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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Friday, March 1, 1996**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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## CORRIGENDA

### OFFICIAL REPORT

On page 94 of Hansard, February 29, 1996, under the heading “Criminal Code”, the first sentence should have read:

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-203, an act to amend the Criminal Code (criminal organization).

On page 94 of Hansard, February 29, 1996, under the heading “Canada Business Corporations Act”, the first sentence should have read:

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.)** move for leave to introduce Bill C-204, and act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act (qualifications of directors).

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 1, 1996

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, in order to facilitate the conduct of the business of the House in the Second Session of the Thirty-fifth Parliament, this House order as follows:

That, during the first thirty sitting days of the Second Session of the Thirty-fifth Parliament, whenever a Minister of the Crown, when proposing a motion for first reading of a bill states that the said bill is in the same form as a Government bill was at the time of prorogation of the First Session, and, whenever any Private Member, when proposing a motion for first reading of a public bill states that the said bill is in the same form as a private member's public bill that he or she introduced in the First Session, if the Speaker is satisfied that the said bill is in the same form as at prorogation, the said bill shall be deemed to have been considered and approved at all stages completed at the time of prorogation and shall stand, if necessary, on the Order Paper, or, as the case may be, referred to committee, at the same stage and under the same legislative procedural process at which it stood at the time of prorogation;

Provided that any evidence adduced by any committee with regard to any bill in the First Session of the Thirty-fifth Parliament that is affected by this Order shall be deemed to have been laid upon the Table, and, as the case may be, referred to the appropriate committee;

Provided that, if this Order is applied to any bill, the consideration of which had been completed in the House of Commons, but which was before the Senate at the time of prorogation, the said bill shall be deemed to have been introduced, completed at all stages and passed by the House of Commons in the present session; and

That, for the remainder of the calendar year 1996, Standing Order 81 shall be amended as follows:

1. Section (4) is suspended and the following substituted therefor:

(4) The Main Estimates for the year ending March 31, 1997 shall stand referred to standing committees up to and including June 21, 1996. Each such committee shall consider and shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported the same to the House not later than the said date, provided that:

(a) not later than the third sitting day prior to June 21, 1996, the Leader of the Opposition may give notice during the time specified in Standing Order 54 of a motion to extend consideration of the main estimates of a named department or agency and the said motion shall be deemed adopted when called on "Motions" on the last sitting day prior to June 21, 1996;

(b) on the sitting day immediately preceding the first allotted day in the supply period ending December 10, 1996, but, in any case not later than ten sitting days following the day on which any motion made pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section is adopted, and not later than the ordinary time of daily adjournment, the said committee shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the main estimates of the said department or agency; and

(c) if the committee shall make a report, the Chairman or a member of the committee acting for the Chairman may so indicate, on a point of order, prior to the hours indicated in paragraph (b) of this section, and the House shall immediately revert to "Presenting Reports from Committees" for the purpose of receiving the said report.

2. Section 14(a) shall be suspended and the following substituted therefor:

(14)(a) Forty-eight hours' written notice shall be given of motions to concur in interim supply, main estimates, supplementary or final estimates, to restore or reinstate any item in the estimates. Twenty-four hours' written notice shall be given of an opposition motion on an allotted day or of a notice to oppose any item in the estimates, provided that for the consideration of the Main Estimates for the year ending March 31, 1997, forty-eight hours' notice shall be given of a notice to oppose any item in the said estimates.

3. Section (17) is amended by inserting, immediately after the word "ending", the words "June 23".

4. Section (18) is amended by deleting the words "On the last allotted day in the period ending June 23" and by substituting therefor the words "On the first allotted day in the period ending December 10";

He said: Mr. Speaker, this motion is intended to provide a framework for the effective management of the business of the House at the beginning of this new session of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

This motion is intended to provide a framework for the effective management of the business of the House.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Our standing orders are designed to provide a framework for the normal operation of the House of Commons on an annual calendar without regard for the periodic disruptions of that calendar which may be caused by dissolutions, prorogations or emergency situations. Whenever that calendar has been interrupted and for whatever reason, the practice has been for the House to amend its standing orders or to pass a special order to deal with the situation in question.

Therefore the government is placing before the House a motion for a special order to deal with the current situation. We are not proposing permanent amendments to the standing orders at this time. Instead we are proceeding in a manner which we view as being similar to but more constructive than that used in the past to deal with a situation that has occurred on a number of occasions previously and will no doubt recur many times in the future.

For that reason there may appear to be similarities between some of the solutions we are putting forward in this motion and some of the actions of a previous government in a previous Parliament which some members on this side of the House as well as others criticized at the time. I submit there are fundamental differences between our proposals now and those put forward in 1991.

On that occasion the government of the day dealt only with specified government bills at specified stages. There was no attempt to provide a system that would apply equally to private members' business as well as government bills and the motion attempted to reinstate a limited number of government bills only in one fell swoop. Of course this is not what is being done with this motion.

• (1005 )

If the procedure we are proposing for the special order operates effectively, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs may want to recommend some permanent revisions to the standing orders along the lines of our proposed special order. Of course this is for the committee to consider.

The rules governing the business of supply require that the main estimates, that is the spending proposals of the various departments and agencies, be tabled and referred to the several standing committees by March 1 and reported by May 31 in order to be passed before the summer adjournment. Also, in order to facilitate government operations in the first three months of the fiscal year, an interim supply bill is passed in March.

With the opening of the new session, if this motion were not adopted, under the regular rules in our standing orders governing the opening of a new session, the standing committees of the House need not be organized before mid March at the earliest. This means that if the normal procedure were followed, the time available to

study the main estimates could quite properly be truncated, be cut by 20 per cent or more. In addition the normal rules, if this motion were not adopted, would require the tabling of the main estimates before the budget.

The budget when presented could alter the fiscal needs of the government as initially reflected in the estimates. Therefore this would make the estimates a less reliable instrument for Parliament's scrutiny of government expenditure.

It is therefore proposed in this motion that for the year 1996 only, the supply cycle be altered to remove the referral deadline of March 1 and the report deadline of May 31 and to provide a new report deadline of June 21, the day the House adjourns for the summer.

The House will be asked to give final approval to the main estimates in September or October rather than in June. This will replace the three weeks of what I might call dead committee time in March with three weeks of live committee time in June. In other words, the full period of time that would have been available to standing committees to study estimates would be restored to them through this motion. In order to facilitate this, in March the House will be asked for seven months rather than three months interim supply.

Members will recognize that the government could well have ignored this situation. We could have presented the main estimates sometime this week before the budget and met the March 1 deadline for their referral to the standing committees. Under the rules, even though these committees would not have been able to meet before the middle of March, they still would have been compelled to report the estimates to the House by May 31.

The government does not view that as a desirable course at all. The work of standing committees on the expenditure process is an important element in our approach to the revitalization of Parliament. Therefore, we are not prepared to take advantage of a quirk in the rules to deprive members of upward of 20 per cent of the time normally allotted to this process.

We believe that the proposed temporary supply calendar for 1996 as set out in the motion now before the House will work to the advantage of members on all sides of the House and to the public at large.

In a similar vein, we believe that the provision of a procedure for members to reinstate bills on which progress had been made in the previous session to the stages which they had reached at the time of prorogation should be viewed as a progressive and constructive step.

It is important to note, as I have said on another occasion, an initiative in this regard was actually taken last autumn by the House leader of the Reform Party, the hon. member for Lethbridge. At

that time he put down a notice of motion calling for private members' bills to be reinstated after a prorogation.

• (1010)

When this motion was chosen as a votable item on the order of precedence, my colleague, the former parliamentary secretary to the House leader, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, privately indicated to him the positive interest in his proposal and our likelihood therefore of offering an amendment to his motion that would treat all bills the same, government bills as well as private members' bills. It seemed to make sense. It seemed to be fair and reasonable. If it was sensible to reinstate private members' bills to where they had left off at the time of prorogation, it was equally sensible to do the same thing for government bills.

Unfortunately, on the day the proposal of the Reform House leader was to be debated, the Reform House leader, the hon. member for Lethbridge, unexpectedly was not present in the House. As a result, under the rules his proposal disappeared from the Order Paper. In effect the government is now picking up the ball where the hon. member for Lethbridge had dropped it last fall.

The motion we have put before the House does not deal with any specific bill. It may well be that some members, whether ministers or private members, have reasons for not reinstating proceedings on their bills that were terminated by prorogation. We are therefore merely providing a procedure to apply equally to ministers and to private members.

Under this procedure, bills on which valuable parliamentary time had been expended in the last session may be proceeded with in the new session without duplication of work and the resulting waste of both time and taxpayers' money. At the time of prorogation 15 government bills and 11 private members' bills had at least been advanced to committee but had not been given royal assent.

There are ample precedents for the House of Commons deeming government bills from previous sessions to have been advanced in new sessions to the stages at which they had expired at prorogation. This has been done in the interest of not wasting parliamentarians' time. It has been done in the interest of not wasting the time of members of the public who otherwise would have to come back to committees to present their views and briefs all over again. It has been done in the interest of not wasting taxpayers' money by repeating exactly the same debate or committee hearings on exactly the same bill.

What is unprecedented in our motion is that we are proposing to give private members exactly the same rights as ministers on this matter. Since taking office in November 1993, this government has acted to enhance the role of the private member especially with regard to private members' public bills.

### *Government Orders*

As far as supporters of this government have been concerned, every vote on a private member's public bill has been a non-whipped, that is, a free vote. It would not therefore be either equitable or consistent with its policy on private member's business for the government to seek authority from the House to reinstate its legislation without also asking the House to grant the same authority to private members. Consequently, for the first time in Canadian parliamentary history, private members' bills will be eligible in a new session to be reinstated to the point they had reached in a previous session.

The proposal in this motion will apply only to bills from the last session in which the House and therefore the public had invested a significant amount of time, namely those bills on which the House had at least taken one more decision in addition to permitting first reading. This would be those bills that had at least been referred to committee, whether before or after second reading. Bills that had merely been introduced but not advanced any further in the last session do not represent any real investment of House time and may simply be reintroduced in the new session in the ordinary fashion.

• (1015)

The procedure will work as follows. During the first 30 sitting days of the new session any minister or private member who introduces a bill precisely the same as a bill in the old session and which had at least been referred to a committee will have the right to request that the new bill be reinstated to the stage at which it had progressed at the time of prorogation.

If the Speaker is satisfied that the bill is precisely in the same form, it shall be ordered reinstated at that stage. This procedure does not oblige a minister or a private member to reintroduce a bill. It merely gives them a new right to do so during a limited period at the beginning of the session.

For the government's part, it has already decided to reintroduce a number of bills under this proposed regime. There will be some bills returned to the committee stage, some resumed at the report stage and some at third reading stage. At least two will, under this special procedure, be deemed by the House to have passed all stages in this session and be sent forthwith to the Senate where they were at the time of prorogation.

Not every minister has reached a final conclusion on this matter, but the list will include Bill C-7 regarding controlled drugs and substances; Bills C-52, C-95 and C-96, reorganizing a number of departments; Bill C-78 respecting witness protection; Bill C-84 respecting regulations; Bill C-88 respecting internal trade; Bill C-94 regarding fuel additives; Bill C-98 concerning oceans; Bill C-100 regarding financial institutions; Bill C-101 respecting transportation; Bill C-106 respecting the Law Reform Commission; Bill C-111 respecting employment insurance.

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This may not be an all inclusive list. Ministers as well as private members will have 30 sitting days to make their final decisions on restoration of bills.

I cannot speak with authority on which private members will reintroduce their measures. At least four of my colleagues on this side of the House have been in communication with my office, demanding the action we are proposing. I hope it is not presumptuous of me to expect members on the other side to be equally committed to their own legislative proposals.

One initiative actually came from the hon. member for Lethbridge. I am looking forward to his thoughts, which I hope will be positive, on our acceptance of what could be argued to have started with his own proposal.

[Translation]

In closing, I think this is a very good motion and I ask the House to support it.

[English]

I commend the motion to the House and I ask for its early approval.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion and especially to present my arguments to someone like you, Mr. Speaker, who has a great deal of experience as both a lawyer and a member of this House. Moreover, you lived through that whole period in 1991 when members of this government were sitting on opposition benches and singing a very different tune.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that it gave you an opportunity to assess the opposition's arguments to the government then in office and today I am sure that they will recognize some of what I will be saying regarding the first motion tabled by the government in this session.

I can tell you that there is nothing reassuring in this motion for the opposition, and more particularly for Canadian democracy. They want us to support the kind of motion presented today as if it were a routine matter.

• (1020)

According to the government House leader, this is a routine motion intended to provide a framework for effective management, as though Parliament did not already have a framework. I am going to show you that Parliament already has a framework, a tradition, which this government wants to bypass this morning by tabling this motion.

This is an exceptional case. On February 2, 1996, the government decided to prorogue Parliament, with full knowledge of the facts, including the consequences of prorogation. Should this motion be adopted today, it will mark the end—and I am weighing

my words carefully—of the value, principles and effect of prorogation in this Parliament.

We should perhaps determine what prorogation means. What is the effect of prorogation? We as members of the House are used to this kind of language; we know what it means. Some people, however, may not know what prorogation means or how it can impact on Parliament.

Since I do not want to quote myself, I will quote law experts, people with a great deal of experience in this area who have written at length on the subject. According to citation 235 in the sixth edition of Beauchesne:

The effect of a prorogation is at once to suspend all business until Parliament shall be summoned again. Not only are the sittings of Parliament at an end, but all proceedings pending at the time are quashed. Every bill must therefore be renewed after a prorogation, as if it were introduced for the first time.

As an effect of prorogation, it is rather important.

In the fourth edition of his book, on pages 102 and 103 of the French version, Bourinot is even more explicit:

The legal effect of a prorogation is to conclude a session; by which all bills and other proceedings of a legislative character—in whatever state they are at the time, are entirely terminated, and must be commenced anew, in the next session, precisely as if they had never been begun.

This is important. At page 137 of his 1993 book entitled *The House of Commons at Work*—you know, the reference material newly elected members are given to acquaint themselves with the operation of this House—your predecessor, the hon. John A. Fraser, whom you knew, says:

Proroguing a session does not dissolve Parliament, but it does have a similar effect—

He is going very far.

—on the business before the House.

He then says:

All current business is abandoned, committees cease their activities, and bills die.

As you can see, over the years, prorogation has always been construed this way. I will come back to 1991 later. For the moment, while Mr. Fraser had decided a certain way in 1991, he took a slightly different stance in his book, in 1993, and I will tell you why in a moment.

Over the years, custom and tradition have shaped the meaning of “prorogation”. We have before us a government that claims to be respectful of the system and is trying, through this motion, to strip a parliamentary principle of any real meaning.

This motion is unacceptable in that it disrespectfully circumvents the established legislative process and raises political interference to new heights.

With this motion, proroguing a session would not mean anything any more, except a chance for the government to pay a visit to the other House, waking up a number of senators who are asleep—that

*Government Orders*

is the bright side—and spend the rest of the day enjoying a big bash at Rideau Hall, at the taxpayers' expense naturally.

The government is trying to make us swallow a principle that is trend setting and unacceptable, under our current system.

• (1025)

When one reads the motion, one realizes that, deny it as they may, it says exactly the same thing as the 1991 motion. Of course, this motion having been moved by the Liberals, it cannot be identical to the one put forward by the Conservatives. But it is identical. In fact, it is just worse.

What does the government motion say? It says, in essence:

That—whenever a minister of the Crown, when proposing a motion for first reading of a bill states that the said bill is in the same form as a government bill at the time of prorogation of the first session—the said bill—shall stand, if necessary, on the Order Paper, or, as the case may be, referred to committee, at the same stage and under the same legislative procedural process at which it stood at the time of prorogation;

Basically, under this motion, while the government may have prorogued the session, there is no actual prorogation. “We can do as we wish, we are in power. So let us go, we are the government”. But the Liberals are doing so in a way that they condemned when they sat on the other side of the House.

If the government wanted to prorogue a session, it had to live with the consequences of its decision. It did not have to prorogue the House. Who calls a prorogation? The Prime Minister. He is the one who decides to prorogue the session or not. He does not have to do it. Why did he do it, knowing full well what the consequences would be? If there is a problem, as the government House leader said earlier in his speech when he stated that this motion seeks to bring a solution to a current problem, that problem was brought about by the Liberals. Must they now invoke their own turpitude to find a solution? I believe the Liberals are responsible for the situation that currently prevails in this House.

I doubt that the legislative agenda for the first session was too heavy, since the issues that we discussed here led us to conclude that the government did not have much to propose. It kept putting off all the important legislation because Quebec was holding a referendum. The government did not want to displease anyone; consequently, it kept putting off the really important bills.

The UI bill was controversial; consequently, the government had to manoeuvre carefully. It postponed introduction of that bill. The result is that the government prorogued Parliament when these bills had not yet been passed. Is that the opposition's fault? Is that the fault of our democratic system? No, it is the Liberals' fault. Why did they choose to go that route?

If this government were serious and had a clear legislative vision, we would not be debating such a motion, because the government would have passed the bills that it deemed important, before deciding to prorogue Parliament. The government's way of doing things makes me wonder.

Could it be that we have in front of us a government that does not know where it is going? I think we can rightly ask ourselves that question. Or could it be that we have in front of us a government that does not care at all about Parliament and would rather run the show—Mr. Speaker, I apologize for using that expression—like an autocrat? This is also a question that we can ask ourselves.

Indeed, acting in this fashion and trying to use some procedural trick that one would expect on the TV show **Les Parlementeries**, so as to circumvent a clear and well established principle, can only be done by a government that rules and manages the country's business with arbitrary and absolute authority. The government claims to know what is best, and that is it. It often displays this attitude, as evidenced by this motion.

I know that, in order to justify such undemocratic behaviour, the government will refer to a so-called precedent dating back to May 29, 1991. I am getting to it now. The government will try to find differences between what was done in 1991 and what is being done now and it will say: “We are not proceeding in the same way. We are much more open. It is much more transparent in this case”. We heard the government House leader earlier.

But let me tell the House: there is no difference. Even if there is, the motion before us today is worse than the one tabled in 1991.

• (1030)

It might be worthwhile reviewing what happened in 1991 for those who are not aware of the details. The motion tabled by the government of the time, the Mulroney Government, was to reinstate six bills that had died on the Order Paper as the result of prorogation.

The government tabled a motion clearly indicating the bills it wanted reinstated, the stages they had reached and at what stages they wanted them to be after the motion was adopted.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you will recall that the Liberals were up in arms over this move by the Conservatives, accusing them of having committed just about every sin in the book, at least every one of the seven deadly sins, and stating that this motion represented a denial of the legislative process of this House. In that instance, however, six very specific bills were involved. The ones they wanted reinstated were listed specifically, whereas this time anybody can get up and say “This bill is at the same stage as it was

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at the end of the session”, and we start up where we left off, as if nothing has happened.

I am going to refer to some portions of the speeches made by the Liberals of the time. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you will find this amusing, because it will bring back to you what those Liberals had to say on an identical motion.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond said: “I contend that the motion is in principle unacceptable in that it seeks to circumvent, indeed to subvert, the normal legislative process of this House. In the past this kind of thing has been done only by unanimous consent. Now the government is seeking to establish an ominous precedent by attempting to force this procedure on the House. This is an offensive and dangerous departure from the practices of all parliamentary bodies and the Chair is, I believe in accordance with Beauchesne’s citation 123.(1) and Standing Order 1, required to refuse to put the motion because of its unprecedented violation of the checks and balances written into the rules governing the normal legislative process.”

That speaker is now a government minister, and I am dying to hear what he has to say. I hope he will rise and say that what his government is doing makes no sense, because the procedure is the same as the one before us today.

Another member who rises frequently in the House, or at least who rose frequently in the House, the member for Kingston and the Islands said: “What is happening today is unprecedented in that the government is moving a motion under Government Orders for debate to reinstate bills in this session. I have searched precedents back to 1938 and did not find one where a motion of this kind was moved for debate. It was always agreed to by unanimous consent. Never before has a government moved to suspend the rules in effect and put bills back into their position at the time of prorogation of a session”.

His comments become even more significant: “If royal prerogative is to mean anything, the prorogation ended those bills. They have to be reinstated in the usual course, but they ought to have been introduced and dealt with as new bills in this session. That is proper procedure in the absence of unanimous consent”.

Further on, to really impress the Speaker at the conclusion of his speech he said: “The government itself exercised its royal prerogative on May 13 to bring this session to an end on May 12. The publication has been made of the Governor General’s proclamation declaring the session at an end. He started it again. It was the government’s decision to do it. It cannot have it both ways and now bring one of these motions to trample on the rights of this House and in effect prevent us from debating these bills”.

Further on, he said: “The government wants to impose a new definition of democracy on Canadians, one of the greatest affronts

to the House in years. It is immoral for the government to introduce this motion. The government is short-circuiting the legislative process to consider five bills. This behaviour is reprehensible. The government knows it. He has not produced a single tittle of evidence to support this gross breach of our practice, and I suggest that it is totally inappropriate”.

• (1035)

I hope that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands will rise in this House to condemn what his government is doing with this motion. It is exactly the same thing. If it was unacceptable in 1991, it is just as unacceptable in 1996. Are there two systems of justice, two ways of proceeding, one when you are in the opposition and one when you are in the government? Is this the Liberal way of doing things?

Another good member, the hon. member for Halifax, said in 1991: “The government should be ashamed. We are wondering today why there was a prorogation”. I am also wondering today. “The House leader is presenting us this pernicious motion, and I emphasize the word—it is the hon. member for Halifax, and not I, who says it—in order to speed up the passage of five bills, in total disregard for the traditions of the House and the British parliamentary procedure and in disregard for the Canadian people”.

I hope that the hon. member for Halifax will rise today to condemn the actions of her government. I hope she will be here to say: “What you are doing makes no sense. I do not want to go back on what I said; what I thought was unacceptable in 1991 I find wrong in 1996”. I hope that she will rise to make that point.

The hon. member for Saint-Léonard is another member who was in the opposition in 1991 and is in the government today. What was he saying regarding this motion? “If the government really intended to examine these bills, it should have done it before the prorogation of the House and that should have been negotiated.” You know, things that can be negotiated before proroguing the House.

Did the government ask us anything to speed up things? No, it can do anything when in power. It can do anything. That at least is what I am led to conclude today.

I see an hon. member, and I will come back to him, because he also made an excellent plea in 1991. Before I do that, I want to mention another member who is now a senator; he was then the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

**An hon. member:** He is sleeping.

**Mr. Bellehumeur:** I do not know whether or not he is sleeping in the other House, but he is not here now.



*Government Orders*

After examining and analyzing the effects of prorogation, he quoted Beauchesne and other legal experts. He came to that conclusion after careful consideration. I will quote from his speech because it deserves to be read, even if it is a little long. I think people have a right to know what today's senator was saying when he was in opposition.

He said this: "I now oppose—being presented with this jumble of legislation, some of which we seriously oppose and some of which we have agreed to. I cannot understand why this government, these government bullies now want to impose their will on the House of Commons through force of numbers".

He went on to say once again: "There are good arguments that the government has no business proceeding as it is doing and that it is contrary to parliamentary reform and all political decency". He concluded by saying: "I think that is bad management, bad policy and, in my opinion, unparliamentary".

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—

**Some hon. members:** Ah, ah!

**An hon. member:** Now we are getting to it.

**Mr. Bellehumeur:** I see that the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is here. I hope he will rise to denounce his government for the way it is proceeding. I am going to tell you what he said in 1991 when he was sitting on our side of the House. You are smiling, Mr. Speaker, because you can surely remember it.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell had carefully reviewed all the consequences of prorogation. He said he feared the kind of precedents such a motion would create, and what it would mean if the Speaker accepted the motion put forward by the Conservative government. He said he was afraid it could resuscitate any bill. I will even give you a specific quote from this great law expert. "Finally, if this precedent is allowed to proceed, then what is next? I ask the question rhetorically. If one can resuscitate five bills with this motion, or four bills, what stops one from resuscitating all legislation from the past?" He even waxed poetic. Indeed, what would keep the government from adopting another motion whereby all bills before the House are deemed to have reached third reading? "What stops us from resuscitating a bill from 1977, saying that that particular bill has now reached third reading, and we are going to vote on it right now? As a matter of fact, we could actually pass a motion stating it has completed third reading debate".

• (1040)

If I interpret his words correctly—because he is so poetical at times that it is difficult to understand what he meant—had the government motion been ruled in order by the Speaker in 1991, the government could have done just about anything thereafter. It

could have taken a bill that died on the Order Paper in 1970, brought it back and considered that the bill was at third reading. "Hey, there. We have decided to pass this bill; we have a majority in this House". That is what he meant.

He went on to say, and this is really good: "What we are in fact doing is amending completely the rules of the House by adopting this motion, were we to do so, or were this motion to be ruled in order". For once, I must say that I agree with him. "The implications of ruling this motion in order would be such that I fear we could render—if a government wanted to, and I am not saying it does—this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant. Render this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant? I hope this rings a bell. I hope that the hon. member will rise in this House and condemn his government's first motion, saying: "Listen, the government made a mistake. We cannot go back on our word. That is the position we took in 1991". I do not know if certain members opposite have Alzheimer's disease, but they seem to have forgotten what they did in the past. I have many more quotes.

**Mr. Milliken:** Great. How interesting.

**Mr. Bellehumeur:** This is interesting, indeed, especially coming from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, whom I quoted earlier and who, at the time, had risen to condemn the Conservative government's motion. I see that he is here and that is listening carefully to what I have to say. He is nodding that it is the case. He agrees with me. I hope that he will rise in this House and muster the courage to condemn his government and say: "Look, we are making a mistake". I hope he does that. I hope he has the decency to do so, because it is indeed a matter of decency.

In 1991, the Liberals were right—yes, you heard me correctly, Mr. Speaker—to be infuriated by the process that the Conservative government was trying to impose in this House. The Liberals were convinced they were right in 1991, and they showed it very clearly to the Speaker. They pleaded their case on several occasions and they voted against the motion. Therefore, if they were right in 1991, how can they now table a motion that is even worse than that of the Conservatives?

Should this motion be adopted, it would have major repercussions on the traditions and practices of this House, but also on the democratic system as a whole, on the values that we Quebecers hold dear and on the values that you, as Canadians, hold dear, and on democracy. Such would be the consequences of adopting the Liberal motion now before us. Let us be clear. Political parties in this House cannot keep changing established practices, setting precedents and doing as they please just because they hold the majority, without jeopardizing democracy. They cannot always bend the rules. Nor should they try to get too much mileage out of some precedents. Speakers in this House may, at times, have made

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mistakes. They may have given too wide an interpretation of certain principles. This is not the way to make law and jurisprudence any better: it only generates anarchy in this House.

• (1045)

The motion before us today is totally unacceptable in terms of its content, form and goal. Let me elaborate on each of these three points.

By its very content, as I have already said, Motion No. 1, the first motion tabled by the government in this session, more or less gives ministers the discretion to rise anytime during the first 30 days of the second session of the 35th Parliament and say "Now, this is such an important a bill that it must be reinstated exactly where it was in the previous session". The motion the government would like to see adopted as the rule for this House confers unwholesome discretionary powers and is unacceptable.

The same applies to its form. They have not even taken the trouble to go into any detail. I have just heard the government leader listing all of the bills that have died on the Order Paper which it would be important to reinstate this session. They cannot be so important as to eradicate all precedent in this House.

Some, no doubt, are more important than others. Where does the government stand with respect to all those bills? What was it up to before prorogation if all those bills were so vital? I believe that the government ought to have shown good faith by making a selection, provided there is any good faith on the other side, but I doubt it. I was trying to comply with the rule of law which states that good faith is to be presumed. If so, I guess there are some four or five bills that are more important and it could have listed them. And even before that, it could have taken the precaution of seeing they were passed before prorogation. But, when one does not know where one is going— We will give the government the benefit of the doubt, but there are four or five bills that could have been specified and that was not done.

The most important point is the objective of the motion, and that is unacceptable. The objective is to block democracy, and to block our growing opposition to certain of those bills. It is to block the opposition taxpayers are organizing against those bills. It is to push through their passage with undue haste. It is to thumb one's nose at tradition. It is to attempt to manipulate public opinion and, particularly, to deprive the members of this House of their right to make decisions on these bills.

We knew that the government, and the Prime Minister in particular, had lost control. We knew that the Prime Minister had lost control of his cabinet, that we have evidence of daily. We knew he had even lost control over his own actions, and today this government wants us to be sucked into the same loss of control, because it has lost control over its legislative agenda through its

own fault. No, that will not do. The official opposition refuses to get on side with the government, refuses to support the government's intent to have this motion adopted.

If we strip prorogation of its meaning and consequences, we pay a price. If, despite all, Mr. Speaker, you decide to allow the government motion and go along with this formula for avoiding the consequences of proroguing a session, I would like to propose an amendment to the government's Motion No. 1. I move, seconded by my colleague for Joliette:

That the motion be amended by adding at the end of the first paragraph, after the word "prorogation", the following:

"except when a Member states on a point of order his or her opposition to the Bill whose reinstatement is being proposed, in which case first reading of the said Bill shall be moved and it shall be debated like any other new measure introduced in the House by the government".

• (1050)

That is the amendment the official opposition proposes.

In closing, I know that common sense, justice and parliamentary fairness will be reflected in your ruling.

As I said at the start of the debate, if you believe in all good conscience that, by making a ruling that could, at first glance, go against the 1991 ruling on a similar motion, be aware that the Supreme Court of Canada in certain instances has felt the need to adjust things to the point of rendering inconsistent decisions.

I think you have the power to do so as well, to make adjustments, to put the pieces of the puzzle back in the right place and to identify and clarify the customs and traditions of this House. I think you also have the right and the obligation to do so, because the government seems to have totally eliminated common sense and fairness from this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I can tell the member and our colleagues that the amendment is in order. The hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley has the floor.

[English]

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, as a new member I had the expectation that when I came to the House with a new government things would be done a little differently from the previous government. It is interesting for me to see not only in this instance but in many others that the present Liberal government and the former Conservative government appear to be the very same thing.

When the members on the government side sat in opposition they were very much against this type of motion. When my hon. colleague from Berthier—Montcalm read from the transcripts of *Hansard* in 1991 he quoted many of these members who were very opposed to this type of motion. It is very interesting to see that with the transfer from opposition to government the Liberals have

changed their stripes and are now the same as the Conservative government before them.

I also find it very interesting that in the last session the government was debating issues that were almost irrelevant to the Canadian public. It was debating whether it should add MMT to gasoline and what the national horse of Canada should be.

If this legislation the government wants to reinstate is so important, why were we not debating it last fall and last spring? This is the same government which last spring let important legislation sit for months and months after passing committee and second reading.

This is the government that sat on legislation and tried to pass it in one week before summer recess. If the government felt its legislation was so important to reinstate it in this session, what was it doing last time other than sitting on its hands?

The lack of serious legislation last session does not justify reinstating it in this session.

• (1055)

I would like to know where all the new government legislation will come from to support the honourable things they will supposedly be doing under the new speech from the throne. When are we to get the new legislation to bring in all of these programs, policies and promises under the new speech from the throne? The government does not have any idea where it is going or how it will get there.

The House leader for the government says we will treat Private Members' Business in the same way; we will be magnanimous and allow Private Members' Business to come forward and be reinstated as well.

I am one of the individuals affected by Private Members' Business. I have Bill C-240 which is supported by hundreds of thousands of Canadians, along with Bill C-226 from the hon. member for York South—Weston. Canadians all across the country support those private members' bills. Let me tell government members, in case they do not know, those two private members' bills have been stuck in committee since December 1994. They have not been dealt with and there has been plenty of opportunity for the government in committee to deal with those private members' bills.

To have the hon. House leader tell me he is being gracious in allowing my private members bill to be dumped into committee for another two years is certainly no encouragement.

If the government is really serious about doing something for private members it would separate Private Members' Business from government legislation, stop controlling private members' legislation and allow it to go through in the manner it should. When private members' bills are passed through the House of Commons at second reading they deserve to be heard equally with any

government bill. I do not think any government should have control over private members' legislation and bury it to the extent it has.

The government is actually showing contempt for Parliament in the way it has treated not only my private member's bill but my colleague's from across the way. These two pieces of legislation have the support of the Canadian public but the government does not have the courage to bring those bills to a vote. It is content to bury them in the committee where it does not have to face the Canadian public and stand up and either support these bills or vote against them and to be seen by the Canadian public to be voting against some very good legislation.

The government tells me and my colleague that it will be gracious and allow our private members' bills to be buried in committee for another two years.

I have had two chairmen of the justice committee assure me over the period of a year and a half that my private member's bill will be dealt with. I have witnesses who have waiting since December 1994 to appear to speak to this bill. To have the government with two chairs of the justice committee making that assurance to me, I will have another chairman of the justice committee making that assurance.

I would like to know whether it is three times lucky or three strikes and you are out. I would like to know if my private member's bill is reinstated whether it will be buried, whether the government will refuse to have the guts and the fortitude to be accountable for supporting legislation that will provide safety to Canadians, that will keep dangerous offenders off the street, that will keep convicted first degree murderers incarcerated for the period of time the courts deem appropriate.

I would like to know whether government members have the courage to show the stripe they wear or whether they will simply be warmed up Conservatives for another two years. I hope that is not the case. I hope members on the other side will listen to some of the comments about how it is just rehashed Conservative government crap and do things a little differently.

**The Speaker:** It being 11 a.m. we will now proceed to Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### JESSICA LYNN PERKINS

**Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the riding of Elgin—Norfolk has a distinctive history. It is the birthplace of Thomas Edison, of Mitch Hepburn a former premier of Ontario, and the world renowned economist John Kenneth Galbraith.

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The city of St. Thomas in my riding has distinguished itself once again by producing another Canadian first. On the morning of January 1, 1996 at one second after midnight, Canada's first baby was born at St. Thomas-Elgin Hospital. Jessica Lynn Perkins is the daughter of Charlene Winkworth and Randall Perkins. Her twin sister Christina was born one minute later. These two girls join a brother and a sister. Jessica shares her record with a baby born in the city of Laval, Quebec.

I congratulate Jessica's parents and welcome her and Christina to a great community.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM**

**Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while hon. members in the other place were relaxing, or even sleeping soundly, during the speech from the throne, workers in my riding of Matapédia-Matane decided to inform this government that they will always be opposed to unemployment insurance reform.

They will never let this government force them onto welfare when it is wasting millions of dollars on a totally obsolete institution. I want to salute them, and I am very proud of them. I hope they will keep up their fight for justice. My thoughts are with them all.

\* \* \*

[English]

**GASOLINE TAX**

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few months since the environment committee and the finance committee recommended a two cent increase in the excise tax on gasoline, Canadians have been signing petitions, writing letters to their MPs and raising a public outcry over the recommendation.

I am shocked to find yet more Liberal hypocrisy on this issue. The government whip when in opposition stated in *Hansard*: "Every budget since this government came to power in 1984—has increased the excise tax on gasoline. This tax alone, with this latest increase, will add \$600 million to the burden my constituents pay".

I am delighted to see his concern. I challenge him and all other Liberal members to demonstrate some backbone and to represent their constituents for a change and to present the petitions they have received opposing the gas tax increase.

\* \* \*

**CANADA PENSION PLAN**

**Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, providing a retirement income support system for Canadians is one of the

greatest achievements of our Liberal government. Canadians across this country value the CPP and are counting on it for their future. In Alberta a recent poll indicates that 57 per cent of Albertans believe that the CPP is an important part of their retirement income, yet many I have spoken with are worried that the rising cost of CPP is placing their pensions at risk.

We heard our Prime Minister commit this government to working with the provinces to preserve the fabric of our social programs, those very same programs that we as Canadians value as our social responsibility one to another no matter where we live in this country.

The CPP belongs to Canadians and they deserve to have a say in its future. That is why our government will be consulting with Canadians in their own communities this spring about how we can sustain the CPP.

You may be sure, Mr. Speaker, that the collective wisdom of the residents of Edmonton East will be part of securing CPP for today's and for future generations of Canadians.

\* \* \*

**HOUSING**

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the need for adequate housing for all Canadians remains a very serious issue. Canada's housing programs provide a source of social stability and economic strength for many individuals.

In my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore and indeed in urban areas across the country, people understand that the government cannot do everything. In a rapidly changing world when we are setting up new forms of federal-provincial partnerships and joint management, we must continue to explore innovative partnerships with private and non-governmental organizations in the creation of housing for those in need.

While being committed to rebuilding Canadian communities through job creation and renewed economic growth, we must look at creative and cost effective ways in which there can be the provision of housing for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

• (1105)

**NAPANEE BEAVER**

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to congratulate a prominent newspaper in my riding of Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

The *Napanee Beaver* is celebrating 125 years of publishing. Recently I had the pleasure of presenting Mrs. Jean Morrison, the owner and publisher of the *Napanee Beaver*, letters of congratula-

tions from our Prime Minister and from Canada's Governor General.

The Napanee *Beaver* has made a significant contribution to the lives of its readers. It has kept the people of the Napanee area informed about the issues that are relevant to our country and our community. Its cartoons have brought smiles to our faces. It has played an important role in the commerce of our area by bringing advertisers and consumers together in its pages. Most important, a free exchange of news and views is fundamental in a democracy.

My best wishes for continued success to the Napanee *Beaver*, 125 years young. Colleagues, please join me in congratulating my local paper and all of the community papers across Canada for the role they play in the democratic process.

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[Translation]

#### REFLOATING THE IRVING WHALE

**Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in February, the Department of the Environment and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans asked for new studies on the *Irving Whale* issue, which could very well challenge the validity of the operation under which the barge is to be refloated.

According to the most conservative estimates, the government's dithering may have cost, for last summer's aborted attempt alone, at least \$12.5 million. So far, not one penny has been recovered from Irving.

Due to the incompetence of some officials and the former environment minister, the *Irving Whale* issue has become an environmental, administrative and financial scandal.

The Bloc Québécois is hoping that the solution chosen by the new ministers in charge will be based on unbiased studies and not on some officials' whims, and that it will take into account the environment, the economy and the health of the people in the Magdalen Islands and Prince Edward Island.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### RICH WINTER

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, character is the single most important defining element of a human being. Character is to do the right thing when no one is looking, to persevere when the going gets tough.

Colleagues, I ask you to join with me in acknowledging Mr. Rich Winter of Edmonton, a man who exemplifies character, a man who

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took on the entire professional hockey establishment to bring to an end an odious era in Canadian hockey history.

In January 1990, Mr. Winter at great personal expense lodged a complaint with the RCMP against Alan Eagleson. Over many of the six years between then and now, Mr. Winter was alone in pursuing the case, fighting the inertia of the entrenched legal, media and hockey worlds.

Today Mr. Eagleson is under U.S. indictment and an extradition request has been made to Canadian justice officials.

Mr. Winter, on behalf of all Canadians, I thank you for your inspiration. I thank you for being an example to all of us to relentlessly pursue our causes. And if the cause is right, then by your example we know that justice will prevail.

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[Translation]

#### NATIONAL UNITY

**Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on October 30, Quebecers voted to stay in Canada. Since then, our government has been delivering on the commitments it made during the referendum campaign. The House of Commons passed one bill recognizing Quebec's distinct character and another one giving a veto to the five regions in Canada.

No later than yesterday, our government reaffirmed its intention of withdrawing, as soon as possible, from manpower training. The Canadian federation is evolving and there are more changes to come.

Our government is confident that its actions will show Quebecers that Canada is their best choice and that it is through unity that we can best express the richness of our diversity.

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[English]

#### SPECIAL WINTER OLYMPICS

**Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Wellington—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to salute a proud group of athletes who recently gathered in Calgary for the Canadian Special Winter Olympics. Between February 12 and 19 special olympians participated in these national games with a spirit of sportsmanship that can serve as an example to all other athletes.

It is my pleasure to congratulate the city of Stratford's floor hockey team for representing the province of Ontario at these national games. I applaud the members of this team for their determination and hard work which allowed them to bring home a bronze medal from Calgary.

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• (1110)

I would also like to recognize Ingrid Newbery, the Ontario special olympics co-ordinator for the Stratford community, whose dedication has allowed many mentally challenged individuals to realize athletic success on a provincial and national level.

Congratulations to each and every athlete who participated in the Calgary games.

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[Translation]

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA**

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues will certainly be happy to learn that the financial help awarded by the Business Development Bank of Canada reached a record level in 1995. The loans granted by the Business Development Bank of Canada reached a total of almost one billion dollars and they helped support investments of \$1.7 billion in businesses borrowing from the bank.

The loans awarded by the Business Development Bank of Canada cost nothing to taxpayers and they lead to the creation of a great number of jobs. In 1995 alone, businesses borrowing from the bank employed 188,000 persons across Canada. Here is another proof that strategies put in place by our government to support small businesses are effective.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last January 24, we were stunned to learn that Mr. Tran Trieu Quan had been condemned to life imprisonment by Vietnamese authorities after a mock trial. How can the foreign affairs minister accept that this Canadian citizen, clearly the victim of a conspiracy, be held prisoner in Vietnam without any action on the part of the Canadian government to get him out of that plight?

We have the right to ask ourselves today if the powerlessness and inertia of our government can be explained by its decision to put financial considerations before human rights. Instead of turning a blind eye to that situation, the foreign affairs minister should prove that Canadian citizenship still means something abroad by carrying out his fundamental duty, that is to protect the interests of Canadians everywhere in the world.

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[English]

**HEALTH CARE**

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech the government shows a commitment to defending publicly funded health care in Canada. It recognizes

that we are faced with increasing costs and increasing demands, but it does not give a single constructive solution on how it is going to save this program. While the government politically postures over defending the Canada Health Act, people are dying while on waiting lists.

We in the Reform Party are committed to ensuring that all Canadians regardless of their income are going to get their health care when they medically need it. We have the solutions and we are willing to share them with the government. I urge the government to take those suggestions and employ them for all Canadians across the country who want their medical care when they need it, not when the government says they need it.

\* \* \*

**GRAMMY AWARDS**

**Mr. Peter Thalheimer (Timmins—Chapleau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today in the House to acknowledge the tremendous achievements of seven Canadian music artists at the American Grammy Awards this past Wednesday.

1995 was obviously a good year for Canadian artists. They accumulated a total of 10 Grammys, making their presence felt in the music industry. Their success testifies to their incredible talent which has not gone unnoticed by North Americans.

The big winner is Ottawa rocker Alanis Morissette with four awards. I am particularly proud of Shania Twain from Timmins who won best country album. Veteran folk singer Joni Mitchell took home two Grammys including best pop album. Rob McConnell took home a jazz Grammy. Charles Dutoit and the Montreal Symphony claimed a Grammy and Toronto composer Rob Bowman also left with one.

I join with the House to congratulate all the Canadian winners on their success at the Grammys. Next week watch Canadian artists for similar success at the Junos.

**The Speaker:** As I mentioned yesterday my dear colleague, perhaps you would send an invitation or acknowledge to our Canadians that we would like to present them here in the House of Commons. I make that comment on behalf of all members.

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• (1115)

**BANK PROFITS**

**Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, two of Canada's big banks just announced the highest quarter profits in their history, putting them on track to break last year's record earnings. Meanwhile, automatic teller machines are replacing taxpaying workers by the thousands and the banks find new ways to pile on service charges. There were \$5.2 billion dollars in profits for the five big banks last year.

I urge the Minister of Finance to continue with the temporary capital tax of 12 per cent he announced in the 1995 budget which is slated to expire this October or move to a bank profit tax. Life insurance companies already pay an additional capital tax, why not the banks?

I am confident that a majority of Canadians would support this measure with surging bank profits in tough times.

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#### NATIONAL UNITY ESSAY CONTEST

**Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the outstanding contributions of the high school students in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka.

In January I initiated a national unity essay contest at all of the high schools in my riding. I asked students to provide me with their ideas about how Canada could achieve long term national unity. I wanted to encourage our riding's youth to put their thoughts on paper and to commit themselves to working together with their peers to promote unity and pride in Canada.

Our students' responses are a tribute to the sincerity and depth of these young people. I have received many terrific essays and ideas.

Most encouraging of all is the strength of conviction I feel in these students' writings. They believe in their country. They believe in a united Canada from coast to coast to coast. They believe in what we share as Canadians and are committed to preserving it.

These students are our future and they are prepared to and capable of accepting the challenge that is Canada.

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#### RICHMOND CONSTITUENCY

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, as Reform's foreign affairs critic one of the responsibilities I have is to keep track of the MP for Richmond who is the Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific. Little did I expect however that in my role I would be asked by so many of his constituents to chide him for not representing their views in Ottawa. But since they have asked, why not?

Recently the MP for Richmond was told in no uncertain terms at a town hall meeting that he should vote against the Liberal disunity package but he refused to listen. Instead of representing his constituents, he intentionally voted against them in this House.

In the *Vancouver Sun* he was quoted as saying: "Canada has to come first. B.C. comes second. And then the opinion of my constituents—comes third". This is an elitist political code that really means: the party comes first, the Prime Minister comes second and the people come last. Shame on the MP for Richmond. He should ask Kim Campbell.

#### Oral Questions

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

#### PARTITION

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the *Vancouver Sun* reported the words of one of the Prime Minister's principal advisers, and I quote:

[English]

"We believe it is possible to act to avert another referendum". "Quebecers are coming to realize all the disruption, tension and instability it will cause". "That was the beauty of the issue of partition".

[Translation]

Would the Deputy Prime Minister confirm the Prime Minister's adviser's statement that the government itself fanned the flame and willingly encouraged the separatist movement through its actions with the aim of intimidating the people of Quebec?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** No, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the Deputy Prime Minister may well not have read either the papers or the statements by her colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs.

In the light of the remarks by the Prime Minister's adviser, could the Deputy Prime Minister reassure the House and tell us that the federal government has no intention of using its powers of disallowance and reservation against a bill that would permit Quebec to attain sovereignty?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by the hon. member's criticism of our desire to work in partnership. We heard the premier of Quebec shortly after he was sworn in talk of working in partnership.

Now, we have an opening offer on the table, and I hope the federal Leader of the Opposition will listen to the premier of Quebec.

• (1120)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we always have the feeling we are living on another planet when the Deputy Prime Minister responds to our questions. We did not criticize the desire to work in partnership. I will send you the question afterwards. There will be other questions on this very thing a bit later. You should listen to questions from time to time, perhaps we would get somewhat coherent answers. I realize this is asking a lot, Mr. Speaker.

*Oral Questions*

I will take it slower. Would the Deputy Prime Minister, the member for Hamilton East, seated over there, kindly tell us whether the government has shelved Stéphane Dion's plan B, among others, and will stop once and for all intimidating the people of Quebec by dubious means? Is that clear?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we support the remarks by the premier of Quebec about his willingness to set the issue of the referendum aside in order to work on Quebec's economy. We are following the advice of the premier of Quebec, because we on this side of the House want economic growth for Montreal, Quebec City and Canada.

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**SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE DAY**

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The heritage minister and her government are inviting Canadians to mark the 30th, 31st and 32nd anniversaries of the flag with exuberance and enthusiasm, since the "One in a million" flag campaign will last until next year. In the same breath, the heritage minister is inviting Canadians to celebrate Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day.

How can the heritage minister invite Canadians to celebrate Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, when her own government and those of several English speaking provinces blithely flout the rights of francophones recognized in the Constitution and the Official Languages Act?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am merely following the advice of the Bloc's designated critic on official languages, who said that there was nothing wrong with celebrating Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day elsewhere.

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the Commissioner of Official Languages states that federal employment centres in Ontario effectively steer francophones toward courses taught in English, what is the heritage minister waiting for to denounce unequivocally this measure to assimilate francophones?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I suggested yesterday in reply to the throne speech that Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day should be celebrated across the country, it was precisely to recognize the fact that Saint John the Baptist is the patron saint of all French-Canadians. It is Quebec's national holiday as well as a day of celebration for all Canadians who want to understand and associate themselves with the French fact in our country.

I invite the hon. member across the way to visit Hamilton in my riding on June 24 and I hope that she will do so, because I can assure her that, if the French community in my riding is celebrating Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day this year—as it has done for many years—it is precisely because we want to share in the pride of being French-Canadian here in this country.

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[English]

**HAITI**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, two days ago in the House the government promised that before we take on a Haiti mission it would "get a better handle on costs" because they could easily spiral out of control. Yesterday the Minister of Foreign Affairs bailed out the United Nations' mission with a blank cheque signed by the Canadian taxpayers.

● (1125)

The Canadian people would like to know how the government is going to control costs when there is no information on the mission? How is the minister going to control these costs, as was promised in the House, when we do not have a clear mandate or the costs? I would like the minister to tell us how this is going to be controlled.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as often happens, the Reform Party gets it wrong. The real importance of the decision that we took last night is that Canada has made a major contribution to secure democracy in Haiti, to ensure the United Nations is able to provide an effective international presence to support the people there and to ensure that once again Canada is able to exercise real leadership.

As I said Wednesday night, and I believe the hon. member was in the House at that time, it was our initiative that broke the stalemate and allowed the United Nations security council late last night to take the decision that would allow us to go into Haiti with a supplementary force and therefore maintain the evolution toward democracy.

I want to assure all members of the House that the commitment we are making is totally and completely within the budget reference levels of the Department of National Defence. There is no extra money beyond what we are asking. It is totally within the peacekeeping budget that the Government of Canada has set aside. We think that peacekeeping is a priority, unlike the hon. member opposite.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Reform members are also concerned about democracy, the spreading of democracy and the people in Haiti. We also believe that peacekeeping is a valuable mission for Canadians and Canadians are behind it.



*Oral Questions*

However, there has to be a plan. How can the government know it is within the budget if it does not have a plan? In 1915 the Americans went into Haiti to develop democracy. They left 20 years later and the infrastructure was not there. The infrastructure is not there now and yet we are going to build this infrastructure in four months and return democracy to this country.

Does the UN or Canada have plans to bring about this miracle of rebuilding Haiti in a four-month period?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the critic for foreign affairs, the hon. member would be well advised to actually read what the plan is. The plan was tabled on February 14 by the Secretary-General where he set out on several pages the specific mandate for the extension of the United Nations force. That would enable the Haitian government that has gone through a very successful democratic election and now taken office to continue in the development of its own police forces with the backup and support of the international force to ensure that there is a proper stabilization during that period of time.

I would be quite glad, at the request of the hon. member, to send him a copy of the Secretary-General's report to the council. That is the exact mandate that we are working on and the plan that we have. That is the kind of arrangement we have made with the UN.

What is most important, because of our intervention on behalf of Canadians and on behalf of everybody else, is that we were able to break a deadlock to ensure that the United Nations was able to continue its presence.

From the debates last night, I would like to take one comment at random from the ambassador of the United Kingdom speaking to the security council. He said: "We pay the warmest tribute to the Government of Canada for the lead it has taken in making the union's continuation possible. It is a source of great satisfaction to my delegation. The United Nations will now be able to continue its mission in this stabilization phase". Due to Canada, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I do have a copy of that UN document and have read it carefully. Basically we are going from 6,000 American troops holding the big stick to 2,000 UN-Canadian troops now trying to deliver democracy. We have done the Americans a big favour because Mr. Clinton promised to be out of Haiti within or by the end of February.

I would like to ask the foreign affairs minister why he will not go along with or use this favour in negotiating better conditions for Canadians and get them to not enforce the Helms-Burton bill as it relates to the many jobs that Canada may potentially lose?

• (1130)

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really disagree with the fundamental premise of the hon. member's question.

We are not doing the Americans a favour. We are contributing to the United Nations. We are contributing to the democratic development in Haiti. We are helping a poor country that was under a dictatorship for many years to regain the opportunity for its people to choose their own lives, to have economic development. That is what we are in there for, not to do people favours.

Unlike the Reform critic for foreign affairs, I think that much more to the point is the comment made in debate on Wednesday night by his colleague, the member for Swift Current—Maple Creek, when he said: "Besides being in our national interest, there is a certain moral imperative for our continued presence in that unhappy country to preserve life and to provide humanitarian assistance".

That is the real spirit of what we have done. It was expressed by the member from Swift Current.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

In the Liberal government's speech from the throne, only one short paragraph is devoted to personal security. There is one short sentence, at the very end of this paragraph, stating that: "Criminal procedure will be reformed to better serve victims of crime". No concrete measure was put forward regarding the security of individuals. There is no clear indication of genuine concern on the part of the government either. In a word, what we have here is seven or eight lines of lip service.

What positive steps, if any, does the minister intend to take to better serve the victims of crime?

[*English*]

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my hon. friend.

I will point to just two measures which will be very important in this regard. We are working on legislation to extend the legislation we passed in the last session regarding the use of DNA evidence. We are working on measures to have a national DNA data bank to make it more effective with respect to the use of such evidence.

Together with the Minister of Justice, I intend to proceed with legislation to give the public more effective protection from high

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risk violent offenders. I hope I will have the support of my hon. friend and his party when these measures are presented to the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on the same issue falling under the minister's responsibility, what possible courses of action is the minister contemplating to resolve the problem of prison overcrowding without jeopardizing at the same time the safety of the public?

[*English*]

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again I thank my hon. friend for raising an important point.

The answer to the question will be longer than is permitted in question period. We are working on measures in consultation with the provinces and territories which will have as a foundation the protection of the public, while at the same time focusing on high risk dangerous offenders and finding alternate means for those who are not in that category; thus ensuring protection of the public while saving taxpayers' money.

Again, when we bring forward details, after we have consulted with the provinces and territories, I hope that we will have strong support from the hon. member and his party and all members of this House.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister finally admitted what Reformers have been saying all along. The government's role in job creation is to create the atmosphere or environment for the private sector to invest.

This government has failed to deliver. Despite a \$6 billion infrastructure program, 1.4 million Canadians are out of work, 800,000 are part time employees. Despite reducing deficits, interests costs on the debt are rising faster than the spending cuts made by the government.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister tell Canadians why her government continues to support deficit spending, make work schemes, direct business subsidies and higher taxes?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes the point that the government is still struggling to try to create a climate to foster employment. There is no doubt about that. It is not a problem that is peculiar to Canada.

However, the hon. gentleman should admit that the government has come a long way in establishing the fundamentals that are

required for the private sector to get into the business of job creation.

Interest rates are at very low levels and comparable to those in the United States. We have inflation at 2 per cent or less. Unemployment is below 10 per cent.

• (1135)

I agree with the hon. gentleman. One way to correct one of the problems for which I am responsible, which is to take care of the unemployed, is to create jobs. Surely all of us can agree that the fundamentals are in place and that the private sector—I believe that the challenge the Prime Minister put to it is an appropriate one—are now in a position to get on with the business that business does best, creating jobs.

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this is getting scary. This is the second person who agrees with Reformers. I kind of like this.

The government promised to create jobs, not the business community. The government talks about security and chances for youth.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. If her government wants business to perform and create jobs, will she commit to have the finance minister promise no new taxes, or tax increases of any kind in the next budget which would be the best inducement for job creation, as all members know.

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure in these last few days before the budget we are all trying to communicate our respective messages to the Minister of Finance. Being the kind of person who listens well, I am sure he will take it all into account.

The hon. gentleman knows that the budget process requires that whatever is going to be announced in the budget be withheld until Wednesday afternoon, and we are all looking forward to that.

As a point of clarification, I would like to point out to the hon. member that during the last election campaign when Liberals talked about jobs, we recognized then as we recognize now that what governments at all levels should be doing is creating the environment and the climate to allow the private sector to create jobs. We are wrestling with that. It is not an easy task. We understand the impact of payroll taxes. We understand the impact of debt financing and the rest of it. But governments at all levels across the country are trying. Some, I think, are succeeding more than others. But a sincere attempt is being made to create an environment that will allow the private sector to create jobs.

Surely the hon. member would recognize that since I stood to answer the question, it would not be very appropriate for me to suggest that the government is creating jobs after what took place at Transport.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***HAITIAN NATIONAL POLICE FORCE**

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Haitian Canadians who have been trained by the RCMP could not be integrated into the national police force in Haiti, despite the commitments made by the Haitian government. Canada has spent nearly \$2 million to train these police officers.

At a time when Canada is striving to help the people of Haiti, will the minister tell us what he intends to do to ensure that these police officers can be integrated as planned into the Haitian national police force?

*[English]*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for acknowledging the very important contribution we have made in the training of Haitian nationals as well as Canadians of Haitian descent in the peacekeeping operation.

At the present time the majority of those who have been trained have been incorporated into the new Haitian national police. There are still about 20 or 30 to be integrated. As I understand it, there was a problem because of the transfer of power between the two different administrations. Now that we have confirmed the extension of the international UN activity in Haiti, we will be able to continue to work with the Haitian government to ensure the integration of all those who received proper training to help stabilize the situation in that country.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, will the minister assure us that Canada's contribution will not be overlooked by the Haitian government, and could he tell us what benefit he plans to derive from the money invested in the training of these police officers pending their integration into the Haitian police force?

*[English]*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the major initiatives of the continuing UN mandate is to continue the training, both in institutions and on the ground of the new Haitian police force.

I want to pay tribute to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who have provided over 100 officers to Haiti. Chief Superintendent Pouliot has been the head of that operation since the beginning and has provided along with the French a continued involvement and participation.

I will certainly take the member's representation to ensure that those who have been trained here in Canada will have full access and opportunity in the Haitian police force.

\* \* \*

● (1140)

**IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, on May 25, 1992 Canada admitted Lee Chau-Ping and her family into Canada as investor immigrants. Unfortunately Lee was not the hardworking businesswoman the department of immigration thought she was; rather, she is the most notorious female drug trafficker in the world.

Can the parliamentary secretary of immigration explain how this woman was able to immigrate to Canada despite the fact she had been under investigation by the royal Hong Kong police since 1986?

**Ms. Maria Minna (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this person arrived in Canada under the administration of the former government, which is important because we have changed.

At issue here is the effectiveness of the security checks conducted when this person made her application for permanent residence. The Immigration Act gives us the authority to take removal action against a person if they falsified, lied or misinterpreted any material fact on their application for permanent residence.

Bill C-44 also takes away the right of appeal of permanent residents who have been convicted of serious offences. The business immigration program is undergoing an extensive review. These changes will make the program less open to abuse. Bill C-44 will also deal with that issue.

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, recently this issue has come up. It is not an isolated instance; it is still happening. A Hong Kong crown prosecutor stated: "Canadian immigration is very much a laughing stock of criminals, and Canada is being used by criminals such as drug traffickers as a soft spot for entry of drugs into North America and as an exit point for the laundering of funds".

Is this the type of open for business reputation the government is trying to promote worldwide?

**Ms. Maria Minna (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the member opposite voted against Bill C-44, a bill which helps.

The government recognizes the safety of the Canadian public is of paramount importance. However, studies have shown that

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foreign born individuals represent a significantly lower number in our prison system compared with Canadian born individuals.

We have in place effective mechanisms, one of which the hon. member voted against, to identify the small percentage of those who try to abuse the system. The joint RCMP-immigration task force will become a permanent partnership. Bill C-44 strengthens the Immigration Act, not weakens it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SOCIAL HOUSING**

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In his speech from the throne, the Governor General described as a conciliatory measure the federal government's withdrawal from the social housing sector. This is just nonsense of course, since, in its last budget, the government had already put a stop to any new initiative regarding social housing.

Are we to understand that the government is about to propose to Quebec a partnership in an area that does not come under its jurisdiction, in which it does not invest any money, but regarding which it intends to maintain national standards that are ill-suited to Quebec's needs?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are about to start working with the provinces to ensure better management in these areas.

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. Will the minister admit that this apparent will to decentralize is only a budgetary scheme designed to offload onto the provinces, with no financial compensation, the responsibility for 1.2 million Canadian households desperately in need of social housing units?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we said on many occasions, the idea is to make good use of the money available. If we can do that in co-operation with the provinces, we will do so. I am surprised that the hon. member, who is from Quebec, would be opposed to what we are doing and will continue to do.

\* \* \*

• (1145)

[English]

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Harry Verran (South West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fishermen of South West Nova Scotia are frustrated. They feel they have not been consulted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and there are many concerns. They are deeply worried

about their future, the future of their families and the future of their coastal communities.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans what he is doing to resolve the concerns of these fishermen and ensure they will have an opportunity to be listened to and have a strong voice in the management of the fishery in the future.

**Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for the manner in which he and his colleagues have represented fishermen and their concerns.

I am aware of these concerns. The emphasis up to now has been on the occupation of DFO offices. I want to de-emphasize that because I am aware there are many fishermen who are not occupying offices, who are interested in speaking, talking and discussing the issues of concern. They have indicated their eagerness to do this to me.

To that end and as a result of meeting with members of Parliament last night I have instructed my officials over this weekend to contact those people who are occupying the offices to give them the opportunity to join the discussions that will take place early next week with those fishermen who share the same concerns but who are not occupying the offices.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week my constituents held victims' rights rallies in Nanaimo and Duncan, B.C. Last night a rally was held in Abbotsford, B.C. with over 2,000 people.

The reason for these rallies is that Canadians do not feel safe in their homes or on the streets. They feel the system has been stacked in favour of the criminals and they are demanding their rights be respected for a change.

When will the Minister of Justice start defending the rights of victims of crime?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the throne speech in its reference to our continued commitment to ensure the criminal justice system safeguards the rights of victims is simply additional evidence of the government's continuing commitment in that regard.

Over the last two years the House of Commons has seen, has debated and has enacted more constructive changes to the criminal justice system than in any period in the last 20 years. The government has shown that commitment.

**Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the answer, like the throne speech, is more rhetoric without real commitment. The people of Abbotsford, like the people across

Canada, are looking for a specific, a victims' bill of rights. Would the minister support such a bill?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is only the most recent occasion on which representatives of the party opposite have sought to cloak themselves in the cause of victims.

The record discloses that when the Canadian people come to assess which party spoke for victims in the House they will decide it was the government.

For the first time in the history of the justice system the government through Bill C-37 introduced victim impact statements in the Young Offenders Act. What happened? The Reform Party voted against that bill.

This party with Bill C-41 strengthened enormously the rights of victims to restitution. What happened? The Reform Party voted against it. This party for the first time changed section 745 to provide for the rights of victims to participate in the hearings. What happened? The Reform Party voted against it.

When victims groups, mothers and fathers of victims, came to Ottawa, brothers and sisters of those shot to death in crime, arguing for gun control, what happened? The Reform Party voted against that bill.

We are the party that stands for victims' rights in this country.

\* \* \*

• (1150)

[Translation]

#### INDIAN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs.

Two years ago, the Liberal government pledged to take immediate action, and I emphasize the word "immediate", to improve the lot of the Innu living in Davis Inlet, notably by relocating the community in a healthier location.

Can the Minister of Indian Affairs tell us when his government will make a decision on the relocation of that community, which continues to live in conditions comparable to that of third world countries, as witnessed last week by the hon. member for Saint-Jean?

[English]

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member. I thought the Bloc had forgotten about me.

I consider Davis Inlet one of the success stories of the government. I went in there, unlike the Bloc. I went to Atlantic Canada five times. I went to the community once. I met with the leadership in Ottawa several times. I met with it in Halifax several times. We

#### Oral Questions

provided a package of almost \$80 million of federal funds for that community.

We have done 35 consultative reports with those people. We are working on their education facilities and we are building houses. We are not building houses for them; we are working with them. They are building their own houses and they are getting trained. We are working in the health facilities.

Unlike what happened under the former government, this was not only a local story or a provincial story, it was an international story, which it no longer is, and we did it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, will the Deputy Prime Minister ensure the House that, from now on, the Minister of Indian affairs will give proper attention to the urgent issues for which he is responsible, rather than generate violence with his irresponsible remarks on Quebec?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister did a good job answering questions concerning Davis Inlet, and I hope that the member opposite will show as much interest regarding aboriginal issues in his own province.

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[English]

#### GUN CONTROL

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the justice minister. I am glad to see he has moved to the front bench, closer to the Reform Party. At least I can see the whites of his eyes now. Of course, the converse of that is true.

The information I have is that licensing by firearm owners will not begin until January 1, 1997, a one-year delay. The registration of long guns will not begin until January 1, 1999, another one-year delay.

Is this true? Are these two key components of his gun legislation to be delayed?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, may I first speak to geography. I assure my hon. colleague that my move was lateral and that the gulf that separates us remains just as wide.

On the subject of timing, when the firearms legislation was tabled in February 1995, which now seems like a very long time ago, our projection was for licensing to begin on January 1, 1996.

Through the very skilful and elaborate means my hon. colleague used in his vain attempt to impede and defeat the legislation, much time was taken in the parliamentary process. It was not until December 1995 that the legislation obtained royal assent.

Naturally the hon. member would want us to take all the time necessary in order to produce a user friendly, efficient and effective system of registration and licensing in order to be fair to the firearm owners of Canada. That is what we intend to do.

*Oral Questions*

• (1155)

We shall bring the registration and licensing systems on line and into effect when we can do so, when they are fully ready, when they are easy and reliable to use for firearms owners, and when we are certain they will achieve the many worthwhile objectives for which they are intended.

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when I first came to the House I used to respect the statesman like manner with which the justice minister answered questions head on, but he has learned to dance and juggle like the rest of them over there.

This party and I had nothing whatever to do with determining the timetable of Bill C-68. The government invoked closure in the House, set the timetable in the standing committee and invoked closure on third reading.

If the justice minister claims lives are being lost in the absence of licensing and registration, if he truly believes this, why the deliberate delay?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the licensing and registration systems are being designed with the help of a users committee comprised of police officers, police chiefs, farmers, hunters, aboriginal persons, gun collectors.

We are putting this system together in a way that will work properly for Canadians. We will take the time required to do that and get it right.

This legislation was not given royal assent until December of 1995. That is a simple fact. The registration and the licensing systems will be brought on stream when they are ready and not a day sooner.

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*[Translation]***FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVANTS**

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board, whom I want to congratulate on his recent appointment, incidentally.

As of yesterday, federal public servants are now invited to submit privatization and commercialization projects. Could the minister indicate to the House whether the government employees submitting such projects will be able to do so confidentially and without fear of reprisals from their managers or from their peers?

**Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. member for his question, because he has done an outstanding job in the community of the national capital region.

Now I want to inform him that the policy made public yesterday allows employees with initiative to take over many government services. Those are services they know well, services in which they have become competent and services that they can better deliver for the benefit of taxpayers.

In order to make the process fair and equitable, we have appointed an independent group to review all the proposals to ensure that contracts are awarded to those best able to serve the public. Finally, should action be taken against employees, I would encourage the hon. member to advise the minister concerned right away so that he can take the necessary corrective action.

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**PARTNERSHIP**

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

We gather from the throne speech that the Liberal government has finally understood that the way to go, for Canada, is the way of dialogue and, in particular, partnership with Quebec.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister recognize that the only real partnership, the viable and working partnership between Canada and Quebec, is a partnership between two peoples?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are many partnership opportunities all the time. In the throne speech, we have shown we are open-minded by our statements on the restructuring of the federation, on federal expenditures, on areas of jurisdiction, and on the entrenchment in the Constitution of the distinct society clause. All we need is the co-operation of our partner, the premier of Quebec.

\* \* \*

*[English]***EDUCATION**

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the throne speech states very clearly: "The government will announce measures to double the number of federal summer student jobs this summer". While I applaud this in principle, what the students in this country want more than ever is affordable

post-secondary education. However, the government has gutted this program by ripping out over \$7 billion in transfer payments.

• (1200)

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister: How is this government going to pay for these summer student jobs, short of mortgaging the future of this country's students?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed that the hon. gentleman would raise the spectre of gutting post-secondary education in this country as a result of the actions of the federal government.

The hon. member knows that the student community, having heard the news that the Government of Canada is doubling the amount of money thereby doubling the number of jobs that will be available next summer, knows this is a very good news story. I believe it is something that young people across the country were looking forward to.

To suggest in the same breath that Canada, compared to practically any other nation in the world, and the Canadian taxpayers are not shouldering their burden in terms of making a contribution to post-secondary education in this country is to say the least very misleading. Canada's educational system at the post-secondary level in terms of funding is at the top of the list on any criteria.

Any increase in tuition is very difficult for students and we recognize that. One of the ways we have attempted to try to allow young people to cope with that is by confirming early in the game, in the throne speech and the Prime Minister's speech, that this summer young people can look forward to twice as many job opportunities as a direct result of the actions of the Government of Canada. At the same time we are challenging the private sector and other governments at all levels to do the same thing.

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#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

In recent town hall meetings discussing the proposed changes to the UI system there has been a lot of wrong information and misunderstanding. Could the minister tell this House exactly how the intensity rule of the proposed employment insurance system will affect claimants with an existing history of repeat use?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the hon. member's deep concern, which is shared by many people across the country, with respect to the legislation that is going to be brought back before the

#### Point of Order

House and considered by committee as it relates to the intensity rule.

Perhaps the safest thing for me to say at this point is that we recognize in the existing legislation the need to go back and recognize that people who have been out of the employment insurance scheme for a few years, who have been unable to find work and who have had to resort to welfare or whatever, have a legitimate right to have access to training programs and so forth. We will recognize past history back three years and will try to find ways to include them in whatever new process is determined upon.

I would think that all of us are looking forward to next week when hon. members on both sides of the House from all parties will again be asked to sit on the committee that will consider the legislation that is going to reform the employment insurance situation in this country.

We will together, as a result of the very massive consultation that has gone on over the past few months, address the question of continuous weeks of work and the question of the intensity rule. I have no doubt, having been made aware of the goodwill that exists in this House and the questions that have been brought forward by interested parties across the country, that in its wisdom the committee will find a solution to a very difficult problem.

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#### POINT OF ORDER

##### REFLECTION ON A VOTE

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 18 clearly states that it is not permitted to reflect on any vote in the House. In response to a question from our immigration critic, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of immigration referred specifically to a vote of that member and the Minister of Justice reviewed at length the voting which took place in this House with respect to some of the bills he went through. This violates Standing Order 18.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to scold them and to remind them not to do it again.

• (1205)

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is of course a reference in the Standing Orders with regard to reflection upon a vote in the House. However, the section in question has more to do with people criticizing others in the House individually as to whether or not they were absent for a vote.

In terms of how a record of a particular party deals with a vote has often been referred to on both sides of the House both in questions and answers. As a matter of fact, virtually every day people ask why a party voted for or against a particular initiative.

*Routine Proceedings*

**The Speaker:** I thank both hon. members for bringing this forward. Yes, I do scold the House.

I would ask you, my colleagues, to please refrain from mentioning votes like that. We got into that a little bit last fall. We are just getting back into shape right now and I am sure this is somewhat of an oversight and that all hon. members will come right back to the rules as we have been adhering to them since the beginning.

I do thank both members for their interventions.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table in both official languages the government's response to eight petitions presented during the first session.

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[*Translation*]

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION NO. 1—NOTICE OF MOTION FOR TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Labour and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, concerning the debate on government Motion No. 1, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the House, I will move that debate be not further adjourned.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the first report later this day.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### CANADA LABOUR CODE

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Labour and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-3, an act to amend the Canada

Labour Code (nuclear undertakings) and to make a related amendment to another act.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

**Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-211, an act to amend the Access to Information Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to inform the House that the member for Calgary Centre is not here to second the bill, but the hon. member for Swift Current—Maple Creek will.

It is a pleasure to present my private member's bill, an act to amend the Access to Information Act. This will bring the Canadian Wheat Board under the jurisdiction of the Access to Information Act.

Privacy Commissioner John Grace appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice in 1986. At that time the committee reviewed the operation of the act and recommended that it be expanded to include all crown agencies.

The committee felt that the exemptions contained in the law provided protection from potential competitive harm. The Wheat Board has no legitimate claims that it would suffer competitive harm.

Western farmers will support this change of the act very strongly and I hope that the House will also.

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

\* \* \*

● (1210)

### CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

**Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-212, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act (audit).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise in this House and introduce this private member's bill to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act audit.

Currently the auditor general does not have the authority to audit the Canadian Wheat Board. Over the years the auditor general has provided a valuable service to Canadians by pointing out waste in federal government as well as showing where Canadians have received value for their money.

This change to the act would not only provide for more trust but would also make the wheat board more accountable and acceptable to producers.



*Routine Proceedings*

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

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented earlier this day, be in concurred in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** No.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## GASOLINE TAX

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in accordance with Standing Order 36 to present the first of a much larger petition to come from 9,000 constituents across Canada. They beg this Parliament not to increase the federal excise tax on gasoline and to strongly consider reallocating some of the \$8 billion now collected from gasoline taxes and dedicating it toward the crumbling national highway system.

## PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first reflects on the parliamentary press gallery which is excluding a particular newspaper in this area from free access to the press gallery. This petition would ask Parliament to address that issue and I agree.

## CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition relates to section 745 of the Criminal Code. This petition has been generated by Darlene Boyd. I have a very small petition here but I will be taking 12,130 names to the office of the justice minister after I leave the House. I could not carry all the boxes into the House. It was too big a load.

## GASOLINE TAX

**Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Kent.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House the following: that Canadians are paying approximately 52 per cent of the cost of a litre of gasoline at the pumps in the form of government taxes; that the tax increase was 1.5 cents per litre in the last federal

budget; that a committee of Parliament has recommended another 2 cent per litre increase in federal excise tax on gasoline in the next federal budget; and that over the past 10 years the excise tax on gasoline has risen by 566 per cent. Therefore, the petitioners request that Parliament not increase the federal excise tax on gasoline in the next federal budget.

**Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a petition on behalf of 91 signatories from my riding of Saskatoon—Humboldt and that of my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Dundurn, urging this Parliament not to increase the federal excise tax on gasoline in the next federal budget.

**Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a further petition with 100 signators from my constituency and that of Saskatoon—Humboldt requesting that Parliament not increase the federal excise tax on gasoline in the next federal budget.

• (1215)

**Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition asking the federal government not to increase the federal excise tax on gasoline in the next federal budget. It is signed by 57 constituents in my riding.

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition signed by over 300 people.

The petitioners are requesting that Parliament amend the Criminal Code and all other relevant statutes of Canada to establish lifetime sentences without eligibility of parole for dangerous offenders, particularly sex offenders against children.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I table three petitions identical in form and content from constituents primarily from the towns of Swift Current, Eastend and Leader.

My constituents also are begging Parliament not to increase the excise tax on gasoline in Canada.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley has 13 minutes left in her intervention from before question period.

**Mr. Harper (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, the member would have liked to finish her remarks but at this moment she cannot be in the House. She will be returning a bit later.

**Mr. Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, I was rising to speak. The representative of the third party has spoken.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The whip is quite correct. We rotate on matters. No member from the Liberal Party indicated they wished to speak. I should have recognized the hon. whip from the government.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in today's debate on the motion put forward by the hon. Government House Leader.

The motion by the hon. Government House Leader is very innovative. True, it proposes a system that is rather new but not unprecedented.

First, I must indicate that a little earlier today one of our friends from the Bloc Québécois mentioned that in 1991, some parliamentarians objected, and rightly so according to him, to an initiative by the last government to reinstate bills that had died on the Order Paper in a previous session of Parliament.

As we know, several hon. members then rose and accused the Conservative government of discrimination. The Conservative government wanted to reinstate only some of its legislation by means of a single motion and denied the same privilege to other members of the House.

As you well know, in spite of our grievances those of us who had protested lost their cause nonetheless on most of the issues raised. Although we believed our argument to be well-founded, we lost. The Speaker made a ruling and, naturally, the bills were reinstated although in a slightly different form than what the government expected. What are we trying to do today?

• (1220)

We want to do something completely different. First of all, the motion before the House is not discriminatory. It allows all members of Parliament, ministers, secretaries of state, private members on the government side as well as those of the opposition

to reintroduce their bills at the stage they were at the end of the last session.

Personally, I first heard about that innovative idea not from a government member or a minister, but from the hon. member from Lethbridge himself.

*[English]*

The hon. member for Lethbridge moved Motion M-476: "That, in the opinion of this House, all private members' bills that have passed second reading in the first session of the 35th Parliament and which are presently at committee, report stage or third reading stage should stand for the second session of the 35th Parliament".

The hon. member for Lethbridge is an experienced parliamentarian not only here but in another legislature, a person who has undoubtedly a lot of knowledge about things parliamentary. He proposed this motion. Given that the hon. member for Lethbridge is the House leader for his party, I am sure he was speaking on behalf of his party. He must have been. After all, he is the boss of that party, he is the House leader.

The boss of the Reform Party wanted to reinstate all private members' bills. Hold that thought for a minute. We on our side of the House, being non-partisan and congenial as we are, had one of our colleagues, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, approach on our behalf the hon. member for Lethbridge. We told him it is such a good idea to revive private members' bills from the opposition. Given that we are non-discriminatory and congenial, as I said, we said let us apply it to all bills in the House.

Mysteriously on the day the initiative was to have been debated the hon. member for Lethbridge did not debate the item in question. I cannot refer to presence or absence. That would be unparliamentary, but if I could I would. Shall I say he was unable to debate the issue in question.

**An hon. member:** It was withdrawn.

**Mr. Boudria:** How was it that he was not available to debate it or, as the member across said, deliberately withdraw it?. That is even worse after having proposed it, given that he was the boss of his party and speaking on behalf of his party.

I do not understand all of these things, but then again I do not have a Reform mindset and maybe that is why. I cannot think like a Reformer and hopefully I never will.

*[Translation]*

Now, the Reform members' boss wanted to reintroduce private members bills, those from opposition members as well as those from government members, even though, traditionally, private members bills are mainly an instrument used by the opposition to advocate certain measures. We liked the idea and we wanted to apply it to bills from opposition as well as government members using the very formula proposed by the hon. member from Lethbridge, that is that a bill that was merely introduced in the

House would not automatically be reactivated. Likewise, a bill that was before the Senate would not automatically be reinstated. But bills that were still before the House and had passed second reading could be, under this formula.

[*English*]

Let us remember the other point. This is enabling and it does not in itself cause the bill to be reactivated. In other words, if I had a private member's bill, which I do not as the whip, presently before a committee, if the government had already dealt with the issue and solved the problem, which the government so often does, and if I felt my private member's bill was now redundant, it would not be automatically reinstated. In other words, it simply enables a member who feels his or her private member's bill is still important enough to merely cause it to go back to the point it was at prior to prorogation.

• (1225)

This is remarkable because it mirrors what the boss of the Reform Party, the hon. member for Lethbridge, was asking us to do.

**An hon. member:** He is not the boss.

**Mr. Boudria:** An hon. member across says his House leader is not his boss. That may be so. I will not tell the Reform Party House leader that one of his colleagues said the House leader was not his boss. I will keep it a secret among us. We shall not mention it to the hon. member for Lethbridge. We would not want to have the hon. member for Lethbridge all upset at some of his colleagues who have said in the House today that he is not the boss.

**Mr. Epp:** We do not believe in top down like you guys.

**Mr. Boudria:** I wonder if the member for Elk Island does not think the whip is the boss. Anyway, I will let Reform members discuss their caucus disagreements. It seems there is a lot of disagreement if they do not think anyone is running the show.

Let me go back to the motion proposed by the House leader for the government which I believe to be quite innovative. One of the important things about this motion is that it saves a lot of money to the taxpayers of Canada. I suppose if a bill had been terminated at second reading the economies are somewhat smaller, although they are there as well because there is sometimes quite a step to reach that level.

Nevertheless, for a bill or another initiative that has gone to committee and which has received the input of Canadians from all across the country testifying either here or elsewhere in Canada, for the people who have submitted briefs and so on, there are economies in not repeating the exercise a second time on an identical piece of legislation.

### *Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

Groups who have already made representations, who have already submitted briefs to parliamentarians, would not have to repeat the whole process a second time for a bill that is identical to the one that was considered during the previous session.

To protect parliamentarians, the motion states clearly that the bill has to be identical to the one from the previous session, as verified by the office of the clerk of the House of Commons, otherwise this new condition would not be applicable.

You can see the validity and the objectivity of this whole exercise. I am sure members opposite could find it in their hearts to support such an initiative.

[*English*]

This has been the subject of consultation among political parties in the House. I cannot discuss the details of the consultation because that is not normally done when consultation is between House leaders. However, I can say that consultation between the House leadership teams, leaders, whips and so on, of each political party has taken place. People were contacted. The substance of what was there was described to the officials of political parties across the way. Therefore consultation had taken place previously.

For those who say or pretend this has been brought on at the last minute, it is not so. It does not reflect reality.

The *Hill Times* of February 26 had a long story on this. It has been known for days through that medium, through the consultation that we had and so on. Consultation has taken place. Only bills that are identical to those—

• (1230)

**Mr. Silye:** Are you sure?

**Mr. Boudria:** Oh, yes, I am quite sure. I can even give the exact time.

**Mr. Silye:** Were members of all parties present?

**Mr. Boudria:** Yes. The hon. member from Calgary wants to verify that we contacted all parties to inform them of this motion. Indeed we had. I contacted someone from each party personally and revealed the contents of the motion. I can discuss privately the name of the MP that I consulted if the people opposite want to know.

**Mr. Bellehumeur:** We read about it in the *Hill Times*.

**Mr. Boudria:** The hon. member said they read about it in the *Hill Times*. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, the consultations between officials of parties were held long before that.

If the member from Calgary has been led to believe differently, that is not true. Consultations were held.

*Government Orders*

The first criteria is that only bills that are the same as those presented in the last Parliament qualify. Only bills that went beyond second reading qualify.

[*Translation*]

Moreover only bills from both sides of the House qualify for this fast tracking system that we have established.

Finally, what we are in fact proposing is an initiative that was first presented to the House by an opposition member, namely the boss of the Reform members, the member for Lethbridge.

So, as you can see, Mr. Speaker, our government is open to initiatives coming from the other side of the House since we are willing to accept and maybe improve on a suggestion made by someone on the other side. We are using this initiative that came originally from an opposition member, after making some improvements to it.

It is non discriminatory, it applies to everybody and it is not at all what the Conservative Party proposed. They wanted to reinstate all at once eight of their bills, I think, only government bills, only the ones they wanted, etc.

In this motion, it is optional. The motion offers a mechanism for reinstating bills, which have to be reinstated one by one.

[*English*]

Let us look at some of the bills that would qualify because they were not completed in the last session of Parliament. I do not know which minister, which backbench MP on the government side, which opposition member will wish to reactivate any of these bills. These are examples. For instance, there is Bill C-7, the controlled drug and substances act, an act to repeal the Narcotic Control Act and parts of the Food and Drugs Act.

It has been the subject of a lot of debate. Why would we want to repeat all of that? Why not save the taxpayers' money and pick up where we left off?

Bill C-101, the national transportation agency bill, was completed at the committee level. A lot of work was done there. Bill C-94 is an important bill with regard to interprovincial trade. Also I believe there is a bill with regard to the use of ethanol as a fuel additive. That is a very important issue. As a rural member representing an electoral district where ethanol is produced I want to see that bill proceeded with as soon as possible.

Let us look at some of the private members' bills. The opposition is telling us: "Don't proceed with this accelerated mechanism". Here is what they do not want us to do.

A Reform MP proposes that we amend the Elections Act with regard to political parties. Seemingly the Reform Party is going to vote against accelerating this bill and bringing it to committee.

The member from Mississauga proposed Bill C-337 in the last session, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act. That was already in committee as well. What about the bill regarding intervenor funding proposed by the member for Oxford?

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Quebec has also introduced a very important bill dealing with genital mutilation of female persons, which is unfortunately practiced, in some cases, in Canada. This is an important issue. The debate in this House was completed and the bill referred to a committee. Why would anyone wish to delay our work on such bills?

• (1235)

[*English*]

A Reform MP from British Columbia who spoke earlier this morning against this innovation would be unable, if her party—it depends when we refer to her party because her boss some months ago wanted to do precisely this—by its statements today, would prevent us from proceeding with further consideration of her bill, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Releases Act and the Criminal Code.

Another member from the Reform Party has a bill regarding an amendment to the Divorce Act granting access and custody to grandparents. Why would they not want to proceed with that? Why would they not want to proceed with the bills that they initiated? That is all the motion of the government proposes. I have some difficulty in understanding why the Reform Party does not want us to go ahead with some of these.

[*Translation*]

The same thing applies to the members of the Bloc. I know that they will probably want to go on with the work Parliament has already started on several issues. I am sure those hon.é members will want that work to go ahead.

As the House knows, we will proceed. The Minister of Labour has proposed a motion today to allow us to proceed without further delay with this motion.

I invite all hon. members of this House to do what the government House leader and the House leader of the Reform Party asked us to do some time ago, although it seems the latter has had time to reconsider his position. Of course, this surprises us. Nevertheless the initiative proposed by the hon. member for Lethbridge was an excellent idea and it still is. This is why we intend, on this side of the House, to adopt this measure. We have improved it. We invite all members to vote in favor of the proposal made today in this House by the government House leader.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is rather strange to listen to what the member has to say

*Government Orders*

now that he is on the government side. All the same, his approach is a little better, in the sense that he uses new words.

He talks about innovation, discrimination, savings and backlogs. It is strange because in the speech he made in 1991—I was reading it as he was talking—he never spoke of innovation. He never spoke of discrimination. If discrimination was one of his primary arguments in 1991, he should have mentioned it then. But no, it is nowhere to be seen. The clincher he made at the time was that it went against tradition, that we never had proceeded this way, that it was unparliamentary. That is what he was saying then.

He raised all sorts of extremely important questions. Now that he is a member of the government, he no longer raises them. He has changed his tune. Such an about-face on such a fundamental question as prorogation is dreadful.

He talked about savings. If the government had negotiated with the official opposition, there would have been unanimous consent regarding some bills. We would have agreed to keep some bills on the Order Paper for consideration during this session. But we would not have agreed to keep bills like the one on unemployment insurance. We want a new bill. Canadians are protesting. This bill does not please them. But the government does not care, it is washing its hands of the whole mess, and everything is thrown in together and presented to Canadians. Hey, we are the government, we are in power.

That is why we are against this motion.

• (1240)

It is impossible to proceed this way under the current system.

I conclude with a question that the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell asked the Conservative government in 1991, in identical circumstances. Perhaps he will say the circumstances were not the same. The difference is that the motion was brought in by a Conservative member at that time whereas now it is being put forward by the Liberals. But, basically, it is exactly the same thing.

I ask the member to answer the same question he asked the government in 1991, that is: “If the motion is accepted in its present wording—I ask question rhetorically—if one can resuscitate five bills with this motion, or four bills, what stops one from resuscitating all legislation from the past?”

If the government can resuscitate all the bills from the previous session, what will prevent it from going further, if it wishes so, and reinstating bills which died on the Order Paper in previous Parliaments? What prevents it from deciding that today is the third reading for such and such a bill, and that this is so because it holds a majority of seats? What would stop the government from acting in that way?

In the end, does the motion they want to us to agree to today in the House of Commons not simply cancel any effect of prorogation, of Royal Assent and of the whole tradition of the House? I

would like to hear what the member has to say on these critical questions, to see just how far he is willing to go in making a fool of himself.

**Mr. Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions of the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm. First, he asked about the bills. He says that they would have been willing to reinstate the bills they like, but not those we like.

This is faulty logic, as you will understand. I assume that, by extension, the member means that only the bills he introduced should be allowed to be reinstated.

**Mr. Bellehumeur:** No.

**Mr. Boudria:** By extension, that is what it means. Mr. Speaker, as you said yourself, this does not make sense.

Second, the member reminded me of what I said some time ago, in 1991, during a previous Parliament, when I sat on the other side—

**Mr. Bellehumeur:** In a previous life.

**Mr. Boudria:** Not in a previous life, but at a time when I am supposed to have said: “If one can resuscitate several bills with one motion, what stops the government from resuscitating others?”

In fact, this question is rather important, since in itself the motion we introduced does not reinstate bills. It provides a means for reinstating bills from both sides of the House at the stages they were at in the same Parliament.

The difference is, of course, that the other proposal, the previous government’s, applied exclusively to certain government bills, not to all the bills, not even all the government bills, and further provided that consideration of the bills would be resumed at the stage they were at. These are three significant differences.

Third, I would remind you that, in spite of what I said in 1991, I lost the argument.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell made a statement that I want to clarify and put on the record because it is very serious.

The government House leader did not contact our House leader or the assistant to our House leader, the member for Lethbridge, on this issue. We saw it for the first time on the Order Paper. I just want to let the member know that is why we are quite upset about the timing.

In addition, the usual custom is that when the House is prorogued, as a courtesy, the government consults with opposition

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parties about the deputy speakers. That was not done either. There are a lot of things this government is just trying to bully through.

The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was concerned and tried to sell the motion that a private member's bill is the same as a government bill. That is not the case. He wants to know why we support reinstating private members' bills but not government bills. They are trying to use the motion of the hon. member for Lethbridge as a bargaining chip. They are trying to use Private Members' Business as a trade off, a quid pro quo. We cannot accept such a deal, especially when all the members opposite when in opposition so vehemently argued against what the Conservatives were doing, which is the same thing this government is doing.

• (1245)

The hon. member asked what was the difference between Private Members' Business and reinstating government business and I would like to answer that and then he can comment after that. Private members cannot set the agenda. They have no control over the business of the House. They are at the mercy of the process which takes a great deal of time and makes it extremely difficult to see their bills past.

In the last session 165 members' bills were introduced and only two were past into law. They need a helping hand. On government business the government controls the legislative agenda. It can summon bills for debate for whatever reason, whenever and however it wants. If the government wants to pass a bill it can do so. There is nothing we can do about it. It can place it on the Order Paper day after day. It can invoke time allocation or closure. It can steamroll it through a committee. If a bill has not passed it is because the government chose not to pass it, and it chose not to pass a whole bunch of bills in the last session.

Bill C-7 was on the Order Paper for over two years. Rather than call it for debate the government held take note debates and adjourned early. Now it wants the opposition to bail it out and reinstate it.

The government has the control over government bills. Private members do not have that control. That is the difference. There are some good private members' bills that were pulled and which should be reinstated, but those are private members' bills, not government bills.

What is the purpose of prorogation? The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands said it best when in opposition. He pointed out what is happening today is unprecedented in that the government is moving a motion under Government Orders for debate to reinstate bills in this session. He searched precedents back to 1938 and did not find one where a motion of this kind was moved for debate. It was always agreed to by unanimous consent.

Never before has the government moved to suspend the rules in effect and put bills back into their position at the time of proro-

gation of a session. If royal prerogative is to mean anything, the prorogation ended those government bills. They have to be reinstated in the usual course but they ought to have been introduced and dealt with as new bills in this session. This is the proper procedure in the absence of unanimous consent.

Now why are these two members, the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, both of whom know the standing orders and the rules and so vehemently opposed what they are now proposing when they are in opposition, contradicting themselves and why do they not see the difference between private members' bills and government bills? Why are they persisting in playing this game instead of getting on with the business of the new legislation, of the new throne speech and of the new vision for Canada that this party is supposed to have?

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I would make mincemeat like that out of the proposal given to us by the hon. member for Lethbridge, the boss of the hon. member who has just spoken. After all, I thought the suggestion by the hon. member for Lethbridge was quite reasonable.

I contacted the hon. member for Mercier and the hon. member for Lethbridge personally. I could later today rise on a point of order if the House so desires and indicate the precise date and time, which I have logged in my office, that the conversations took place.

The hon. member across says it was okay to reactivate the private members' bills but not the government bills because some of the private members' bills were good. This is his argument. Some of the government, I would even say all government bills, and all private members' bills on this side of the House are good, not just some of them like the members across the way say.

After all, as the people of Canada's newest province sometimes say, what is good in Goose Bay is good in Gander.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government motion we are debating now is very special. This week, the government focused largely on the throne speech, saying that it signalled a new beginning for this government, which would now adopt a new approach based on jobs in various sectors.

At the same time, the government presents a motion which will guarantee business as usual and allow the reinstating of old bills. The government is acting like those who make resolutions on New Year's day and break them the day after. We have a hard time understanding that, especially since it goes against parliamentary tradition.

• (1250)

It is a well-known principle, and I feel it is important to mention this for Canadians who are listening, that prorogation of the House is a political decision which means we start all over, and that all bills die on the Order Paper. In this way, we make sure that all new government positions are different from past ones. For the sake of efficiency, we can exceptionally reinstate bills, normally those that have been favourably received in the House.

In this case, the government is upsetting the rules. It is establishing the principle that anything can be brought back, at any time, and that, whether there is a throne speech or not, the situation we had in the previous session can be carried over into the new one.

I would like to draw the attention of citizens and hon. members to the fact that, by proposing this motion, by using this approach, the government is really telling us: "When we bring back Bill C-111 on unemployment insurance, it will be business as usual". Yet, during the previous session, the government was told in all the Liberal ridings in the Maritimes, in all the ridings in Eastern Quebec, that the unemployment insurance reform, as introduced, was not acceptable.

If the government has the right to reinstate Bill C-111 without any changes, arguing that it is for the sake of continuity, why did it prorogue? Why did we decide to put an end to current business? Was it to let the Governor General have a good party where those who so desired could go? Was it only for the sake of decorum? It is rather puzzling.

Moreover, it is the wrong message to send to the people, because it seems to indicate that we did not listen to them. In my own riding I had meetings with groups of employees and citizens, sometime 50, 75 or 150, on the question of unemployment insurance. Whether in Saint-Pascal, Pohénégamook, La Pocatière, Saint-André de Kamouraska, Rivière-du-Loup or elsewhere, people told us: "The government has to go back to the drawing board". The motion that the government tabled would allow it to ignore this message from the people, and this is unacceptable.

I could give you another example: Bill C-96, which establishes the Department of Human Resources. It has given rise to a major dispute between Quebec and Canada. This bill would allow the Government of Canada to interfere in all the areas concerning manpower training. It flies in the face of the whole debate on decentralization of manpower training.

Why does the government insist on saying that it wants to bring back a bill like this one, with a simple majority, and that the minister, anytime he sees fit in his political strategy, could bring this bill back? I think that this is contrary to parliamentary rules, to

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the very nature of the speech from the throne, and to the obligation the government has to introduce new policy thrusts.

If the government can come back with bills of a similar nature, it should have the courage to start the debate all over again and to steer the legislation through all the stages.

All the more so because, in the case of the unemployment insurance bill, in December, the government avoided the debate on second reading and referred the bill to the committee immediately, under the pretence that there was an urgent need. The government's strategy is very clear: it wants to try to bring back the bill in committee without a debate on second reading, because I am sure that several Liberal members from the Maritimes would have a lot to say about this bill if it were reinstated in second reading as it stood last fall.

In fact, the government is trying to avoid taking into account what its own members want, which is something I find unacceptable.

It is often said that the opposition opposes measures for the sake of it, because of the nature of its responsibilities. I would like to mention two bills that the opposition could have agreed to reinstate. They are Bill C-66 on grain transportation and Bill C-78 on witness protection, that were dealt with in the last session.

• (1255)

Why was there no consultation between the government and the opposition parties, as is traditional in Parliament, to find a common ground on bills that could be reinstated? For instance, we certainly would have been in favour of reinstating the bill to prevent excision, which was introduced by the hon. member for Quebec. We are certainly in favour of that and I think we could find that there is unanimous consent in the House on that subject.

There are the two bills that I just mentioned, Bill C-66 on grain transportation and Bill C-78 on witness protection. We could have done the same thing with these two bills and, at the same time, the government could have brought in the bills that had been received favourably in the House. It was very clear from the outset that there was no way we would accept to reinstate a bill such as the one on unemployment insurance reform, but perhaps some agreements could have been reached.

I am thinking, in particular, of Bill C-68 on the reform of electoral boundaries, about which the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Bloc Québécois members from eastern Quebec ridings were in agreement and made representations at all stages to be able to protect the five existing ridings in eastern Quebec. That is a bill that perhaps we would have been able to agree on, with the consent of the Senate, so that it could be brought back here and we could deal with it without ending up where we are now.

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Unfortunately, there was no such consultation. The government prefers to hide behind the fact that it would have the advantage of bringing the bill back at any time, at the minister's request. I think the government has made a very bad choice.

Now, let us turn to the amendment the Bloc Québécois has moved. This amendment would let members respect the privilege of every other member in this House by giving notice of their refusal to allow a bill to be reinstated when the minister asks for leave to introduce his bill. In this way we would be sure that there would be a minimum of respect for members' responsibilities. It would be a mark of a very great respect for democracy and it would conform to the true meaning of prorogation of a session.

The new throne speech having set out a different vision on most things, it is imperative that members ascertain that the new legislation reflects this throne speech and that this throne speech is not only old formulas under a new guise, which very clearly seems to be the case, given the government motion.

The government should have more courage and say to us: "Yes, among bills we have brought forward in the past, there are four or five that we absolutely want to have passed, so we will bring back them to this House". We could even debate the motions. It would be more democratic than the present approach, whereby the government to reinstate by the back door bills that had not been received favourably by the House.

Once more I come back to the unemployment insurance bill. You know, we listened to what Canadians and Quebecers said last fall, during the holiday season and in January, and we could take the opportunity offered by the fact that we have a new Minister of Human Resources Development to take note of certain things, to notice that the government measure has one very important element missing, that is an active policy on employment. The previous bill singled out seasonal workers, and prevented young Canadians from being eligible for unemployment insurance in order to save about \$2 billion per year in an unemployment insurance program funded entirely by employees and employers. That was what Bill C-111 did.

If the government gets its way and manages to bring back this bill directly at committee stage, without any debate in the House, it will be an admission that it has no intention of correcting it. The government will be admitting that it did not listen to what Canadians had to say, and that it is still going to try to push all its cuts through and to continue in the same direction that was condemned everywhere across the country and even more so in the Maritimes.

Let me give you another example, Bill C-96. In this case, the government is really saying: "Business as usual".

• (1300)

While the federal government is trying for instance to negotiate an agreement on manpower training with the Quebec government, although Bill C-96 was denounced in the past as not respecting areas of jurisdiction, the Minister of Human Resources Development, in his negotiations with Quebec, would certainly have a much stronger negotiation tool if he would say: "Yes, we realize that our Bill C-96 did not really respect current areas of jurisdiction and what we want for the future in Canada: that the federal government be responsible for some things and that it be made clear; that provincial governments be responsible for other things and that be made clear, and that in the future we not have spheres of activity where the two governments get involved and try to have the biggest poster or the biggest Canada flag on advertisements".

When we see statements like the ones made by the Minister of Human Resources Development, who says that every time the Government of Canada will be spending money, we must ensure that there will be a federal government identification to make sure people will know where the money is coming from, it is very clear that there is no logic between Bill C-96, the new image that the federal government wants to project of its willingness to negotiate in good faith with the governments, and these statements saying that the federal government will make sure that its investment is visible everywhere.

There is a major contradiction there and, instead of trying to sneak bills by us, the government should have the courage to make a list, to table it and to tell us: "These bills will come back because we think they are essential and the House will decide if the proposition is relevant".

The present debate is also a major precedent in the evolution of the parliamentary process. In that regard, I think we would better go back to the basic principle of British parliamentary government.

Earlier, my hon. colleague quoted excerpts from Beauchesne that clearly show how important the basis for proroguing sessions is, because this has always been a rather basic decision for a government to make. This means that the government's intention when proroguing a session to start a new one is to change its agenda, change its outlook on things, introduce new bills. This sends a message to the public about the government's new approach, as well as that of the opposition, and serve as a basis to assess the relevance of its actions.

Now, this clarity would be lost. By allowing any bill from the previous session to be brought back at any time, we are not giving the people the chance to pass judgement on the government's actions. I think this will have a major impact in the years to come, on future Parliaments and on the kind of relationship the people will have with their representatives.



It is complicating matters, providing information that is not as clear as the information provided in the past. This certainly is not the way to go to ensure the well-being of Quebecers and Canadians.

To conclude my presentation on this subject, I would like to say that the government seems to want to enjoy all the benefits of prorogation without the drawbacks. They have changed the wrapping. They have packaged differently what they are trying to sell, but the product itself has not changed. The same old toys have been tossed into the box; only the wrapping has changed. And the person opening this box is expected to shout: "Oh, this is great, all new, really different".

But that is not the message being conveyed, not at all. The message people are receiving is that old bills, bills that came under much criticism, that did not go through quickly in the House, that never made it past consideration in committee because of some snag, will be given a second life totally artificially.

Under the motion, as moved, any outstanding bill could be brought back before this House. This seems unacceptable to me, and definitely not in keeping with what is expected from a Parliament like the one in which we are sitting.

• (1305)

The government must review its actions in several respects. It must make proposals that are in line with the throne speech. It must tell us what "social union" means and what the impact of its new policies will be. Above all, its bills must be consistent with that because, according to what we have heard so far, the Canada social transfer will be a general fund that the provinces will be free to manage at they see fit.

The throne speech shows a different approach. It refers to a guaranteed minimum level of financing for each province. These elements directly contradict legislation such as Bill C-96. We would then be debating old bills in accordance with the government's new approach. The first thing we as opposition must say is that we should no longer be debating these bills since they are not in line with the government's proposed policy.

We feel this is unacceptable and hope that the government will agree to our proposed amendment, which would allow a minister to bring back any bill, but members of the House would have an opportunity to explain why they object to it. This would make Parliament more effective, which is something that people everywhere are asking us. I hope Parliament will follow our suggestion.

**Mr. Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, I had a question, but I will let the hon. member for—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Everybody knows that if an hon. member from a political party objecting to the speech wishes to ask a

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question or make a comment, generally, the Chair recognizes that other party. Does the hon. member wish to put a question?

**Mrs. Brushett:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member has the floor.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup has made a very interesting point on this motion. He would like to be selective in what he brings back to the House. This motion does not have selectivity in the sense that we can bring in one and leave out the other. It is all inclusive.

The opportunity lies in the motion that every government bill, if the minister so chooses, and every private members' bill can come before the House.

I believe we were all elected in 1993, including the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, to bring forward efficient, progressive legislation.

I would like the member for elaborate a little further on why he would consider selectivity of government business in the motion not to be part of the process of moving forward for a more efficient government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Crête:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for a question that will enable me to elaborate on how we see things.

Usually, when Parliament prorogues, all the bills die on the Order Paper and the government must come up with a new legislative agenda. That is the very reason for proroguing.

We accept that view, but we propose that only as an exception should a number of bills, over which the government and the opposition parties would agree, be maintained. The government should do some consulting, rather than trying to forcefully bring back all the bills. Let us look at a list of bills from the last session. Which ones does the government want to bring back? Which ones does the official opposition want to bring back? Which ones does the third party want to bring back? Let us make a list of all the bills for which there is a consensus.

• (1310)

If the government absolutely wants to bring back a piece of legislation for which there is no consensus, it should come before the House and say: "We are asking the House to take this bill back under consideration". Then a debate would take place. The UI bill is an excellent example. If we agreed that Bill C-111 should be brought back before the House, it would be much more democratic, much more elegant for the government to table a proposal to the effect that it wishes that Bill C-111 be maintained, even if this may involve a few amendments. Then the House would debate the relevance of such a proposal. In this way, Quebecers and Canadians

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would see very clearly who, between the government and the opposition, takes into account the opinions expressed through consultations, as well as the mood prevailing across the country.

We are not asking that the opposition be the one to decide. However, there has to be some kind of an agreement on that issue. Right now, the government is acting like someone who wants to buy a new car, while also wanting to keep the best things from the old one. This is not logical. There is no continuity in the government's action. The government should take into account the logic in these arguments. It should at least accept the amendment tabled by the Bloc, or the idea of some agreement or negotiation between the parties regarding a list of bills from the previous session. It should not adopt the view that all the bills should be brought back. That would defeat the purpose of proroguing, while also significantly reducing the importance of the speech from the throne. And if the speech from the throne becomes meaningless because all the bills from the previous session can simply be brought back, the government itself will have drastically reduced the impact of its new agenda.

[*English*]

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of debate that I think causes the public to scratch their heads and wonder a little about what we do here.

I am interested in the remarks of the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup because for the last two years he and I worked together on the unemployment bill. We travelled across the country. We heard from hundreds and thousands of people through the mails, through surveys sent out and through personal representations on that bill.

We spent hundreds of hours looking at each clause and debating the provisions of that bill. We spent millions of dollars. If I understand what he is saying it is that we should be allowed, because of a technicality, to throw out all that work and start over.

How does he justify passing off all that expense and all that time?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Crête:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is indeed using a very good example. Let us look, for instance, at the Unemployment Insurance Act. People asked us to vote against the bill as tabled. Thousands of people sent postcards to the Leader of the Opposition. Probably over 20,000, 25,000 or even 30,000 asked us to vote down the bill. Today's debate is not useless as far as my fellow citizens are concerned, because they have asked me to do everything I could to see to it that this bill dies on the Order Paper and that the government takes its responsibilities and introduces

another bill more in line with the real needs of Quebecers and Canadians.

This is why I do not have any qualms about turning a debate on what seems like a procedural issue, which it is not, into a debate on a substantive issue.

In the speech from the throne, the government said that the unemployment insurance reform would be based on the same fiscal parameters which applied before. In other words, it stated that it would stick to its philosophy on this issue. This is what we heard from people from all over Canada, people from eastern Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Talk to the people in the maritimes. I am sure that the Liberal caucus has talked about this. At least, I hope so, because if they have not done so, they are not doing their jobs. I am sure that they are doing a very good job and that they are trying to make the government take action on this issue. The best way for hon. members to play a positive role is by debating these issues here in the House as much as possible.

• (1315)

The work of the parliamentary committees is to put the finishing touch to bills, to try to improve them, by coming up with amendments that would ensure that we have, in the end, the best possible bills.

However, we are not yet at that stage with the unemployment insurance bill; we are not working out the details, we are still considering substantive matters. As long as we do not have a reform proposal which includes an active policy on employment, it would be pointless to approve anything. We will keep doing the best we can. We will put forward all the amendments needed to improve the bill, but, in this instance, what Quebecers and Canadians are asking for is a debate on the substance of the bill. If we let the government reinstate the bill in its previous form whenever it feels like it, we are not doing Quebecers and Canadians any favour.

[*English*]

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make enlarges upon the question I asked the member from Rivière-du-Loup. In his response he has admitted that what he is attempting to do, and assuming he is representing his party, what his party is attempting to do is to use any device possible to delay further work on the bill.

If one stops to think about that for a moment, it contravenes one of the principles upon which the last election was fought. All parties and all politicians were told very clearly by the public that they wanted to see a change in how this House conducted itself. The public wanted to see reforms to the rules of this Chamber. They wanted to see politicians focusing more on issues than on technicalities. They wanted to see us focusing on the things that affected the lives of people and not simply playing the many games

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that we can play within an arcane set of rules to disrupt the proceedings of the Chamber.

What has occurred here? The government came into office, laid a plan before the people and began to enact legislation that reflected that plan. After two years, which is the normal midpoint in the life of a government, it wanted to once more put before the people its plan for the next two years. This is quite common and is looked forward to. It is an opportunity for the government to reflect on what it has done and to come forward and state what it has learned, what it feels has worked and where it wants to go from here.

However, at any time when we reach that point, because of the processes that we use and the extensive consultations that we have undertaken, there are bills that are not complete. They may also not be unanimous, which is a fact of life in this Chamber, but at some point we come to a decision. We cannot simply say that because we had not come to that point on a particular piece of legislation that we should throw it on the rubbish heap and start over again particularly in light of the enormous cost. No bill represents that better than the unemployment insurance bill.

The hon. member opposite who spoke just before me was on challenged air, that old plane we flew in across the country. He sat in on the hundreds and hundreds of hours of consultation as people from every community across the country, including Rivière-du-Loup, came and spoke to us. Are we simply to say that all that work was for naught or are we to pick up where we were in the debate and continue to debate, continue to fight and continue to ask the government to move?

The member will have to admit that the government has moved a long way. The bill that is before a committee is very different from the initial thinking of the government. In fact, it is a bill that demonstrates very clearly this government's willingness to consult, to listen and to act on the wishes of people. It is because of the interventions from the member opposite as well as interventions from thousands of people across this country that there have been very significant changes. I would ask the member to remember that process.

• (1320)

The government put a green paper in front of the people of Canada and asked them to respond to it. The government in that green paper set out a number of proposals that represented its thinking about the reforms to UI.

We consulted broadly. The people gave us their responses and we put recommendations in our report that contradicted what was said in the green paper because we respected the consultations we held and we valued the input we received. It went on from there for

further work by the minister. He worked very hard and struggled very diligently over the summer to work through each one of those issues and to present even further changes before he introduced the bill.

The bill he introduced was vastly different from the green paper because of the hundreds and thousands of hours of work by Canadians and by members of this House. Now we are in committee on that bill consulting on the details, looking at some final reforms. Even now we hear the new minister talking about further changes, further amendments, further refinements. That is the process of evolution of a very complicated piece of legislation. It is a good process and one that has stood us well.

What we should not do and I think people would not accept is to simply because of a technical game that is played within the House, throw out all of that work, go back to the drawing board and hold the unemployed in this country in limbo for another one or two years. Is that fair to the unemployed? Is that fair to seasonal workers? Is that fair to employers?

It is time to get on. Yes, I respect the hon. member very much. I have valued his input on the bill. I think he has a lot to say in the area of social services and I want to hear him say it. I want him to debate the bill strenuously and I want to benefit from his input. But what I do not want is to spend a lot of time on a procedural debate. I do not want to spend a lot of time arguing how the rules of the House run so that we can disrupt the order of business, or we can throw the government off track by what, one day?

We just saw an example of that with the Reform Party. Reform members refused to allow the tabling of the list of committee members. What nonsense. What has that accomplished? My gosh, it has disrupted the agenda of the government for a day. Is this the kind of message members are going to put in their householder and run home and say: "Look what we did. We disrupted the business of the government for a day. Aren't we heroes".

That is not what people came here to do. People came here to debate, to represent their constituencies, to see that the wishes of Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and the maritimes were placed before the House. They came here to question the government, to ask ministers why they are doing what they are doing, and to hold them to account. They came here to vote, to represent their constituents.

That is why we are here. It is not to play silly games, not to spend our time, our energies, our talent and our creativity looking for little ways to put a stick into the spokes of government momentarily. Does that enhance any of us in this House?

If members want to debate the unemployment insurance bill, let us debate the unemployment insurance bill. If they want to debate

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Bill C-7, if they want to debate changes to health legislation, let us debate changes to health legislation. If they want to oppose it, oppose it. Let us have a vigorous, hard fought debate. Let us hold the government to account and let us vote. But let us stop the procedural nonsense. Let us get on with the work of this House.

Let us do what the Reform Party campaigned on, what we campaigned on, what the Bloc, the Conservatives and the New Democrats campaigned on. Let us bring some order here. Let us show people that we are spending their money wisely. Let us show people that we take the business of this country seriously. Let us get on with the debates on the issues people want us to debate and stop the procedural bickering.

• (1325)

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with some intent and some interest to the member opposite. He raised some good points about putting up procedural roadblocks for the sake of procedural roadblocks. We have not done that as a rule. I agree in that I do not think the Canadian people want to see this being done. However, the principle at stake here is whether or not we should simply acquiesce to whatever the government decides it is going to do and whether we should in our role as opposition stand up for what we think is right.

In this case the situation is that since the 35th Parliament started the government has supported the view that the nomination and election of vice-chairs for all committees should go to the Bloc, period. It has not been an open and free election. It has been a set up job from the very beginning. It is a sham of an election. Our intent is to bring this to the attention of Canadian citizens everywhere.

We would have no problem with the Bloc being elected to both vice-chairs or the vice-chair or the second vice-chair if it were a free and open election, if it were a secret election within the committee, but it is not. At every single committee I have attended, the chief government whip has sat in the committee room, watched, presided over, pointed fingers and said: "This is what you are going to do in this vote". This is a mockery of democracy.

Our point is not to be obstructive but to point out to the government and to Canadians that the government cannot be hypocritical. The Prime Minister cannot when he is in western Canada go on a radio or television program and say that it makes him sick when he looks across and sees the official opposition is a separatist party that will break up the country. Then when he gets back to Quebec he says exactly the opposite and at every possible opportunity he mollicoddles and appeases the Bloc and is so afraid to offend them. We are not afraid to offend them and if that offends the Liberal government, it should be offended.

**Mr. Alcock:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his point. I listened and considered carefully what he said until his last couple of sentences. If he will permit me I will start there.

The Prime Minister of this country and this government does not go into western Canada and say one thing then go into eastern Canada, Quebec or any other place and say something else. That is a fact. The Prime Minister has not been afraid to take any battle anywhere in this country at any time in the some 30 years he has been in this House. I have seen him do it over and over and over again. I very strenuously reject what the member has suggested.

The fact is there are laws and there are rules and there are ways of procedure in this House that we respect. The member is simply not going to gerrymander his way out of that. The fact is whether I like it or not, the Bloc is the official opposition. We heard a very lengthy ruling by the Speaker who considered that question very carefully. That is a fact.

Having established that, let us get on with the business of the House. The tabling of a list of committee members is a trivial point. How does preventing the tabling of the list of committee members by one day further his cause or make him look any more intelligent or make his debate seem any more fulsome? If he wants to make the point about vice-chairs, make it. He should stand up in this House every time. On the many, many occasions he has to debate substantive issues he should stand up in the House and make that point. He should stand up in question period and ask those questions. He should make his case.

I am sure every member knows, particularly every western member, and I am sure all the members sitting there right now know the difficulty of finding a life within the travel and the time we have to spend here. So let us spend the time here to its maximum value. Let us not waste it.

I do not want to take an extra day away from my family and my children because somebody has played around with a procedural motion, but I will do it. I will come into this House to debate any issue I possibly can, but let us not play those games. Members of the Reform Party came into this House so full of the lofty principles of government and were so prepared to defend the rights of the people and honour what the people wanted to hear. I am appalled to see you playing those kind of silly, trivial games.

• (1330)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I ask all members to not refer to other members as "you". Third person singular or third person plural, please.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to my hon. colleague's comment about not wasting our time.

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If he were really serious about this, which I think he is, at least he certainly looks sincere, the important thing is to get procedural motions like this off the table. They are on the table and we are now obligated to get involved in the debate. However, there is a very big issue at stake here.

The point I want to register was made very effectively by the hon. Pat Nowlan when he was in the House. He did it on the occasion of the 1991 debate. I refer rather extensively to some things he said. At that time he said to me: "In the years that I have been here it would boggle the mind in terms of the effective working of Parliament to do what is being projected here". It is exactly the same thing the previous government did in the House in 1991.

He said:

What really disturbs me, having spent a good many years on the opposition side, is that we know, and my former friends across the way know from when they were on the opposition, that the prorogation date is sometimes used as the negotiating lever to get bills to move along. Under the tradition and history of the British parliamentary system come prorogation everything on the Order Paper died. It was then incumbent on the government and the responsibility of the government in the new session to reintroduce the bills and/or try to work matter matters out by consent, as they so often did.

I have a good memory also. There were many times in this Chamber in which a deal was made before prorogation. Sometimes by unanimous consent bills which were on the Order Paper, certain ones being difficult to agree with perhaps, were nevertheless put together as a package so they could get through and could be reintroduced later.

If the government brings in an omnibus motion which has the effect of lumping all the bills together that were all at the same stage in the previous session of a Parliament through a formal motion of the House where it knows it has the numbers to have a fait accompli, if you like, of the passage of that kind of a motion, that puts into jeopardy any future debate on the floor of the House. That is what the issue is all about.

The question is why would a government, including this one or any other, that will use this kind of lever really worry about the concerns of the opposition? It does not care about what the opposition thinks. It knows that come prorogation the debate will be cut off and since it has the majority in the new Parliament the government knows it will not lose anything.

What in the world is this all about if we do what is proposed here? I cannot help but refer to the hon. Don Boudria. I am pleased he is here to hear himself quoted again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Members, we are all rusty. Present sitting members of the House have to be referred to by their riding and ministers by their portfolio.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize. I stand corrected. I was referring to the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I believe other members have mentioned this today. I refer to a second paragraph which I do not think has been read. The hon. member will hear himself quoted again, from May 28, 1991.

• (1335)

**An hon. member:** That was then.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, that was then and he has learned extremely well. He has learned to debate cleverly on both sides of the issue. If it were not so serious, it would be a nice game. To become a skilful debater one must be able to debate both sides of an issue.

He said: "What we are doing is amending completely the rules of the House by adopting this motion. Were we to do so or were this motion to be ruled in order, the implications of the ruling of this motion in order would be such that I fear we could render this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant".

He went on to say: "We would simply deem everything and anything to have been passed, to have been at third reading or to have been at any stage or for any reason the government did not want to proceed with other stages of the bill".

Is that not exactly what the hon. member told us 20 minutes ago? It is most interesting what happens when one walks from this side of the House to that side of the House. When they have all the numbers on their side, they begin to think anything they do has to be right.

At that time the government won the debate. Of course it did, had the numbers, exactly as Pat Nowlan put it so clearly. It reminds me very much of what Gordon Gibson said in the *Globe and Mail* on Tuesday of this week: "Our system effectively provides for a four year elected dictatorship with an astonishing concentration of power in the Prime Minister's office and the cabinet. Not unnaturally, those enjoying this power think it is a pretty good system".

That is the seriousness of the issue before us. We really should be reflecting the wishes of the people. Sometimes procedural motions are brought to the floor of the House to give advantage to levering certain bills to move things faster or slower, the suggestion being that somehow the opposition side has a say in these things.

As my hon. colleague from Calgary Centre said so clearly, we do not have a say. It is in the hands of the government. Gordon Gibson said very clearly that in the final analysis the Prime Minister can decide whatever he wants.

Now I refer to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. Let him hear what he had to say on May 28, 1991. This is excellent. The hon. member will have his memory refreshed. He could probably say the very same thing today. He should. If he were on this side of the House I am sure he would. This is really interesting. The hon. member said: "A new definition of democracy has been introduced. That is what this government is trying to introduce to

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Canada. Frankly, it is time we exposed the—"—do you remember what you said?

**Mr. Milliken:** Fraud.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Fraud. He called it a fraud but today it is good stuff. He goes on. It gets better: "I want to deal with the propriety of the motion the government introduced. I suggest it is contrary to all the practices of this House for the last 124 years. It is a breach of the proprieties of this place. While the Speaker has ruled that the motion is in order and I respect that ruling, I suggest that it is still morally wicked".

• (1340)

What a statement. That is what he said when he was on this side but now that he is part of the government he says that is okay. It is as morally wicked today as it was then. The morals have changed. It is amazing. One walks across the House and the morals become different. Is it not interesting? What has happened in this place?

Then he drew his conclusion: "I suggest that this is wrong and it is wickedly wrong. It is a gross violation of the constitutional principles on which the House has operated since Confederation". Listen to the loftiness of these phrases. "Indeed it is contrary to the whole practice of British parliamentary tradition for 900 years and nothing like this has ever been tried before. I suggest it is wrong. The government knows it is wrong".

It is very interesting that at that time the hon. member was joined by the now premier of Newfoundland who said: "The government party of the day regrettably for the country, a country in desperate need of leadership on the constitutional front and on the economic front, does not have the confidence of the people". Even as a member of the opposition, one wanting to replace the governing party, he made those kinds of comments. What does the government do? Yesterday the Prime Minister indicated to the House that the back of the deficit had been broken. That is an interesting conclusion when the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the speech from the throne said very clearly that the deficit shall be at least or not more than 2 per cent of the gross domestic product.

That does not suggest the deficit's back has been broken. It has not made any indication either of how seriously the fiscal situation of the country has been damaged and continues to be damaged.

**An hon. member:** That is a lot more progress than your Tory friends made.

**Mr. Schmidt:** This is interesting. The hon. member says that is more progress than the Tories made. I draw to the member's attention that since he and his colleagues came into the House they have added to the debt \$76 billion plus. That is their contribution to the fiscal health of the country. It is on the backs of the people that

the deficit and the debt ride, and they are getting heavier and heavier. I suggest to the Prime Minister and to my colleagues opposite that the back that is being broken is the back of the taxpayer, not of the deficit.

There comes a time when one almost has to say that what we have here is a tyranny of the majority. It is not the interests of the people that are being addressed in this motion but the convenience of a particular group of people who not want to live by the procedures that we have all agreed to. They want to change them.

It would be one thing to say this will simply bring back the bills the government wants back on the table. Then it ties that with this sort of noble condescending attitude, almost patronizing, saying it will also allow private members' bills to come forward. That does not change the principle one iota. It seems the government wants to get some kind of prestige, or to drain some credibility from the fact that yes, private members' bills will also be able to come to the table. If it was morally wicked before, if it was a fraud before, it is no less wicked and no less a fraud today than it was then.

• (1345)

I suggest that the sooner we get on with the business of the country and deal with things like the deficit, justice issues and keeping criminals off the streets, we will be far better off than wrangling here on whether we should bring back all that stuff that was really supposed to have been stopped by prorogation at the whim and fancy of the government whenever it wishes to do so.

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if my hon. colleague would want to share his views on the cost issues. I am not talking about financial costs. I am talking about the human costs of the various committees that participated throughout the previous session. I know that many of our constituents throughout the country have invested a great deal of time and effort in coming forward to share their views on various matters before committees at various stages.

I was curious about what are the hon. member's views or his party's views on the subject of costs and whether it is something that should be given consideration.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I am so happy that my colleague across the way asked that question. It really gives me a chance to say something about the speed with which legislation is introduced to the House and the substance of the legislation that is introduced. It is almost like having a car that is trying to go uphill but the ice on the highway is so slick that the car cannot move at all. It is spinning like crazy but it is not going anywhere. That is what is happening here.

If the hon. member is really concerned about the costs that were incurred, then the legislation should have been pushed through the House on a regular basis, instead of trying to force it all through at the end.

Let us take as an example the internal trade agreement. The agreement was signed on July 1 the year before. A whole year later the bill finally came to the House. We would told we should pass it into law so that it can be put into operation. What was the delay? Certainly the opposition did not delay it. The standing committee did not delay it. Somebody else delayed it. I wonder if it is not the same group that has the opportunity to bring bills back to the House if this motion is passed.

The concern I have is this. How much time has the government wasted by not moving faster than it did? If the government wanted to bring all these bills forward, why did it not just keep on going? We lost a whole month.

**Mr. Silye:** Why did you prorogue?

**Mr. Zed:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate, as I often do, the views of my learned colleague. The only difficulty I have is this. What about the human investment in time, energy and the quality of the debate that was advanced prior to prorogation?

I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he would comment on that one specific issue. Is it not a valid comment that there were significant investments made in bringing people to Ottawa or having our committees travel throughout the country? Would it not be a pity to lose all of the very good work that was done by all members on all sides of the House and particularly at the committee level? I ask my hon. colleague to comment on that aspect.

• (1350)

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to comment on the human investment. The sad part is that so much of the human effort has been completely ignored by the government.

All kinds of witnesses come before committees, not only the industry committee but a number of other committees, and what effect has it had on legislation? What effect has it had in bringing about any amendments? The hon. member should recognize that that kind of thing is much more debilitating than for the government to take the position that if it prorogues it can bring that stuff back because some of that investment of time and energy is significant and should not be lost.

It is not lost. We have heard all those things. If the government is really serious it will bring forward that legislation very quickly and very clearly. It will not have to go through all of that debate again. We know that and I believe the hon. member knows that.

If there were ever a time when we should be sensitive to the human element it is now. We should recognize the terrible position that people are put in when they are not sure about what is going to

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happen to the criminal who is incarcerated for committing a violent crime, who has raped their daughters and is now out on the street again without any restriction whatsoever. That is the concern. That has a far greater human cost than the debate that has happened, that has not been forgotten and does not have to be repeated even if the bill is presented at first reading. That is the human cost.

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear the laughter and the jesting going on this afternoon, looking back at the history of what has been said and leaving a very distorted picture of what this motion is all about today.

When the government House leader brought this motion in this morning it was clear and simple. It serves all members of this House. It gives an opportunity of bringing any legislation of the government and any legislation of any private member back to the floor of this House as long as it is identical to the way it was presented prior to prorogation and as long as it has passed second reading. That is very simple and very appropriate for the public who are listening today to understand what this motion does.

The opposition has been misleading the public this afternoon. They talked about anything and everything. They talked about the deficit and about changing policies. This legislation was brought forward where you have the opportunity if you have a voice, Reform members and Bloc members, you have an opportunity in debate—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** I am sorry to be such a bore, colleagues. I know it is early in the session but please just delete the word you and say they or he.

**Mrs. Brushett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been a little distracted with some of the history on this debate. I have no history in this place except as a 1993 member so it is interesting to be reminded of what has gone on in the past, however boring I think it was.

The point of this legislation is to give us the opportunity to proceed efficiently in the business of government. Each and every member of this place was elected in 1993 to pass legislation that works effectively and efficiently for our society. Legislation that was in progress, for want of a better word, that was left on the Order Paper before prorogation, is to come back for debate. There will be opportunities to add amendments and make changes. It does not mean that any hon. member in this House must remain silent.

We have talked about many things here today. Some bills, such as C-111, the employment insurance act, has been debated and the public has talked about it for several months. However, that is what legislation is all about. It is to seek consensus not only from members in this House but from the public as well. The hon. member for Okanagan Centre talked about the debt. He said that we have added to the debt. This is misleading. This government has reduced the deficit. As the Minister of Finance brings in the budget

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next Wednesday afternoon at 4.30 p.m., the public will see how we have reduced the deficit.

• (1355)

In terms of the debt, it is out there; it exists. However, this will be part of our longer term legislation and the debt will be taken care of once we have dealt with the deficit. I must remind the hon. members of the opposition of first things first and keep our priorities straight.

When we talk about the Unemployment Insurance Act, about Bill C-111, the public has advised us of what it would like to see in that bill. We have listened to the public. As it goes into committee for more discussion those amendments, those considerations will be listened to. We have the interest of the Minister of Human Resources Development as well as his expression of opportunity to hear those recommendations and see if they can be fitted into this legislation. The opportunity lies in the meetings in committee to present those views.

I would suggest this misleading of the public here today is a distortion of what this House is about. It is a distortion because we came here promising the public we would act more responsibly, more maturely and not spend our time on issues of procedure.

We bring many motions to the floor on House procedure, but was that not also a promise to the public, that we did not have to look back to 100 years ago, that it is time we updated some of the legislation, some of the standing orders, some of the House procedures. The House procedures committee is a committee of all parties in this House.

There is the opportunity and I would challenge any member. If an hon. member believes they do not have that opportunity, it lies there for each and every one of us, whether we are backbenchers on the government side or whether we are in opposition.

The motion presented this morning by the government House leader is very clear. I believe the public, in the interest of efficiency, in the interest of money that has been spent in hearing public views, in holding public hearings across this nation, would be in support of progressive motions that see legislation move forward.

If the hon. member believes this is not the wish of the public, that it is not the wish of the Canadian taxpayer, then I believe the opportunity lies that those views, those statistics, those numbers of convincing, of otherwise, could be brought forward in committee.

The opportunity to carry legislation forward is a reality and it is part of a credible government's mandate. Some of the bills will come forward if the members so choose, but this is all inclusive. Any member has the opportunity to bring a bill forward as long as

it is identical and has passed second reading; that is private members' bills as well as government bills.

There is not selectivity, as some members have suggested. It is an opportunity for all bills. As we sat here last year there was a bill from the Reform member on grandparents' rights and of grandparents' accessibility to their grandchildren. As their offspring go through divorce or separation there can be problems of keeping the children at a distance from grandparents.

The gallery was full of grandparents that day as I spoke on that bill on behalf of the Reform member. That bill has excellent content that serves the children of this country, that serves them in a way such that they will have that support morally, lovingly, with nurturing and financially from grandparents who are a little more distanced from the situation. That was a private member's bill from the Reform Party. I would suggest this is an opportunity for every member in the House to support this motion today to see that it does pass which would bring these bills back for debate and for passage.

• (1400)

There is an opportunity as well when we talk about deficits, debts and the cost that we forget that and think of what we have been through. I am convinced the public does not want us to delay in time and cost in not passing this motion which was brought forward today and not bringing those bills back here to debate but they want us to continue on to get them off the slate.

We have a responsibility and we have taken that. Every member in the House has an opportunity through the standing committees which are broad committees representing all parties in this House. I think it is misleading when we tell the public before the cameras today in the Parliament of Canada that we are doing anything but practising good government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the comments of my colleague, and I have a question for her. I am not very familiar with House procedure, but I do know that according to the statutes prorogation means all bills die on the Order Paper.

The government knows it. This has always been the case since there is a government. The government is free to prorogue or not, but it knows very well that when it does, all bills automatically die on the Order Paper. This very government, when it was sitting on the opposition benches, was very critical of the Conservative government because it did not abide by the rules of this House.

How can the government take such a position now? Is the hon. member trying to tell us that the government is free to ignore our



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procedures for the sake of convenience? That is the fundamental question. Do we have procedures or do we not? My colleague is telling me procedures can be changed—and I agree with her—but let the government change them, then. But as long as they stand as they are, it should not ignore them just because it is more convenient. That is the fundamental question.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Brushett:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address that very interesting question. I find it interesting that the hon. member for Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies whose purpose here is to separate the country refers to the origins of the Queen, the King and the reign of British rule, that it is so great and this House has no opportunity to change those historic perspectives as they were.

I assure the hon. member that as part of the Liberal promise, as part of the 1993 election platform, this government took the responsibility and the obligation to the Canadian people to manage the Parliament of Canada more efficiently. Also, in the name of the Canadian taxpayer we would introduce procedures that seemed fitting of 1996 and the progress we should be making as we move toward the 21st century.

I have the greatest respect, as all hon. members do in the House, for the historic value and the traditions, but I believe it is not the absolute rule that we live within the monarchy. We know the views of the separatist members and their purpose and intent here.

This House does have the responsibility to serve the Canadian people and to bring forward legislation that is progressive and efficient. In the name of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs governing this place, in which all members, even separatist members are a part of that committee, then we do have that responsibility. I believe we are only serving the Parliament in a wise, efficient manner using House procedures.

• (1405 )

**Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the hon. member. Could she tell me the specific reason the Liberal government prorogued the House? Could I have a simple answer?

**Mrs. Brushett:** Mr. Speaker, it is part of this government's platform, part of its promise to the Canadian people to deliver good government. Part of it was to restructure the Unemployment Insurance Act, part of it was to restructure the standing committees and all procedures in this House, and it was to make the House deliver legislation more efficiently and economically.

I am sure the hon. member knows the red book promise. He probably knows the red book as well as any other member in the House.

**Mr. Harris:** Probably better.

**Mrs. Brushett:** Yes, perhaps the hon. member does know it better than some.

The legislation was introduced according to what the Canadian people requested. Canadians have requested additional commitments from the Government of Canada, that we would respect the five principles of the Canada Health Act; to ensure health accessibility at no charge except through the public purse for all Canadians; to ensure that we would provide the kind of compassionate, caring society; to ensure that we would maintain the Old Age Security Act and the guaranteed income supplement; to ensure to the Canadian people that we would do the things that our government promised.

That is part of why we had a red book. It is part of why we had a throne speech and it is part of why we have the numbers to run the Government of Canada today.

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is probably the same question my colleague just asked which she did not answer, the purpose of prorogation.

To get on to that issue, is it not to wipe off the slate and start over with the throne speech to set the new direction for the government with its new vision, with its new hope, with its new ideas for growth and opportunity? Is it not to go forward instead of going backward in the first piece of legislation the government introduces?

The first motion the government has introduced is to bring back all those old government bills it does not want to leave behind. Those bills are supposed to die on the order paper.

Prorogation is the cause of this motion and the cause of the undemocratic use of this Chamber. What is the purpose and why, in her opinion, did her government prorogue?

**Mrs. Brushett:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has suggested that we are bringing back all the old government bills, to use his words. The hon. member forgets that we are bringing back Reform private members' bills and private members' bills from the Bloc, the NDP and the Conservatives. We are bringing back all bills that were in session prior to the break.

The hon. member recognizes that this legislation is excellent legislation which must be carried through. This legislation needs to be completed. Canadians want this legislation back on the Order Paper and they want it passed.

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• (1410)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before getting to the main part of my speech, perhaps I should answer the question asked by two Reform members. What these two members and many other people are wondering is why prorogue the session if the government wants to reinstate everything that was being considered during last session.

Probably all that has happened in the last few months, particularly in connection with the Quebec referendum, is one of the reasons why the government wants to start afresh, to show Canadians that it has regained control of the situation. But I want to get back to the main point, because I am not speaking in reply to the speech from the throne, but rather on Motion No. 1.

This is a motion to reinstate bills that were at various stages when the session was prorogued. That would appear logical, up to a point, but tradition has it that when a session ends and another one begins, we make a fresh start. Otherwise, we should have continued in the same parliamentary session without having a new speech from the throne and a new beginning.

This behaviour annoys me for two reasons: it shows a lack of respect for parliamentary tradition and practice, and—this annoys me even more, as it does many other people who are interested in politics—it proves that very often one says something when on one side of the House and something else when on the other side. I will get back to this in a while, since many members who now sit over there criticized the then Conservative government when it put forward a motion very similar to the one we are debating this afternoon. Just wait and see what their positions were then. It is rather difficult to understand how they can support this motion today after all they said against it then.

Let us go back to the first point, which is the lack of respect for tradition and practice. I agree that some things must be changed, improved, in the parliamentary system. The problem is that each and every time changes are made, the opposition parties or the backbenchers lose some of their powers so that the government, the executive, can have more power and be able to break or alter a rule as it pleases to go ahead undisturbed with its agenda.

This is rather disappointing, since all 295 of us here were elected to represent the people. Our constituents do not want to see our rights and responsibilities as members of Parliament trampled on; they want us to play an even bigger role and have an even greater influence on the parliamentary system.

Of course, my Liberal colleagues will say: “Motion No. 1 also enables members to reinstate private members’ bills and to carry on with their consideration in the current session”. But one has to

be aware of one thing: how many private members’ bills, and we can go back as far as we want, actually became law? How many private members’ bills actually went through the whole legislative process? Very, very few of them.

If the government is proposing this motion authorizing the reinstatement of measures at the stage they were before in Parliament, it is to pursue its agenda on bills which it sets great store by; it is not to please members whose private bills had completed a stage in the process. This rarely happens.

So, the purpose of motion No. 1 is to deal with government business, basically everything that comes from cabinet and the executive branch. Thus, it is not a major argument for the government. Of course, it sweetens the pill.

If these bills are so important for the government and if they are so good for Quebecers and Canadians, why did it not introduce them earlier during the last session? Since it was elected two and a half years ago, why did it not hurry to introduce these legislative measures so vital to the operations of the Government of Canada and to the federal administration?

• (1415)

We wonder why. And when we search for answers, we find some clues. We notice that there has been an atmosphere of panic in the last few months. That was obvious in the speech from the throne. The government does not have clear directions for the second half of its mandate and it is even alluding to the possibility of an early election to avoid the constitutional agenda of 1997.

I will talk about the second part. I would like to quote some Liberal members who were in the opposition not so long ago. Maybe they will go back to the opposition seats. Not all of those who are here now, but some of them. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, now in the Senate, speaking to the Conservative motion, declared this: “I cannot understand why this government, these government bullies now want to impose their will on the House of Commons”.

He was talking about government bullies imposing their will. I would be curious to know if the same bullies now work for the Liberal Party and if the hon. senator still thinks the same way. He was not alone to speak. There were several of them. There is one I just saw. He is the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands. He declared: “They have to be reinstated in the usual course, but they ought to have been introduced and dealt with as new bills in this session”. That means that a bill must be moved as a new bill and go through the normal legislative process. He quoted from Beauchesne, saying that any irregularity of any portion of a motion renders the whole motion irregular. He fought hard and even contested the legality of that motion. He presented many arguments to that effect.

One of his colleagues, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who is still with us, was a lot harsher. He said: “The implications of ruling this motion in order would be such that I fear we could render—if a government wanted to—this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant”.

To render the House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant. That is what the member said. He is not a sovereignist, a separatist, but a member who sits on the other side of the House and who occupies a very important position within the government. Why has he changed his mind now that he is in a position of authority? How can that be explained? People become very cynical about politics when they see individuals change their mind so drastically in a relatively short time span.

How can a politician who says that he is working for the well-being of Canadians and wants to improve their social and economic standards of living have credibility when he contradicts himself constantly. People do not know when we are telling the truth. They do not know who among us is telling the truth. It is very serious. It is a lack of respect for the office we hold, for the institution for which we work, which, ultimately, is there to serve the people.

It is surprising to see those people, who claimed to champion the cause of integrity and transparency in their red book—which, by the way, they threw away as soon as they took office—suddenly adopting the agenda of the previous government in many areas.

Look at what is happening with the reform of social programs and think of the lack of respect for the institution. They are not even able to take a position that would be seen as their own, to promote the role of members of Parliament and to respect the institution.

If we really wanted to make the institution more efficient, as my Liberal colleague said, we could evaluate how really efficient committees are and examine the way they operate. There are many issues to examine.

The government tries to control everything: House committees, procedure and all the rest and this is why we have now almost reached the point where we have a sham of democracy. Some were complaining about the monarchy earlier, but it is simply disguised. The real power of individuals in this House is relatively small when we face actions like those of the government.

• (1420)

The Bloc Québécois wants to be constructive. If I remember rightly, my colleague for Laurier—Sainte-Marie or my colleague for Berthier—Montcalm introduced an amendment whereby a bill

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could be returned to the stage it was at. Under certain circumstances, a prorogation can be very useful.

If a minister or a member introduces business from the previous session requesting the unanimous consent of the House to continue, he will have it, if the measure is in everyone's interest.

This would avoid having the government simply bringing back its own agenda, but also all the measures that are, to all intents and purposes, uncontested, approved by all the members and must be approved by all Quebecers and Canadians, given that we are from very different parties. In this regard, the amendment would therefore be constructive.

In the few minutes I have left before question period, I would like to mention that the member preceding me referred to the fact that we were sovereignists or separatists, whatever your preference, and that she was surprised at our interest in following parliamentary rules, because this is the British parliamentary system.

Since our arrival here, we have shown respect, probably even more than the government, for parliamentary institutions and rules. We are fighting democratically. We are seeking major change, major change in the future of Quebecers and of Canadians, because we want to build a relationship between peoples.

That does not prevent us from respecting institutions and from waging a democratic struggle. Thus this sort of remark reveals a considerable lack of understanding of our action and role here. I am pleased to be able to tell her that we are not attacking institutions. We are not attacking individuals, we are not attacking Canadians. We are leading a battle for Quebecers, because we think it is the best road for the future for the people of Quebec and the people of Canada.

When we are told that, in the end, it is in our interest to block the process—I remember that, when we first came into the House of Commons, everybody said that the Bloc would be doing anything to block the conduct of business of the House. People had fun making puns. It did not happen that way. We allowed for an improvement of the conduct of business. We co-operated a lot. There was much co-operation between House leaders of all parties to ensure that the House may conduct its business in the most efficient manner, to avoid using procedural technicalities to prolong debates late into the night and achieve nothing. We allowed for an improvement in the conduct of business of our institution. That is how we want things to be.

Motion No. 1 does not improve the functioning of the institution and, I am convinced, will not go down in history as a measure having furthered the British parliamentary system in the best interest of Canadians. On the contrary, it gives more power to the

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executive, to cabinet which is really in charge of the government and controls MPs, who, when they protest in caucus—as is now the case—are threatened with a general election to keep them in line.

In that sense, it is a threat. I find it interesting when they threaten to send certain MPs from their own party to the slaughter house. Personally, I am not against the fact that you could call an election. The only danger is that you may lose your Prime Minister in the battle, but we shall see. When the time comes, voters in Saint-Maurice will be the judge.

I am quite sure that there are Liberal members in this House who are thinking, in their hearts of hearts: “This is true; this is another thing we are doing which does not make any sense.” Let them keep it up.

If they cannot publicly side with us to defend the rules and the role of members, at least, when they meet in the privacy of their caucus, let them raise the issue with the cabinet members, who control this Parliament, and with all those behind the scene, who yield some power, and tell them: “Listen, there are limits to how far you can lead us; when you decide to make a new speech from the throne and start a new session, it is to make a fresh start in several areas and the same should apply to the bills introduced during the last session.”

To conclude, I would like to point out that the unemployment insurance reform is among these bills, and nobody will convince me that it is not controversial and cannot be improved. Why not take advantage of a new session to put this unemployment insurance reform on a more solid footing? This way, at least, everybody's interests would be served.

Let have some self-respect and not change one's mind when changing side in the House; let us not make an about-face as did the member for Kingston and the Islands who has completely changed his minds on this motion. Furthermore, let us follow parliamentary procedure and try to make the role of member of Parliament as efficient as possible.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the purpose of prorogation of the government was strictly to introduce a new throne speech.

Between now and Christmas there probably will not be any new substantive pieces of legislation introduced by the government. That is why it wants to reintroduce through Motion M-1 all of the previous bills without any notification to the opposition members. We will not know what bills it wants to bring back. It will be able to

put them back at whatever stage it wants. This is a contravention of the democratic process in the House.

The current Minister of Health, the member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, had this to say about this type of action taken by the previous government: “I contend that the motion is in principle unacceptable and that it seeks to circumvent, indeed to subvert, the normal legislative process of this House. In the past this kind of thing has only been done by unanimous consent. Now the government is seeking to establish an ominous precedent by attempting to force this procedure on the House. This is an offensive and dangerous departure from the practices of all parliamentary bodies”.

The current premier of Newfoundland, the former minister of fisheries in the government, had this to say about this type of activity which the government is now doing: “We see the decision by the government today to put this motion before the House as a confirmation of the destruction—and that is what it is—of our parliamentary system of government”.

Another Liberal member of the House from Halifax had this to say about the Conservative government on this same issue: “I can only say that the government should hang its head in shame. One wonders today why the government prorogued the House of Commons last time”.

I agree wholeheartedly with the words of the member for Kingston and the Islands. When in opposition he had this to say about this very action taken now by his government which he criticized. I could not say it better. I will have to use his words and I express my support for his conviction, his integrity, his intelligence on this issue: “If the royal prerogative is to mean anything, the prorogation ended those bills. They have to be reinstated in the usual course but they ought to have been introduced and dealt with as new bills in this session. That is the proper procedure in the absence of unanimous consent, not this fiasco that we are wasting taxpayers' money on and doing now. What the government is doing by this, and let us make it perfectly clear what is happening here, is short circuiting the legislative process”.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Brien:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Centre found some very interesting points in the position of the member for Kingston and the Islands. I also found some very eloquent comments of his. He said: “A new definition of democracy—That is what this government is trying to introduce to Canada—I suggest it is perhaps one of the worst outrages that has been perpetrated in this House in many years—it is still morally wicked of the government to proceed with this motion”. We could go on and on with quotations like that. There are many.

*Government Orders*

He is not alone. The current finance minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, once declared: “We find ourselves in the situation we are now in. The bill died on the Order Paper. In its supreme arrogance and lack of understanding, this government comes to us and says: ‘we would like to reinstate it’”.

These are the same people who today are tabling this motion. Nothing further needs to be said, to know that such actions contribute largely to the results of polls showing a 7, 8 or 10 per cent credibility rating for politicians. Some opinion polls even give figures as low as 2 per cent. I believe these people should feel

responsible for that situation and should stop changing direction constantly.

They still have an opportunity to retain their credibility if they change their position and withdraw their motion so that the situation can go back to normal. They only have to return all those bills they want passed to the first reading stage. This is all I had to say.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 2.30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 2.31 p.m.)

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