's position regarding that issue. We feel that we can adequately deal with this issue right here in parliament, given all the resources available, the broadcasting of committee hearings, the parliamentary resources at our disposal, and we can also deal with all the other important issues—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The leader of the Bloc Quebecois.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have negotiated often enough with the leader of the government in the House to know that, once the government has made a decision, its members toe the line or else they get shoved aside.

In the letter that he sent to us, the government House leader says that the government is convinced that holding hearings in Ottawa will allow the committee to hear quality witnesses, without any waste of time.

What the government is saying to all the groups and individuals who appear before a travelling committee is that it is a waste of time. Is this what the House leader is telling us?

• (1425)

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is hardly in

a position to talk about people shoving others aside. As regards this issue, we feel that we have all the resources necessary for that committee to do a good job.

We agree with the broadcasting of committee proceedings. We have already agreed to ensure a good representation of witnesses, without causing delays, and the member should recognize that we are in good company when it comes to not letting a parliamentary committee travel.

Indeed, we need only think about Bill 99, which is now before the Quebec National Assembly—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the leader of the government that if the committee on Bill 99 is not travelling, it is the fault of the Quebec Liberals.

This government wants to use its bill to give the Government of Quebec lessons on clarity.

My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. How can the government claim to give such lessons in clarity to the Government of Quebec when, in a referendum it is organizing itself on February 27 and 28 regarding the Montagnais in Lac Saint-Jean—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Mr. Daniel Turp: I repeat my question for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

In a referendum to be held on February 27 and 28 regarding the Montagnais of Lac Saint-Jean, the government is asking two questions that contain nearly 200 words in three paragraphs with reference to an agreement and with a single response choice. Is this the government's clarity?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the question, but I can tell the member that, even if he is right, he cannot shroud the choice of a country in confusion.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister insists that all of the information about HRDC grants and contributions on a riding by riding basis is public and that all you have to do is ask.

I am asking on behalf of Canadians who want that information. Will the minister table now the information on the master list of up

to date, comprehensive information on grants and contributions? Will she table the master list now?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to convey to the House that there is no master list because grants and contributions change on a day by day basis. We are talking about individual projects that may be approved one day and then completed in a week or a year.

Today in committee I made the commitment to work with members of parliament to ensure that they get the information they want through their local human resources development branch office.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess we now know what the minister's notion of efficiency is. Every single Canadian who wants this information should charge around the country and request it on 301 separate ridings. Surely that is part of what is wrong with what is happening.

Would it not be more efficient for the minister to simply table the complete, up to date information in the House of Commons now? Canadians have a right to know. That is what we are here for.

• (1430)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member could make it easy for us all if she would just put a question on the order paper and detail the kind of information that she wants, for what day and for what project. I would be glad to respond to it.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I forgot a question, I am sorry. The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

* * *

BILL C-20

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is another question about clarity and who can teach whom what.

With respect to the Montagnais referendum, article 8.3 of the proposed agreement, on which the Montagnais are going to vote later this month, defines majority as 50% plus one.

If 50% plus one is good for Newfoundland, if it is good for the Montagnais, why would it not be good for Quebec?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, naturally, in a democracy, the more important the decision, the higher the bar must be set. There is no decision more important than breaking up a country. The bar for making such a decision must be set very high.

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In the case of this sort of agreement, as in the case of the Nisga'a, it would not have been 50% plus one at all. Nor is it 50% plus one in Mont-Tremblant.

It would therefore be wrong to reduce democracy to a simple formula of 50% plus one. And this is what the supreme court pointed out in the opinion it released on August 20, 1998.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, departmental officials have confirmed that the minister received extensive briefings when she took over the department in August. The minister's executive assistant also confirmed that an extensive briefing took place in that month. This morning the minister herself confirmed that she received extensive briefings in August. Yet she has stood in the House and repeatedly stated that she knew nothing of any problems until the date of November 17.

Would the minister have Canadians believe that she knew there were no problems in her department until the date of November 17?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I will confirm is that the final internal audit that looked at the seven programs, grants and contributions in my department as we have shared with the House over and over again was presented to me in its entirety on November 17.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is not even close. I am not asking about the audit. I will ask the minister again, when was she first made aware of problems within her department? There is an absolute inconsistency here. When was she first made aware of problems in her department?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, which specific problem is the hon. member referring to?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that answer was absolutely disgraceful. Let us see if we can get a straight answer now from the minister.

The memo from Robert Thériault made it very clear that the Department of Human Resources Development was willing to bend the rules specifically for the Prime Minister.

My question is when will the minister admit that her department knowingly broke the rules so that there could be tax dollars funnelled to the Prime Minister's riding for his political slush fund?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence that rules were broken.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the memo was very clear. It says specifically that “it is a difficult decision as we depart from regional guidelines”. This is from Robert Thériault in her office. How can she get off saying that there is no evidence that any rules were broken? It is very clear.

• (1435)

When is she going to quit hiding and being evasive and stand up and act like a minister and tell Canadians the truth, that her department funnelled money to the Prime Minister because he wanted to make sure pork got to the people in his riding? That is all it is.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I categorically reject the premise of the hon. member’s question.

When we talk about transitional jobs funds, we find those projects in ridings of members of all political stripes. We find those projects in areas of high unemployment. We know that those projects have made a difference in the lives of Canadians who otherwise would not have opportunities to work.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development read the damning report on her department on November 17, 1999. Yet, on December 16, she said in this House, and I quote:

No moneys flowed until the appropriate approvals were in place.

How could the minister make such a statement when the report was full of examples of projects regarding which many mistakes had been made in terms of their approval?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, the question to which the hon. member refers came from the opposition about a specific project. In that specific case no moneys flowed until the appropriate approvals were made.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what can the minister say to justify her December 16 statement in this House, considering that a list provided by her department mentions the case of Bas Iris in the riding of Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, which received \$5.9 million in grants in 1997-98, but for which approval was only given several months later, on February 4, 1999?

The Speaker: As I said yesterday, the questions are very specific. If the hon. minister wishes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. If the minister wishes to answer the question, she may do so.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only to say that I agree with you and that I would be glad to take the details from the hon. member and respond to that.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have documents that we have talked about which say that right in the minister’s office the rules have been broken. The rules have been waived to put money into the Prime Minister’s riding.

Is the minister prepared to show up before the public accounts committee which I chair with a document in her hand to tell me why the rules were not broken and why she should not resign?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify again that the transitional jobs funds in which we have invested and participated in the Prime Minister’s riding were approved by a number of partners. They were approved by private sector investors, by public and private financial institutions, by provincial governments as I have recognized before, by local communities. These projects are not just supported by the federal government but by the communities, by the private sector and by the provincial government in the province of Quebec.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if that was a yes.

Is the minister trying to say that the other people who participated in this grant application were duped into paying their share of the funds when the rules were being broken right in her office?

Again, will the minister come to the public accounts committee—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. The question, please.

Mr. John Williams: Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is will she come to the public accounts committee and explain why the rules were broken or offer her resignation?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say again that when we look at these jobs funds we know there are other partners that are there. These are not the full and single decision of investment by the federal government.

Oral Questions

• (1440)

I have great respect for the committees of this House. Indeed I was before the human resources committee this morning and will be returning there next week and again after that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development learned of the mess in her department on November 17, 1999, she says.

Why, one month later, did she tell us in this House that no money had been paid out before it was authorized, when Industries Franc Bois in the riding of Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle had received \$400,000 in 1997-98, funding that was not approved until much later, namely, on February 1, 1999? Why did she tell us that?

The Speaker: Once more, the questions are specific. If the hon. minister wishes to respond, I give her permission.

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again there are two things. One, with reference to my comments in the House on December 16, they were made in regard to a specific project. Two, if the hon. member would like to table the details of his particular project on the order paper, I would be glad to respond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the subject of specific projects, the Prime Minister, like the minister, like the government, never hesitates to cite specific examples in the ridings of opposition members.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: When we want answers, it is too specific. We do not take that, Mr. Speaker.

She must know what is going on in her department. She will tell us why she told this House it did not happen when it did in dozens of cases, not in just one, in dozens.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants details on this specific case, I will try to help him.

I have in hand a letter that says “I fully support the project submitted”. And it is signed by Roger Pomerleau, a former Bloc Québécois member.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[*English*]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we discovered that TJF lists are being altered and manipulated.

The Somalia scandal proved that this government cannot be trusted to protect against the destruction of important documents. The HRD minister and her officials who were responsible for this billion dollar bungle are still in custody of all that relevant data.

What measures is the minister putting in place to ensure that this does not become Somalia II?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of the hon. member’s question.

I want to recognize that it is the Reform Party that says that my department, the Department of Human Resources Development Canada, is the best department in responding to access to information requests.

• (1445)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, to see the smirks of Liberal members opposite over the last couple of days about a billion dollar absconding of Canadian tax dollars is enough to make me puke.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I think we are ratcheting up the rhetoric. I would ask members to please cool it down, and I would ask the hon. member to please go into his question now.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: This minister is in a position to destroy or alter the documents that could cost her her job. Under any other circumstance, people under investigation lose their access to that potentially damning evidence. She has tried to cover up this billion dollar bungle for months now—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The question, right now.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Why should we trust this minister to guard the documents that could seal her very fate?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the course of the day there are issues about information and lists and all kinds of things. What I would like to ask the hon. member to do, if he wants particular and specific information, is to let us know what it is he wants. Put it on the order paper. Initiate an access to information request.

When people just say “give us information” it is very difficult for me to satisfy their wishes when I am not sure what they specifically want.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, panicked as they are, the members opposite are trying to shift the responsibility to those who sponsored the projects. The responsibility lies with those who administer them. She is the one responsible.

Oral Questions

She makes statements here in the House on her honour, invoking her ministerial accountability. We have given several examples that contradict what she said on December 16, and I quote:

No moneys flowed until the appropriate approvals were in place.

That is what she said. She can laugh and be smug all she wants, but if she has an ounce of pride left, she should resign.

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would only ask that the hon. member and others in his party go back a few questions in *Hansard* and they will see that the response was made to a particular project that was raised, if I am not mistaken, perhaps by their opposition.

My response was to that particular project, and I say again in that case that no moneys were transmitted until the appropriate approvals were in hand.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CONFERENCE OF WOMEN IN THE FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada was represented at the first conference of women in the Francophonie in Luxembourg. Could the Secretary of State responsible for Francophonie tell us what commitments were made at this initial meeting?

Hon. Ronald J. Duhamel (Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I took part, along with my colleague, the Secretary of State for the Status of Women, and our partners from Quebec and New Brunswick.

Canada undertook to step up its efforts to promote democratization, human rights and equality of the sexes. Canada also undertook to eliminate the obstacles to women's advancement, such as violence and limited access to political positions.

Canada is a leader in this area. It intends to continue to exercise that leadership.

* * *

• (1450)

[*English*]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder that HRDC is in such a sad state. The Prime Minister set the standard in his own riding. He announced grants before they were even approved. They did not even exist. They did not even have applications.

The captain of the ship sets the standard for its crew. It is painfully obvious that the mess we are in today started in Shawinigan at the orders of the Prime Minister. Is that why he is so desperate to keep his first mate, the minister, afloat?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Liberal caucus and the government believe the Minister of Human Resources Development is doing an outstanding job and should continue with her duties.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will notice something very interesting. The Reform Party has completely abandoned any questions on the audit report. They are trying to raise questions about something that was satisfactorily answered before Christmas. It shows the bankruptcy, the emptiness of the Reformers' attack, because they have admitted that when it comes to the audit report what the Minister of Human Resources Development has said is totally—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): I am glad you think the minister is doing a great job because you are the only one.

The Speaker: Order, please. All remarks should be directed through the Chair.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, political interference in the granting process has cost taxpayers millions. We know the Prime Minister has interfered with the awarding of grants and contributions. We know the minister of human resources has awarded grants to her own riding even though it did not qualify.

Political decisions forced officials to break the rules. Why were these officials not insulated from this undue—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no wonder the hon. member refuses to deal any more with the audit report. The audit report in question found that \$1 billion had not been lost, that the department knew where the money went. It did not find any misappropriation. Furthermore, it did not find any political interference.

If the hon. member wants to pay attention to the audit report, the subject of questions all week, then why does he not go back and read it and admit that the premise of his questions is entirely wrong?

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today in committee I asked the Minister of Human Resources Development why she was covering up information by refusing to give full disclosure to the Canadian people of the government's master list of all grants and contributions. The minister would not commit in committee to a full disclosure.

I would like to ask the minister again why she is hiding behind this information, because clearly a master list exists. Is it to prevent a full comparison and disclosure of the political management of this fund?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that it is a matter of record in the public accounts, all the expenditures in the ridings and the grants and contributions from my department. All the expenditures, over \$100,000, are there. They are public.

In committee today I offered to members that if they wanted more detailed information I would be glad to satisfy their request as long as I know the specifics of what they are looking for.

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians want is honest answers, not creative accounting. Not accounting for over \$30 million of public money is a serious breach of trust. The only people who do not think it is serious are the cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister.

I would like to ask a question of the Prime Minister. How much money do his cabinet ministers have to mismanage before he thinks it is a problem: \$50 million or \$100 million? How badly does a Liberal cabinet minister have to mess up before she is asked to resign?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said, and she agreed, that there are problems of administration, of record keeping. The Minister of Human Resources Development has put in place a six point plan, approved and supported by the auditor general, to deal with these problems.

Furthermore, the auditor general is carrying out his own audit and he will be reporting in the fall, including to the public accounts committee. We consider every dollar of taxpayers' money to be important. The premise of the hon. member's question is therefore quite wrong and she should withdraw that premise.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the minister continued to say that she had not been informed of the problems at HRDC until November 17.

This morning, in committee, an official chose his words very carefully and said that she had not been informed of the report until November 17.

When was the minister informed that there were problems with the transitional jobs creation fund?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are more important details to be

Oral Questions

understood here. When the hon. member is speaking about the transitional jobs fund, that is one of the programs that was reviewed under the internal audit.

With reference to the transitional jobs fund, I have answered numerous questions in the House about specific projects in that regard. If the hon. member checks *Hansard* he will see that I was also forthcoming about administrative problems with that program; but with regard to the internal audit, that is about the grants and contributions in seven large programs, and that information I received on November 17.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, let me try the question in English. I will try to ask it slowly and I will try to be specific, if I can.

We are looking for an answer, not for when the minister found out about the report. We want to know when she found out that there were problems with the transitional jobs fund.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, I was answering questions in the House about the transitional jobs fund and I was always forthcoming.

I want to remind the hon. member about the importance of this program. I will quote back to him his own words when he wrote:

I'll tell you in my riding TJF works quite well. I have a high unemployment level in my riding and TJF has proven to work and the bureaucrats certainly in my riding work very hard and they are very transparent.

* * *

HOME CARE

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, research shows that current home care policies and practices have in many cases contributed to the impoverishment of women.

How is the Secretary of State for the Status of Women committed to ensuring that women are not adversely affected by the home care system?

Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recent research has shown that women are adversely affected in many ways by home care because of the amount of care they do in the home in unpaid work.

Status of Women Canada is leading the world in research about unpaid work. In the 1998 budget the Minister of Finance did commit to give tax credits to those who did unpaid work in the home looking after those who were chronically ill.

The issue of home care policies is a provincial one. At the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting my colleagues are committed to bringing these issues to their specific provincial colleagues.

*Points of Order***HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, one of the worst abuses of HRDC money was the grant for \$2.3 million handed out to an unknown recipient. Nobody knows who got that money.

What is even more interesting is that this unknown recipient just happened to be living in the minister's riding. How can the minister justify taking hardworking taxpayers' money and turning around and writing cheques to persons unknown?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member can provide me with the details of the information he has then I would be glad to respond to him.

* * *

• (1500)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Today is a very special day for us. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in our gallery of a group of truly extraordinary Canadians. They are the recipients of the Order of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to their exceptional achievements in various fields, these people have really made a difference for our country and their successes enhance the life of all Canadians.

[*English*]

We have invited the recipients to be with us. I am going to call out their names and I would ask them to stand and remain standing. I would ask hon. members to withhold their applause until I have introduced all of these extraordinary Canadians.

They are: Boyd M. Anderson, Annette Helene Augustine, Glen Merlyn Bagnell, Geoffrey E. H. Ballard, William John Antliff Bulman, Howard Reid Cable, Michael Christian de Pencier, France Gagnon Pratte, Sheldon Galbraith, André Jacques Galipeault, Irving Russell Gerstein, Elva Kyle, Gisèle Lamoureux, Reverend Garth Warren Legge, Helen Manyfingers, John Reid Morden, René Racine, Stanley George Reynolds, Marie Ada Shales, Shirley Sharzer, John Hebden Todd, Jocelyn Demers, Henri Dorion, Frank Hayden, Eva Sophie Prager, Donna M. Scott, Jeffrey Simpson and Robert Daniel Steadward.

These are the recipients of the Order of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: I will be holding a reception in Room 216 for these extraordinary Canadians and I would invite members to attend.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader could share with the opposition what legislation he plans to place before the House for the next week or so. As well, could he enlighten us as to just when he plans to use time allocation to shut down debate for the 60th time in this place.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I cannot predict when the opposition will cause obstruction the next time. It is pretty hard for me to predict obstruction by the opposition, so I will not be able to answer in any great detail the last point.

• (1505)

Dealing with the agenda, I would like to share the weekly business statement with all of my colleagues in the House, and it is as follows.

This afternoon we will conclude the second reading debate of Bill C-20, the clarity act.

Tomorrow morning we will consider Bill C-10, dealing with municipal grants, and in the afternoon we will consider the Senate amendments to Bill C-7, the criminal records act, which we began and unfortunately were not able to conclude yesterday.

With time permitting, we could consider Bill C-6, but more than likely we would delay that in an effort to complete Bill C-7. As a matter of fact, we could delay consideration of Bill C-6 for another day.

Next Monday we will return to report stage of Bill C-2, the elections bill. Hopefully we will complete that bill on Monday.

The Minister of Justice intends to introduce tomorrow an omnibus bill which deals with modernizing benefits. I expect that the House will commence debate at second reading on the omnibus bill on Tuesday.

Next Wednesday we will likely debate Bill C-11, respecting the Cape Breton Development Corporation.

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POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENT

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister quoted from a letter earlier today.

[*Translation*]

I would like to table that letter from former MP Roger Pomerleau, who very much insisted that we support that industry, Bas

Iris, in the riding of Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies. I am sure the House wants to see that document and that is why I am happy to table it.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE REQUIREMENT FOR CLARITY AS SET OUT IN THE OPINION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA IN THE QUEBEC SECESSION REFERENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, an act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to contribute to this debate because I firmly believe that, as indicated in the title of the bill, we must give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion offered by the Supreme Court on August 20, 1998. However, I notice that, in this debate on the possibility of a future referendum, political observers tend to ignore one question that is at the heart of this debate: Why hold another referendum?

The only thing that motivates separatist leaders is that they are convinced that the small gap that separated the yes from the no on October 30, 1995 could be filled in a future referendum. You will certainly agree with me that it is not the best of reasons. So I will explain, in the time available to me, why another referendum should not be held in Quebec.

Let us agree on one thing. In the minds of separatists, it is absolutely essential to hold another referendum because Quebec's situation within Canada is unbearable, or so they say. This is false. Quebec was able to develop in every sphere of human activity and to assert its distinctiveness, particularly in terms of language and culture. Quebec has become a dynamic and modern society within Canada. In short, Quebec can be itself and develop within Canada.

Since it took office, our government has undertaken several initiatives to modernize the Canadian federation. Here are a few examples.

- (1510)

First there is the limit on the federal spending power, to which the government committed in the 1996 throne speech. The social union agreement reached on February 4 of last year actualized this commitment and restricted the federal spending power.

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This agreement, into which the Bouchard government refused to enter, will nevertheless ensure the viability of our social programs. It highlights principles which are based on fundamental Canadian values such as equality for all, respect for diversity, fairness, human dignity, individual responsibility and solidarity.

The agreement provides, among other things, that new social policies should not hamper mobility. Also, governments undertook to be more transparent and accountable to Canadians.

Then there is the regional veto legislation and the distinct society resolution. This resolution recognizes that Quebec is a distinct society within Canada, with a French-speaking majority, a unique culture and a civil law tradition.

Moreover, the primary federal transfer to the provinces was made less uncertain through the creation of the Canada health and social transfer.

Equally important are the agreements entered into with the provinces and territories, including Quebec, in the area of labour and on the implementation of the national child benefit system, to say nothing of the harmonization of the federal legislation with the new Quebec civil code.

The agreement on internal trade is another accomplishment our government is very proud of, as we are of the very successful infrastructure works program.

In the area of international trade, team Canada efforts have resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in business for our companies.

The constitutional amendment regarding school boards in Quebec showed that we do not hesitate to go the constitutional way when warranted.

As you can see, we did not idle, watching the train go by. We took action, and Quebecers know it. What is very clear is that Quebecers do not want another referendum. Should there be another one, Quebecers want the question to be very clear. This is what recent polls have shown.

[*English*]

On October 30 a CROP poll released by the federal government revealed that 93% of Quebecers feel it is reasonable to require a clear question and 72% a clear majority. Sixty-one per cent believe that the 1995 question was not clear and 60% feel that 50% plus one does not constitute a clear majority. In my opinion, those numbers speak volumes about Quebecers' opinions on a future referendum.

Other data from the poll shed some light on Quebecers' so-called right to declare independence unilaterally. On November 23, Mr. Bouchard claimed that the supreme court's opinion opened the door to such a possibility in the event of bad faith on the part of the

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Government of Canada and that Ottawa's desire to have the requirement for clarity respected was an example of such bad faith.

Nevertheless, the majority of the CROP poll respondents, 66%, believe that it is reasonable that Quebec conclude an agreement with the rest of Canada before declaring independence. Only 23% felt otherwise.

A majority of 68% believe that the opposition parties in the National Assembly of Quebec should have a say in how the question is worded. Fifty-eight per cent believe that the Government of Canada has a role to play in that regard, as do 56% with respect to the rest of the country. Sixty per cent of Quebecers feel that a slim majority for the yes would leave the province deeply divided. Eighty-four per cent believe that it would be difficult to effect secession under those conditions.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

These figures show the deep confusion generated by the separatist proposal. Since they refuse to banish the spectre of the referendum, the federal government has no choice but to remove any ambiguity, should another referendum be held. It is in this context that the government wants to make clear under which conditions it would have to negotiate the secession of a province.

Mr. Bouchard has reiterated his commitment to hold another referendum. Mr. Facal has said that he is working on this full time. In a speech delivered on November 28, the Prime Minister has encouraged the Bouchard government to set aside its referendum plans for the next four years.

The PQ government and the Bloc Québécois immediately refused. But, according to a CROP poll carried out last September, a strong majority of 71% of Quebecers do not want another referendum.

Quebecers do not want another referendum, and they do not want separation. They have the right to demand that governments deal with their everyday problems. That is what our government is doing with determination, but, because of the referendum obsession of separatist leaders, we have no choice but to deal with this issue that concerns the survival of our country.

[*English*]

We believe that our country is worth saving and that the well-being of Canadians is worth addressing, not in a spirit of division but in a realistic and constructive way. A referendum would only divide the population. Instead, we should be devoting all our energies to children, to education, to the environment and to all the challenges of the next century.

We have a duty to clarify the circumstances under which our government would feel bound to negotiate the secession of a province. I am convinced that on a clear question, Quebecers will say, for a third time, that they do not want to separate from Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a teenager, I was drafted by my aunt Annette to campaign for the Liberal Party of Quebec and I had the opportunity to get to know the Prime Minister when he was first elected in Saint-Maurice.

In those days, his local opponents were the Creditists led by Réal Caouette. As early as 1963, I was barely 17 years old then, the Prime Minister was known to go after his fellow Quebecers pretty hard. As the years went by, he even spit repeatedly on his people, the people of Quebec.

I also remember when he was Minister of Finance in 1977 and wanted to interfere in matters of provincial jurisdiction and to deal directly with the municipalities. The government of the day, under the direction of René Lévesque, was adamantly opposed to it. Reaffirming his intention to humiliate his people even more, he directly distributed a cheques in the amount of \$85 to all Quebecers.

• (1520)

When he was Minister of Justice, a few years later, in 1982, the Prime Minister worked with Pierre Trudeau—the ineffable Trudeau to whom no one is indifferent in Quebec—to patriate the Canadian constitution, with complete disregard for Quebec, even though he knew that a resolution had been passed almost unanimously by the national assembly condemning the Trudeau government.

In those days the Prime Minister was the Minister of Justice and he was right beside the Queen to sign the patriation papers. We remember him on the pictures.

In 1990, with his two faithful allies, Clyde Wells, the premier of Newfoundland, and Sharon Carstairs, the leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba, he succeeded in aborting the Meech Lake accord, which included only the five minimum conditions, as the then Quebec premier, Robert Bourassa, liked to described them. That was a minimum. The Prime Minister, the then leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, succeeded in aborting the Meech Lake accord.

No wonder this Prime Minister is so unpopular in Quebec. Some will say: "Sure, but he succeeded in getting elected in the riding of Saint-Maurice". We know that his election in the riding of Saint-Maurice has had a very high cost for Quebec taxpayers. Besides, the Minister of Human Resources Development is now disclosing little by little what has been the cost of the 1997 election in the riding of Saint-Maurice to allow the Prime Minister to win his seat, by a very narrow margin incidentally.

He was very grateful indeed for, a few months after becoming Prime Minister here in Ottawa in 1993, he appointed Sharon

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Carstairs to the Senate. As you know, this is a very nice gift. She is still young. Up till the age of 75, she will enjoy job security and a nice income with great working conditions.

In 1992, what role did he play in the referendum on the Charlottetown accord? The trademark of this Prime Minister, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice, has always been that of spitting on and belittling his people, the Quebecers.

I also like to recall, in case some of my colleagues opposite might have forgotten about it, the famous legislation initiated by the Senate, Bill S-31, which forbid the Caisse de dépôts et placements du Québec to take control of Canadian Pacific. A ceiling of 10% was set. Shareholders could not hold more than 10% of the shares.

This same Prime Minister was willing to change this agreement, this legislation, to allow his friend Schwartz from Toronto to take control of Air Canada and Canadian. When it is good for others, he agrees. His trademark has always been to clobber Quebec to gain important supporters outside Quebec.

In 1982, while 73 Liberal members agreed to the patriation of the constitution here in the House of Commons, elected representatives in the Quebec National Assembly voted almost unanimously to condemn this unilateral move.

Today, fortunately, there are 45 BQ members from Quebec in this House who will oppose Bill C-20 as strongly as they can and try to bring amendments to the bill. After that, we will hope Quebecers will decide their own future.

In 1968, the Liberal Party of Canada took office with a francophone, Pierre Trudeau, at the helm. Our country has been run by a francophone from Quebec, a Quebecer, for the past 32 years, except for the nine months during which Joe Clark was in office. Of course, there were a few prime ministers who were designated, but I am talking here about those who were elected.

• (1525)

Once again, Bill C-20 was initiated by one of our own, and this is sad for Quebecers. It was initiated by the Prime Minister, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice, and his colleague and friend whom he recruited in 1995 in a byelection and who serves as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, a distinguished professor. Both are francophones from Quebec, and they are clobbering us.

Bill C-20 is undemocratic. It does not respect the will of the people. It is an undemocratic bill because it makes the democratic will of Quebecers dependent on all of Canada.

At present, 101 of the 103 hon. members on the Liberal side are from Ontario. If we were to follow the spirit and letter of the Prime Minister's bill, the Ontario members of this House would have a veto over Quebec's future. That is undemocratic, because the

federal government gives itself the right to refuse to recognize the vote of Quebecers.

If 56% of Quebecers voted yes, the very next day they would say 57% was required. If we had 57%, they would say that 58% was required.

Earlier, a member from Ontario said "We have the right to do everything we can to keep Canada as it is right now". Everything we can. That "everything" is a very dangerous word in the mouth of that man. We do not know to what extremes that government may be prepared to go to try to keep Canada as it is right now.

Bill C-20 is also undemocratic because it gives more weight to a federalist vote than to a sovereignist vote. With 50% plus one, one person equals one vote. However, if the limit is set at 60%, a federalist vote is worth 1.1 or something like that. At 70%, that vote would be worth 1.2. That does not make any sense.

In my family, we are seven. There is one federalist and six sovereignists. The federalist could boast "It takes two of your votes to cancel mine". That does not make any sense.

In the co-op system, the rule was "one man, one vote; one woman, one vote", and now the government wants to change this rule. I hope we will not let it do this.

I would like to quote what Mackenzie King said after the 1949 referendum in Newfoundland, where 52.3% of the people voted to join Canada. Incidentally, the other provinces had not been consulted to know if they wanted to have Newfoundland join the Confederation.

So, shortly after the Newfoundland referendum that showed 52% support for that option, Mackenzie King, then Prime Minister of Canada, said "The result of the plebiscite in favour of the union between the two countries is clear beyond any potential misunderstanding". Mackenzie King was satisfied with 52.3% and did not see any reason to persist in believing there might possibly be some disagreement.

I suggest the Prime Minister take a look in the mirror tonight, that he think, get out of his official residence and travel to Quebec. If he is afraid to go to Quebec, he should at least visit his riding of Saint-Maurice. He should go to restaurants in Shawinigan and have breakfast with Quebec people to hear what they think of his Bill C-20.

• (1530)

Mr. Daniel Turp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This debate is so important to the governing party that I can see three of its members on this side of the House. Besides, I do not see a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

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The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

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

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I have to participate in the debate on Bill C-20, a bill designed to promote the breakup of Canada. We have much more serious problems.

Mr. John Bryden: Yes, Joe Clark.

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way made a speech earlier and I listened intently even though I was not in agreement with what he was saying. I would like him to offer me the same courtesy.

We have much more serious problems, such as child poverty, health care, the fisheries crisis on the east coast and many other issues that this intellectually bankrupt government is ignoring by putting up this smoke screen called the clarity bill.

[*Translation*]

Since the beginning of Confederation, every one of our distinguished prime ministers, whether Liberal or Conservative, all worked very hard to strengthen and improve the Canadian union.

Every one of these great individuals managed to understand that Canadian unity must prevail over everything else. Of course, there have been many difficulties, but thanks to their tenacity and that of the Canadian people, those difficulties were overcome.

Bill C-20 is nothing but an insult to all Canadians who devoted themselves to making Canada the best country in the world. For the first time in our history, a Canadian government has introduced a bill describing how a province can separate from Canada.

Would it be that this Liberal government is more interested in finding ways to break up than to strengthen the union?

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I would like you to call for a quorum. I find it improper that this government, which says that this bill is the most important—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski—Mitis knows very well that the rules do not allow us to mention the absence of members of the House, and the Speaker must always apply the standing orders in that regard.

And the count having been taken:

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: There is no quorum. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum.

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, there is currently no provision in our Canadian constitution for the separation of a province from the rest of Canada but for the first time in history this bill would have Ottawa spell out the steps toward secession.

• (1535)

Our Prime Minister is playing a very dangerous game with this unity bill. Not only is he taking a very confrontational approach with the people of Quebec, he is also encouraging the rest of the Canada to take a similar stand.

If one of the reasons the people of Quebec wanted to separate in the first place was because they felt alienated by the rest of Canada, this clarity bill will certainly add to their sense of frustration and isolation.

Like many Canadians, I keep asking myself why the Prime Minister would introduce a clarity bill at this time when support for separatism in Quebec is dwindling. When the Quebec economy is struggling and support for Premier Bouchard is on the decline, when Quebecers are concerned about the economy and the Quebec government is struggling to find solutions, what does our Prime Minister do? He purposely decides to antagonize the people of Quebec. He graciously gives Premier Bouchard an issue that will deflect—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, it seems we are the only members in this House listening to the hon. member's speech. Out of respect for our colleagues who have a few things to say, I think it would be appropriate if we were all here or, at the very least, if there was a minimum number of members in the House. Therefore I ask you to check to see if we have a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see that we have a quorum. The hon. member for West Nova.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, it is quite difficult to keep one's train of thought when one keeps being interrupted.

Mr. John Bryden: It is okay, you are reading a speech. It is easy to read a speech.

Mr. Mark Muise: I have a point of view and I wish my friend would respect it.

What does the Prime Minister do? He purposely decides to antagonize the people of Quebec. He graciously gives Premier Bouchard an issue that will deflect attention away from the economy.

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[Translation]

The Prime Minister says that he wants a clear question should Quebec decide to hold another referendum. That is his excuse for introducing Bill C-20.

Is there anyone in this House who can explain, or even better, show the clarity in this bill? The Prime Minister says that a 50% plus one majority is not enough to destroy our country. I ask him what is a sufficient majority. Is it 65%, 75%, 80%? Who knows? Who can answer this question?

Is the Prime Minister afraid to indicate a percentage to Quebecers? Is he afraid of their reaction? If the answer to this question is yes, why did he introduce this bill?

[English]

I certainly do not oppose the need for a clear question. Quebecers and all Canadians deserve a clear understanding of the consequences associated with separation. However, we must continue to focus our undying attention on uniting all Canadians rather than focusing on ways of dividing us as a nation.

Yesterday in question period, our Prime Minister was responding to a question put forth by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, when he said "We hope that the bill will be passed as quickly as possible because it is not a major concern of the public right now. The public wants us to address other problems, such as job creation, health, tax relief, things of interest to Quebecers and the rest of Canadians".

Truer words were never spoken. If the Prime Minister really believed what he said in question period, why on earth did he introduce Bill C-20 in the first place? The Prime Minister himself said that we have much more serious problems in the country than the need for a clarity bill. What about the crisis in health care, the farm crisis or the crisis in the Atlantic Fishery? What about child poverty, homelessness, the crisis in education and the huge student loan debt? What about the crisis in the Human Resources Development Department?

The only reason the Prime Minister introduced the clarity bill is because he is somehow looking for some kind of an achievement that he can leave behind as his legacy.

From the serious problems I have just mentioned, the Prime Minister will have a legacy. He will be known for leading Canadians into one crisis after another.

[Translation]

Our Prime Minister himself admits that we have much more urgent problems than Bill C-20. Why then are we spending so much energy on Bill C-20 when the health system in Canada is on the brink of disaster?

• (1540)

Do we think a sick person whose case is a medical emergency and who cannot find a doctor cares about Bill C-20? Do we really think our children who suffer and live in poverty care about Bill C-20?

Do we think the lobster fishermen in Atlantic Canada who are at risk of losing their livelihood care about Bill C-20? Do we think the western farmers who are at risk of losing their farms care about Bill C-20?

I am positive the answer to all those questions is no.

[English]

When I was reading this piece of legislation and thinking about what it means, I had difficulty believing that I was in Canada, this great country that we all work and strive to keep strong and make better. I just cannot imagine that we are dealing with this piece of legislation when we have so many other more serious and pressing issues to deal with. When is the government going to start focusing its attention on the real problems facing the country?

Let us go back for a moment and focus our attention on the question of clarity. The bill is supposed to clarify the rules in the event of another referendum, but what exactly does it clarify? We have already said that it fails to define what constitutes a clear majority. Bill C-20 does not even come close to defining what a clear question would be. What would happen if a province were to secure a clear majority in support of a question not approved by the House of Commons? Does anyone know?

These are but a few of the many questions that the so-called clarity bill fails to answer.

[Translation]

As I said before, Bill C-20 is a very dangerous bill, which threatens the future of our country. I am against it and I invite all members in this House to vote against it.

Let us work together to strengthen our country, not destroy it.

[English]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of issues surrounding this debate that I, and probably many of my constituents, find somewhat puzzling.

The first issue was made by the speaker representing the Tory Party who just spoke. Many people in Ontario and in my community are asking why Joe Clark is opposed to this and why the Tory Party is divided on this particular issue.

If we take a look at this historically, we should ask ourselves why Brian Mulroney invited into his bed—

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. René Laurin: Mr. Speaker, we have important things to say about Bill C-20 and there will be a very important vote on it later this afternoon. If Liberal members are interested in knowing what we have to say, if they are serious, I would ask them to help maintain the quorum and be present in this House.

I ask you to check that we have a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: We have a quorum.

[English]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep some kind of flow. It might be difficult if this is the game we are going to be subjected to all afternoon. Members know full well that members are busy in committees and in meetings doing the work they were sent to Ottawa to do. A member's job is not just to sit in this place and participate by listening to a speech. As we all know, these speeches are available in *Hansard*. It is available electronically as it is occurring and we know that.

• (1545)

Tactics which simply waste the time of the House by continually calling quorum are silly. They do a disservice to the Canadian people and the people of Quebec who want to know what other parliamentarians from around the country think about the bill. I would hope members opposite would allow all members in this place to at least finish their speeches so there is a flow to their comments.

I was making the point that historically it is easy to understand why the Bloc members are against the bill. It is what they are dedicated to and there is no puzzle there.

It is difficult to understand what the problem is with the Conservative Party. But if we look back in history, we realize the deal Prime Minister Mulroney made with the devil when he invited the current premier of the province of Quebec to sit at the cabinet table. It is not hard to understand the current leader of the Conservative Party who has yet to show enough courage to stand for election to come into this place. There is a byelection coming up in the not too distant future in St. John's. Member after member of that party are defecting and resigning because they cannot tolerate the positions being taken. It is not hard to understand if we look at it from a historical perspective where the current leader of the Conservative Party is coming from, but it is shameful.

Tories in my riding ask me what in the world is going on and why they are doing this. It is obvious what the strategy of the leader is, even though he did not have the courtesy to discuss it with his caucus prior to announcing it to the rest of the world. His strategy seems to be that maybe the Conservatives can get some votes in Quebec and try to rebuild the party if they oppose this bill. It is shameful politics of the worst kind that they would play with the future of this country and the future of that province by taking that kind of a position.

What is it that really upsets the separatists and keeps them motivated? I think about the united alternative conference to which I unfortunately was dispatched as a representative, as a spy for the Liberal Party. It was like sticking a thousand pins in my eyes but I went. I was astounded to see separatists were actually invited to be headline speakers at the united alternative—

An hon. member: We invited you.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: You did not invite me. Had they invited me, I would have been delighted to deliver a calm and rational speech on exactly what they should be doing with their united alternative.

The people in Quebec remember the advertisements the Reform Party ran in the last election. They attempted to suggest that somehow one's place of birth should disqualify one from standing to be prime minister. People remember that. I know Reform members have attempted to distance themselves from that. I know that by coming up with some new party whatever it is called, that again they are going to try to distance themselves, but the people of Quebec will not forget that.

I do not know which is the right word, sympathy or empathy, but having been here for two years and having worked with members of the Bloc and knowing them, I have a much better understanding of what it is that motivates them. They get motivated tremendously when they see the kind of intransigent position that a party like the Reform Party takes in relation to what amounts to a third of the country which is obviously and arguably one of the most important parts of the country. The province of Quebec provides us—

[Translation]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, as you can see, once again the members of this government do not even have the decency to be present to listen to their own colleagues who want to speak to Bill C-20. I ask you to check that we have a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see that we have a quorum. The hon. member for Mississauga West.

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• (1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, maybe they could learn to count. They are worried about 50 plus one but they cannot even count how many members are in the House.

To get back to the point, I have developed some understanding. In fact one of the members of the Bloc who I met outside asked me if I was going to speak. When I said yes, he said to please stay calm. So I will because there are some things that must be said.

I hear Bloc members say in the House that it is undemocratic to require a clear question. My constituents do not understand that and ask what is wrong with that and why would they object to the question being clear? They say that 50 plus one should be the deciding factor. If in fact they believe that 50 plus one should be the deciding factor, why do we continue to debate another referendum?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): You are a block head.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: I am not a square head as the member seems to indicate.

Let us go back to the results in 1980. The results were that 59.6% said no. I do not know what part of that they do not understand; 59.6% said no and 40.4% said yes. That is more than 50% plus one.

The question was quite remarkable in the 1980 referendum: “The Government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada based on the equality of nations; this agreement would enable Quebec to” and it goes on and on. It asks if the people agree with giving the Government of Quebec the authority to negotiate some kind of arrangement with the rest of Canada.

The answer was clear then. The separatists did not agree with the answer. They did not agree with the results so they worked over a 15 year period to develop another question. That question is shorter and a little more clear. Remember that those members are asking for 50% plus one. The question is: Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Quebec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995? Yes, 49.4; no, 50% plus one.

If they agree that it should be 50% plus one, if that is the argument, then they should accept the results. The results are very clear.

I do not accept the premise that anybody wants a referendum other than Premier Bouchard, a few of the henchmen that work with him and perhaps the members of the Bloc. In all of the polling results we have seen, it is absolutely clear that the population of Quebec does not want it. They want to get on with other things in their lives. They are the same as everybody else. Their Visa cards are overextended. They are trying to get the kids through school. They have to buy a new car or get the old one fixed. They have the same problems everybody has whether they are in St. John’s, Newfoundland or Victoria or Saskatchewan.

I believe that they are saying, “Once and for all, would you people in Ottawa put a question that is clear and let us get an answer to this”. That is what this bill says. It is absolutely beyond me why anybody would object to that.

The history of this issue is quite interesting. People talk about the recent history. They talk about the referendum when Mulroney tore the paper in half and caused people to get upset. They talk about the closeness of it, but this has been going on in this great country for years and years and years.

I consider myself to be a Pearsonian Liberal. Lester Pearson, the great prime minister of this country, did some things but I am out of time and I cannot share those comments about the Right Hon. Lester Pearson.

• (1555)

I will say that it is fair to have a clear question and it is absolutely fair to have a clear result. Finally, if we are going to have a referendum, once and for all we can put this issue to bed and get on with developing the greatest nation in the world.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-20, the clarity bill. The full title of the bill is an act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec secession reference. That title explains very well the objective of this legislation. However, I think the bill could just as easily be entitled an act to respect the rights of Quebecers and the rights of Canadians in any future referendum on Quebec separation.

As the justices of the supreme court noted, the subject matter of this issue “requires us to consider momentous questions that go to the heart of our system of constitutional government”. Momentous questions indeed. There are few topics that this House of Commons has dealt with that touch the fibre of our constitutional being more than the bill we have before us today.

This bill speaks to an issue that is fundamental to Canada and Canadians. As the justices stated, the court is engaged in rendering an advisory opinion on certain legal aspects of the continued existence of the Canadian federation.

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At the risk of being somewhat literary, this bill grapples with the age old question raised in Hamlet's soliloquy, to be or not to be. That is indeed the very real question. If the Canada we know, one of the great democracies of the world, an oasis of tolerance and compassion, a respected leader in the family of nations, is not to be, then the process by which we arrive at that tragic conclusion and the implications of such a decision must be absolutely clear to each and every Canadian.

If one sets out to dismantle one of the greatest countries on the face of the planet, there is no room for confusion. There is no room for obfuscation, wiggle room or interpretation. At every step of the way there must be the very highest level of clarity.

Clarity is not something that is simply owed to the people of a province wishing to separate. It is owed to the people of Canada and indeed the international community. No country exists in a vacuum, so the precedent that is set by the enactment of this legislation forms an important contribution to the body of international law on the issue of secession.

There is no doubt that, as they said at the U.S. Democratic convention in 1968, the whole world is watching. The issue of secession is one which the international community has a great interest in. There are few areas in the world which have not been affected by both successful and unsuccessful secessionist movements. The recent developments in Chechnya or the other former Soviet republics, East Timor, Eritrea, Slovakia, the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and Catalonia in Spain illustrate the importance of this issue to the world at large.

A recent article in the respected British magazine *The Economist* dealt with the issue of secession. Among the points this particular article made on secession were:

It should be carried out only if a clear majority (well over 50% plus one of the voters) have freely chosen it, ideally in an unbiased referendum held in tranquil circumstances.

The Canadian principles of peace, order and good government are deep democratic traditions. Our federalism and constitutionalism are expressed throughout this five page bill.

As I mentioned earlier the purpose of this bill is to give effect to the requirement for clarity set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada. I believe it would be helpful to understand precisely the nature of the questions which the supreme court addressed and some of the other comments that the court made. There were three questions.

Question number one: Under the constitution of Canada, can the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally?

Question number two: Does international law give the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec the right to effect

the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally? In this regard is there a right to self-determination under international law that would give the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec the right to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally?

Question number three: In the event of a conflict between domestic and international law on the right of the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally, which would take precedence in Canada?

How did the court answer the questions? On question number one the supreme court response was unequivocal. It stated:

The Constitution vouchsafes order and stability, and accordingly secession of a province 'under the Constitution' could not be achieved unilaterally, that is, without principled negotiation with other participants in Confederation within the existing constitutional framework.

Again on the question of unilateral secession the court made some statements that may be of particular interest to those on the Bloc and Reform benches. The court stated:

Democracy... means more than simple majority rule. Constitutional jurisprudence show that democracy exists in the larger context of other constitutional values.

• (1600)

At another point in the judgment the court stated:

The referendum result, if it is to be taken as an expression of the democratic will, must be free of ambiguity both in terms of the question asked and in terms of the support it achieves.

On question number two the court is again unequivocal, and I quote the reference:

The National Assembly, the legislature or the government of Quebec do not enjoy a right at international law to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally.

Interestingly the court does note the possibility of what it describes as "an unconstitutional declaration of secession leading to a de facto secession".

However, I believe with great conviction that Canadians regardless of what province they live in have the unassailable right to expect that their provincial government will in every instance respect the rule of law and the constitution. To do otherwise would turn a secessionist initiative into an illegal and unconstitutional activity that could very well have unfortunate and unintended consequences.

On question number three the court stated that since there was no conflict between domestic and international law there was no need to address that issue. In reading the judgment of the supreme court one is struck by how reasonable the court's conclusions were. In every respect the court has provided a judgment that is in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the constitution.

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What precisely does the clarity bill do? It provides for the House of Commons to determine the clarity of a referendum question on the secession of a province and sets out some of the considerations to be taken into account in making its determination. It prohibits the Government of Canada from entering into negotiations on the terms under which a province might cease to be part of Canada if a referendum question was unclear.

Following a referendum on secession in a province the bill provides for the House of Commons to determine if a clear majority of the people in that province had clearly expressed a will to cease to be part of Canada, and it sets out factors to be considered in making its determination. It also prohibits the Government of Canada from engaging in negotiations with a province unless a clear majority had clearly expressed its will to secede.

Finally the legislation recognizes that the secession of a province requires an amendment to the Constitution of Canada, which in turn requires negotiations involving all provincial governments and the Government of Canada. It also requires that certain matters such as the division of assets and liabilities, border changes and the rights of aboriginal peoples and other minorities must be addressed before a constitutional amendment is proposed by a minister of the crown.

The clarity bill is about honesty. It is about providing the conditions for an honest result on any future referendum. If one takes the time to read the supreme court judgment, one will find the document explains our rich constitutional history and analyzes our most important constitutional principles. The inherent duty of our constitution is that it provides and protects fundamental rights within the framework of federalism, the rule of law, democracy, the protection of minorities and constitutionalism.

I would like to end my remarks with a statement that is referred to in the supreme court judgment from one of our most illustrious Fathers of Confederation, Sir George-Étienne Cartier. Those opposite who oppose this measure would do well to reflect upon his words when he said:

In our federation, we will have Catholics and Protestants, English, French, Irish and Scots, and everyone, through his efforts and successes, will add to the prosperity and glory of the new confederation. We are of different races, not so that we can wage war on one another, but in order to work together for our well-being.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand in Canada's parliament to speak in this very important debate. Frankly I wish sincerely that all members of the House would pay very close attention to what is going on.

This is as important a matter as I believe we can ever face in this country. It is the existence of our country itself. For some members of our assembly not to be paying full attention, not to be involved and not to be thinking this through is unfortunate.

I recognize that some are in committees and others have constituency work in other parts of the country. That is part of the role of a member of parliament. Perhaps it would have been better had we given more time to debate. I cannot but help begin my intervention this afternoon by pointing out to everyone who is listening that once again the government has invoked a form of closure.

• (1605)

Technically it is called time allocation, which is worse than closure, because it gives us less time for debate than closure does. I cannot understand. On an issue as important as this one we need to give ample time for not only parliamentarians to speak to it but for Canadians in general to become involved in the debate to discuss the issues, the pros and the cons, and to seek input into study of the bill. We need to travel across the country to see what Canadians want or aspire to in their country.

I am disgusted at the Liberal government and its total disregard for the democratic process in the House. It has a bill that is supposed to be related to a democratic process with respect to the possible secession of a province, yet it has trodden on the ability of parliamentarians to debate it fully not only here but around the country. It is very distressing. Although many members cannot possibly be here today, I know they would be here tomorrow, the day after, and on other days to take their turn expressing themselves.

This bill is called the clarity bill in its vernacular. I have heard several speakers say this afternoon that the bill lacks clarity. I am afraid I have to agree. Basically all it says is that there shall be clarity in the wording of the question and there shall be a clear majority. Neither the wording of the question nor the level of the majority nor the number of voters who have to participate in a vote for it to pass are spelled out.

It is a very undefined bill. All it says is that after the decision is made by the province choosing to secede parliament will study the question within certain time limits. It is not clear to me whether the bill even says that the threshold will be declared in advance. I think that is the intention of the bill but it could be interpreted otherwise. That is not a very good way of handling it.

I am certainly not willing right now to speculate on what a clear question should be. I can think of some things that perhaps one could put forward, but I hesitate to do it because of the possible ramifications of not making a wise choice. This needs a lot of careful thought. The question should be clear and succinct. When it is determined it should be included in the bill and debated in the House. The kind of question that would be considered clear should have been in Bill C-20.

Then there is the question of what proportion of the people should vote for it. Some said 50% plus one vote. Some said 58%. Some said two-thirds and so on. The goal of Bloc members is to

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separate from Canada. I accept that as their goal but I dislike it. One thing I must say about them is that in the six years I have observed their work in the House they have not wavered from their goal. Pretty well in every speech on no matter what topic they are able to weave into it that they want to get out of Canada. I regret that. If they ever do that it will pull out part of the heart of this country.

I am with members who say it is regrettable that we have to have this bill. Yet the reality is that a number of citizens, primarily in Quebec, have sent more separatist members here than other members.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Fournier: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, what is happening today in this House is appalling. It shows contempt for the Quebec people and it is an insult to democracy. Where are the Liberals who want to shut down debate on this bill? We are debating Quebec's future—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows it is improper to make reference to the absence of members. I hope he will comply with the standing orders.

Mr. Ghislain Fournier: Mr. Speaker, I ask you to check that we have a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, when one talks about democracy not all votes require a simple majority. For a number of years I have been chairman or president of different organizations and we used *Robert's Rules of Order*, which are quite different from the rules here. In *Robert's Rules of Order* there are a number of occasions where an action to be taken requires more than 50%. For example—

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Fournier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order again, we still do not have a quorum. I do not know who has been doing the counting. I was told we needed 20 members to have a quorum and at present we do not have 20 members in the House.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see that we have a quorum. The hon. member for Elk Island.

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, this is difficult. I do not use notes when I speak. I try to use my head instead. It is difficult to keep the train of thought of going but I think I will manage.

There are a number of occasions in those rules when two-thirds are needed. For example, a motion that has already been dealt with cannot be revisited unless two-thirds of the people present in the meeting vote in favour of it. Some instances require more than 50%.

The requirement is clear. The people of the province proposing a question should know in advance what is the number. We expect at least 60% of people vote. We will not consider this a clear vote, an expression of the people, unless there is at least 50% plus one, 60% or 66%. Whatever it is, it must be determined in advance and it must be fair.

This is a slight diversion from the topic but it has to do with the mathematics involved. We very seldom have a 100% turnout at an election. Sometimes it is as high as 80% in some ridings and it is less than 50% in others. The question in a democracy is how to represent the will of the majority. It is possible, if people do not show up to vote in an election, that the proportion of those who do show up could be a skewed sample.

One could use a truly random sample. For example, we could look at the HRD scandal before us these days. Apparently the auditors there used a random sample. Then it is quite accurate to attribute the characteristics of the sample to the whole population. However, in a general election we do not have a random sample. People come out to vote if they feel strongly about an issue. Those who do not feel very strongly might just not bother. They are not as highly motivated to attend.

For example, in some ridings people who are really against the government might show up in greater numbers to vote to kick the government out than those who are tepidly in favour of the government. That poses a risk to the sitting government member in a riding because he or she may not get supporters out in the same numbers as those who want to arrange for the turfing of that member. That happens particularly in an election or in a vote which is as emotion bound as that of a secession vote.

• (1615)

I know that my time is almost up, but I want to use the closing minutes to say a few words to the people of Quebec. I do not think I will be successful in persuading the separatist members here, although I wish I could.

Physically we have to live together. We cannot take a giant chainsaw, cut around Quebec and float Quebec away so there will be some distance between us. Physically we will stay together, no matter what kind of political arrangement we have. We need to make sure that we have the best possible political arrangement for that situation.

I believe that people in the province of Quebec, as in all other provinces, should be able to so arrange their affairs within confederation so they do not want to leave. The policies of the Reform Party, the policies of the new Canadian alliance, are such that I believe Quebecers could live with them if they took the time to read them, study them and give them careful thought, and not simply say with a prejudiced point of view "We are not going to listen to them".

I plead for a fair hearing of what we are actually saying. They can look it up on the website and ask for literature. We are certainly willing to share it. I know that we can come to a place where we can live together co-operatively.

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the events which led to Bill C-20. Before I do so I would like to inform the House of a message that I received from my constituents during the recess. They were strongly in favour of this bill. In fact there were a number of my constituents who came to me and asked why it had taken our government so long to table this legislation.

I would like to look back to the circumstances of the 1995 referendum to explain why our government decided to table Bill C-20. I note that some of my colleagues noted that we do not take great joy in having to take such a step, but we do so because the separatist leaders continue to brandish the threat of another referendum on separation.

Let us look back for a moment to the 1994 general election in Quebec, which was won by the Parti Québécois. At that time the PQ strategy was to jumpstart the process leading up to Quebec separation, even before Quebecers had a chance to vote on it in a referendum. Then Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau claimed that Quebec had a right to self-determination, which would allow it to separate from Canada unilaterally. Draft legislation along those lines was actually tabled in the national assembly.

In an attempt to whip up support for its option the Parizeau government struck numerous political commissions in every region of the province. Following several weeks of so-called consultations the commissions reported back to the national commission on the future of Quebec, which submitted a report to the PQ government on April 19, 1995. That was also the time of the notorious Le Hir reports, which would become one of the most incredible propaganda exercises ever undertaken in Quebec's history.

In the spring of 1995 Mr. Parizeau's Parti Québécois changed tack regarding the referendum question, deciding to adopt a vague concept of association included in an eventual question. And so, the sovereignty partnership was born.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Parizeau had hitherto opposed any such concept, wanting instead to concentrate on sovereignty. In an interview in 1990 he stated:

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As far as I'm concerned, the question that should be asked the next time around ought to be on Quebec sovereignty, not on "Do you authorize us to negotiate to see whether. . . ." No, no. I think it has to be clear. . . . We've now come to the point where we have to ask Quebecers how they feel about sovereignty.

Faced with certain defeat in the referendum, he chose instead, for political reasons, to adopt this concept of partnership.

On June 12, 1995, Jacques Parizeau, Lucien Bouchard, then leader of the Bloc Québécois, and Mario Dumont, leader of the Action démocratique du Québec, signed a tripartite agreement on that basis. Under that agreement the Government of Quebec, following a vote in favour of its option, would undertake negotiations with the rest of Canada to establish a political and economic partnership. Those negotiations would be limited to one year at the most, at which time sovereignty would be proclaimed whether or not a partnership had been concluded. The agreement also stipulated that the Government of Quebec could terminate the negotiations at any time if it deemed they were not progressing quickly enough.

• (1620)

After having told a diplomat that the referendum process was like a lobster trap that Quebecers could not get out of, Mr. Parizeau was now hiding his true intentions. Despite this new partnership spin, all he really wanted was a yes vote that he could then use to make a unilateral declaration of independence.

This is not conjecture on my part. The proof is there.

On the very day of the referendum, Mr. Parizeau taped a televised message to the population in which he clearly stated his intention of going ahead with a unilateral declaration of independence. He confirmed that intention in his memoirs. It is there in black and white on page 286. He stated:

It will be noted that any speeches I have made pertaining to negotiations with Canada have been so worded to allow for such a declaration of sovereignty. And I have never made any undertaking, either in public or in private, not to make a unilateral declaration of sovereignty.

That is what the famous concept of partnership really boiled down to.

Anybody could have had their own interpretation of this concept, but Mr. Parizeau would have thrown the concept out the window at the first opportunity. Fortunately, he never got that chance because a majority of Quebecers refused to fall into that trap.

The confusion surrounding a unilateral declaration of independence says a lot about the agreement of June 12, 1995, which was one of the cornerstones of the yes side's referendum campaign in 1995. Mr. Dumont, who was one of the signatories to the agreement, stated recently that he has never been a sovereignist.

As for Mr. Parizeau, he went on to make yet another statement in his typical style. He wrote:

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It's often been said that the question in 1995 wasn't clear. It's true, as I've said many times, that the question I would have preferred was the following: Do you want Quebec to become a sovereign (or independent) country as of . . . ?

There we have Mr. Parizeau's deep-rooted conviction about the concept of partnership. It is noteworthy that the only time Mr. Parizeau ever toned down his hard line separatist rhetoric was at the very time he was in a position to put it into practice.

What was the question that was asked in the end? It was set out in Bill 1, an act respecting the future of Quebec, and it reads as follows:

Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Quebec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?

Right away we can see a key difference in comparison with the referendum process that was undertaken in 1980. Unlike that earlier process, the Government of Quebec provided for only one referendum in 1995. Let us bear in mind that under the latter formula sovereignty was not conditional upon a political and economic partnership with the rest of Canada. Whether or not any agreement were reached with the rest of the country, sovereignty would be inevitable. It would come about no matter what happened, and Quebecers would have no say on the final product. There would be no second vote.

In an attempt to clarify the question, the Quebec Liberal Party proposed a number of amendments to Bill 1. All of those amendments were rejected by the PQ government. At the same time, the Prime Minister of Canada stated that the question was ambiguous and that a majority of 50% plus one would be too small to effect sovereignty. We all know the outcome.

On October 30, 1995, 50.48% of Quebec voters answered no, while 49.42% voted yes. Of special note are poll results obtained in the last days of the campaign, indicating that one out of five yes voters truly believed that Quebec would still remain a Canadian province in the event of a yes victory. The separatist leaders' campaign of smoke and mirrors worked very effectively.

• (1625)

For all of those reasons our government is duty bound to act now to ensure that Quebecers will not have to bankroll yet another misinformation campaign to get them to support separation, an option which they have twice rejected.

The purpose of the bill tabled by the intergovernmental affairs minister is to ensure that the referendum process is clear and that Quebecers can make a choice secure in the knowledge that all the cards are well and truly laid on the table. They have the right to vote on a clear option and a crystal clear question. They are entitled to the assurance that they will never lose their Canadian citizenship

and all of the other advantages they enjoy as Canadians, unless they have renounced Canada loud and clear.

This is the purpose of the clarity act. As its name suggests it seeks to ensure that the choice to be made is clear to everyone. Since the separatist leaders will not support that objective, our government has decided to enact legislation to ensure that our democratic tradition is not usurped by double talk and double dealing.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Mercier—East Timor.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of a vast majority of my constituents.

In everyday life, a number of them are political opponents of mine who do not necessarily share my burning desire to live in my own country, Quebec, as soon as possible. However, this time they share my opposition to Bill C-20, introduced in this House on December 10 by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, the Canadian Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. The bill is entitled an act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference.

Moreover, what happened this morning in this very House shows that the members of the Liberal Party of Canada, the party in power, have completely lost track of what it means to be democratic.

Democracy is first and foremost a concept that people must have between their ears. If it is not there, they can talk about it all they want, but they will not change anything in reality. They will then adopt undemocratic behaviours while pretending to serve democracy and to defend the public good. Moreover, they will do as this government is doing. They will become arrogant and go as far as to prevent their opponents from expressing their views on what the government considers to be a decisive issue for the future of Canada through a gag order.

I regularly hear on the radio or on TV and read in the newspapers, both English and French, statements by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville saying that Quebecers do not want to hear about a referendum in the foreseeable future.

Has this member, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, already forgotten that he himself revived the debate on this issue in Quebec and Canada? If this minister is as sensitive to public opinion as he claims to be, why did he introduce a bill that nobody wants in Quebec?

We will conclude today the debate at second reading of Bill C-20. Unfortunately, I will not have time to get to the core of the issue because I have no choice but to express my outrage at a government that, day after day, tramples on democracy and never misses an opportunity to lecture other countries. The people of Canada and Quebec must keep a close eye on their federal government, because the absence of democracy originates in its own backyard.

In the last general election, in June 1997, if the Liberal Party of Canada had won only 151 seats, the leader of this party and member for Saint-Maurice would have agreed to form the government on the basis that his party had a majority. A majority of 50% plus one would have been enough to take office.

The Prime Minister, the member for Saint-Maurice, and his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs find that a majority of 50% plus one is not enough, while they belong to a party that got only 38% of the vote in the last general election.

The government must stop adding fuel to the flame. The hon. member for Saint-Maurice and the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier must stop antagonizing the people of Quebec. The Prime Minister and his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs must stop trying to gain the support of the Canadian people by denigrating the men and women of Quebec.

• (1630)

With Bill C-20, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs wants to define the rules of the next Quebec referendum. This is clear interference in the democratic process that Quebec has put in place to decide its own political and constitutional future.

Also, the minister would have us believe that his government now recognizes the possibility for Quebec to break away from Canada when in fact his legislation is designed to make it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to hold another referendum in Quebec.

Obviously, the former great professor will claim that I am not interpreting his bill properly and that he never intended to prevent Quebec from holding a referendum when and as it sees fit. But in reality, and notwithstanding what he claims so loudly every chance he gets, should Bill C-20 be passed, any potential referendum Quebec may want to hold would have to take into account the minister's wishes as set out in Bill C-20.

Accordingly, I call upon members opposite who are moderately intelligent and who did not enter politics to be the sidekicks or the puppets of the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier. I call upon the intelligence of those members across the way who still know the meaning of the word "liberal". I call upon those who are still able to express themselves within the Liberal Party and have not

fallen victims to the gag order their party leader or their House leader imposes on them.

When the people of Canada and Quebec have fully understood how horrible this bill is, they will know what to do at the ballot box at the next general federal election, as they did regarding employment insurance at the last general election. But it will be too late for our colleagues opposite, who will be sorry they did not have the courage to speak up.

There is still time for the government majority to intervene and make its Prime Minister and his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs see reason. There are at least three good reasons the government should withdraw Bill C-20.

First, Bill C-20 is designed to give the House of Commons the power to disallow a legal and legitimate act of the national assembly and decision of the Quebec people.

We talk about a right of disallowance because Bill C-20 gives the House of Commons the power to determine by resolution whether it pleases the House to find that the question is clear and that a clear majority of the people of Quebec have clearly expressed their will to separate from Canada.

We talk about a right of disallowance because Bill C-20 accords the House of Commons the power to reject a motion by which the national assembly would adopt a referendum question and to censor the result of a referendum without a clear majority, again in the opinion of the House.

Considering the intentions of the government on clarity and the question to be put to the aboriginal people on the Pointe-Bleue reserve in Roberval, no wonder doubts are cast on this government's ability to assess clarity.

Here is the question to the voters in the band:

Do you accept and approve the settlement agreement dated, for reference purposes, the 14th day of December, 1999, between the Montagnais band of Lac-Saint-Jean and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada?

Do you agree to sanction, pursuant to sections 38(1) and 39 of the Indian Act, the absolute transfer to her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada by the Montagnais band of Lac-Saint-Jean all rights and those of its members pertaining to all parcels of reserve lands on concession IX of the Ouiatchouan township?

By voting yes, you authorize the Chief of the Montagnais band of Lac-Saint-Jean or any other member of the band council duly authorized by resolution to sign on behalf of the band council and its members all documents and to take all measures required to put into effect the settlement agreement and the absolute transfer of all parcels of the reserve lands on concession IX of the Ouiatchouan township. "Yes or no?"

So much for the clarity of this government.

Second, Bill C-20 denies Quebecers the freedom to choose their political destiny, and particularly the freedom to include in a

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referendum question—if such is the desire of the national assembly—an offer of partnership with the rest of Canada.

• (1635)

Bill C-20 is an attack on Quebec's freedom of choice because it limits the constitutional and political options for the future of Quebec by rejecting partnership outright.

In section 2 of Bill C-20, particularly subsections (4) (a) and (b), we see that the real political objective of the Liberal Government of Canada is to deprive the Government of Quebec of the possibility of presenting to the people of Quebec a modern version of independence and sovereignty.

The purpose of Bill C-20 is to prevent Quebec from extending its hand to Canada with the offer of a form of partnership which would be fully compatible with the new status of a sovereign Quebec.

As several analysts have pointed out, we are dealing with a strategy, a ploy of the Prime Minister and his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, intended to place before Quebecers the following alternative: status quo or secession.

The third reason is that Bill C-20 denies the universally accepted rule of 50% plus one for the majority, and the fundamental rule of the equality of votes.

Since you are signalling that my time is nearly up, I would like to repeat that this bill ought to be withdrawn before the institution that is the House of Commons is condemned for having broken an essential principle, the equality of everyone before the law.

[*English*]

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have completed writing in the days ahead yet another chapter in our nation's history, a chapter that would make the fathers of Canadian Confederation proud of us, knowing that their legacy cannot be undone under a cloud of confusion and uncertainty of the people's will and outside our shared societal values.

I refer to Bill C-20 before us, also popularly known as the clarity act. It is a bill that sets clear parameters under which Canada would negotiate the secession of a province from our federation. The bill clarifies the binding relationship among the provinces and between them and Canada as a whole.

Fate would have it that we are here on this premiere sitting of the House in the new century debating a bill that our forefathers surely would not have anticipated in 1867 when they began to build a country called Canada. Nor could their wildest imaginations have foreseen that a nation so young would twice face the possibility of

the breakup of our country, but prouder still are we that we should twice withstand the challenge.

Thus I submit that past referenda on the secession of Quebec speak not of a weakened country, although it is my fervent hope that such activity will not continue indefinitely from time to time. Rather, they speak to the will of the Canadian people to stay together when presented anew with a question.

Yes, they speak to the strength of our nation's democracy. Yes, they speak to the societal value of respect that we as Canadians hold for our shared values. In addition to democracy, these values include federalism, constitutionalism and the rule of law and respect for minorities.

We need only look at the make-up of the representation in this House to appreciate how that respect for values is manifest. In what other country in the world will we find a political party sitting in the country's highest law-making body and yet unashamedly bent on separating the province from the country? Ironic as it sounds, it speaks to our respect for democracy in this country. It speaks to our respect for democracy in the House of Commons.

And so it is that the clarity act before us reflects this very shared value, including respect for minorities. Yes, respect and not merely tolerance. Unlike tolerance, respect is a more profound societal value, for it brings with it a sense of justice and human dignity.

Democracy is abundantly evident in Bill C-20 for it safeguards the rights of the governed against the totalitarian rule of their government.

• (1640)

Even as it protects the rights of citizens to have their citizenship and their province within Canada against the misguided wish of their provincial government, the bill respects at the same time their rights to secede from the rest of the country should they clearly express that will by a clear majority vote on a clear question.

However, these two expressions of democracy alone, a clear majority on a clear question, are not sufficient basis for a unilateral declaration of independence on the part of any province.

The Supreme Court of Canada says "Democracy means more than simple majority rule". It further says "Democracy exists in the larger context of other constitutional values", to which I alluded to earlier. Negotiations, therefore, have to take place following a clear vote on a clear question of secession from Canada.

In clear words, the Supreme Court of Canada holds that:

... the democratic vote, by however strong a majority, would have no legal effect on its own and could not push aside the principles of federalism and the rule of law, the rights of individuals and minorities, or the operation of democracy in other provinces or in Canada as a whole.

These democratic tenets link rights with obligations. While these tenets recognize the constitutional right of the members of our federation to initiate constitutional change, there is the reciprocal duty on the part of other participants to engage in discussions to address any legitimate initiative to a change in constitutional order.

However, exercise only of rights without discharging one's reciprocal obligation puts at risk the very legitimacy of that exercise.

On the issue of a clear majority, members of the opposition have argued that 50% plus one is sufficient. If it were so, it would make it absurd to consider what then would constitute an unclear majority.

It is obvious that clear majority should mean more than 50% plus one. In addition to requiring that the vote be a clear majority, it is also crucial that the question be clear. That is, the words should mean the same thing for everyone.

Does the bill provide a mechanism for the measurement of clarity? Yes. The more the question makes clear the will to no longer remain in Canada and become an independent country, the more clear the question is. The further it strays from this requirement of the Supreme Court of Canada, the less is the question's clarity.

Bill C-20 is a reasonable bill. This is not merely a statement by the Government of Canada. A cross-section of the national media has acknowledged this affirmation: from Quebec's *La Presse*, *Le Nouvelliste*, the *Montreal Gazette* and *La Tribune* to the *Halifax Daily News*, *Fredericton's Daily Gleaner*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Ottawa Citizen* to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Regina Leader Post*, the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, the *Calgary Herald*, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Victoria Times Colonist*.

Truly we can take pride that the federal government has deemed it proper to bring forward the legislation before us, a bill that champions the respect for democracy and the rule of law and the operation of our shared values as Canadian citizens when any province contemplates permanent departure from the Canadian family.

This move on the part of the Government of Canada attests to its decisive and bold leadership on this issue. This was the same leadership that was evident when the government referred this issue to the highest judicial tribunal of the land, the Supreme Court of Canada, and that judgment was applauded even by the incumbent premier of Quebec.

In conclusion, Bill C-20 exudes the fullest expression of responsible democracy and reasonableness. It is all these and more. It embodies the advisory judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada respecting the reciprocal rights and obligations of the federal and

Government Orders

provincial governments and to govern within their respective jurisdictions. It embodies in clarity the binding relationship and shared values among them and among us; a relationship and set of values that must be considered when a province contemplates secession from Canada.

A Canadian I am not by birth. A Canadian I am by choice. Truly, our country was created on mutual consent out of the diversity of our people, a diversity that has made our nation rich and from which we continue to draw strength. Bill C-20 reminds us of our diversity in origin, culture, language and faith.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you to check if we have quorum.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have had a call for quorum. We do not have quorum.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-20 reminds us of our diversity in origin, culture, language and faith. It reminds us of the journey of Confederation we have travelled together, of the pain and suffering we overcame jointly as a people during that journey and of the societal values we have come to cherish and nurture as a nation of diverse people.

It is within our gift that we affirm our faith in ourselves as one people and in our country as one Canada.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take part in the discussion of this bill to give effect to the requirement of clarity in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada on the Quebec secession reference case.

This caucus has announced its support in principle. That is not to say we are not concerned about some aspects of the bill. We have concerns that in fairness have been heightened by what we can only see as the shenanigans today of the government members opposite with the imposition of time allocation. I note that I will be the second and probably the last speaker of the day from our caucus that will have an opportunity to participate.

I wonder whether other members do not see and share the hypocrisy in all of this. After all, here we are with a piece of legislation that purports to recognize the need to consult all

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Canadians as opposed to just those living in the province of Quebec on this critical issue of secession. And the government says, "Oh, by the way, we are introducing closure and time allocation and we have a mere day to debate it". It is hypocritical and offensive to all democratically elected members in the House regardless of which side of this issue members are on.

Surely there are very few issues in any democracy that are more important than keeping the country together. To deny hundreds of democratically elected members the opportunity and the right to speak in the House of Commons about an issue as fundamental as this one, I find to be deeply offensive.

We in the NDP caucus approach this piece of legislation with some regret because it does contemplate the breakup of Canada. We would have preferred to concentrate on the very many positive aspects and proposals to strengthen national unity, to improve democracy and the way in which the country works.

As an aside, I would invite listeners and members opposite to have a look at the social democratic forum on Canada's future which the New Democratic Party caucus and party worked on last year and presented at our convention of August 1999.

In short, we think Canada could do much better and to no small extent we hold the government responsible.

Some of us remember and were observers in person at what can only be described as the pathetic performance of the now Prime Minister when he was running for the leadership of the Liberal Party in Calgary almost 10 years ago. Who can forget him welcoming to the box in the Saddledome the then premier of Newfoundland hours after Mr. Wells had done his bit to sabotage the Meech Lake accord? I note a causal effect of that was the immediate creation of the Bloc Quebecois and the resurgence of discussion of separatism and separation in the province of Quebec. The rejection of the Charlottetown accord two years later gave a boost to the other extreme party in this parliament, the Reform Party. As a result, any prospects for a plan A have now gone out the window and we are firmly charted on a plan B course.

• (1650)

Since the election of the government in 1993 we have seen devolution of powers conferred to the provinces. We have not witnessed to my recollection any first ministers conferences to try to resolve some of our problems on the national unity issue. The social union framework from our point of view has failed to deal adequately with social rights and certainly does not accommodate Quebec's desire to opt out of most national programs with full compensation.

The bill itself talks about two things, a clear question and a clear majority. In speaking to constituents in my riding of Palliser, there is not much debate around the clear question. I think there is a lot of merit in that. A clear majority and what constitutes that however

does give rise to more discussion and division of opinion. Certainly the bill to that extent does correspond to the two conditions set out by the supreme court that would have to be met before the rest of Canada is to be obliged to negotiate.

The bill is supposed to address what would need to occur for there to be an extraordinary constitutional negotiation leading to the secession of Quebec or any other province for that matter. The court said a clear majority vote in Quebec on a clear question in favour of secession would confer democratic legitimacy on the secession initiative which all of the other participants in Confederation would have to recognize. However, the court also made a second equally important point, that Quebec's right to self-determination must be exercised within the Canadian constitutional framework.

We see in this decision, or opinion more correctly, that Quebec's right to self-determination must be respected by the other partners of Confederation, but that this right must be exercised with respect for the other democratic values that have guided this country for more than 130 years. In striking a balance between these two key principles, the supreme court specified a clear role for the federal parliament in any secession bid.

As a key actor in the constitutional procedure, parliament does have an obligation to negotiate in good faith should it be confronted with a clear will to secede. It has an obligation to represent the rights and interests of all Canadians in any such negotiating process.

What needs to be debated, and I assume we will now have to rely on doing this at the committee stage, is whether parliament in exercising that right has set the bar on the issue of clarity and majority too high or whether the bill acts in some other way that can be judged as unfair or prejudicial to the freedom of the Quebec people or the rights of minorities in Quebec, such as the aboriginal community. That is what both our party's consultation process and parliament's legislative committee need to address.

I do want to recognize and express the concern we have for the rights of aboriginal people because we do not feel that they are protected adequately in this bill. Clearly, existing constitutional protections for aboriginal rights would be threatened by the secession of any province. The bill does specify that the question of aboriginal rights would need to be addressed, but it does not specify a basic level of protection for these rights that would need to be achieved before parliament could agree to the secession of any province.

The bill also identifies various actors whose views parliament must take into consideration in its deliberations on a secession bid. Unfortunately and notably, aboriginal peoples are not among those specifically involved. New Democrats will therefore be seeking ways to ensure that aboriginal peoples are meaningfully involved

in Bill C-20 and that there is stronger protection provided in the bill for their rights.

We find this absence particularly ironic given the fact that there is recognition in the bill to the unelected Senate. As hon. members know, New Democrats on this side of the House have long argued that an unelected, unaccountable Senate has no place in a modern democracy. We see again the hypocrisy of ignoring aboriginal Canadians while involving the Senate in a way that we think is unconscionable.

• (1655)

Over the years New Democrats have often had to take positions on so-called national unity issues. I am very proud of the fact that even at the founding of the New Democratic Party back in 1961 New Democrats affirmed the right of Quebecers to determine their own future freely and democratically. The NDP is proud to have been the first federal party to recognize that right.

At the last convention in August 1999 we did adopt a paper that advocated recognizing Quebecers as a people not in the ethnic and therefore inappropriate nationalistic sense, but rather in the sense of recognizing that Quebecers are one of the two linguistic and cultural realities within which most Canadians live and move and have their social being.

On these occasions, last year being the most recent, we have been able to play a constructive role in forcing improvements to various constitutional initiatives. With the clarity bill New Democrats are presented with another such opportunity. We approach this bill in the same spirit of good faith with which we have approached other initiatives in the past.

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity during this debate to discuss the legitimacy of the role of the House of Commons in setting rules that would guide the conduct of the House and of the federal government within a process that could lead to the secession of one of our federation's provinces.

On January 19 *La Presse* published an article by Mr. Claude Castonguay who incidentally was the minister of health and social services in the first Robert Bourassa government. He has taken part in all of the debates on the political future of Quebec either as a minister, a senator or a concerned citizen.

In his article Mr. Castonguay stated, "Quebec independence would have profound repercussions for all of Canada and its citizens, including those in Quebec who want to remain Canadian. So it should be no surprise that the federal government wants to set some rules of conduct that it intends to follow in the event of another referendum on sovereignty. That is the objective of the recent bill on clarity tabled in the House of Commons". He went on

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to say, "I find it difficult to see this bill which in no way limits the prerogatives of the national assembly as an attack on Quebec".

These are the words of a great Quebecer with vast experience in political and federal politics whose integrity and political judgment have earned him the esteem of his fellow citizens regardless of political stripe.

Mr. Castonguay chose to reflect carefully on the clarity bill before entering into the debate. More than a month after the bill was tabled, he acknowledged loudly and clearly what many believe in their hearts but do not dare to say in public.

It is perfectly legitimate for the Government of Canada, while respecting the powers of the provincial legislative assembly, to set rules that would guide its conduct within a process that could lead to the secession of a province.

Mr. Castonguay's statement is at odds with the many objections that were raised when the draft bill was introduced and which have been raised since the bill was tabled that challenge the very legitimacy of the role of the House of Commons in this affair. Those secessionist critics are trying to convince people not only in Canada but on the international scene as well that the House of Commons is usurping its powers when it takes the necessary measures to set rules that would guide its own conduct and that of the federal government in the event that a province initiates a process that could lead to secession.

Those critics claim that we, the members of parliament representing all Canadians, are subject to unilateralism of the secessionist leaders and have no choice but to stand idly by should our federation break up. Wanting to reduce the members of this House to mere spectators belies the profound ignorance of the origins of the Parliament of Canada. It flies in the face of our political traditions and practices.

• (1700)

I think a little history 101 is in order. In the introduction of the reference regarding the secession of Quebec, the supreme court in its wisdom provided some historical background. In the courts own words:

Confederation was an initiative of elected representatives of the people then living in the colonies scattered across part of what is now Canada. It was not initiated by imperial fiat.

The justices of our federation's highest court went on to describe the circumstances in which our federation was born:

In March 1864, a select committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada . . . began to explore prospects for constitutional reform. The committee's report, released in June 1864, recommended that a federal union encompassing Canada East and Canada West, and perhaps the other British North American colonies, be pursued—

An opening to pursue federal union soon arose. The leaders of the maritime colonies had planned to meet at Charlottetown in the fall to discuss the perennial topic of

Government Orders

maritime union. The Province of Canada secured invitations to send a Canadian delegation.

On September 1, 1864, 23 delegates—five from New Brunswick, five from Nova Scotia, five from Prince Edward Island, and eight from the Province of Canada. . .met in Charlottetown—The delegates reached agreement on a plan for federal union. . .featuring a bicameral central legislature.

As we know, this plan would take the form of the 72 Quebec resolutions. Those resolutions were debated and in March 1865 approved by the Canadian Legislative Assembly with the support of a majority of members from both Canada East and Canada West.

Our parliament and the House of Commons was born out of the desire of elected representatives of what were then British colonies to establish a federal government. The federal parliament and the House of Commons is the tangible expression of that union, which was freely approved by elected representatives.

As Mr. Lucien Bouchard put it so eloquently on July 1, 1988, “Canada was born 121 years ago, as the result of a process that drew on the sources of dialogue, negotiation, and openness”.

Since 1867 the House of Commons has been made up of members representing the constituent entities of the federation. Since 1867 members of this House have always taken pains to fulfil their responsibilities under section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, of which the preamble stipulates that they are free “to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Canada”.

Yet some people claim that we, the elected members of the House of Commons, have no say, have no right to take tangible measures when faced with a threat of secession. If there were to be a secession they try to deny our role to the point of relieving us of our responsibilities toward all Canadians.

This line of reasoning by the secessionist leaders is the result of such mental acrobatics and such twisted logic that the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, an academic and expert in international law, sometimes finds it difficult to endorse it.

On December 8 in an interview on RDI he declined to give a flat no to the following question:

Isn't it legitimate for the federal government to want to assess the clarity of the question?

When pressed by the interviewer to clearly state his position he had this to say:

The supreme court suggests that Canadian political actors, which may include the House of Commons, can assess the clarity of the question and the majority, but not before the referendum.

In closing I would like to quote from an interview in *Le Devoir* on January 27 by Mr. Benôit Lauzière who was the paper's editor from 1986 to 1990. In that interview Mr. Lauzière described Canada in this way:

It is above all a generous idea. . .and in my opinion, therein lies the principle of a modern citizenship. I almost want to say that we are condemned to ensuring that it works. Because what is the alternative? The resurgence of every sort of nationalism.

We would be running counter to the western world. There aren't many places like it in the world. As a citizen, I don't detest having several orders of government. It comes back to the idea of checks and balances—

• (1705)

The secessionist leaders must acknowledge that we have the right to take the measures necessary to prevent our federation, “a generous idea” wherein “lies the principle of modern citizenship,” to use the words of this former editor of *Le Devoir*, from disintegrating following a referendum with an ambiguous question and an ambiguous result.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with emotion and gravity that I take part in this debate.

I will begin by quoting René Lévesque, a former member of the Liberal Party of Quebec, who said as follows:

We believe that it is possible to avoid the shared impasse of Canadian confederation by adapting to our situation the two predominant movements of our era: the movement toward freedom of peoples, and the movement toward freely negotiated political and economic groups.

The spirit and the letter of this statement, which can be said to underlie the evolution of the sovereignist movement in Quebec, is being questioned, denied and rejected in the supposed clarity bill.

By its very wording, Bill C-20 entitled “An act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference” misleads those listening or watching. Never did the supreme court say or write that for a question to be clear it could not be associated with an offer of partnership.

Recently, we have had the support of the researchers at the C.D. Howe Institute, who confirmed that they did not understand why the government was saying this in its bill.

Not only does this bill lack clarity, but the only thing it does do is preclude any other negotiation than secession negotiation. It does not state clearly what kind of majority Canada would require before entering into negotiation. After playing around with all kinds of numbers, it does not dare setting a specific one because it knows full well it would not have the support of the international community.

Neither does it say what a clear question would be. The only thing the bill is very clear about is that the question could not envisage other possibilities in addition to the secession of the province from Canada, such as economic or political arrangements with Canada, that obscure a direct expression of the will of the

population of that province on whether the province should cease to be part of Canada.

The Government of Canada missed the opportunity to show some openness and a modern attitude toward the Quebec issue. This government, which wants to be the most forward looking on this issue, is embracing the most conservative views imaginable.

• (1710)

During the 20th century, particularly during the second half, the people of Quebec became increasingly aware of who they were, of their culture and also of the fact that, as a small minority within North America, they needed protection. For that, they could only count on themselves. Progressively the people of Quebec—very progressively and more widely—awakened to the idea of sovereignty.

The bill is entitled “An Act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference”. The word secession does not belong to the vocabulary of sovereignists. The word secession refers to a Quebec surrounded by walls. Nothing could be further from what sovereignists have in mind.

The Liberals who, today, support free trade with the whole world, with the exception perhaps of a sovereign Quebec, should remember that it is thanks to sovereignists and Quebecers that the free trade agreement that they now want to extend to the whole world was passed, this at a time when their leader was so bitterly opposed to the idea.

Sovereignty is an open and modern project by a people which, while being sovereign, would want to renegotiate its economic ties with Canada. To me, it is very significant that the only clear thing in this extremely confusing bill is that Canada refuses this renegotiation of the relations between the two great peoples, and also with the aboriginal people. This is shameful.

The more this government opposes a democratic debate, the more its bill—I do not wish that, but when we see how they are behaving, we cannot help but think that it is likely to happen—will become illegitimate, obsolete, reactionary and conservative. This bill, which does not propose any renewal of the relations between peoples, can only be considered a meaningless document.

It is our hope that the sovereign people of Quebec will be able to count on the sovereign people of Canada to understand that the future does not lie in conflict or confrontation, but in negotiation, that it does not lie in a refusal to negotiate, in a refusal to accept reality and in an idea that some people have in their head about Canada. We hope that Canadians will have the intelligence to see that, north of the United States, it is better to negotiate together to be stronger than to continue to get deeper and deeper in the common impasse described by René Lévesque.

Bill C-20 is a denial of the Canadian attitude that we have always known. It is a denial of democracy in Quebec and of its history. Let

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us not forget that Robert Bourassa is the one who passed Bill 150. People can say what they want, but the Quebec National Assembly, under the Liberal premier of the day, passed a law providing for a referendum, with rules defined by the national assembly, to get out of that impasse.

The 1992 referendum did not get us out of there, since the negotiations were grossly inadequate. In 1995 we almost got there. We think that at the time we could have negotiated.

• (1715)

Finally, this bill seems to be a desperate attempt to prevent something, the sovereignty of Quebec, which will happen, I am absolutely certain, even if I do not know when or how.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5.15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1745)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 668*)

YEAS

Members

Asselin	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bigras
Bigras	Brien
Canuel	Cardin
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	Crête
de Savoye	Debien

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Desrochers
Duceppe
Fournier
Gauthier
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guimond
Laurin
Loubier
Marchand
Mercier
Picard (Drummond)
Rocheleau
St-Hilaire
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Venne—42

Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Dumas
Gagnon
Girard-Bujold
Guay
Lalonde
Lebel
Marceau
Ménard
Perron
Plamondon
Sauvageau
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp

O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proctor
Proulx
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
Speller
St-Jacques
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeri
Vautour
Wayne
Wilfert
Wood—179

Obhrai
Pankiw
Parrish
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Price
Proud
Provenzano
Reed
Riis
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Sgro
Solomon
St. Denis
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Stoffer
Telegdi
Ur
Vanclief
Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan
Williams

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Alcock
Assad
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bennett
Bertrand
Blaikie
Bonwick
Brisson
Bryden
Byrne
Cadman
Caplan
Casey
Catterall
Chan
Chatters
Clouthier
Collenette
Cullen
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duncan
Eggleton
Finlay
Fry
Godfrey
Goldring
Graham
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guarnieri
Harb
Harris
Harvey
Hill (MacLeod)
Hilstrom
Ifody
Jaffer
Johnston
Jordan
Keddy (South Shore)
Keys
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Konrad
Lastewka
Leung
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Manley
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
Meredith
Minna
Morrison
Murray
Nault
O'Brien (Labrador)

Adams
Anderson
Augustine
Bakopanos
Bélair
Bellemare
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Calder
Carroll
Casson
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Coderre
Cotler
Desjarlais
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Dromisky
Duhamel
Easter
Epp
Fontana
Gagliano
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Gruending
Hanger
Hardy
Harvard
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Ianno
Jackson
Jennings
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Limoges
Longfield
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Mancini
Marleau
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mitchell
Muise
Myers
Nystrom
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

● (1755)

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

(Division No. 669)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Alcock
Assad
Bakopanos
Bélair
Bellemare
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Bryden
Byrne
Cadman
Caplan

Adams
Anderson
Augustine
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bennett
Bertrand
Blaikie
Bonwick
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Calder
Carroll

Casey
Catterall
Chan
Chatters
Clouthier
Collenette
Cullen
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Duhamel
Easter
Epp
Fontana
Gagliano
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Gruending
Hanger
Hardy
Harvard
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Ianno
Jackson
Jennings
Jordan
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Limoges
Longfield
Mahoney
Maloney
Manley
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
Meredith
Minna
Morrison
Myers
Nystrom
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Obhrai
Pankiw
Parrish
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proctor
Proulx
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Stoffer
Telegdi
Torsney
Valeri
Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan
Williams

Casson
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Coderre
Cotler
Desjarlais
Dhaliwal
Discepolo
Dromisky
Duncan
Eggleton
Finlay
Fry
Godfrey
Goldring
Graham
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guarnieri
Harb
Harris
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Ifody
Jaffer
Johnston
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Konrad
Lastewka
Leung
Lincoln
MacAulay
Malhi
Mancini
Marleau
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proud
Provenzano
Reed
Riis
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Sgro
Solomon
St. Denis
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo
Thibeault
Ur
Vanclief
Wayne
Wilfert
Wood—168

NAYS

Members

Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bergeron
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok

Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Bigras

Private Members' Business

Brien
Canuel
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
de Savoye
Desrochers
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Dumas
Gagnon
Girard-Bujold
Guay
Harvey
Jones
Lalonde
Lebel
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Marchand
Mercier
Perron
Plamondon
Robinson
Sauvageau
St-Jacques
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vautour

Brison
Cardin
Crête
Debien
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe
Fournier
Gauthier
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guimond
Herron
Keddy (South Shore)
Laurin
Loubier
Marceau
Ménard
Muisé
Picard (Drummond)
Price
Rocheleau
St-Hilaire
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp
Venne—55

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The bill therefore stands referred to a legislative committee.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

LEUKEMIA AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should recognize the month of June as Leukemia Awareness Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the results of the vote would indicate that clarity is a good thing, and we also think that awareness is a good thing. Awareness is as much a motherhood issue as is clarity. We find it quite astounding that our colleagues across the way in the Progressive Conservative Party find that clarity could be a bad thing.

There is no question that there has been a proliferation in the use of "the week of", "the month of" and "the year of" in terms of all kinds of diseases, but particularly those concerning cancer.

Private Members' Business

• (1800)

The month of April has already been proclaimed cancer awareness month and as all hon. members know, October is breast cancer month. Having proclaimed April as cancer month has benefited all cancer sites. June is already the month for ALS, thyroid and spina bifida.

Although we think the competition among diseases has been uncomfortable when it comes to AIDS versus breast cancer versus prostate cancer, the politicizing of those diseases in terms of fundraising has been problematic sometimes. In times of awareness, more is better. We need to do whatever we can to raise the awareness of Canadians of these diseases in three ways: that of patient and caregiver, that of advocate and that of citizen.

The organizations that deal with health issues find that focusing all their efforts on one month of the year works for them. We therefore support the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada's interest in having June proclaimed leukemia awareness month.

What is interesting when we talk about awareness of leukemia that usually we are talking about an understanding of the disease, which is obviously a good thing. We are trying to develop an understanding of things that reflect early detection. For leukemia it is things such as fatigue and bruising. We are obviously trying to raise the awareness of the public for dollars for research and support which is also an extremely good thing. With this disease more than any other, it is also imperative that Canadians come to understand the importance and effectiveness of becoming a bone marrow transplant donor so that we can move to the next step in terms of the success that already exists in leukemia treatment.

In 1974 I graduated from the University of Toronto medical school. Back then leukemia was a virtual death sentence. Since then treatments have evolved, such as chemotherapy and bone marrow transplantation. At the 25th anniversary of our graduation from medical school last June, my classmate, Dr. Mark Minden, made a presentation. He is now the chair of the Leukemia Research Foundation's scientific review panel and one of the most pre-eminent researchers in leukemia and bone marrow transplantation.

His presentation was astonishing to those of us who may not have focused on just how far we have come in the last 25 years. The motto of the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada is "We are getting closer every day". It was impressively underlined by Dr. Minden as to how close we really are.

Unfortunately well over 3,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with leukemia this year and over 2,000 will die. It is important that Canadians understand that the cure rate is 70% in children and that 50% of adults affected reach disease remission lasting one to five years or more. Leukemia is the only form of human cancer where such advances have been realized. Leukemia research really does save lives.

As an overview, we should note the fact that leukemia is a disease of the white blood cells. Indeed it comes from two Greek words meaning white and blood. It is a cancer of the blood cells or of the blood-forming tissues of the body, the bone marrow, the spleen and the lymph nodes.

Leukemia affects individuals of all ages, of either sex and of every background. It is not contagious nor hereditary, but the more that we understand about the genetic disorders, the better. There is now a Philadelphia chromosome that is implicated with one of the chronic leukemias. We know it is more common with things like Down's syndrome, which is a genetic condition. We know that exposure to certain chemicals and radiation may increase susceptibility. This means that not only can we understand where it comes from genetically but maybe we could find out how it could be prevented by understanding the chemistry and radiation problems.

• (1805)

Chemotherapy, radiation and bone marrow transplants are working, but leukemia continues to cause the death of more children than any other disease.

I would like to highlight one of the most common leukemias in children, acute lymphoblastic leukemia or ALL. It represents more than three-quarters of leukemias in young people. It develops in the immature lymphoblasts or young lymphocytes. It seems to be caused by immunological factors. In this millennium immunology is probably the area which needs the most work.

There is evidence of a high risk for this disorder in people with immunodeficiency disorders. Apparent clusters of ALL are age specific at two or three years of age. Differences in this sub-type by age suggest that we still do not even know whether this is a disorder in the initial development of the immune system or whether it is an unusual immune response to infectious agents. There is no question that if we came to understand this better, we would be able to treat lots of conditions caused by abnormal immune systems much better.

These young people usually need chemotherapy for at least two to three years. It is a treatment intended to achieve a remission by eliminating all leukemia cells. But as we know, the drugs that are used to kill leukemia cells also kill healthy cells. It means that cells are killed in the hair, the skin, and the linings of the stomach and the intestine. At times this successful drug therapy is devastating even though the disease is cured. The side effects to the child are really difficult. It is sometimes necessary to receive radiation therapy to the brain and the spinal cord and the children are extraordinarily uncomfortable.

Before 1970 few children or teenagers with leukemia were cured. Survival improved when treatments changed from single to many agent chemotherapy. But when leukemia cells are still present around the brain and the spine, they are not able to be reached by chemotherapy.

This treatment has dramatically increased the cure rate of children and 95% of young people with ALL are now reaching remission after their first month of chemotherapy. In Canada an estimated three-quarters of all young people diagnosed with ALL between 1985 and 1988 were alive five years and most were considered cured.

About 30% of these kids experience a relapse or a return of the disease. Then the help of Canadians is needed in terms of bone marrow transplantation. This has been shown to improve survival and is offered to many children with ALL in their second or subsequent relapses.

We need Canadians to sign up as bone marrow donors. Because we need to match donors on all six of the immunological markers, siblings have a one in four chance of being a perfect match. If they do not match, the sometimes dying patients must turn quickly to other blood relations, bone marrow registries and pleas through the media. In about 40% of cases these searches fail.

Scientists have discovered a new method to transplant bone marrow from a mismatched donor, meaning almost anybody can have the potentially life-saving procedure.

It has been almost five years since our family's best friend, Phillip Borsos, died of leukemia. Phillip had had Hodgkin's disease and his leukemia was caused by the treatment he received for the Hodgkin's, an unfortunate and rare side effect but one nonetheless that happened. His wife Barret, and his two sons Angus and Silas whom I had the privilege of delivering, are now hoping that we in Canada will not take away other fathers when we are so close to the cure.

• (1810)

Phillip Borsos was one of Canada's finest filmmakers. He made amazing documentaries: *Cooperage*; *Spartree*, and received an Oscar nomination for his documentary *Nails*. He then went on to direct *The Grey Fox* and *Mean Season*, *One Magic Christmas*, *Bethune* and *Yellow Dog* and then he died at 40 years of age.

Already the Leukemia Research Foundation has made huge progress and it is continuing the ongoing struggle to develop greater awareness. Last June during leukemia awareness month Leukemia Research Fund of Canada flags were flying over the city halls in major cities across Canada.

We are asking for the month to be designated by the House which would make it even more important. More awareness would be raised. The purpose of the awareness strategy is to spread the message that leukemia must be eradicated and that the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada exists for that purpose.

It is extraordinarily important that we have good messages like the national campaign entitled "We are getting closer every day".

Private Members' Business

We have a vehicle with which to inspire Canadians to do all of those things, to understand the gravity and how prevalent leukemia is, to understand that donating to leukemia research is extraordinarily important, and to sign up as a bone marrow donor.

In Canada health care is so important to people. Canadians are always reassured in the three roles they can play, that of patient and caregiver, that of advocate for the diseases, and that of citizen. For us to designate the month of June as leukemia awareness month would go a long way to that end. I hope there is support for this.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the privilege of standing again in our House of Commons to talk about an issue which is very important to Canadians.

First of all I commend the hon. member who has brought this motion forward. I have a great deal of respect and interest in people who pursue research into finding the cure for many different diseases, so I am on the right wavelength in terms of supporting the intent of such a motion.

One needs to ask how one can best promote both the awareness of any particular disease or situation, and how one can best foster an environment both economically and academically to search for cures for these various diseases. This one focuses on one particular disease, blood cancer or leukemia.

I was asked to represent our party in this debate tonight. I stopped to think of how many people I know who have had leukemia. I may be wrong but I thought of four. I have been wracking my brain trying to think of whether or not there are more. In all instances, as the hon. member stated, when the news is first given, it is like a death sentence. Several people in our own family have had cancer: both my wife and her father and several others. It is devastating because it is a disease for which at this stage there is no known cause. Hence there is not a cure that has any degree of certainty, although they have been doing research and great strides have been made. It is very encouraging to realize that now some 70% of children who are diagnosed with leukemia actually will be survivors.

• (1815)

I have thought of two people who as young adults were diagnosed with leukemia and who are still living. Two have gone into remission of the four I was able to think of. One is a person in my community who has a wife and two young children. Frankly when he got the word that he had leukemia it blew this young family away. He went for treatment and I believe with his extraordinary faith in God for his divine healing he has been in remission now for a number of years. I saw him not long ago and I was very pleased with his appearance. I do not know if it is possible but he even looked healthier than I do. He is a little less rotund but is very healthy. We are grateful for that.

Private Members' Business

There were two young fellows on my list both of whom were diagnosed in their late teens and neither of whom survived. Both young men were very close to us. They were friends of ours. They were contemporaries of our children. They did not make it. They were diagnosed, went through the treatment regimen with a lot of agony and suffering and eventually did not make it.

No doubt this is a disease which requires urgent attention. As a government we must promote research and development in these medical areas. We need to concentrate on pockets of research in the country so that people who are of like mind can share their ideas and promote their research. I would like to see that happen.

With respect to calling a month of awareness, I am neither here nor there on it. The member is proposing that June be declared leukemia awareness month. April already is cancer awareness month. We are very aware of it.

In fact, I go to jail every April for the annual jail and bail fundraising that the Cancer Society does in our area. I have had the misfortune the last couple of times of having the Liberal candidate whom I defeated be the judge when I was arrested. When they bring me in he is not very kind to me. He always sets the bail really high.

Last April when they took me in, they arrested me and put handcuffs on me. As I said, I am rather rotund and the handcuffs actually dug into my skin and pushed right against the bone. I stood in front of the judge and said, "This is prisoner abuse". He said, "That will be \$500 for speaking disrespectfully of our police force". I said, "That's not fair". He said, "Five hundred dollars for talking back to the judge" and then he put me into the jail. I said, "This is no real jail. If it was a real jail there would be a colour TV". He said, "Another 500 bucks".

I had to raise \$1,500 for bail to get out of jail which of course my friends helped me to do and I was able to get out of jail. All of these different activities not only raise awareness of the disease but they also raise money in order to promote research.

I have an inclination to say that leukemia awareness month should be tied in with the general cancer awareness in April. That would be my preference.

• (1820)

However, I would have no objection to setting aside a separate month even though we have only 12 months and, as has been mentioned, every month is an awareness month for more than one cause at this stage.

The message I would like to leave is one that has more to do with government involvement than with declaring a month a particular month. We all have to do as much as we can to promote research and development, to educate particularly our young people, and to provide a climate for them that promotes research. Perhaps I should

not say this in the context of this debate but I cannot stay away from it. We need to reduce taxes so that our research scientists and our young people can find greater motivation to stay here and work together to find cures for diseases.

Leukemia is an interesting disease because considerable progress has been made in this area. Perhaps the research in leukemia will eventually be the key that unlocks the door to wider research and gives us more clues on how to attack cancer generally.

I commend the member for bringing forward the motion. Even having this one hour of debate in the House today helps to increase the awareness of people.

There are two kinds of people in our country. Those who have had experience with cancer, perhaps leukemia, are very aware of the disease and the need for research. There are others who fall into the category of "it will not happen to me or to my family". Those are the ones we should target. Those are the ones all of us should help to make more aware. We should appeal to them to work together as Canadians. Whether it be through our tax system or voluntary charitable donations, let us all work together to find a cure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate our colleague from the government majority, the hon. member from Ontario, who I gather from her preliminary remarks is a physician by trade, on her sensitivity to a form of blood cancer that is obviously a very trying disease, which, as you know, affects all too many young people.

Of course, I cannot congratulate her on her preliminary remarks on the clarity bill. She will understand that, as far as that goal is concerned, I do not share her views and do not believe this is a bill we should promote, because we on this side agree it is really undemocratic.

That being said, I do congratulate her wholeheartedly for the sensitivity she has displayed toward the fight against leukemia. We will indeed support her motion, while I realize it is not a votable item. The hon. member has suggested that there are three approaches to overcoming leukemia.

She reminded us that, at the time when she was a medical student in 1974—I was barely a teenager then, as you can imagine—for all intents and purposes, leukemia was a terminal disease with very little hope of remission and with very few drugs available of course.

I believe I am correct in saying today that, while there is still no satisfactory treatment and today still people—again too often children and young people—die from leukemia, there are a number of drugs available and treatment is possible.

I think that the hon. member's motion, which is primarily designed to raise awareness, is also a call for research and for partnership between public funding agencies and the pharmaceutical industry.

• (1825)

I am pleased to tell her that we on this side believe that her call should be heard. I think that research is important and can make a difference. When we talk about the pharmaceutical industry, there are two main industrial clusters, so to speak. There is the generic drug industry, which is based mainly in Ontario, in the Toronto and Mississauga area, and the brand name drug industry, based in Quebec.

We must bear in mind that the fight against leukemia or cancer in general cannot be won without co-ordinating the research effort.

I met recently with representatives of the association formerly known as PMAC, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada, whose name has been changed to Rx & D. Under this new designation is a long-established group of about forty companies essentially involved in producing brand name drugs.

The brand name drug industry told us that a research cycle of more than 10 years may have elapsed between the time a molecule is isolated for research and the time a drug becomes available on the consumer market. Between the time a molecule is isolated for research and the time the drug becomes commercially available, an investment of nearly \$500 million is required.

We are talking about huge investments, so much so that the legislator—I think we have to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto Ménard what is Ménard's—patent protection was initiated under the Progressive Conservative government.

If I am not mistaken, it was introduced in 1991 or 1992, under Bill C-22. The legislator found it necessary at the time to provide some form of protection and incentive to research, because to this day—and let us never forget it—it is our best and most legitimate hope to overcome disease, particularly debilitating diseases like leukemia.

Research has to remain our greatest hope. It is important to recall that, with the motion tabled by our colleague, a member from Ontario and a physician by trade, we as parliamentarians must implement the most effective, forward-looking and discerning tools to make research possible.

I have just reviewed actions taken under the Mulroney government, which my seatmate, the hon. member for Chicoutimi, was part of in the good as well as the bad times. Of course, he is convinced that the good times were more important than the more difficult ones, which is totally his right.

Private Members' Business

We are in favour of this motion. We agree that awareness is required. This brings me to the third aspect raised by our colleague, namely, support for caregivers.

When someone in our family has an illness, this is not an isolated situation which has no effect on our ability to cope. Awareness means understanding what the illness is, understanding what medications are available, understanding that prophylaxis is available, but it also means adopting a certain behaviour when we know people with leukemia.

• (1830)

Both members who spoke before me, the motion's sponsor and our colleague from the Reform Party who alluded with great humour to his stoutness—which, I must tell him, makes him very likeable and very endearing to us—referred to the importance of showing solidarity as caregivers. Awareness also means providing information on what type of behaviour to adopt.

I thank our colleague for her motion. We are showing solidarity. If the motion had been deemed votable, we would have voted for it as a group, as we must do in some circumstances.

[English]

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the motion to recognize the month of June as leukemia awareness month as this would increase our awareness of the disease.

One of the things we need to be aware of is that 2,000 people will die from this disease. We also need to know what causes the disease and why it affects some people but not others. What are the implications concerning our environment? What are the environmental factors that may or may not play a part in this disease? What are the genetic factors?

There is so much to know but so little that people in general do know about this disease because of their busy lives. They only find out about it if someone they know and love is suffering from the disease, but they do not know enough to be of any help.

We have to be aware of what we can do as a community and what we can provide in terms of medicare and home care. We need good hospitals and good research.

The whole cycle of research that was just described may take a long time. If we want to decrease the number of deaths from this disease we must always be proactive and one step ahead. We want to prevent those 2,000 deaths as a country, but more importantly, the deaths that each family may have to face.

The idea of cancer alone induces fear in people. The more awareness we can bring to them, the more we can help our

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communities. Most people think of cancer as a deadly disease. Hopefully, as we move further along in our research, there will be far fewer deaths and far fewer children being taken away from their families and out of our lives.

The fact that this disease affects so many children and is the leading cause of death in children is enough for us to single it out as being a disease for which people need to develop an awareness. As a mother of four children and having seen families lose their children, it is our deepest fear that our children will die ahead of us. I do not know how a family would cope with that. The loss of a child to a family and to a community makes us want to take the extra effort to become more aware of this disease and to bring the issue forward.

Last year a man in our community died. A lot of treatment cannot be done in the north so people have to fly out, which is quite a difficult endeavour in itself. It means the waiting period can be far longer for people in the north than for people who are in a community where treatment can be easily accessed. The man who died had left the Yukon to undergo a bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately, it was too late for Ben Sheardown.

I will say a few words about Ben because he was an integral part of our community. He was a coach, an athlete, a teacher, a counsellor, a husband and a father. To every person he came into contact with, he was far more than that. Anyone who met him could not help but be inspired by his kindness, his passion and his ferocious nature.

Anyone who had the chance to meet him in the last month of his life knew immediately how privileged they were. He went through incredible suffering with tremendous grace and almost transcended the daily world that we live in. I think he attained a different spiritual level, one which we all would like to bring to our lives.

• (1835)

The worst part is that he left us too soon. He still had so much of himself to give to his children, his wife and his community. He was someone I had known throughout my whole life as a teacher, a neighbour and a friend. He is still deeply missed. If we could have prevented his death or given him even a few more years of life we would have all benefited.

Just last month I had to say goodbye to a friend who died of leukemia. She did not even have a chance for a bone marrow transplant. Her name was Effie Croft and she had started a small community newspaper in Faro. She found out quite late that she had the disease because she would never have imagined herself sick no matter how tired she was. She was a counsellor, but more than anything she brought an incredible joy to the people around her. Even through the time of her whole town's decamping and

moving away when the mine closed she was a real source of energy and great love to her town.

When people found out how sick Ben was with leukemia and that they could possibly donate bone marrow, there was a huge outpouring of people wanting to do that. As was described by the member of parliament who is also a doctor, it is a long process and it is not easy to find a match. People were not aware that if they had made themselves available to a donor bank beforehand they could have helped. It could have been easily accessible to Ben and anyone else who might need a bone marrow transplant.

There is another thing about organ donations, bone marrow donations or donations of whatever piece of our bodies we are able to donate. People need to know that in the case of donating bone marrow we do not have to die to do it. There is a lot of fear for people trying to come to grips with what it means to be a donor, with what it means to be able to help each other. Canada does not have a good record for doing that, but I know people would do it if they were only aware of how to do it. Then they would be more than generous in any way they could to help their fellow citizens.

Sometimes when we talk about diseases we talk about them in terms of numbers and names instead of in terms of individuals, children, friends, parents, sisters and the other people they affect. If we appeal to the better instincts of our friends and neighbours in our communities I know they would respond.

This idea deserves action. We can do no wrong by tightening the awareness of this terrible disease. If we help just one family it would be worth it, but I think this awareness will help our whole country.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter the debate on what is a great motion moved by the member for St. Paul's who is a physician and is probably very aware of this troublesome disease.

Approximately 3,300 people will be diagnosed this year with leukemia and 2,100 will die from it. This is a sad reality but it certainly hits home in a lot of families in Canada. Many families are probably saying goodbye to loved ones who are leaving us because of this disease.

We must continue working together in partnership to develop cures for diseases such as this one. It is not the only one. Before my life in politics I was very involved in the community. I started the Alzheimer's society in my region, another disease that is hitting a lot of people.

Leukemia also hits young people as well. The cure rate for young people today is 65% but 35% do not make it. This is very difficult especially for parents. It is important to make sure Canadians are aware of what is going on here and to make sure that everything possible is being done.

• (1840)

[Translation]

It is therefore important to raise the awareness of this disease, which takes lives every single day across Canada, from coast to coast. Indeed, 35% of children with leukemia will not make it. They will die.

As parents, it is very hard to see these sick children on television or when visiting a hospital.

I want to thank the member for St. Paul's for taking the initiative of raising this very important issue in the House. I would also like to thank all the volunteers who work day and night from coast to coast and who, as such, are not paid of course. In my riding, in the Campbellton area, I went to visit a prison with them to help raise money for cancer. These people are always there, without fail. A knock on the door and they are ready to help fight this disease.

Shortly before Christmas, our family was stricken, not by cancer, but by heart disease. My father died in October 1999; it has been extremely hard on all of us. But I am thinking about a family in the Dalhousie area, in Restigouche, the Perry family, whose 18 year old son has leukemia.

[English]

There is no warning. It can hit very quickly. That was exactly what happened to the Perry family, a young family in Dalhousie, New Brunswick. One of the children was diagnosed with leukemia just before Christmas. He is 18 years old and is receiving treatment as we speak. If he is listening today I want to tell him, on behalf of the House, not to lose faith. There is always hope. Sixty-five per cent of people make it through. We are all thinking of him and his family. Hopefully, he will get through as well.

[Translation]

Once again, I would like to thank the hon. member for St. Paul's and all the volunteers. We are still asking the government for its partnership and effort to develop the drugs we need.

Last week, health ministers and premiers met in Quebec City and asked for more money for health care. We need money for development, but we also need money to care for the sick. We really need to put the emphasis on health. I think this is a consensus throughout Canada.

The ball is in the government's court. We need to put pressure on the finance minister and the Prime Minister to put more money in health care, because we know health is a priority in Canada.

I congratulate once more the member opposite. We will gladly support this motion.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Joe Fontana (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the member, the good doctor from St. Paul's. I rise today to add my support to a very worthwhile motion to declare the month of June as leukemia awareness month.

As the son of a leukemia survivor, I know how important this motion is. It really touches my heart. My mother, thank God, has been in remission for six years. Not only did it take the good efforts of the medical fraternity and the research which has been done so far on leukemia, but also the caregivers and the families, which provided the strength and the love that allowed my mother to survive. The quality of life may not be perfect, but it is a very good life and one that we would hope for every person who has been stricken with leukemia.

• (1845)

Leukemia affects all ages, both sexes and every background. Every 10 minutes another child or adult dies from leukemia or a related cancer. In 1999, as we have already heard, 3,000 Canadians were diagnosed with leukemia and 2,100 died of this devastating disease. Leukemia is the number one killer of children. Leukemia is a destroyer of families and as we have heard a devastator of dreams.

Despite these staggering odds, as the doctor, the member for St. Paul's, and others have said, we are winning important battles in the fight to save lives. With the best treatment 73% of our children with childhood leukemia will now survive. That is a great step forward. The overall survival rates have doubled in the last 30 years.

These are important victories with human faces. Yet we must continue to work to win the war. Yes, we all agree that medical research is an important component. We must provide Canada's researchers with the support and the financial resources they need, as well as the opportunity to be able to research in Canada and stop this terrible disease.

We must raise public awareness. This is what June is all about. It is to make it possible for people to become aware of those around them who have leukemia and to make it possible for the volunteer sector to raise the moneys along with governments to be able to continue their fine work on research. It is also an opportunity to thank those men and women in the hospitals and in the homes who provide the love, nurturing and caring that are important parts of the well-being of people.

While medicine is very important, caring and compassion are also important. I must give accolades to those people, for example, Dr. Barr at University Hospital in London, Ontario, and those men and women who looked after my mother and made it possible for her to continue, as so many hundreds and thousands of people work very hard to do.

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This motion is essential so that the public understands and knows our commitment as a parliament to the eradication of leukemia and that we will continue to work with all our partners in our communities to ensure that we can stop this disease and make it possible for all those people to dream the possible dream and not to have to suffer the affliction of leukemia.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion brought forward by the member for St. Paul's asking the government to recognize the month of June as Leukemia Awareness Month. I congratulate her as well as all the other members from the various parties who were involved in this initiative.

All over Canada, the public supports the campaign that was launched to find ways of preventing or treating leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, Hodgkin's disease and other blood diseases.

Leukemia affects people of all ages, of both sexes and from all backgrounds. It was described at length by several of my colleagues who have spoken on this issue during the last hour. I would add one fact: in Canada, every ten minutes, a child or an adult dies from leukemia or a related form of cancer.

[*English*]

In their homes and communities all across the country thousands of Canadians are living with leukemia and many Canadians are working to provide support and comfort to those affected by these forms of cancer.

Recognizing the month of June as leukemia awareness month will help to acknowledge the important contributions of families, health professionals, researchers, educators and the thousands of other Canadians whose every day efforts help to reduce the incidence and impact of this disease.

Closely related to program delivery is public information and education. Voluntary groups have the unique ability to reach deep into society to ensure that the public as a whole knows about particular services that might benefit them.

• (1850)

Now the government has the opportunity to help with this public awareness campaign by recognizing June as leukemia awareness month. Volunteers by the hundreds are coming forward to help with every kind of fundraising event, and great progress is being made.

[*Translation*]

Lives are saved and treatments are improved while researchers are working to find a permanent cure.

The volunteer sector plays a crucial role in the pursuit of these objectives for Canadians and in the efforts to maintain a high

quality of life. The volunteer sector has become the third pillar of Canadian society, with the public sector and the private sector, helping to make Canada a country that is more humanitarian, more prosperous and more attentive to the needs of others.

Volunteers can help in many ways each year, and the volunteers with the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada collect over \$3 million for research, research that saves lives.

Today, 70% of children affected are cured, and over 50% of adults with the disease go into remission for five years or more, thanks to all these efforts.

Other volunteers help people with leukemia by giving them psychological support or temporarily relieving those caring for them. Canadians do their part, but this deadly and challenging disease continues to take lives, and every life lost is a tragedy.

This is why we must all support research for a cure and support this motion, which calls on the government to make June Leukemia Awareness Month.

[*English*]

Canadians want all levels of government to work collaboratively, to work in partnership to address this important need. Canadians support the investment that the federal government has made in research, education and funding of the health care system.

We have done much but more could be done. Through the creation and funding of Canadian institutes on health research, through promotion and prevention campaigns, and through investment in the Canadian health and social transfer we will all be providing much needed assistance to Canadians living with and supporting those with leukemia.

Recognizing the month of June as leukemia awareness month will also recognize the work of the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada, established in 1955 as a non-profit organization.

[*Translation*]

Recognizing the month of June as Leukemia Awareness Month will give us an opportunity to remember all those who fell victim to leukemia and other forms of blood cancer, and to celebrate the survival of an increasingly larger number of patients.

It will also be an opportunity to develop the public's awareness of bone marrow transplants and of the importance of providing psychological support to children, parents and families affected by leukemia.

It will be an opportunity to talk to Canadians about health and the prevention of disease, and to stress to them the importance of health care and wellness services.

This is why, and I will conclude with this, I am very pleased to see that members from all opposition parties have rallied and

Private Members' Business

shown enthusiastic support for this motion by the hon. member for St. Paul's to designate the month of June as Leukemia Awareness Month.

[*English*]

I would encourage all members to support the motion raised to recognize the month of June as leukemia awareness month.

The Deputy Speaker: There is one minute left in the time permitted. We will give the time to the hon. member for St. Paul's who, if she speaks now, will close the debate.

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their remarks of support. I celebrate the Canadians who are every day fighting this disease in their personal lives, the researchers who are fighting for an ultimate cure, and the volunteers who are already making June leukemia awareness month.

There are many heroes in this regard. There are some in terms of the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada which has now developed a fantastic website at www.leukemia.ca. In another medium, Peter Kent and Ken Ryan of Global Television did those fabulous personal spots.

• (1855)

I cannot close this debate without thinking again of my friend and my husband's best friend, Phillip Borsos, the gifted filmmaker, who as a passionate Canadian insisted on excellence and would

never settle for less. I do not think any of us in this Chamber will settle until we have a cure for this dreaded disease. I thank everyone who supports us in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, my colleague, the member for Mercier, planned to take part in the adjournment proceedings this evening. Events beyond her control have prevented her from being with us this evening.

Would it be possible to obtain the consent of the House to postpone her speech until a later date, following negotiation with the clerks?

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to postpone the adjournment proceedings planned for this evening?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.57 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.57 p.m.)

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

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