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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 7, 1998

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 7, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (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 two petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The committee has considered Bill C-39, an act to amend the Nunavut Act and the Constitution Act, 1867, and has agreed to report it with amendments.

• (1005)

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade regarding Canadian military personnel captured in Hong Kong during World War II.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 32nd report of the Standing

Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Transport.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 32nd report later this day.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MINT ACT

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-41, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mint Act and the Currency Act.

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

* * *

[*English*]

INDIAN ACT

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-402, an act to amend the Indian Act (obligations of landlords and tenants on reserve land).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Coquihalla to introduce my private member's bill entitled an act to amend the Indian Act, obligations of landlords and tenants on reserve land.

This past November 51 families at the Driftwood mobile home park located on Indian reserve land were evicted from their homes as a result of a failed septic system. Most of the residents were forced to either relocate, sell their homes for whatever they could get or simply walk away from their investments.

This tragedy clearly demonstrates the inequity that exists for people who rent land or residential premises on reserve land. Legislation is clearly lacking to define the obligations of crown when granting a lease authorized in section 58(3) of the Indian Act. Also lacking is legislation that clearly defines the obligations between the landlord and tenant, in other words between the crown, leasee under a lease from the minister and the tenant.

The bill would amend the Indian Act to precisely define the obligations of landlords and tenants on Indian reserve land by making existing provincial landlord and tenancy legislation apply to these leases.

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

*Routine Proceedings***CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT**

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-403, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (lead sinkers and lead jigs).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased today to have the opportunity to present my private member's bill.

Specifically this legislation is an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Mr. John Phillips and Mr. Robert Anderson who brought this important issue to my attention. The eventual passing of the bill will represent the end of a long road travelled by both gentlemen after having spent three years trying to educate Canadians and Canadian governments on the consequences of using lead sinkers and lead jigs in our pristine waters.

The legislation will ensure that lead sinkers and jigs are banned for both use and importation. The protection of our environment is of primary concern to the government and I am sure that every member in the House will support the legislation when it is tabled for debate.

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

* * *

• (1010)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (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 32nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

ADULT ENTERTAINMENT

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two related petitions although they concern different subjects. In the first the petitioners call the attention of parliament to the fact that the city of Kanata accepted an application for an adult entertainment parlour based on a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada. They call on parliament to pursue changes to the legislation that would give municipalities the right

to prohibit adult entertainment parlours, goods and services and to broaden the restrictions on existing adult entertainment parlours.

CRTC

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): In the second petition, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners draw the attention of parliament to the fact that the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission refused to license four religious broadcasting services but has at the same time approved the pornographic Playboy channel. They call on parliament to review the mandate of the CRTC and direct the CRTC to administer a new policy which will encourage the licensing of religious broadcasters.

JUSTICE

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first petition is with regard to the Young Offenders Act. The people in my riding from communities such as Merritt, Penticton and people from other locations in British Columbia are concerned about the Young Offenders Act. They are asking that the House of Commons and the government deal with issue as soon as possible by lowering the age limit, transferring those accused of violent crimes to adult court. Publication of names is also important.

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is related to the hepatitis C situation. The petitioners ask that parliament reopen the issue of compensation for all victims of hepatitis C. There are 90 petitioners listed from all areas of British Columbia.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to table this petition from 50 of my constituents who state that over 90% of Canadians do not believe stricter gun laws are a solution to violent crime. They also cite opposition from police on the streets and many provincial and territorial governments. They therefore ask parliament to repeal Bill C-68 and instead spend the high cost it will require on more effective measures to cut crime and improve public safety.

ADULT ENTERTAINMENT

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from 419 people in the city of Kanata and that area. They are requesting parliament to pursue changes to the legislation that would give municipalities the right to prohibit adult entertainment parlours and broaden the restrictions of existing adult entertainment parlours to reduce the incidence of crime. These residents are opposed to an adult entertainment parlour opening in their neighbourhood. They are disappointed that supreme court rulings override community values and wishes.

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 75 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 75—**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:**

With respect to assistance provided under the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, would the Minister responsible for ACOA provide for each federal riding in New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island the following: (a) a list of projects approved under the ACOA program since June 2, 1997 to the date this question is answered; (b) the location, by province and riding, for each approved project; and (c) the financial contribution made by ACOA for each approved project?

Return tabled.

[English]

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on October 28, 1997, I asked Question No. 33. There seems to be a reluctance to provide the answer to this question. I cannot understand it, other than to note that the question has to do with a special relationship between the minister and the Oak Bay Marine Group and the actions of the minister's west coast assistant, Velma McColl. I would like to know when I can expect that answer.

• (1015)

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I have looked into the whereabouts of the response to Question No. 33. I assure the member that it is not reluctance. The reply is being processed and I will present it in the House as soon as possible.

Mr. John Cummins: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the unsatisfactory answer on the previous question, I asked Question No. 56 on December 2, 1997. It has to do again with the same two individuals.

I must say that these questions are of some importance because they have to do with the Chinook salmon fishery of which 47 runs in British Columbia are at high risk.

I would like to know when I can expect an answer to this question. On December 2 the question was asked. The 45 days is long gone.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I do recognize the importance of these questions. I will also look into the whereabouts of the response to Question No. 56.

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Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member thinks 45 days is bad, listen to this one. Question No. 21 has been on the Order Paper since, believe this or not, October 3, 1997.

The parliamentary secretary has repeatedly promised the House he will make inquiries as to when Question No. 21 will be answered. I recommend that the parliamentary secretary come out from behind the curtain and tell us when Question No. 21 will be answered.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I have made a note of Question No. 21. I would point out to the House that some of these questions involve virtually all the departments of government and to gather the information takes a considerable period of time. I will certainly look into Question No. 21.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that all remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (Part I) and the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 31 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-19.

[Translation]

The motions will be grouped for debate as follows:

Group No. 1: Motions Nos. 1 to 5.

[English]

Group No. 2: Motions Nos. 6 to 8 and Motion No. 30.

Group No. 3: Motions Nos. 9 and 28.

[Translation]

Group No. 4: Motion No. 10.

Group No. 5: Motions Nos. 11 to 17.

[English]

Group No. 6: Motions Nos. 18, 20, 22 and 23.

[Translation]

Group No. 7: Motions Nos. 19, 25 to 27 and 29.

[English]

Group No. 8: Motions Nos. 21 and 24.

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[Translation]

Group No. 9: Motion No. 31.

[English]

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 5 to the House.

● (1020)

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-19, in Clause 2, be amended

(a) by replacing lines 31 and 32 on page 2 with the following:

“Minister, on the recommendation of the standing committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to human resources development, to hold office during good”

(b) by adding after line 35 on page 2 the following:

“(1.1) Before making a recommendation to the Minister under subsection (1), the committee referred to in that subsection shall hold public hearings to hear the representations of any person seeking nomination as a candidate for the offices of Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson or wishing to make representations with respect to any candidate under consideration by the committee.”

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-19, in Clause 2, be amended by adding after line 35 on page 2 the following:

“(1.1) The terms referred to in subsection (1) shall not be renewed.”

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-19, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing lines 36 to 40 on page 2 and lines 1 to 14 on page 3 with the following:

“(2) Subject to subsection (3), the members of the Board other than the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons are to be appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the standing committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to human resources development, to hold office during good behaviour for terms not exceeding three years each, subject to removal by the Minister at any time for cause.

(2.1) Before the standing committee referred to in subsection (2) makes recommendations to the Minister for the purposes specified in that subsection, the committee shall hold at least one hearing at which it shall invite the organizations representative of employees or employers to submit names of candidates for the positions referred to in that subsection.

(3) The members of the Board appointed pursuant to paragraph 9(2)(e) are to be appointed by the Minister, on the recommendation of the standing committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to human resources development, to hold office during good behaviour for terms not exceeding three years each, subject to removal by the Minister at any time for cause.”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-19, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing lines 13 to 20 on page 5 with the following:

“12.03 (1) If the Chairperson of the Board is absent or unable to act, a Vice-Chairperson designated by the Minister acts as Chairperson for the time being, and a Vice-Chairperson so designated has and may exercise all the powers and perform all the duties and functions of the Chairperson.

(2) If the office of Chairperson is vacant, a person chosen by a vote of a majority of the members of the Board present when the vote is taken shall act as Chairperson.”

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-19, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 44 on page 7 with the following:

“tions, if any, to the Minister and to the standing committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to human resources development.”

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, the amendments that we are proposing to improve Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code.

First of all, and this is unfortunate, we will not be able to put forward all the amendments that we wanted to present, for reasons of procedure, given the nature of this bill, compared to that of last year's proposed legislation, which also sought to amend the Canada Labour Code, but which was never passed, seemingly for technical reasons in the Senate, and because a federal election was called.

There are amendments which we really wanted to propose again this year, but we were unable to do so for reasons of procedure, as I mentioned earlier. These amendments sought to have flour mills and other undertakings for the milling of grain come under provincial legislation, including the Quebec labour code, as opposed to being covered by the Canada Labour Code, as is currently the case. We cannot go any further for procedural reasons, as I said.

As for federal public servants, whether they are represented by the Public Service Alliance of Canada or the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, and also RCMP personnel, we have been defending these groups since we came to Ottawa, so that they too can be covered by the Canada Labour Code, as opposed to the Public Service Staff Relations Act, but unfortunately, again for reasons of procedure, we cannot table the appropriate amendments.

I now come to our amendments in Group No. 1, which address two issues: first, there is the role of committees, in particular the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, to which the Department of Labour reports and which deals with the Canada Labour Code and, second, vacancies, as well as the renewal of the terms of members

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of the Labour Relations Board, recently renamed the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

As for the committee, it is known that, historically, the Bloc Québécois has defended in the House the fact that House committees are called upon to play a greater role in overall operations. Right now, one criticism is that committees are required to meet without really having many powers, because the executive feels free to do all sorts of things without first seeking the opinion of members, the House and committees.

We therefore suggest, for instance, that the appointment of members to the Canada Industrial Relations Board be by recommendation and that the committee be permitted to hold hearings, that the board submit an annual report, not just to the minister, but also to the committee, and that, in the case of appointments, the committee be involved in the entire process, that it perhaps even be allowed to call candidates to appear before it and to seek the opinion of the public with respect to the list of potential members.

These amendments are entirely consistent with the Bloc Québécois' earlier positions calling for greater involvement by elected representatives in all aspects of operations in the interests of democracy.

I will come back to this often. The dramatic gesture by our colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, says a great deal not just about how things are done, but about what things are done. It is the whole operation of what we represent in democratic terms that is open to discussion and highly so, in my opinion. We in the Bloc Québécois think that this is the sort of measure that will greatly strengthen the role of elected officials and democracy.

• (1025)

More specifically, everything that concerns the committee is in Motions Nos. 1, 3 and 5.

Motion No. 2 serves to ensure that the members of the Industrial Relations Board—the chairperson and the vice-chairpersons—cannot have their terms renewed after three or five years, as the case may be, to provide for an automatic turnover to provide the board with new blood. We consider that, by setting a time limit, the board will be revitalized, perhaps have new approaches, new influence networks and look differently at things.

Finally, Motion No. 4 pertains to vacancies. The law as it stands provides that the chairperson is to be replaced by the vice-chairperson in the event he is absent or ill. In the event the chairperson is absent or ill, or the position vacant, the bill provides that the minister will choose the person to replace the chairperson.

We think a vacancy, and not a temporary absence, in the position of chairperson should be filled by the individual chosen by a majority vote of the members of the board present. We think that,

when people know each other, it would perhaps be more democratic and more fair to let those who know the field appoint a new chairperson in the case of a vacancy.

We know how gifted this government is at finding friends when it counts. We think this would be a fine time to call a halt to this sort of attitude, which we have seen all too often, and ensure that people close to events are invited to react and take action accordingly, designating a new chairperson to fill the vacant position.

That is the end of my remarks on the motions in Group No. 1.

[*English*]

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before addressing the motions in Group No. 1, I would like to say a few words about the purpose of Bill C-19 and about the consultation process preceding its introduction.

Bill C-19 is the result of extensive consultations with representatives of labour and management and other interested parties in the context of a review of Part I of the Canada Labour Code which began in 1994. The review included a study by an independent task force of industrial relations experts chaired by Mr. Andrew Sims.

Following the release of the task force report entitled "Seeking a Balance" in February 1996, the Minister of Labour held cross-country consultations. He continues to do that. He has consulted and consulted.

The contents of Bill C-19 are essentially the same as its predecessor, the former Bill C-66, which was awaiting third reading in the Senate when the 35th Parliament was dissolved. However, in response to the concerns raised during the study of the former bill and during further ministerial consultations with interested parties last summer and fall, a number of drafting changes were made, again because of consultations and the fact that the Minister of Labour has listened.

The result is a bill which, while not meeting all the preferences of all parties, is a fair and balanced package of amendments arrived at through extensive consultations, reflecting considerable consensus between labour and management subject to Part I of the code.

• (1030)

I draw to the attention of the House that any time labour and management are too happy with the bill, then it is lopsided. Because of the feeling and the information that we have been able to get through the consultations we know we have a balanced package here which is very important.

The bill includes important measures designed to improve the administration and conduct of collective bargaining in the federally regulated private sector. It reflects labour and management support for a legislative framework which allows them to develop their

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own solutions to industrial relations problems without the need for government intervention or imposed third party solutions. I should think that we would all want to strive for that particular component.

There is a clear relationship between a positive labour relations environment and a productive viable economy. A stable positive labour relations climate is essential if Canada is to meet the competitive challenges of the new global economy.

Collective bargaining legislation should encourage and facilitate co-operative labour-management relationships and the adoption of innovative workplace practices. The government believes that Bill C-19 succeeds in meeting these goals.

I would like to turn my attention now to the motions in Group No. 1. They refer to provisions in clause 2 of the bill which establishes a new Canada Industrial Relations Board to replace the current Canada Labour Relations Board.

A working group of representatives of labour and management in the federally regulated private sector reached a consensus on this issue. The new board would have a neutral chair and vice-chairs and equal numbers of members representing employees and employers. Balance. In all legislation we must strive to achieve balance.

Provisions establishing the new board are designed to ensure that it better reflects the labour and management communities it serves across the country and that it operates effectively and cost efficiently. The Reform Party should like that. Cost efficient. This is what we have been hearing and this is what we are trying to deliver in this bill.

The bill specifically addresses issues of concern raised by the parties and noted by the task force in its report. Here are a few of the key provisions which will improve administration of the code.

The chair and vice-chairs must have experience and expertise in industrial relations. Surely no one in this House would object to experience on this board.

The minister must consult with organizations representing employees and employers with respect to the appointment of representative members. Again it is a consultation process, which is extremely important to successful board appointments.

The appointment of regionally based members will reduce travel costs. The Reform Party should be delighted with this aspect in the board.

The powers of the chair with respect to supervision and management of the board's work will be clarified. There will be a fair and impartial process for the review of the conduct of a board member. The chair or a vice-chair sitting alone will be able to determine certain applications instead of a three member panel. The board can operate more efficiently by holding pre-hearing conferences using

teleconferencing and requiring the production of pertinent documents during the investigative process.

The board must issue decisions within a reasonable timeframe. The use of mediation to resolve issues will be encouraged.

The bill aims to ensure the effective and efficient administration of part I of the code by a new representational board composed of qualified members. I am sure that all members in this House will support a representational board that will be positive, fair and with experience.

I am counting on my colleagues in the Chamber to help get this through.

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to the foregoing speakers both from the Bloc and from the government. As I look over the motions that form Group No. 1, I see that my colleague from the Bloc has moved that the human resources committee should be the screening process for committee members on the Canada Industrial Relations Board. While we believe that the minister should not have broad autocratic sweeping powers in this area to appoint simply whomever he or she would like as the member has alluded to, we would give mild support to at least seeing the resumé's of potential members of the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

● (1035)

Motion No. 2 presented by my colleagues from the Bloc suggests that the vice-chair and the chair should only be limited to one term. I know that the CLRB has had some bad experiences but in the case that we have gone through with the Canada Labour Relations Board we had a chairman that was appointed for a period of 10 years. A period of 10 years is far too long. As a matter of fact I made a representation to the Sims task force that the term should be limited to five years. That is a reflection in the bill which I very much support.

I do not think that limiting the term of the chair or the vice-chair to one term would have much merit. It may be a little difficult to find a person willing to take on the job. I do not see anything wrong with reappointing a very qualified person for a second five year term.

If my colleague from the Bloc is concerned about a patronage appointment, let us take the scenario that perhaps during the time of a chairman's appointment his term runs out and there is a new government or a new minister. That would allow twice as many opportunities for a patronage appointment than at the present time. I believe we would not support the Bloc's Motion No. 2 in Group No. 1.

The bill reduces the term of the members on the board from 10 years to five years and that is supportable. A 10-year appointment is far too long. The Bloc has suggested that it should be reduced

even more to a period of three years. I do not believe this is necessary. A five year term is appropriate.

We have had cases that last for months. There have also been cases which are definitely not justified and which have lasted for more than two years.

We should be able to agree that a five year term is a proper length of appointment. I cannot understand the rationale behind my colleague's suggestion that they only be appointed for three years at a time.

It would help with continuity if the terms were staggered. If everyone were to be replaced at once and all the terms expired at the same time, there would be a completely new board at some point in time. If the terms were staggered there would be some experienced members and some not so experienced members. That would certainly help with continuity on the board.

The Bloc's Motion No. 4 provides that when the office of the chair is vacant, the members of the board shall determine who the chairman shall be. That is not a bad system of selecting a chairman. When I was on municipal council the reeve of the municipality was selected in that way. When you ran for a position on council, you did not run for the position of reeve. You were selected from among your peers. That is not too bad of a provision.

• (1040)

I would like to hear more rationale from my colleagues in the Bloc as far as defending their positions. They have only given us cursory rationale as to why they believe we should support their position. I would like to hear more on their position as far as the Canada Industrial Relations Board is concerned.

It is our hope that the government is going to keep a closer eye on the operations of the Canada Industrial Relations Board than it did on the Canada Labour Relations Board. Aside from the very well publicized and documented misuse of public funds which took place within the previous board, there is also the fact that there are cases which have been before the board for more than two years. That is ridiculous. We all in the Chamber are familiar with the phrase that justice delayed is justice denied. That applies in this instance.

There is another thing which certainly has not helped in any way to build up the name of the previous board. It seems that they could not decide on anything among themselves as far as the governing of themselves. The first thing a quasi-judicial board should note is that it must learn to govern itself. What I am talking about is that it managed to rack up something like \$250,000 worth of legal costs in internal squabbling in regard to who had what jurisdiction and who had what authority. That is totally unacceptable.

The department, the committee and the House of Commons should have a better handle on what is happening in the Canada

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Industrial Relations Board. We should be notified as to its operations. We should have a regular report to which the committee, parliament, Canadians and the press can react.

I know we can say that the auditor general has oversight of this entire situation and he does. The auditor general raised this problem time and time again. It was only after much to do was raised by the Reform Party and by the press that these problems in the Canada Labour Relations Board were addressed. We are very sorry that it took so long for these problems to be addressed. We hope that it does not happen like that in the future.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in the debate on the reform of the Canada Labour Code.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has submitted some amendments, Motions Nos. 1, 3 and 5 in particular, the essential objective of which is greater democratization, as you can see. In this Parliament, what does "greater democratization" mean? It means that the House of Commons or its committees which, being made up of parliamentarians, are an extension of the House, must be informed of the in-depth examination of matters.

Labour relations are a very important matter. When there is a labour conflict, there is a concern for equity, for balance between the parties. There is generally a union side and an employer side, although this is not always the case, and there is an assumption of debate, of balance.

In principle, there can be no better instrument than a parliament for ensuring a balance. Here we represent different parties. At present, we have a majority government and several opposition parties. This democratic mechanism represented by the House of Commons and the committees makes it possible for everyone's point of view to be heard and listened to. This ensures that the public is better informed about the debates, all the ins and outs relating to the labour conflict, or the improvements to be made in terms of labour relations.

That is why I want to support the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. I would like to point out that he has done a wonderful job. He has done an excellent follow-up on all these mechanisms. He is far more of an expert than I am on these matters.

When he speaks on this matter, whether in caucus or in discussions between colleagues, he always stresses the concept of balance. One must not be prejudiced toward one side or the other, but rather try to strike a balance between management and labour. I think that this serves the common interest, the interests of the public.

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I therefore support the motions of my hon. colleague for Trois-Rivières.

[*English*]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this morning we are in the fourth stage of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code. Report stage really deals with what came out of committee examination of the bill. There are numerous amendments that we are considering today at this stage of examining the bill.

I was interested to hear the parliamentary secretary's remarks about this bill, waxing eloquent about the amount of consultation that had been done. A great deal of consultation did go on with respect to these changes to the Canada Labour Code.

However, what the parliamentary secretary did not mention and what is very unfortunate is that a lot of the results of these consultations were simply ignored in the final construction of the bill.

There is not a whole lot of merit in having wide consultations, a long and detailed report and then having recommendations coming out of those consultations if the government simply goes its own way at the end of the day in constructing the legislation. To a large degree this is what happened following the so-called consultations.

Consultations should be very largely reflected in the final result but, I would submit, that is not the case with this bill.

• (1050)

The parliamentary secretary also made a rather strange and bizarre assertion that if no one is happy with a piece of legislation then it must be good. I find this a little hard to credit, particularly when there are interest groups involved in the formation of this legislation which to my knowledge have never expressed themselves satisfied with any degree of accommodation of their wishes. There always seems to be with perhaps all groups that the blue sky and the green grass is always a little further over the horizon.

That should not be the litmus test of legislation. The litmus test really should be whether this bill serves the Canadian people and our country. I did not hear any of that discussed by the parliamentary secretary.

The parliamentary secretary did talk about the goals of the bill being a productive and viable economy. It is certainly debatable and we will be debating whether this bill does anything to ensure and enhance a productive and viable economy. I would argue it does not meet this goal at all. It will have an adverse, negative effect on the economy in many respects.

For all the talk about balance and all the talk about doing what gives the best balance in the competing interests involved, it is debatable that balance is not achieved in this legislation.

The first group of amendments proposed comes from the Bloc. Amazingly enough, some people will say Reform supports and is approving of the thrust of these five amendments. We do not agree with every detail of them but I think these amendments were well considered and put forward in a very constructive way.

The first amendment is particularly constructive because it states that appointments to this board which wields a lot of clout in the affairs of our country, particularly in the labour and economic affairs regulated by the federal government, should be made by parliament through its committee which deals with these affairs, the HRD committee.

The present legislation leaves the appointments strictly to the government, the cabinet and the minister. Surely we have seen the repugnant effects of government patronage appointments to these important positions. There are hundreds if not thousands of examples of how government cannot and should not be trusted exclusively to have the final say over these kinds of important designations.

We would strongly support all members of parliament's having a strong input into who fills these important positions. I agree with my colleague from the Bloc who indicated this would ensure that all points of view are heard.

If the government is serious about balance in this legislation surely it would welcome an amendment which would move a long way to ensuring the kind of balance it pretends it wants to achieve by making sure all points of view are heard regarding who sits on this important industrial relations board.

The second of the five amendments talks about limiting the term of the members of the board to one term. I suppose we have to ask ourselves as parliamentarians would we feel it would be appropriate if we were allowed to sit in parliament for only one term. Some people would say yes. If we have to put up with the rascals for one term that is plenty.

• (1055)

During our first term we are on a steep learning curve as members of parliament. We gain valuable experience which allows us to go on with an enhanced level of competence. If we are diligent and well meaning we can achieve this in our first term and provide a very valuable service.

There may be members of the board who do not rise to those higher levels of competence and ability. They could be weeded out. But if there are extremely effective, knowledgeable and well informed people on the board who know what they are doing, who know the players and who have a great deal of insight into the process, they should not be turfed out after only one round.

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On the three year term limit that has been suggested rather than five, three years goes pretty fast, especially the older we get. I had a birthday yesterday and three years does not seem like that long ago, nor does five years seem that long ago. I am not sure that is a very substantive debate. That has been proposed as the third amendment and I do not have strong feelings about it.

The fourth represents changes to the legislation. Presently if the chair becomes vacant, the minister will fill the vacancy. The legislation proposes that the board members fill the vacancy. If Motion No. 1 is passed, the board members will be chosen in a balanced way through input from all members of parliament. I presume there would be a pretty good balance on the board and it would have the best chance to choose a good replacement for a vacant chair. Board members would know the players since they would have worked with them. They would undoubtedly choose someone who had their highest respect and whom they felt they could work with effectively and efficiently.

The fifth amendment is that any report with respect to disciplinary or remedial measures relating to members of the board would not just fall silent at the minister's level but would be passed on to parliament through the relevant committee, the HRD committee. That committee could ensure that if remedial or disciplinary measures were recommended, they would be properly followed up on. This would lead to accountability on the board, something Canadians want.

I commend my colleagues from the Bloc for some pretty well thought out amendments. I hope these comments will help members deciding whether they should be supported.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully and with interest to my colleagues from both sides of the House, especially to the parliamentary secretary. I agree with many of her comments. Although she commented in good faith, she gave the government's position and at times failed to shed sufficient light on some of the provisions of this bill.

Bill C-19 is a very important piece of legislation. For all intents and purposes it regulates the lives and work of about 750,000 Canadians who work either directly for the federal government or for federally regulated companies in the banking, telecommunications and transportation sectors.

This bill is very important for the number of citizens it affects. It is just as important as the Canada Labour Code. This kind of legislation is not amended very often. Bill C-19 is probably the first major review of the rules that have regulated the workplace for the past 25 years.

• (1100)

The object of the bill is important because it affects the delicate relationship between management and the workers. It affects the

delicate equilibrium that ought to be maintained at all times between the investors, the bosses, the risk takers and the job creators on one hand and the workers, the people who bring their lives efforts to service of the enterprise on the other hand.

Therefore we must seek just and fair remuneration, working conditions and social benefits which create a milieu that is fair, just and rewarding for the workers.

[*Translation*]

Regarding the motions moved by our colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, Motion No. 1 for example provides in essence that, instead of being appointed by the governor in council or by cabinet, the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the board would be appointed by the minister, on the recommendation of the House committee dealing with matters relating to human resources development. This committee would have to hold public hearings before making a recommendation.

Our party will support this motion put forward by our colleague from the Bloc Québécois. This is something that already exists in Ontario. It ensures a more open appointment process. The public hearings should not, however, be allowed to turn into a circus.

Motion No. 2 of our colleague states that the five-year term of the chairperson and vice-chairperson shall not be renewed. I must say that our party will vote against this motion. It makes no sense not to renew their mandate if they are competent.

Now turning to Motion No. 3. Instead of being appointed by the governor in council, members of the board, whether full time or part time, would be appointed by the minister, on recommendation of the House committee dealing with matters relating to human resources development. The committee would have to hold public hearings before making a recommendation. Our party will support this motion.

Motion No. 4 states that if the chairperson of the board is absent or unable to act, a vice-chairperson designated by the minister shall act as chairperson. This part is similar to what the bill currently provides.

If the office of chairperson is vacant, a replacement would be elected from within the board instead of being designated by the minister. We will vote against this motion. What this amendment is supposed to achieve is not really clear. Is it intended as a temporary measure? Otherwise, it contradicts the Bloc amendments calling for the chairperson to be appointed on the recommendation of the committee of the House of Commons. This provision seems to be pointless since it is unlikely that the position would remain vacant for several months. The other provisions of the bill seem to properly address these concerns.

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As for Motion No. 5, it provides that, when a member of the board is subject to an inquiry, the judge would be required to submit his findings to both the minister and the committee of the House of Commons. We will support this motion. Should a problem arise, the matter would be referred to the members of this House, who could suggest an appropriate course of action. This reinforces accountability to Parliament.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recently came in from my riding, got off the plane and raced here to find that we missed one of our speaking opportunities. I thank you for recognizing me now and giving me the chance to speak to the five first motions put forth for consideration to amend Bill C-19 and the Canada Labour Code.

I have reviewed these five motions put forward by the member for Trois-Rivières. While I fully understand the tone and content, and even some of the merits of what the member for Trois-Rivières is obviously trying to argue, I cannot support the idea of introducing these changes at this time.

The five motions are clustered together for obvious reasons because they deal with the same subject matter, the composition of the newly formed board and the representational qualities of the board, the appointment of the chair and the vice-chair, and their terms of office.

I do not think I will break them down in detail and comment on them one by one in that regard, except to start my remarks by saying how critical this part of Bill C-19 is. The whole review of the board and its structure and the fact that it will be truly representational now is a huge leap forward for the labour relations climate in the country.

I should say as well that the ideas stated in Bill C-19, the amendments to the code, are the result of exhaustive consultation, two years of consultation with labour and management all across the country. Everybody had a kick at the cat. Everybody had ample opportunity to try to make recommendations that would make this a better and a more functional labour board.

As the Sims task force points to as its mandate, we were seeking a balance, some way to satisfy the interests of all the true stakeholders.

After all this consultation, this give and take and co-operation, they arrived at the changes that are called for in the original Bill C-19. The minister makes the appointments. The terms are set. The stakeholders recommend the other members of the board so that it is truly a representational board. All those things are part of a fine balance and part of a larger package that is Bill C-19. I would be very reluctant to alter it at this time for the risk of upsetting that

delicate balance. It would not be showing respect for the whole consultation process that took place in the previous two years.

Most of the parties involved are very satisfied with the current package. It was not just Bill C-19. Going back to Bill C-66 this exhaustive consultation process took place. It went through the various levels of debate in the House of Commons and made it all the way to the Senate before the election was called.

There have been ample opportunities to make any changes that people felt were necessary or desirable at any one of those stages.

What we have is a situation now where the parties that truly rely on the labour code, the federally regulated employers, the employees who work for them and their representatives, are eager to see Bill C-19 moved forward.

The package is satisfactory. The package does not serve all of our needs and certainly from labour's side there are many things we wish were there, many things we wish we could have convinced our partners in industry to adopt. It is not always possible. It was a give and a take. It was very much the type of co-operation that we should be looking for as a model in other forms of legislation. I believe that all stakeholders put their own special interests aside. They left their baggage at the door and did what was right to make the labour board a more practical, relevant and functional institution.

It certainly needed review. It needed amendment. We had a terrible situation with the board where there was a huge backlog of cases. I believe there were as many as 90 applications for certification pending. These are very time sensitive. When workers have the courage to sign a union card and to organize themselves so that they can bargain collectively, there is always a backlash from the employer. Often there are subtle forms of coercion, intimidation or harassment which make the workers rethink whether this is the right thing they are doing. Any delays increase the odds of that happening.

• (1110)

With this newly constituted board I believe that case work will be dealt with more quickly, the backlog will be fixed up and these workers will have access to the justice they deserve.

This is one of the reasons we are hoping for speedy passage of Bill C-19 so those workers who have legitimate issues pending can start having them dealt with and heard by this newly constituted board.

Motions Nos. 1 through 5 seem to minimize the powers of the minister and add authority and powers to the committee that deals with human resources issues. In other words, the minister's role would be minimized and the role of the standing committee would be augmented. While there may be some merit in that kind of argument, in actual fact it would not change the balance of power

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in that the standing committee for HRDC is dominated by government by virtue of the number of seats that it is given.

Surely, if the minister wants a certain thing to happen, whether it is directly in his or her hands or in the hands of the committee members, the government's wishes will come about. I do not believe there is enough merit in this argument. Even if we were convinced this was the right thing to do, I do not think it has enough merit to delay the passage of Bill C-19 with further debate and obstacles and so on.

We know the official opposition will be introducing a number of motions designed to delay the implementation of Bill C-19. We will have to deal with those when they come before us. However, in this case an issue such as the composition of the board or the appointment of the chairs and the vice-chairs or the term of office in which they sit in itself is not enough to delay the passage of what is definitely a very worthy piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that will benefit working people as they conduct themselves in a federally regulated workplace.

In my mind there is nothing concrete in this package of motions that will make Bill C-19 any better to any degree. We are dealing with minutiae here. We are dealing with fine tuning an idea.

The real change, the one that we should be most interested in, is the fact that the board will now be representational. It will have a neutral chairperson, a representative from labour and a representative from management. In that kind of balance I think we will achieve some of the mandate of the Sims task force, achieve a balance in Canadian labour relations.

Anybody who has been a practitioner in labour relations knows that is the goal. The key objective is fairness. Natural justice and fairness are the two yardsticks by which we measure the success or the failure of the industrial relations process, the quasi-judicial process of the way we conduct ourselves in the federally regulated workplace of today.

If I saw anything that would substantially make Bill C-19 better I think I could stand here and recommend that our caucus vote for it. As much as I have a great deal of respect for the member for Trois-Rivières—and I know he is a committed trade unionist and somebody who is sincere about making the environment better for Canadian workers—the only reason I cannot support this package of motions is that I do not see it making Bill C-19 substantially better. Therefore the recommendation to my NDP caucus is that we will be voting against this package of motions.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the bill earlier this year. One of the reasons I like to speak to labour legislation is that in my previous life pre-parliament I worked in the union certification climate in the forest industry. I currently represent an area with a very high union membership, the same area where I worked previously. It is one of

the many industries that has undergone tremendous change over the last several years.

• (1115)

We are seeing that on a global scale. We are certainly seeing it big time in the resource industries in Canada. We are going to see those kinds of changes coming to government as well.

I know there have been a lot of changes in government bureaucracy, but they pale in comparison to what has been going on in the private sector.

Some of the things that I was involved in, for example, went far beyond labour negotiations, union-management style negotiations. They went into joint training on environmental concerns, how to implement things like changing operating methods to meet changing standards in the forest practices code and all those kinds of things.

It blurs the lines between who belongs to management and who belongs to the union. Everyone has a joint goal and it is very refreshing.

Anything we can do to create an environment and an atmosphere where people have the same set of objectives and tend to be headed in the same direction would be very useful indeed. If we can take the polarization out, take the confrontation out, then I think we have really achieved something. There are some proposals on the table from the Reform Party that tend to do that.

I realize that does not address the specifics of this bill, but I thought I would put it on the table anyway.

What we are talking about today is a bill that would amend Part I of the Canada Labour Code to rename the Canada Labour Relations Board to the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

This bill died in the Senate in the last parliament when it was Bill C-66. It died for good reasons and now it has been brought back with minor changes. The changes that have been made still do not address very significant problems in the bill. It is still laced with problems.

The group of amendments that we are addressing at this time have all been put forward by the Bloc. They are Bloc Motions Nos. 1 to 5. I might add that 30 motions have been put forward to amend this legislation. Other amendments were proposed at committee. This gives us some idea of the significance of the desire to effect change within this legislative package.

All of the amendments we will be discussing over the next several days came from either the official opposition as Reform amendments or from the Bloc.

Motion No. 1 is very similar to an amendment that Reform moved in committee. It requires that candidates for the chair and vice-chair of the CIRB be appointed only if the parliamentary

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committee approves and it requires the parliamentary committee to hold hearings.

If this is thought about on a larger scale, we could go beyond the CIRB to think about this in other contexts. There is growing pressure from the populous, from anyone concerned about democracy, to head toward removing patronage from these positions to make them more effective.

We have another circumstance right now where our information commissioner is retiring. He is saying publicly that the last person we want to run the information commissioner's office is a career bureaucrat. He says we want somebody who has displayed independent spirit, independent means and independence from government, someone who will lend themselves to an atmosphere which tends to hold government accountable as opposed to trying to support the bureaucracy against the best interests of society.

• (1120)

This is a growing concern and one we have brought to the table for several years in this House. We would like to see this type of motion expanded to include all of our boards because patronage rewards friends rather than putting people—

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not see a quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum. The hon. member for Vancouver Island North has the floor.

Mr. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I finished talking about Motion No. 1, which can basically be summarized by saying that we need to appoint people based on merit, on their ability to do the job without being hampered by previous baggage, and to do it in a non-partisan fashion.

Motion No. 2 deals with term limits. It limits the chair and vice-chair, that we previously talked about, to one term only. This legislation already takes the term from ten years down to five years without amendment. Five years is certainly a lot better than ten years. How do we hold someone accountable if their appointment lasts that long?

I believe the living example is Mr. Weatherill, who was removed from office after great pain because of spending habits and other things which were considered to be far beyond what was allowed in terms of what was good value for money and accountability to the public.

There are two sides to this issue. We have to have a term long enough to create continuity, while at the same time we do not want such a long term that we end up with people who can essentially

become unaccountable. We could use this argument for any official, whether it is a member of Parliament, a member of the Senate or any other public body or institution.

Motion No. 3 is a Bloc motion which would reduce appointments to three years. We see some merit in reducing the appointment of members of the board from five years to three, but we see merit in continuing the five year term for the chair and vice-chair simply because of the continuity question. I am not really hung up on the issue of three years or five years, but it is certainly better than ten years. Five years is probably a bit too long for a regular board member.

Motion No. 4 would authorize the minister to appoint a vice-chair as a temporary chair. This would be in the case of a vacancy. It would require that the appointment be determined by a majority vote of the members of the board as opposed to selection by the minister.

• (1125)

I will finish on this note. It is important that the structure of the board be done right. If it is not done right everything else does not matter. These are important amendments.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as we heard earlier from my colleague for Calgary—Nose Hill, there are a lot of people who are dissatisfied with the consultations which took place regarding this bill. It is the consultations that really bother us. As you said earlier today, Mr. Speaker, holding consultations does not mean that you actually have to listen. We feel that the consultations on this particular bill have not resulted in any meaningful changes, as is the case with a lot of bills on the Hill.

Mr. Jean Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would call notice that we do not have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche is calling for a quorum.

Call in the members.

• (1135)

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum. The hon. member for North Vancouver has the floor.

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making earlier was that there has been insufficient listening to the consultation on this bill. The exercise we have just gone through indicates that what I said was correct. There are no people listening to what is being said about this bill. The consultation goes on but nobody listens. My colleague from Calgary—Nose Hill made that point quite strongly earlier today.

The fact that 30 different motions are being put forward at report stage, as mentioned by another member a few minutes ago,

indicates the amount of dissent there is on the bill. Notwithstanding the argument from one of the members of the NDP that it is a bill they would like to see pushed through fairly quickly, the fact is this is a bill with a lot that still needs to be done.

Instead of looking to the future we are going to be left with some outdated labour practices that will not be taking us forward into the future. Those clients of the services that are covered by this bill will have no alternative in the event of a strike. The procedures contained in this bill for handling problems such as strikes are still outmoded and outdated.

Yesterday in my office one of the representatives of the Government of New Zealand was visiting me. We were discussing the never ending road work that is taking place on Wellington Street. It seems to go on for years and years and now they are working on the road outside the West Block. This is evidence of the type of labour climate we have. These things can go on and on for years and years with no resolution. We need to inject some efficiency and modern practices into government.

The representative from the Government of New Zealand stated that they had suffered from these types of situations as well but it does not happen any more. It is all done by private contract with set dates and responsibility. There are alternatives in the event of strikes. I stray a little from the topic.

• (1140)

I return to the issue of appointments to the Canada Industrial Relations Board. The people of Canada frankly are thoroughly sick of the patronage which riddles every aspect of the various boards like the parole board, the immigration and refugee board and even the Senate. Mr. Speaker, you look shocked that there could be any patronage in the Senate and I am sorry if you had not noticed that it is filled with patronage.

Club Chrétien has been more active than club Mulroney in terms of the rewards that the clubs to members. An enormous number of failed Liberal candidates have been appointed to all manner of boards. We are concerned that they are going to end up on the Canada Industrial Relations Board as well.

I hear a couple of members laughing on the government side because they know that is the truth. We are going to end up with patronage appointees on this board. Then we have to start wondering what are the credentials other than being Liberal. It is certainly open to question. One just has to look at the list. It includes Liberal riding presidents, failed candidates, campaign workers, bagmen, ministerial assistants. These are the types of people who get appointed to that type of board. I can give some examples.

Recently André Bachand, Liberal candidate in 1988 and a long time Liberal president in Brome—Missisquoi was appointed to the National Parole Board. Elizabeth McKall, the wife of a Liberal

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riding president in Edmonton West was appointed to the National Parole Board.

The immigration and refugee board seems to be the most common recipient of Liberal largesse. No less than 14 appointments of well-known Liberals to the immigration and refugee board occurred during 1997 and 1998. To give some examples: Anita Fuoco Boscariol, twice defeated candidate; Lucie Blais, defeated candidate in 1993; Milagros Eustaquoi, failed candidate; Ronald Guerette, former riding president; Elke Homsy, former legislative assistant; Joan Lylian Kouri, defeated candidate; Gary McCauley, defeated MP; Anna Terrana, defeated MP; and Raza Naqvi, yet another failed candidate. They are just some examples of the type of people who get appointed to these boards, nothing but patronage appointments.

An hon. member: Mary Clancy.

Mr. Ted White: One of my colleagues mentioned the name of Mary Clancy, who was appointed to the high commission in Boston.

It is absolutely incredible. We look at those sorts of appointments and we have to shake our heads and ask what other qualifications did they have other than being Liberal. I can bet that we are going to end up with the Canada Industrial Relations Board packed with Liberal patronage appointments.

In terms of the role of the board and the Bloc motions that have been put forward, Reform actually supports the Bloc Motion No. 4 in this regard because it injects at least a little bit of democracy into the board. It actually allows the board to determine by a majority vote who should become the chair if it becomes vacant.

Mr. Speaker, that is an amusing concept to you because I know you are very supportive of the appointment process. The threatening idea that members of the board would actually elect their own chair, what a terrible thought. That would be one of the safeguards that would perhaps remove an element of the patronage and control that goes into those boards.

In reviewing the various motions that are from the Bloc in this group, we are quite supportive of Motion No. 1. The candidates for the chair and vice-chairs of the Canada Industrial Relations Board would be appointed only if the human resources development committee approved.

There is a very good argument for much more transparency in relation to all of this patronage that goes on. Actually I am sure that soon Club Chrétien is going to be running out of candidates to appoint to these various boards. Most of them must have cashed in their mileage points already.

• (1145)

An hon. member: Failed Liberal candidates.

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Mr. Ted White: My colleague mentions there will be a lot more failed Liberal candidates but there will not be a Liberal in charge to appoint them to the various boards so that takes care of that one.

We are opposed to Motion No. 2 put forward by the Bloc. It limits the chair and vice-chairs to one term. At first glance that may seem in conflict with our opposition to appointments. If there is a very good chair who has been elected by the members of the board, we would like to see it made possible to extend that term.

We are also opposing Motion No. 3. The bill reduces the terms of the appointees from ten years to five years while the amendment reduces the term to three years for the chair, vice-chairs and members. Our position is that five years should be the minimum for stability and continuity.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I refer you to Standing Order 29 which refers to quorum in the House. A few minutes ago you witnessed the bells ringing for some eight or nine minutes to get quorum in the House. As we have brought up at House leaders meetings prior to this, we expect the government to have its fair share of members in the House. I am not talking about numbers at the moment. I am just asking you to hear me out.

It is quite unacceptable to us for there to be more members in opposition speaking to bills than government members. I suggest the Chair give advice to the government. Either the Liberals start matching this side of the House or we will be walking out of here. We will expect them to start filling quorum in the House every minute of every day.

Mr. Bob Speller: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's comments. I want him to know that we were sitting in the foreign committee with the minister there. Votes were to be held so we had to have a full contingent in that committee. As a result of his quorum call, the opposition parties did not have the full opportunity to question the minister.

So I would caution him in using his quorum call in the House all the time. The hon. member knows we have many committees, in particular on Thursdays. We are getting near the end of the session. Many ministers are coming forward to committees. Surely it would not be in the member's best interest to make a quorum call in the House when there is very important work going on in these committees with ministers.

The Deputy Speaker: We should not get into a debate on this point of order. As your Speaker I can only say that I do not believe a point of order has been raised. The hon. House leader for the Reform Party has made his point. He has delivered his own message to the government and the government has heard it or argued against it as the case may be.

The Speaker as the presiding officer of the House is not concerned when there is a quorum call as to who is in the House

from which side of the House. The count is for the minimum number of 20 members. If 20 members are present the debate resumes. The Speaker is disinterested as to whether it is all government members, all opposition members or a mixture of members from both sides forming the quorum. As such the Speaker is not in a position to tell members from either side of the House who should be in his or her place or how many members should be available for any debate.

In the circumstances we will leave this matter and proceed with the debate.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, in light of that nonsensical answer from the government benches I call quorum.

• (1150)

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair counted 20 members.

Mr. Ted McWhinney: Mr. Speaker, the last point of order was frivolous and therefore non-receivable.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1.

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I had been recognized as the next speaker and of course other events happened. I was on my feet.

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I am in the midst of putting the question to the House. I called resuming debate and no member rose in his or her place. I asked if the House was ready for the question. No member rose in his or her place, the House called for the question and I started putting the question.

I am afraid the hon. member needs to be in his place if he is to make this point.

An hon. member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not think it is proper for the Chair to entertain a point of order when we are in the process of putting the question to the House and I propose to proceed with putting the question.

[Translation]

The vote is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 3 stands deferred.

• (1155)

The next question is on Motion No. 4. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 4 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 5. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 5 stands deferred.

[English]

The House will now proceed to the study of the motions in Group No. 2 and I will now put those motions to the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-19 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-19, in Clause 13, be amended by replacing lines 22 to 24 on page 14 with the following:

“13. Subsections 29(1) and (2) of the Act are replaced by the following:

29.(1) The Board shall, for the purpose of satisfying itself as to whether employees in a unit wish to have a particular trade union represent them as their bargaining agent, order that a representation vote be taken among the employees in the unit where it is satisfied that at least thirty-five per cent of the employees in the unit are members of the trade unit applying for certification.

(2) Any person who was not an employee”

Government Orders

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-19, in Clause 16, be amended by replacing lines 3 to 9 on page 16 with the following:

“(4.1) On application by one or more employers of employees in the bargaining unit, the Board may revoke the appointment of the employer representative and appoint a new representative.”

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-19 be amended by deleting Clause 46.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, before looking specifically at Group No. 2 of motions, I would like to mention that I committed an almost unpardonable omission just now when I was listing all the groups of employees whom we would have liked to have seen receive more attention in the review of the Canada Labour Code.

I mentioned members of the RCMP, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Professional Institute of the Public Service, but I neglected to mention pregnant workers, on behalf of whom the unions made highly legitimate representations to us that we wish to convey to the House.

Unfortunately, because of the same process I explained earlier, because of the government's more specific approach this year to the bill before us, we are unable to introduce an amendment that would have made preventative withdrawal possible for pregnant or nursing workers in cases where the health of the mother or the unborn child is at risk. We find this regrettable and want these people to know that we are concerned about them.

I will comment on each of the amendments in Group No. 2, beginning with our own, which has to do with clause 6 on page 12 of the bill. Clause 6 reads as follows:

6. The Board may decide any matter before it without holding an oral hearing.

This seems excessive, to put it bluntly. We fail to see the validity of that provision. The information notes provided by the government do not convince us that this is appropriate. This could lead the board to take actions that might look like arbitration or abusive measures, and we are not at all convinced that this clause is appropriate.

Motion No. 7, proposed by the Reform Party, deals with clause 13, on page 14 of the bill, and concerns the spirit of the legislation. If I understand its position correctly, the Reform Party is very true to itself. The bill provides that scabs cannot take part in a vote on a union's representational capacity.

• (1200)

Under the Reformers' motion, these replacement workers, or scabs, would be allowed to take part in such a vote, something which we strongly oppose. We must not, in any way, legitimize the hiring of replacement workers, whether it is before, during or after

the fact. Therefore, we will oppose this motion by the Reform Party.

Motion No. 8 deals with clause 16 on page 16 of the bill and has to do with employers' representatives. There is a provision with which we have trouble, and this is the reason for our motion. That provision reads:

(4.1) On application by one or more employers of employees in the bargaining unit, the Board may, if it is satisfied that the employer representative is no longer qualified to act in that capacity, revoke the appointment of the employer representative and appoint a new representative.

This provision deals with employers' representation on the board. It provides that the employers represented on the board may, for reasons of their own, deem the employer representative no longer qualified to represent them. We respect the fact that these employers may repudiate—to put it bluntly—their representative on the board, without going any further.

Based on the wording of the bill, the board may, if it is satisfied that the employer representative is no longer qualified to act in that capacity, revoke the appointment of the employer representative and appoint a new representative. We do not feel it is up to the board to interfere in such matters. It is up to the employers represented to proceed as they see fit and to designate those they see fit to designate.

The board's control over this aspect is a source of concern. Taken to the extreme, the board could decide to retain the representation made by a person whom the employer had indicated it no longer wished to be represented by. This therefore confers an undue control to the board, which is why we are presenting this motion.

Then we have the last motion in Group No. 2, on page 36. This is probably a marked improvement, and is the reason why the public is so pleased, as we must admit it is, with the work of the Simms commission and with the Simms report, which talks about the balance that may have been struck. This mechanism is an important one, and could be described as modern. It is a response to a need that is recognized in the report.

It is stated that the board can, despite a lack of evidence of majority support, certify a union when there has been unfair labour practice or serious infringement on the free choice of employees to free negotiation, to free representation. Thus, when the employer has obviously behaved in an unfair and abusive manner, when there has been intimidation or violence, the legislator may, via the board, authorize certification of a trade union, may certify it to represent a given employee group.

As you have seen, the Reform Party is opposed to such a thing. This is a societal choice, a social as opposed to purely economic point of view, where a deaf ear is turned regardless of even seriously unfair labour practices, as the government's explanatory notes indicate.

Government Orders

We on this side are vehemently opposed to this. I personally find it a very up to date, very generous point of view, provided of course that the board has set out clear guidelines.

• (1205)

It must be hoped that the board will show some wisdom, that it will ensure that it does not become common practice to give such accreditation without proper consultation or a vote. There would, I assume, have to be exceptional circumstances for this clause to be applied.

Those are, therefore, the comments I wanted to make on the four motions in Group No. 2.

[*English*]

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contents of Bill C-19 are largely based on the recommendations of the Sims task force in its report entitled "Seeking a Balance".

While management and labour representatives may have wanted to see more in some areas and less in others depending on their perspective, the Sims recommendations were deemed acceptable as an overall balanced package. This truly has been a bill of give and take and has been successful in achieving a balanced package.

The official opposition has put forward motions that would radically alter the balance of the package. The amendment it is proposing to section 29 of the code would change current certification procedures and require the board to hold representation votes in all cases.

The Sims task force did not recommend such a change and major federally regulated employers have not asked for such a change. Majority support is the basis for union certification under part I of the code. This would not change under Bill C-19.

Under current code provisions where an applicant union shows proof of membership, signed membership cards and payment of \$5 fees, of between 35% and 50% of the employees in the bargaining unit, the board must hold a certification vote. Where the application is supported by a majority of employees, the board may hold a representation vote or may certify the applicant based on the membership evidence which is verified by board officers.

The task force found no evidence that the current system is not working or that it has been abused. In fact the task force noted two advantages to the current system. First, it requires the applicant trade union to be supported by the majority of employees in the bargaining unit and not only the majority of those who vote. Second, it reduces opportunities for inappropriate employer interference with the employees' choice.

As recommended by the Sims task force, under Bill C-19 the board's authority to verify union support by holding a representation vote in any case is retained.

The official opposition is also seeking to remove the remedial certification provision. This provision would allow the board to certify a trade union which has not presented evidence of majority support where the board is of the opinion that the union would have obtained such support if not for unfair labour practices committed by the employer.

Employers are uniquely positioned to have significant influence over employees given their ability to profoundly affect an employee's continuing job security and his or her economic destiny. Where employees fear reprisals from their employer, they may not freely express their true wishes even in a secret ballot vote.

The remedial certification provision is designed to discourage employers who might consider engaging in unfair labour practices in order to avoid a unionized workplace. It is neither a new nor a radical provision. Five provincial labour boards have similar authority. They use it infrequently in order to remedy the worst cases of employer interference or intimidation which makes it impossible to determine the true wishes of employees through a representation vote.

I would also like to remind members that the provision will be interpreted by the new Canada Industrial Relations Board which will have equal labour and management representation.

In commenting on this provision, a University of Toronto professor of law told the standing committee "The ultimate purpose of the provision reflects a very fundamental legal principle and that is that one should not profit from one's own wrong". That is, the employer should not get the result it seeks as a consequence of violating the code. I agree with the professor and urge members to support this provision.

• (1210)

I would also like to briefly address the motion to delete the provision in Bill C-19 which authorizes the board to determine applications without holding an oral hearing.

As a quasi-judicial tribunal, the board is required in all cases to respect the rules of natural justice. While affected parties have the right to make representations to a tribunal, there is no absolute right to an oral hearing. In fact the board and many other tribunals regularly determine applications without holding an oral hearing.

Board decisions are reviewable by the federal court of appeal. One of the reasons the court can overturn a board decision is if it finds that the board has failed to respect the rules of natural justice.

Under Bill C-19 the board would continue to decide whether or not an oral hearing is necessary based on the circumstances of each case.

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As is currently its policy, the board will hold an oral hearing when one is required in order to establish facts through witness testimony. This provision simply clarifies the board's authority to make determinations based on the written evidence and representations of the parties where the facts of the case are not in dispute.

If the board were required to hold a hearing in every case, administration of the code would become even slower and more costly. This would not serve the interests of the parties or contribute to positive labour management relations. I do not support such an approach. I strongly urge members to oppose this motion.

Finally, with respect to the other motion in this group, which modifies the process for the revocation of an employer representative in the longshoring industry, I fail to see the rationale for the proposed change. The choice of an employer representative belongs to the employees concerned. They should be able to apply to the board to change representatives and the board should authorize such a change if the representative no longer has majority support or is otherwise no longer qualified to act.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly had some confusion before I was allowed to speak. I guess at one point I was lamenting the fact that I would not have many people to speak to and now we have quite a government crowd listening to my presentation. I am really pleased that the government is taking so much interest in this issue and that I have such a large group to speak to.

I am talking about this group of motions, but it is something much bigger than that. This whole Bill C-19 is something that all government members here should be aware of. What we are really talking about is a situation that will impact on us as Canadians in the 21st century in an international way.

As the House knows I have great interest in the international community and in how well Canada is doing. We often put ourselves out as number one. The United Nations ranks us as number one, which is all well and good, but when we travel extensively throughout the world we begin to realize that we are falling behind.

We are falling behind the world in a number of areas. One of these areas relates to Bill C-19. It is in our competitiveness, our transportation network and our ability for sales in something as valuable as grain and other commodities.

The crowd continues to build in the government ranks. Obviously they are very interested in what I have to say.

In the globalization of the world, three major trading blocs are developing: the European Union; the Americas, and all the hope we have for that; and southeast Asia. We have to look at how

globalization relates to the actual situation of our labour and that valuable resource this country has.

• (1215)

We have a very highly trained and skilled workforce. We have a good education system. However, as I pointed out, we are falling behind in the world because we are failing to compete as well. We are failing to be conscious of productivity, of making our industries the most productive they can possibly be. We are not keeping up the standard of quality control that we require. Most of all, we are not being seen any more as a reliable supplier of products such as our agricultural products.

The effect of prolonged strikes on our ability to be reliable marketers in the world cannot be imagined until we talk to Japanese merchants or Chinese purchasers that want to buy malt barley from us. We start to realize the problem when Japanese shipowners ask how we would like to have a ship that has been booked for months and months sitting idle in a port for 30, 40 or 50 days. The ship was to make another shipment down the road yet it was sitting there. It is all about transportation. It is all about our ability to deliver. It is all about reliability.

We have to start thinking about these things. This place must get off its old line of working in a vacuum, that Canada is the greatest, that Canada is number one, and start thinking about how we are to compete in the 21st century. That is where Bill C-19 becomes such an important bill.

This group of amendments and the previous groups of amendments come down to democratization and what it means to Canadians. We need to talk about this board. We need to ask ourselves if this is the modern way to approach the problems I have identified. Is this the best way to deal with the situation?

Our motion in Group No. 7 talks about having unions involved only when they can get employees to sign union certification cards at a level of 35%. That is not very high and that is not really democracy, but at least it is a long way from where we are now. The amendments in Group No. 2 proposed by our party will help to bring democracy, accountability and to build a system that is transparent, acceptable and competitive to take care of the problem respecting our ability to deal in the global market.

We must look at this board. We must ask who should be on it. As a number of previous speakers have indicated, who do we expect will show up on a board like this one? If we follow the traditional status quo of dealing with boards we know who will be there. We know they will have to be fundraisers or retired or defeated candidates. They will have to be somebody with connections to be on this board. Is that what gives us the transparent and functional board that our businessmen and farmers want to have in the 21st century? I do not think so.

Government Orders

I will tell a story to point out what I mean. I attended the APEC conference in Vancouver as the foreign affairs critic for our party. I was at a function where most government officials from the various countries were present. At my table was a defeated Liberal candidate who had been given a two day junket to Vancouver as his reward for having run and been defeated by the Liberal Party.

• (1220)

At this very important meeting there were officials from various countries. At our table was a representative from New Guinea. Our illustrious representative of the government asked some very important questions of this delegate from Papua, New Guinea. He said "You are from Papua. There is no such name as that. What a silly name that is". That is where that delegate lives; that is his country; that is where he is from.

He thought it was quite a funny name and quite silly. Then he went on to say "I thought this was just for people who were from Asia. I did not know you could belong to APEC and not be from Asia. What are you doing here? You don't look Asian". Was this is a diplomatic thing to say to this man from Papua, New Guinea? He really was not impressed at that point and looked at our representative and said "Canada is a member of APEC as well".

These are the types of people the government appoints to boards. They end up on committees representing Canadians. This does not allow us to become productive. This does not allow us to become competitive. This does nothing for us in the international community.

When we look at these motions, at Bill C-19 and the huge government turnout that came to hear this message, I just have to be impressed. I want to close at this point and think it would only be fitting to ask for quorum so that some of the members who were not here might come in to catch the last word or two.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Just to be clear, is the member for Red Deer calling quorum?

Mr. Bob Mills: Yes, I am. I would like to call quorum.

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

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I just want to put on record, because the hon. member indicated for the record that there were no Liberal members present, that there were 18 Liberal members here, one Reform—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Wetaskiwin.

• (1225)

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague from Red Deer for raising the points that he did. I would like to expand on what he said.

He was talking about the importance of the bill to international relations. I would like to take that from a more local perspective and to pose a question. How will passage of the bill help the average Canadian? Is the average Canadian even aware of it?

In order to do that we have to examine who the legislation affects directly. It affects about 10% of Canada's workforce, those people who work in federally regulated industries like transportation, communication and all workers in the Northwest Territories; in other words, about 700,000 of the Canadian workforce.

We must ask ourselves what is the impact of the bill on the average person in Canada. Specifically, will it improve things for the average person in Canada? Does the passage of the bill mean that there will be an improvement in for instance the mail service? No, it does not. It does not preclude any work stoppages such as the one we saw in mail service last winter. It has not improved those situations at all.

If we are to open up the industrial relations portion of the Canada Labour Code, why not address some of these problems that mean something to the average person in Canada? Every person in Canada at one point or another mails a letter or receives a letter. First class mail is a monopoly of the post office. How has the legislation improved mail service in Canada? The short answer is that it has not improved mail service in Canada.

Perhaps it has improved Canada's ability to be a reliable exporter of goods. Let us look at that. Canada has ports on both ends of the country, a huge country that has reliable salt water ports both on the west coast and east coast of the country. They are extremely important outlets to world markets.

Let us hope that the industrial relations portion of the bill has made some improvement here. As we examine the bill we have to ask ourselves what those improvements could possibly be. Would it mean that as a result of changes to the bill that Canadians can more easily get products to port, loaded on ships, out through the port and off to customers? No. As my colleague has pointed out, we still have the bottleneck problem of trying to get our goods through ports which with great regularity have some sort of work stoppages.

To be fair, it is not always a strike. Oftentimes it is a lockout. What difference does it make to the average person on the street who is affected by the overall economy of Canada, the impact of not being able to get our goods to port and on to world markets? I do not think we have improved that at all.

Government Orders

Why have we not? The only thing that I can see is that the government is unwilling to address the fact that we need to have some sort of dispute settlement mechanism if collective bargaining fails, and it has been failing; otherwise we would not have these work stoppages. It works in some cases but it seems like when things get critical the work stoppages occur right at the time when we need ports the most.

The work stoppages in the post office never occur during summer holidays. They always seem to occur around Christmas-time when the demand for the services of the post office is the greatest.

• (1230)

As well, work stoppages at the ports do not seem to happen in the spring when the farmers are busy seeding. They always seem to happen in the wintertime when the farmers are cleaning out their granaries, trying to market their crops. It affects a lot more people than just simply the farmers. It affects the people on the railways. It affects the people of Canada, in general, because lost sales have to be recovered somehow.

Canada is not the only producer of these products. Whether they are agricultural products, dehydrated alfalfa or potash, it does not matter. These are products that we have to get to market in order to maintain our businesses. As we are often told, and we concur, this is a great, prosperous country in which to live, but we have to pay attention to business. We simply cannot be in a position where we can lose market after market and maintain a buoyant position in the world.

When I say that this bill does not do anything to help the average Canadian, it could be asked: Why is the average Canadian not saying something? Why are they not up in arms? Why are they not telling us to make some improvements?

As I pointed out, this only affects about 10% of the Canadian workforce. The average Canadian is so busy trying to make a living and paying their taxes that they do not have time to worry about problems like this. That is the reason we are raising these problems today and trying to make some improvements to this bill.

We would like very much to see products, regardless of whether they originate at the farmgate, at the lumber mill, or at the mine, to be able to reach port through a dependable transportation system, to be loaded onto ships and to be carried to market.

This has a huge impact on the Canadian economy. Anything that has a large impact on the Canadian economy has a large impact on individual people who, at first glance, would say "That is the Canada Labour Code. That is industrial relations. I do not work for the federal government. It has no effect on me". But it does. It affects every person in Canada.

There are provisions in this bill which we consider to be less than democratic. There are provisions which would enable the Canada Industrial Labour Board to certify a union without a majority indicating they would like to belong to the union.

Of course we will hear from the NDP, and we have heard from the government, that it can only do that provided there is clear evidence before the board that the employer has used some sort of unfair labour tactics, as if implying that it is only the employer who can use pressure tactics on a group of people.

I submit that this is undemocratic. Certification of a union should take place by secret ballot. When a person goes into the polling booth to cast a ballot nobody can put pressure on that person. They have the security and the confidentiality of the secret ballot. That is how unions should be certified.

We have heard many times about how this legislation seeks a balance. I would submit that if it is fair to certify a union without a majority, it should be fine to de-certify a union without a majority.

Furthermore, I submit that the Canada Industrial Relations Board will have tremendous pressure put on it by union bosses to see every case brought before it as undermining the unions. Every case will be pled on that basis.

• (1235)

Mr. Darrel Stinson: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important debate and I see a very, very pale attendance from the other side. I would like a quorum call, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: There is a quorum.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to do something a bit novel. I would like to actually speak to one of the motions that we are dealing with currently, which will be a bit of a shift from the last couple of speakers. We heard everything from Papua, New Guinea, to international affairs and how the labour code is going to have a broad-sweeping international detrimental impact on our country's abilities.

To deal with some of the specifics of why we are really here today, I would like to talk to Motion No. 7 put forward by the member for Wetaskiwin which would require that a representation vote be taken among employees in a unit and so on. The member spoke briefly about this when he made his remarks. He thought it would be a breach of democracy if there were situations in which a union could be granted certification if there had been unfair labour practice.

Government Orders

I want to point out some of the legal arguments that the board has to take into consideration when it makes such a rare ruling as granting automatic certification. Really what it hinges on is the board being satisfied that it is not possible to determine the true wishes of the employees because there has been interference. In that situation it will grant certification. It will give the employees the benefit of the doubt. Again, the board will only do that if the employees have demonstrated that without that interference the application for certification would actually have gone through.

In the actual case histories where this has happened, union representatives have had to show that they were well on their way to signing up enough cards, that they were getting close to a majority. Then the onus was on the union or the representative of the workers to prove that there was interference to such a degree that holding a vote would have been irrelevant because the whole situation had been poisoned to the point where the true wishes of the employees would not be known by a free vote.

Another point that the member made was that the privacy of the ballot box, the sanctity of the voting booth, is a place where no interference can take place. The result of every organizing drive that I have been on was that the election was held at the place of work; in fact, in the offices of the employer. Every worker who wanted to vote on the issue had to march down a gauntlet, walk down a hallway where all the bosses stood in the doors to their offices with their arms folded and glared at them to the point where we filed complaints. It has been very much a problem in some cases.

Interference happens even without speaking. There is psychological interference. It is very difficult to walk past the person who has control over your economic destiny and do something that person does not want you to do. Most employers do not want a union in their workplace.

I disagree that there is no interference possible when it is a secret ballot vote.

The member made the point that he did not think if union representatives got 35% of the cards signed they should get a vote. I think that is wrong. I think if 35% is indicated there is a sufficient amount of support to test it. If certification is not granted at 35%, then there will be a vote supervised by the labour board. That is very fair, in my estimation.

• (1240)

If over 50% of the cards are signed, the board will say that a vote is not necessary, majority support has been demonstrated and it should go ahead.

My argument is that it actually takes more of a conscious effort to sign a union card. Those cards have to be written very specifically to say the undersigned wants this particular bargaining agent to represent them in all matters dealing with terms and conditions,

wages, et cetera. They have to read it, sign that they have read it, dig in their pocket and hand over \$5. They have to consciously indicate that they want the union to represent them. It is actually more meaningful in my mind than walking into a ballot box, seeing yea or nay and putting an *x* on it.

Having 35% of the cards signed is very meaningful to me. It indicates a level of support that deserves to be tested with a vote. If there is 50% plus one, then the people have spoken.

Motion No. 7 asks for a vote in all cases. Even if the union manages to show that 100% of the cards have been signed, according to this motion a vote would still have to be conducted. People would be asked to vote twice on the same thing. How many times are votes to be held? Until they get the answer they want? Will people be made to vote over and over again until the desired effect is achieved and they can finally cap it off? That would be patently unfair. If majority support can be indicated, that should be satisfactory.

Automatic certification is an aspect of fairness which we are trying to achieve, as per the Sims task force and as per the whole substance of Bill C-19. We are trying to create a balance. We are trying to provide people with access to representation without fear of coercion, intimidation or the misuse of the historic imbalance in the power relationship that has always existed between employers and employees. We are seeking to level that playing field, at least for matters of labour relations, to make the two parties more equal. They will not be afraid of each other because they will have this equalizing legislation.

Bill C-19 does not put too much power in the hands of working people and unions. All other matters are still the exclusive right of management. Every collective agreement has a management rights clause which states that management has the exclusive right to dictate the means of production, the hours of work, et cetera. That is an aspect of every part of labour management relations. We are only talking about fairness in terms of access to representation if the people want it.

There is nothing threatening in Bill C-19, nor in the amendments dealing with certification. Adopting Motion No. 7 would be a huge step backwards in terms of allowing people to make their own choice on whether or not they want representation.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are on Government Orders which has to do with government business. This is a bill the government wants to put through. We happen to support it, but that it beside the point. The point is that it is the government's responsibility to get its legislation through. The purpose of quorum calls is not to have people poke their noses through the curtain and then leave. The idea is to keep a quorum so that when people are speaking to legislation they are actually speaking to somebody on the government side, so I would call quorum one more time.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have a call for quorum. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There is a quorum.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for West Kootenay—Okanagan.

Mr. Jim Gouk (West Kootenay—Okanagan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there are so few people listening to this debate that it would be a shame not to allow me to wait until the few members who are present are actually listening.

• (1245)

It seems that even when the Liberals are present they do not choose to listen. That is a lot of the problem.

The hon. member for Guelph—Wellington rose on a point of order earlier with regard to quorum calls and suggested the numerical values of what is on her side of the House versus this side of the House showed how wonderful the Liberals were.

As pointed out by the NDP member who just rose on a point of order, it is not up to the opposition to supply people for quorum calls when it is the government's bill that it is trying to put through—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The Chair is interested in this but would be much more interested in the bill being debated.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Speaker, I will try to get on course. It is very difficult when there are such ridiculous statements being made by the Liberals opposite.

I intend to address the motions in Group No. 2.

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We just went through an exercise of calling quorum and right away we have the government side disappearing again. I would like to call quorum again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I will ask the clerk to count the members present.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I can get their attention, I will carry on.

As I was saying, I intend to address specifically the motions in Group No. 2. What we are talking about in the motions in Group No. 2 are the powers and activities of the board.

I think it is appropriate, even though it is not in this group, that we talk about what kind of board we have to enforce these powers.

If the make-up of the board is one way, then it may be more comfortable with a power. If the make-up is a different way—

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we have quorum again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I will ask the clerk to count the members present.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the powers the board is going to have, particularly the ones contained in Group No. 2 of the motions now before the House.

When we talk in terms of the make-up of this board, the government wants to ensure the ability to put patronage appointments into this board.

The powers we are discussing in Group No. 2 are the kind of powers we are talking about, people who are put in there by patronage and not necessarily by merit.

I had a situation earlier during the first term of my office as MP where we needed a chair of the unemployment insurance commission board, the board of referees in my riding.

We felt this was very important because it meant not proper representation for the people who have problems in their riding. They had to go all the way to the Okanagan.

We suggested the names of three people to be chairs of boards. This will illustrate our concern under Group No. 2 regarding the make-up of this board. One was the campaign manager for the Conservative candidate, one was a non-Liberal and one was a person whose party affiliation we did not know.

We put their names in because we believed they would be good people. As it happened, we got no answer from the government on what it was going to do and the chair remained empty.

One day my assistant and my wife were at the local college speaking about politics. There also was the assistant campaign manager of the failed Liberal candidate for the riding.

He came to my assistant and said "I hear you are concerned about getting a chair appointed for the board of referees". It is interesting that he would have that information because we only conveyed that to the government. He said "don't worry about it because I'm being appointed". I raised that in the House and in the newspaper and made quite a fuss.

• (1250)

A reporter from the Vancouver *Sun* actually went to the riding and interviewed this individual. He told this individual that his

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member of parliament was questioning the fact that this was a patronage appointment and asked him how he would respond to that. He said "Of course it is patronage. What is wrong with that? How else would we attract people to our party?"

We do have a great concern about the make-up of this board and how it will be in a position to deal with some of the situations in this bill, particularly in Group No. 2.

Motion No. 6 deals with the potential streamlining of the board. We think that perhaps the Bloc's heart was in the right place when it wrote this but it is a bit of overkill. The Bloc is talking about having no ability whatsoever in relatively minor cases for the board to streamline things. We think it is appropriate. When people are waiting for the board to make a decision on a simple matter and fairly clear cut, we would like to think that the board can pick up the speed of things.

Motion No. 7 is a particularly interesting one because now we are talking about representation. By the sound of what the labour critic for the NDP said on this, I suggest that perhaps he has personal experience which has kind of poisoned his attitude to this process. He is talking about having to march down this line of hostile employers who have the power to read his mind. Why else would he feel threatened? He could have gone in with a big smile and given them a thumbs up. "Isn't that guy a good fellow. Obviously he is going to vote our way". In other words, he feels they can read his mind and that is what is intimidating him.

Believe me, knowing the hon. member, I would be a little intimidated too if I were him and thought somebody could read my mind at times. I will not even go to the natural line of that out of respect for the hon. member. Even though our opinions differ, I do have some level of respect for him.

When we start talking in terms of votes, the member is saying 35% is good enough. I will bet the Bloc would love to pass this one. Imagine if the Bloc said "Wait a minute, if we can get popular support for this, in the next Quebec referendum we only need 35%". If we go back to what the hon. member in the NDP said, it is really hard to sign people up. So 35% is good enough. Can anyone imagine what the Bloc would do with that?

Lucien Bouchard may be watching this debate today saying "If this government says 35% is enough, I think we will adopt it in the next referendum. If 35% of the population of Quebec votes to separate we're out of here". Interesting.

The Liberals may want to think about that when they come to vote on that motion. Do they really want to say that 35% represents the majority?

During the Quebec referendum we heard some people over there suggesting that 50% is not even enough and that maybe it should be 60%. Do they really want to set a precedent that states that 35% is good enough? I really hope they will start thinking about that one.

On Motion No. 8 what we are really looking at is to have democracy, pure and simple. The hon. member from the NDP actually suggested there is no way employees could possibly have a fair vote and if they sign up 35% that is proof positive. He says there is no way they will ever get a fair vote because they are intimidated by the employer. He is perhaps forgetting the case with Wal-Mart where considerably less than 50% signed up. The union that wanted to sign them up said it was unfair management practice and it was interfered with. It demanded that there should be certification because it was interfered with.

The board looked at this and agreed and so it certified them. The employees did not want it and now they are seeking to have the union decertified. So much for the arguments from the hon. member.

I could go on considerably, as the House well knows, on individual parts of this. Comments made from the Liberal side alone could keep me going all day I am sure.

• (1255)

I want to reassure members that I will be back and that they will hear from me later today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are looking at Group No. 2, which contains four motions.

We are in favour of Motion No. 6 because we want to prevent the arbitrary appointment of replacements for representatives who have been duly appointed by their group.

Excuse me, I realize I made a mistake. I was in fact referring to Motion No. 8.

I want to focus particular attention on the two motions proposed by the hon. member of the Reform Party. In our opinion, Motion No. 7 allows strikebreakers to be used, in that they could vote for a bargaining unit, which we find excessive and unacceptable. We in the Bloc Québécois are strenuously opposed to any use of strikebreakers, for reasons rooted in Quebec history. There is a consensus on this in Quebec. The use of scabs results in an escalation of violence and stirs up emotions. All manner of problems arise in a labour conflict when scab labour is brought in.

Still worse, what the Reform Party is proposing is for these scabs to have a right to vote. As well as replacing employees, they could take part in union decisions. This we find unacceptable. It is not clearly set out but the possibility is there and we are opposed to this.

Motion No. 30 refers to unfair labour practices by the employer. It weakens the importance of recognition of duly unionized workers and allows them to be replaced by people who are not accredited.

I am raising this point again to shed a more general light on this bill. In this House, two parties are opposed to the bill: the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois. The other parties support it because,

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in their opinion, it is a series of compromises acceptable to labour and management.

However, the arguments on which the Bloc Québécois' opposition is based relate mainly to the possible use of scabs, which is unacceptable in Quebec. Reform members on the other hand, probably because of the type of concerns in the region of Canada they represent, call for the existing rules to be relaxed. They are asking for greater freedom than that currently provided by the legislation and are opposed to the bill because they feel it goes too far. In our opinion, it does not go far enough.

If I may use an analogy, it is somewhat reminiscent of the Charlottetown accord. Quebeckers were faced with a proposal from all of Canada's first ministers, including the Quebec premier, who, rather surprisingly and paradoxically, had agreed to compromise. This compromise went so far that Quebec did not go for it.

• (1300)

At the other end of the country, people felt too much power was being given to Quebec.

This is not unusual in this House. There are two very important cultures and attitudes in this country. Compromise must be sought with respect to working conditions. Discussions around work issues are about people's livelihood and are much more down to earth than discussions about the Constitution as far as people are concerned, since they deal with their everyday labour relations.

However, we are dealing with two different cultures and views of the work world that are hard to reconcile. I shall attempt to demonstrate this today by outlining the rationale behind the Bloc Québécois' opposition to the Reform Party's proposals. We believe that allowing scabs to vote on important issues in the place of unionized workers is unacceptable and that is why we are opposed to this practice.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the Group No. 2 motions before us at report stage of Bill C-19.

I am pleased to see you back in the chair, Mr. Speaker. I knew you would be pleased that I was speaking whilst on your watch.

I would like to follow up a little more on the points raised by the Reform member who spoke. It would be nice if we could call the members here by their names. I realize it is tradition that we have to call them by their riding names.

Something interesting happened to the New Zealand parliament when it switched to the MMP system of representation. Half of the members do not actually have ridings. They are selected on the

basis of party lists. The house was faced with the problem of how to identify members when they cannot be called by a riding name. They dispensed completely with calling people by the ridings and now they call each other by their names. It raises the question why it was even necessary to have this tradition in the past anyway. But I digress as I tend to do, and I will get back to the point we were talking about.

A little earlier my colleague from the Kootenay area riding was talking about the 35% threshold for certifying a union. It really puzzles me how the NDP, which claims to be the New Democratic Party, can argue against democracy in this way.

I reinforce the argument of my colleague. How could you possibly take 35% to be representative of the majority? As my colleague mentioned, if the Bloc Québécois had that rule for their Quebec referendum, especially if they could argue coercion, that people on the way to the polling booth to vote had to walk through an armada of no signs, they would automatically get certified for separation. It is totally ludicrous. If you have democracy you have democracy and that means a majority.

Perhaps the NDP support for such a concept is based on the fact that the workers have to compulsorily contribute to the NDP through their union dues. There are plenty of workers out there who do not want to do that.

The Wal-Mart affair in Ontario is certainly a good example of that. The Canada Industrial Relations Board in its wisdom certified the union when 151 of the Wal-Mart employees at the Windsor store voted against a union and 43 voted for it. How could a union possibly be certified under those circumstances? There were 151 against and 43 for a union and it was certified. Why? Because the CIRB made a random decision that the employer was unfair.

Now the workers are organizing to decertify. I would say that almost certainly indicates that their will has been absolutely defied by the Canada Industrial Relations Board. It is absolutely appalling that those people on the CIRB would use their political bent, their ideology to force a decision upon unwilling workers.

• (1305)

We will certainly be watching the ongoing happenings with that particular decertification drive. I think it will show conclusively that workers want control of their own destiny. They do not want these sorts of undemocratic laws forced upon them.

Reform's Motion No. 30 would fix this problem of 35%. The bill as it stands allows the Canada Industrial Relations Board to certify a union even if there is no evidence of majority support if the board believes there would have been support had it not been for the

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employer's unfair labour practices. That is a really subjective judgment.

The determination of what constitutes an unfair labour practice is left entirely up to the Canada Industrial Relations Board. The Wal-Mart case as I said illustrates that. What we would like to see is that a union not be certified unless there is a secret ballot held and a majority of the workers have to support that idea of a union.

Motion No. 7 also proposed by the Reform Party deals with the Canada Labour Code which states that the board may, and I underline may, hold a representational vote on union certification to satisfy itself that the workers want the union. The word is "may" and we would like to see that as "must".

Again, how can we possibly guarantee a democratic process if we do not allow people to vote? The same members in this House who want to certify unions with 35% with all sorts of arbitrary procedures would never ever agree to such procedures in their own ridings.

You can laugh, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine the situation in your own riding if that were to happen. You probably would not be sitting there today. All sorts of strange things could happen and you could be on the patronage bandwagon today, Mr. Speaker, looking for a position on the immigration and refugee board, or maybe on this Canada Industrial Relations Board. You would certainly deserve it, Mr. Speaker. You have been here long enough to prove that you are part of club Chrétien. I think you have earned enough membership points. You might even get to the Senate, I do not know.

In any event, in this group there are two Reform motions which obviously we support. There are two Bloc motions which we oppose. Members before me have indicated briefly why we would do that.

First the Bloc wants to delete the clause in the bill which allows the CIRB to make decisions without oral hearings in fairly straightforward cases. We think it clogs the system if there is too much process. Therefore we are not supporting that particular motion.

The other one proposed by the Bloc has to do with the common practice where a group of employers will join forces to have just one agent represent them in negotiations. The amendment from the Bloc removes the requirement that the board must satisfy itself that the employer representative is no longer qualified to act in that capacity before revoking the appointment. The Bloc amendment provides for the automatic removal of the employer representative upon receipt of an application from one or more of the employers in the group and the appointment of a new representative.

We believe that there should be a vote of the majority of the members in this employer's group before such an action is taken. We really feel that the Bloc motion would weaken the employer's association position if they could just have one employer come

along and the same sort of lack of process that we are talking about on the union side would suddenly be appearing on the employer side as well.

That deals with my comments on the Group No. 2 motions. I realize you probably need to take a break soon, Mr. Speaker, but I hope you are back in time for my speech on the Group No. 3 motions.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, many months have gone by. Much work has been done. Many speakers have been heard. A report called "Seeking a Balance" was even presented to the minister with many comments on how to make the Canada Labour Code fair for all parties involved, both labour and employers.

• (1310)

As we all know, federal labour jurisdiction encompasses some very important sectors of our economy, for example, interprovincial transportation, aeronautics, broadcasting, banks and shipping. The federal government also has jurisdiction over labour matters involving the federal public service. In all, federal labour legislation governs about 10% of the Canadian workforce.

This is the reason why we as legislators must make sure changes that will be made to part I of the Canada Labour Code are changes dated 1998 and not 1965. We must make sure that these changes serve today's and future generations of workers and employers.

In November 1996 Bill C-66 was introduced to parliament. It was rushed through the House of Commons like we expect the government will want to do with Bill C-19. Then as is the custom the Senate social affairs committee gave Bill C-66 careful consideration. PC senators outlined major flaws with the bill especially with respect to the privacy issue, replacement workers and certification as a remedy. This is the issue I wish to delve into at this time.

Here we are on May 7, 1998 speaking on many flaws that still exist and proposing solutions to these flaws. As the member of parliament for the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche, elected democratically by the citizens of my great riding, I have a lot of difficulty with a clause which states: "The board may certify a trade union despite the lack of evidence of majority support".

Having a sentence like this in a bill from a democratically elected House, the House of Commons of Canada, should certainly raise many eyebrows. Whatever happened to democracy? Mr. Speaker, do you think the Prime Minister is travelling too much to Cuba?

Clause 46 states that if the employer "has failed to comply with section 94 and the board is of the opinion that, but for the unfair labour practice, the trade union could reasonably have been expected to have had the support of a majority of the employees in the unit".

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What does the government consider to be unfair labour practice? Let me shed some light on the interpretation that was given to a clause much like the one before us now.

As stated previously by an hon. member, consider the case last winter in which a majority of 151 to 43 employees of Wal-Mart in Windsor voted against unionization. The Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that the employer had engaged in unfair labour practices and made them all join the steelworkers union.

What was the unfair labour practice? What big bad deed did the employer practice in? What action was so reprehensible that almost three-quarters of the employees voting against unionization had to be overturned?

Managers of the store when they were asked whether the store would close if it were unionized followed the legal advice they had received and refused to comment. They did not say anything. That was an unfair labour practice. What were they supposed to say? A yes would almost certainly have been judged to be intimidation but a no might well have led to a lawsuit had higher labour costs would in fact put the store out of business.

In the OLRB's view, the managers' refusal to answer was such a grievous violation of workers rights that it invalidated not only that vote but any future votes as well. Since the managers could not avoid unfair labour practice by saying yes, saying no, or saying nothing, it is reasonably clear that legislation of this sort draws its principal inspiration from Lewis Carroll. Following the Ontario decision, a similar situation was under way in British Columbia.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

This shows how a bad decision can snowball. We should take a stand against this attempt to void a democratic vote on a mere whim. It is ridiculous.

During the 1997 election campaign, the Progressive Conservative Party promised to strengthen the protection conferred by labour laws on workers by increasing their democratic rights. We would have required a secret ballot with respect to matters involving union representation. It can therefore be argued that increasing workers' democratic rights includes respecting the wishes expressed in a secret ballot.

What is the point of holding a vote, if it can be overturned for any old reason? In support of my argument, I wish to refer to the conclusions of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which, as I said earlier, made an exhaustive study of Bill C-66.

In its report, the Senate committee wrote as follows:

Your committee has heard concerns that the provision in Clause 46 which would allow the Canada Industrial Relations Board to certify a trade union as a remedy for

employer unfair labour practices, runs counter to the principle that certification should be based solely on the majority support of the employees in the bargaining unit. We strongly endorse the principle of majority support as a basis for certification and note that Bill C-66 retains the Board's authority to verify support by holding a representation vote in any case. We strongly recommend that the Board exercise the jurisdiction it has under section 29(1) of the Canada Labour Code and order a representation vote as a matter of course.

We believe that the concerns that have been expressed to the committee on this clause are serious and urge the utmost caution in applying this exceptional provision. Though a number of provincial labour statutes include similar provisions, they are used by provincial labour boards in rare cases, where an employer commits a serious unfair labour practice and where a representation vote is unlikely to provide a true measure of the employees' wishes.

We recommend, therefore, that in interpreting and applying Section 99.1, the Canada Industrial Relations Board should respect the findings of the Sims Task Force, namely, that this is an unusual remedy which should be reserved for "truly intolerable conduct" by an employer. Your committee has concerns about whether the recent use of a similar clause by the Ontario Labour Relations Board in the Wal-Mart case is in fact an appropriate use of such a measure.

In its report, the Senate committee, the majority of whose members are Liberals, would probably have proposed an amendment deleting clause 46 if it had had the time.

I therefore hope that members of the House will support this amendment.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to rise because I certainly do not want it to be thought by anyone who supports Bill C-19 that I am in any way supportive of the filibuster the Reform Party is performing for us today with respect to Bill C-19.

Many things have been said that I think should not go unanswered. The debate on Bill C-19 which has gone on at various stages—and we are now at report stage—has shown the profound bias that exists in the Reform Party against labour unions, wage earners and their right to organize themselves collectively to defend their interests in the workplace and in the economy in general.

• (1320)

Even though I know a lot about the Reform Party, I have to say that I am shocked at the vehemence and the unfairness with which it advanced these arguments. For example, a Reform member talked about his objection to the notion that 35% of a workforce signing its cards would be sufficient to create a vote on whether or not to certify the union in that workplace.

The member did two things. First, he tried to give the impression that the 35% in and of itself was enough to certify the union. No one has ever said that and that is not what the bill says. For the member to try to give that impression, I do not know whether he is as dumb as a bag of hammers or whether he is trying to give a false impression to the House. The fact is that the bill is very clear that 35% is what causes a vote to be taken. Thirty-five per cent has

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never been regarded sufficient for certification in itself. It is very interesting the member would be so concerned about—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: They do not like what I am saying because they are desperately trying to change the subject over there.

It is very interesting the member would dump all over the notion that 35% is enough. This morning his leader had a press conference and announced the Reform new Canada act that has provision for a constitutional constituent assembly at which things would be decided about the constitution of the country. What would it take to cause this vote to take place at the constitutional constituent assembly? It would take 3% of eligible electoral voters, but when it comes to a union 35% is not enough. When it comes to a union, they will have to win the vote before they have the vote.

Who are we trying to kid? Only somebody who was profoundly anti-union could hold such a double standard that when it comes to unions 35% is not enough to cause a vote to take place but when it comes to the country 3% is enough.

I dare members to look back at all the proposals that have been made by individual Reform MPs and by the Reform Party as to what would be enough to cause a referendum to take place in various situations. I would bet that in none of those situations did they ask that it be 35% to cause a vote to be taken.

However, when it comes to unions, when it comes to working people, when it comes to wage earners having the opportunity to vote as to who will represent them in the workplace, the Reform Party has an entirely different standard. When it is a vote that Reformers want to take place, 3% will do, but when it comes to unions 35% is not enough. Let this double standard speak for itself.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise after the member who just spoke. That was a most interesting interpretation. I would like to read for his benefit the specific clause being debated and the amendment actually being proposed. The following is being proposed in government legislation:

29.(1) The Board may, for the purpose of satisfying itself as to whether employees in a unit wish to have a particular trade union represent them as their bargaining agent, order that a representation vote be taken among the employees in the unit where it is satisfied that at least thirty-five per cent of the employees in the unit are members of the trade unit applying for certification.

• (1325)

The Reform Party is proposing to leave all that in place with one change, that is that the word “may” be changed to the word “shall”. That is the whole issue.

What in the world was this gentleman who just spoke talking about? What were those people over there clapping about? What were they all laughing about? They do not understand their own bill. It is unbelievable.

We have the NDP railing about things. What the NDP member was actually saying is in the bill. What is in the bill is what the government wants. All we want to do is to make sure that this democratic principle is observed. That is the issue. When will the NDP learn what the English language actually says? When will those hon. members recognize what they mean when legislation is put before the House?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. While I am sure the debate is very energetic, it is very difficult for the Chair to hear the hon. member for Kelowna who has the floor. I am trying to listen, but it is exceedingly difficult to hear with all the enthusiastic debate going on in the Chamber. Perhaps we could have a little more order so that the hon. member for Kelowna could resume his remarks.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I cannot hear for Reformers heckling their own member. I appreciate—

The Deputy Speaker: The Speaker cannot hear for the noise in the Chamber and we will leave it at that.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful that we can have such a spirited discussion about democracy. It means that democracy works. It has a chance.

I would like to move to another point. It has to do with another proposal being made. It would amend subclause 16 (4.1) in the proposed legislation and reads:

On application of one or more employers of employees in the bargaining unit, the Board may revoke the appointment of the employer representative and appoint a new representative.

That is a very serious amendment. It says that one person may determine that someone should not represent them any more. It takes away any kind of secondary or objective evaluation of whether the individual representing a group is qualified to continue to be that representative.

It should not simply be one person's whim or fancy that allows someone to be taken out of a negotiation situation. All they might say is that they do not understand or they do not agree with him and as a consequence want him out of there.

There has to be some protection against the kind of arbitrary and fanciful thinking which the motion suggests. I would have to speak against it and suggest that there has to be a somewhat fairer system of doing it, a fairer process.

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I will move to the third area I want to comment on concerning the business of changing one of the motions that has to do with the business of who may decide what is unfair labour practice.

● (1330)

The suggestion in the bill would read that the CIRB would be both judge and advocate. On the one hand, this board watches over the process and makes decisions about whether that is fair and whether it is going forward in the manner that it ought to proceed. Then if one of the parties is judged to be, in the opinion of the CIRB, unfair or engaging in unfair labour practices it is not totally impartial.

There was a commitment earlier in the process for them to work directly with these people. If now it states that they are being unfair in the kind of labour practices that they are engaging in they are in fact arguing against themselves.

I suggest that this very example took place in Ontario in the Wal-Mart case where the employees said they did not want to be certified. However, because somebody took the interpretation that management had engaged in unfair labour practices, we are now going to say they can certify. It totally denies the realization that a vast majority of these people did not want the union.

Members might say that was in the heat of the moment, emotions prevailed and there were unfair labour practices. However, members should notice what has happened since then. Recently we have the realization that the Windsor store alone voted 151 to 43 in favour of the union's being decertified. Is this not a clear indication that the earlier ruling by the CIRB was wrong?

There are three reasons why we should oppose these motions in Group No. 2. First, to recognize the business of having only one person to allow another person to be taken out of the negotiation procedure is wrong. We must oppose the proposal within the proposed legislation that the board may deny democracy to operator.

If we in this House want to be honest with each other and want to be a clear debating society, then we must agree that we should take whatever steps we can to assure that democracy takes place not only here but in all the agencies and in all the ways in which we negotiate disagreements or where we have differences of opinion. We must preserve that.

We must also preserve the judicial procedure at least in principle that allows fairness and equity to take place so that judge and advocate cannot exist at the same time and make arguments against that.

There is another point I want to raise which has to do with the democracy in this place. Could it be that the government of the day could actually take it into its consideration and agree that maybe

there are times, even after it has gone through second reading and the committee process, that it could entertain, accept and agree to amendments in the legislation that make sense and that will guarantee the very fundamental issue on which this country was built, democracy.

If this government does nothing else, perhaps it could see it in its heart and in its mind to change that particular provision in the bill to say the board shall guarantee that democracy operates with those people who want a union or who do not want a union in a particular area. This has nothing to do with being pro or anti-union. It means people have a right to decide how they want to govern themselves and how they want their relationships with their employers to be obtained.

Surely it is in the heart of all of us to allow workers as well as anyone else to exercise and demonstrate their democratic rights.

Mr. Allan Kerpan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I listened to my colleague give such an eloquent speech. It is a real shame that there are not more here to hear that. When I look around the Chamber I realize there are fewer members than the required number for quorum.

● (1335)

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: There is a quorum.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is a feeling in the House that this is an important debate and that there should be some close attention paid. That sends a signal. We are now speaking on changes to the labour code. There are four motions in Group No. 2. I will make a few brief remarks to assist my colleagues in making a good decision with respect to these proposed amendments.

The first Bloc amendment states that the provision in the bill that allows the board to make decisions without oral hearings should be deleted. In other words, the board must hold oral hearings in every case before it makes a decision. On the face of this there could be some good arguments for saying that decisions should not be made without proper evidence being before the board. So it would not be palm tree justice but there would be some real evidence. There would be a balanced review of the evidence before making a decision.

The background of this provision in the bill would allow the board to make decisions not without evidence but with written rather than oral evidence. If after reviewing the written evidence the board feels that an oral hearing is necessary, it could proceed to that stage of the process. The debate on this amendment is whether the board should be required in all cases to receive oral evidence before it makes decisions or whether it can make decisions based

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only on written evidence in some cases. It was envisioned that this would be on minor issues although there would be nothing to keep the board from making major decisions without oral evidence.

There are arguments on both sides of the issue. At this stage it might be good to give the board the flexibility to make some procedural and minor decisions based simply on written evidence in order to expedite its proceedings and to make sure there is not a backlog or an administrative overload on the board. There could be a concern that the board might abuse that, that it might make decisions without receiving the proper evidence or allowing all the parties to have their say. If that is a real and substantial concern, then the Bloc's motion makes some sense. We need to weigh that carefully. As the parliamentary secretary is fond of saying, we need to come out with a balance on it.

The second amendment was put forward by the official opposition. It has caused some interesting fireworks in the House due to a misinterpretation of this amendment by one of the NDP members, a member who almost never makes that kind of mistake. I have the highest respect for that member and his logic process.

However, in this case the bill provides that if 35% of workers say that they want a representational vote, then the board may call a vote. Our amendment states that if 35% of workers want a representational vote, then the board shall call a vote. In other words, democracy shall work, not may work, if the board decides that workers get the great gift of getting to exercise democracy.

• (1340)

If the NDP feels that having to hold a representational vote with only 35% of members indicating they want certification is not democratic, that it should be 50%, I would very strongly support an amendment to raise the bar from 35% to 50%. I invite my friends in the NDP to make that amendment if they feel that there needs to be even stronger democracy in this provision.

At this point we would be content to say to workers that if a reasonable number want union certification then there will be a vote as to whether that will be put into place. If the NDP wants that number of workers to be raised then it can make an argument for doing that. At this point the issue is not the number of workers who want certification, it is the fact that even if some workers do want certification the board may or may not choose to allow them to make that decision. That totally flies in the face of democracy, which is something that the New Democrats I am sure would find absolutely repugnant. I know they will be strongly in support of this democratization amendment put forward by the official opposition.

In our country as far as I know, although I know some Liberal backbenchers would argue with me, we still have a democracy. I know that democracy is flouted and abused and repressed, sadly, in

procedures of the House as we perceived recently, but it is still a principle that even the government pays some lip service to. I hope we would not be denying our workers the democratic traditions of our country, not stripping away their democratic rights and replacing their ability to make free and self-determining decisions and having their rights replaced by some appointed board which decides what is best for them.

Surely this dictatorship approach, this father knows best, this small group of elites knows best for the workers should be absolutely repugnant to every party in the House, most especially to the NDP. I expect that this amendment will pass very easily because of our fervent and deep commitment to the democratic process in this country.

The next motion is a Bloc motion which says that if there is a representative of employers, a group of employers, in bargaining negotiations and if even one employer from that group makes an application then the employer representative will be turfed and replaced by somebody else the board chooses. What the Bloc is essentially saying is that unless there is unanimity an employer representative is going to be toast.

We have to think through the implications of this. If there has to be unanimity on the part of the employers before someone can act on their behalf, then are we going to apply the same principle to workers and say there has to be unanimity among workers before a union can act on their behalf? If that is the case there would have to be 100% vote to validate the certification of a union to represent workers. Because the unanimity principle has been put into place for employers, in fairness the same principle should hold true for employees, for workers.

Is the Bloc saying that its unanimity principle is the one we want to go on in this respect? I do not think so. I think the democratic principle is based on a majority decision. Unless the block is saying there has to be unanimity across the board in the expression of who is going to represent both employers and employees, clearly it would be very inconsistent, very unfair and be a completely tilted playing field were we to support the Bloc motion. I appeal to my friends in the Bloc to consider how illogical this amendment is unless they are going to follow it up with the requirement of unanimity among workers before a union can be certified.

• (1345)

The last amendment is a Reform amendment. It essentially addresses the democracy principle as well, saying that we must get rid of the provision that the board can certify a union even if the workers say they do not want one, if the board says that there was an unfair labour practice. I do not have time to get into this. I know that many of my colleagues will speak eloquently and fervently on this.

Government Orders

Suffice it to say that if we really believe in democracy in this country we had better start putting our money where our mouth is in this kind of legislation.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-19 and the second group of amendments.

I would like to congratulate my colleague from Wetaskiwin for all the work that he has put into this matter before and during the committee debates that have been carrying on.

Today we are looking at different groups of amendments and we are now debating Group No. 2. The one I would like to dwell on is the democratic aspects of our amendment.

We need to make sure that democracy in this country can go through all aspects of our society. This bill states that the Canada Industrial Relations Board may order a representational vote on union certification. That is just not good enough. We would like to have our amendment brought forward which says that 35% of the employees need to sign a card indicating they want union certification.

There was a recent case in Ontario. A similar provision in the Ontario labour relations act imposes stricter requirements on automatic certification. Even under a stricter provision the Ontario Labour Relations Board in the recent Wal-Mart decision certified the steelworkers union as the bargaining agent for a group in a Wal-Mart store in Windsor despite the fact that 70% of the employees voted against the union. The board based its decision on membership evidence submitted by the steelworkers union which showed it had support of 44% of the employees in the bargaining unit.

It just goes to point out that if this bill is not treated properly, it can open up all kinds of strange parameters and undemocratic proceedings. The fact we would like to see 35% of employees cards signed would go a long way to stopping some of the problems that exist.

This bill and its predecessor, Bill C-66, are basically flawed for some of the reasons we are stating today. Stable labour relations are absolutely essential for this country to grow and to thrive, for people to invest in Canada and to reinvest. Companies that are looking to expand and to offer new services across Canada want stable labour relations so that they can count on their businesses being open and being able to supply Canadians with the services that they want.

With this whole entrepreneurial aspect of our country where a person can come up with a good idea, promote it, develop it and put it in place to service Canadians, it is necessary to have in place the

labour to fulfil these aspirations. We would like to see amendments to the bill to allow that to happen.

The democratic aspect of what we are promoting in the Group No. 2 amendments is part of what we believe in. We know that the rest of the members of the House will develop their opinions and support us as well.

• (1350)

The Bloc has a motion that allows one or more employees in a group to appoint a new representative. That does not follow with what we would like to see done so we will be opposing that motion.

There are other items my colleague from Wetaskiwin has brought forward to show the weakness of this bill. One of them is access to offsite workers. We will be handling that at a later date.

We saw a couple of years ago during the winter that we could not for various reasons get our products to port, and once they got to port we could not get them out. This bill is to help relieve that situation. It guarantees that once a product or grain gets to port, it will be shipped. We have a whole lot of things to address in the labour act to enable those products to get from the farm gate or from the manufacturer's gate to the port.

As we go through the scenario of looking into the problems that existed two years ago that helped to almost bankrupt our agricultural community on the prairies, we have to make sure that we go back through every aspect of the labour act and put forth changes that will make it more acceptable and make it more friendly to the people who are shipping goods. That is why we have brought forward our amendments. We have to make sure that what happened in Windsor, Ontario cannot happen elsewhere.

The Canada Industrial Relations Board has also made some changes to how it is going to structure its chairs and the length of service. Many aspects here need to be looked at considerably. If we can start with our amendment that will keep this bill democratic and allow members of a union to have a representational vote of 35%, this will help alleviate one of the major obstacles and will fall into place with some of the other amendments we are proposing in the other groups.

This bill is going to have far reaching effects for years to come in Canada. It is important that it be democratic. It is important that it address the issues that are of concern in the labour industry. It is important to supply an atmosphere in Canada in which people will be confident in investing. It is important to the producers and manufacturers that when they have made a commitment to somebody offshore to deliver a product in a timely fashion that they are able to do it. If that cannot be done, our reputation is harmed. It is seriously affected and we lose that trust we have throughout the world.

I hope the rest of the House will support our amendments.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you for getting the riding name right. I know how difficult it is for hon. Speakers to recognize 300 members, or 298 as the case may be, with the few who serve in your capacity. It is hard to remember all these riding names. Some of them are quite difficult to remember. I know that you struggle with mine from time to time so I do appreciate the fact that you got it right today.

It is a pleasure for me to address this very important piece of legislation. These report stage amendments to Bill C-19, amendments to the Canada Labour Code, were brought forward by members of the opposition parties. In speaking to this particular group of amendments, it is important to highlight one of the fundamental flaws found in this legislation, which a number of my colleagues and colleagues from other parties have been addressing today, and that is the clause which is very undemocratic.

• (1355)

We have heard some of the other members speak to the fact that a group of workers and employees could have union certification despite the wishes of the majority of those same employees. As some of my colleagues have stated over the past number of hours, that is a very serious breach in light of the fact that we supposedly live in a democratic country.

As some have said, we see in this particular Chamber from time to time that democracy is repressed or it is flouted and put down. The fact remains that we do live in a democratic country. For a government to bring forward these particular amendments to the Canada Labour Code which would see the wishes of a minority superimposed over those of the majority is clearly wrong.

I support the Reform Motion No. 7 which is included in Group No. 2. The legislation as it now exists says that the board, the CIRB, may order a representational vote on union certification to satisfy itself that the workers want the union. Our amendment calls for the board to hold a representational vote when 35% of the employees sign cards indicating that they want that union certification. That is a reasonable amendment.

I have risen so many times in the House both in the last parliament and in this parliament to speak to amendments that have been well thought out and put together in all sincerity by members from both sides of the House and by all four opposition parties. The amendments are brought forward to try to improve legislation either at the committee level or in the Chamber at report stage as we are doing today and as we have seen, we cannot even get a quorum from time to time.

It is the government's responsibility to ensure that it at least goes through a certain facade or charade of having a few members present—

The Speaker: My colleague, I know that you are in the middle of your talk. Of course you will be recognized first when we come

back to debate. You still have six minutes to speak on this particular topic.

Because it is almost 2 p.m. we will now proceed to Statements by Members.

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STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PORT COLBORNE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to congratulate my alma mater, Port Colborne High School, its students, staff and fellow alumni on its 75th anniversary.

To celebrate this historic occasion Port High is hosting a gala reunion this weekend. In many cases three generations of Port Colborne residents have studied at Port High and several thousand will return to this fine school to celebrate this auspicious occasion.

It is something we often take for granted in our country, that we have the finest system of education in the world. We educate so many young people, send them out into the changing global economy and global society to meet the challenges of their time. Academically, athletically and socially, Port High ranks first among equals.

The reunion is an opportunity to celebrate our friendships past and present, to celebrate our dedication to learning and especially to celebrate the teachers whose work has inspired and guided us and our young people. All the while we will commemorate 75 years of exemplary secondary education in Port Colborne.

Ad astra per ardua.

* * *

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been 331 days since the justice minister promised to reform the Young Offenders Act. Canadians want this minister to deliver on that promise, not procrastinate, evade and neglect. Public rallies are being held across the country to urge this minister to move.

In Calgary this Saturday, May 9 at 2.15 p.m. concerned citizens will gather at the Court of Queen's Bench and then will parade to the McDougall Centre to express their views on changes to the Young Offenders Act.

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I urge all Calgarians and citizens across southern Alberta to attend this rally and support measures to improve the safety and security of all Canadians.

* * *

• (1400)

[Translation]

SPORT FISHING

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to tell you about another excellent government initiative.

On May 2, the secretary of state responsible for Canada Economic Development announced a \$1.4 million program, in co-operation with the Quebec government, for the voluntary buyback of the last commercial salmon fishing licences on the Lower North Shore. The federal government will contribute \$700,000 under that program.

With this initiative, the Canadian and Quebec governments are following up on their commitment to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization to limit interception fishing as much as possible, so as to reduce its impact on migration corridors.

This initiative will also promote the development of sport fishing which, according to estimates, will generate annual economic benefits of about \$2 million in the Lower North Shore region.

This shows once again that Canada is a country that works, contrary to what some may think, to their own detriment.

* * *

WORLD RED CROSS DAY

Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, May 8, is World Red Cross Day.

The Red Cross has been a pillar of civil society. It was instrumental in the signing of the convention on the elimination of antipersonnel mines by 122 countries, in Ottawa, last December.

In Oslo, back in September 1997 when the text of the convention was being worked out, I was privileged to have long discussions with Red Cross officials and with victims who benefited from that organization's help. One had to see the emotion with which these victims expressed their true and personal appreciation for this great community organization to understand the importance of its role.

There are close to 100 million land mines in the world. Each month—and I mean each month—these mines make 2,000 new victims. Given the new world order in which civil society is going to play a vital role, I wanted to mark the day celebrating the Red

Cross, which is one of the great humanitarian institutions of the world.

* * *

[English]

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to Michael Coulis who has recently begun a cross-country bicycle tour to heighten awareness about the issue of child sexual abuse.

Michael is working in conjunction with Victims of Violence, a national charitable organization dedicated to the prevention of crimes against children and the improvement of the situation of victims of violent crime.

Mr. Coulis is himself a victim of childhood sexual abuse and has dedicated this trip to help curtail these crimes that have been characterized by their victims as a life sentence.

Reform shares Michael's concern about these victims and has long called for tougher sentences and a victim's bill of rights. I applaud Michael for his efforts.

I wish to point out that I currently have a votable private member's bill, Bill C-284, which is designed to better protect children from known sexual offenders. I encourage other members of this House to support my bill and offer some hope to Michael and others who share these legitimate concerns.

* * *

THE ATLANTIC GROUND FISH STRATEGY

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Hilda Bagnell of Louisbourg started working at National Sea Products in 1962 and stayed there until the industry collapsed. But on Friday, May 9, Mrs. Bagnell along with hundreds of others from Cape Breton and across Atlantic Canada will have their TAGS lifeline cut.

Across Cape Breton from Louisbourg, two fishermen were told last Wednesday night, the night before the annual lobster fishery opened, that their quotas had been slashed by 40%. The plant in Cheticamp will now only process 400,000 tonnes compared to over one million last year.

Imagine how we would feel if we received a 40% pay cut with no notice. Imagine working for nearly 40 years and then being abandoned by the government whose policies had cost you your job.

I invite people to come to Atlantic Canada. I will show them the devastation caused by these unthinking, unfeeling policies. Then perhaps this government will see TAGS—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

[Translation]

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Government of Canada is paying particular tribute to the volunteers who worked so hard during the ice storm. I offer greetings to all those who are here today in the House.

Thousands of persons took action at the beginning of the year to help Quebecers who were in the grip of one of Quebec's worst storms.

This tribute coincides with Emergency Preparedness Week, which reminds us of the importance of preparing people and public bodies for this sort of catastrophe, which can arrive at any moment.

Today, however, these words suffice to express our thoughts on all those people, organizations and associations that worked together during the ice storm: thank you, thank you, thank you.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

CANADIAN SKILLS COMPETITION

Mr. Lou Sekora (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week Vancouver will host the 4th Canadian Skills Competition. This event will showcase skills of young Canadians from all our provinces and territories in 29 different trade and technology occupations.

These students and apprentices will compete in traditional fields such as brick laying and welding, as well as in areas such as desktop publishing, television and video production.

The Government of Canada recognizes that we need to encourage more young people to consider going into skilled trades and technology occupations. It is essential to the economic strength of this country.

That is why this competition is important. It salutes the excellence of young people who are going into these fields. It shows that Canada and its young people are ready to compete with modern skills in our changing economy.

* * *

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 1998 marks the 50th anniversary of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada and May is MS awareness month.

Evelyn Gotlieb Opal and Harry Bell, along with Dr. Colin Russell of the Montreal Neurological Institute, founded the society

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to help thousands of Canadians and their families deal with the devastating impacts of MS.

In its 50 years the society has grown to become the foremost voluntary agency, and Canadian researchers are at the helm of the research effort into finding a cure and discovering innovative new drug therapies.

As one honorary Carnation Day chair, I urge Canadians to support volunteers across the country to raise money and awareness of MS and to support individuals and research.

Happy 50th anniversary, MS society. Keep up the great work.

* * *

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I met my mother for the very first time on September 3, 1948. I cannot remember anything about that meeting, but somehow I knew she was nearby.

As I grew up I relied on her to clean my clothes, to cook my food and when things were not going so well I knew again she would always be nearby.

I remember the first bike she got me in Lakeside, Nova Scotia, even when we could not afford it. I remember her supporting me when I struggled through school. I remember her, again, always being there when I needed the wisdom and kind understanding of a mother.

One of my greatest Reform supporters in Chester Basin, Nova Scotia is, yes, you guessed it, my mother.

Today she is the queen of grandmothers to my children. She is the best friend of my wife. But to me she remains the kind mother I have always had.

On Sunday I wish my mother a very special Mother's Day and to all mothers who have done so much for their children and ask for nothing in return.

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[Translation]

QUEBEC CITY

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I protest the decision of the Quebec City national capital commission, which wants to rewrite Canadian history from a separatist standpoint by ignoring, denying and twisting reality.

We all recall that Quebec City hosted meetings between the leaders of the allies in 1943 and in 1945. Present at the meetings were the President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, the British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, and the Prime Minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King.

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Today, the commission is going to unveil statues of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill in this connection, but it is giving no recognition to the Canadian Prime Minister. This is a distortion of history, and indirectly, a moral affront to our soldiers in the last world war.

* * *

QUEBEC CITY

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an important event is taking place today in Quebec City: the commemoration of the 1943 and 1944 Quebec conferences. Quebec City was the host of these conferences where the leaders of the countries involved in a conflict of the magnitude of the second world war made decisions that would mark important turning points in history.

By unveiling two commemorative monuments of the Quebec conferences, that is, busts of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, we are marking an important event in world history. The leading role of Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King must also be acknowledged, as well as the effort of all Canadian soldiers in support of allied forces in the second world war.

● (1410)

When we commemorate such important events in the history of Canada, I believe we should do so with unquestionable intellectual honesty and not indulge in petty—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

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COMPOSTING WEEK

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, May 4 to May 10 is national composting week and this year's theme is "Composting, going back to our roots".

Composting is simple to do. You just have to put all your organic waste in a bin, outside your house, and let time and nature do the work.

Even though it is that simple, only about 20% of households do it. Considering that a family generates some 225 kilograms of organic waste annually, and that one pound of such waste produces between 4 and 10 cubic feet of methane, it only makes sense to start reducing greenhouse gases at home.

The efforts of amateur composters might save our planet from environmental deterioration.

I want to pay tribute to my father, Dr. Albert Alarie, who was a pioneer in this area, since he initiated composting in the scientific and municipal worlds, as early as in the 1950s. His work as an educator and an interpretive writer provided the foundation of all

that is now being done in Quebec, in this area. We owe him the benefits that we are now reaping.

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[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Conservative member for Charlotte, on his vigilant pursuit of justice and proper compensation for all victims of hepatitis C. This government has shown contempt, not compassion, for the victims of hepatitis C.

My colleague's efforts have helped the victims believe that someone in Ottawa cares about their plight. While the Minister of Health spoke down to Canadians and declared that the file was closed, it was my colleague who spoke for Canadians, the victims and their families.

Conservatives have a history of doing the right thing for innocent victims. This week the Conservative government in Ontario came out in support of extending compensation to all victims. Federally it was the previous Conservative government that moved unilaterally in providing compensation to all victims of HIV tainted blood.

The Conservative member for Charlotte has been working on behalf of hepatitis C victims all across Canada, including in the riding of St. John's West, and for that we should all be grateful.

* * *

[Translation]

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, 350 experts are meeting in Montreal for an international conference on renewable energies. Delegates are looking at the latest technological developments in the field, as well as at policies encouraging the transition to renewable energies.

Delegates will note that the federal government has neither a specific policy nor an actual budget for the promotion of renewable energies. Worse yet, it is cutting its budgets for the few related research projects, such as the Tokamak facility in Varennes. Delegates will also note that this government is still trying to excuse its failure to act by claiming that additional studies are necessary.

But time is running out. Every day, 10 Canadians die prematurely because of the effects of air pollution, which could be controlled. The federal government must take action now in the areas over which it has jurisdiction in order to stop the coal-based production of electricity, improve the energy efficiency of vehicles and buildings, and promote public transportation.

Oral Questions

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Gary Pillitteri (Niagara Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Canada in general, Ontario in particular, and my own constituency of Niagara Falls are experiencing good economic times.

What I find fascinating, if not bizarre, is that the Ontario premier is trying to claim credit for most of the good news. I am quite sure he is fooling no one.

The Standing Committee on Finance, of which I am a proud member, set things in motion with recommendations it gathered from across Canada. This, combined with the determination of the finance minister in holding inflation down, keeping interest rates low and balancing the budget for the first time in years, is the real reason for our recovery. All of this was accomplished in a caring way. There was no slashing or burning.

Ontario is a great place in which to live and do business, not because of Mike Harris but in spite of him.

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PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on March 10, during the prostate cancer information session held here on the Hill, almost 80 men took PSA blood tests for prostate cancer.

I am pleased to announce that most of those men had levels below four. Unfortunately, three of our colleagues had levels above four, with the highest being in the range of 13, a level of significant concern.

Because of other commitments, some MPs who should have did not take the PSA test. However, prime ministers, party leaders, ministers and deputy ministers do not have immunity from prostate cancer.

• (1415)

In light of the results I have just given, I hope those who did not take the PSA test and who are above the age of 50 will now call their doctors and make an appointment to take the test, if not for themselves then for their families, their loved ones and their colleagues.

The Speaker: I notice that many of us are wearing the carnation for Multiple Sclerosis Day. It is a good idea that we do this.

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, why is it that whenever the Prime Minister is asked to work with the provinces, particularly on social issues, he turns it into a meanspirited squabble?

The Prime Minister tried to bully British Columbia on welfare reform; he attacked Alberta on health care reform; and now he is directing insults to the premiers who want to compensate victims of hepatitis C. He treats the premiers more shabbily than he treats his own backbenchers.

How is this proposed hepatitis C conference to succeed if this is the Prime Minister's approach?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premiers have agreed that there should be a conference next week. Even last night on TV, Premier Harris changed his mind again and said that he would send his minister. I am happy with that.

All the ministers will sit down and look at the file. It will not be a policy made on the spur of the moment. It will be a rational approach to the problem. We know there was a commission that made the report. In fact the commission recommended that the compensation should be paid by the provincial governments but we took the initiative to resolve it and now—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister's spin doctors sent him to a charity function at McDonald's to try to paint him as more compassionate. At McDonald's the Prime Minister flip-flopped. The Prime Minister said that he might give compensation to some of the victims and then again he might not.

How can the Prime Minister go into a serious negotiation on this issue without having a firm position in advance?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was with George Cohon yesterday who is doing a great job using his business facilities to help young kids in Canada. I will not apologize for that.

We had a very rational discussion before with the provinces. We made a deal according to all the information that all the ministers had. Last Friday afternoon all the ministers talked and they came to an agreement. An hour after that, a premier pulled the rug out from under his minister of health. It is not a case—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Oral Questions

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is suffering from the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde syndrome. One day he dangles out hope for the victims; the next day he says that maybe he will not compensate them. This is cruel treatment of the victims. If he is going to compensate these victims, why does he not say so? If he is not going to compensate them, why does he not come out and say so?

Is the Prime Minister going to compensate these victims or not?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the same person who was asking me a few days ago if we were to compensate when there was fault by the government. Now he has changed his tune again; talk about changing his mind.

He is trying to create the impression with Canadians that he is compassionate, but he is the one who wants to cut \$800 million from aboriginal people. He is the one who wants to cut \$3 billion from equalization payments. I can read and read and read to prove that he is just playing politics.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing for me is that the victims watch these proceedings. They watch these antics. They are not interested in politics. They are not interested in pettiness. They are not interested in name calling.

• (1420)

What they want to know, and I get to be their voice, is what is the position of the Prime Minister as they go to this meeting. Is he ready to compensate the victims of hepatitis C from tainted blood? Yes or no. Will he or will he not?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should be very careful before styling himself as the voice of victims.

There are 22,000 victims who were infected during a period when something should have been done and have the government and the Prime Minister to thank for the fact that they are to be compensated.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the victims over and over again say that they are not answering this simple question. I do not know how many times we have to ask it.

Surely when you go to a negotiation you go there with a position. All we are asking is what is the position of the government as it goes to this important meeting on hepatitis C.

Is it going there sulking with its heels dug in, or is it going there in an open spirit of co-operation? For the victims' sake, will the government compensate pre-1986 victims? Yes or no.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already said the developments of this week are significant.

We have already said we will make ourselves available for a meeting. In fact the date and location of that meeting are almost finalized. We are going there to speak with provinces whose positions have changed and may change between now and then.

I think the hon. member should realize that the way we run the country is by consensus. We are listening to what is being said. We will also approach that meeting trying to find a new consensus. As the Prime Minister says, you do not make public policy in scrums or on the fly; you do it by sitting with the parties.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, under pressure from this House, the public in general and victims of the disease, the position of the premiers has moved in the right direction in the past week.

Ontario and Quebec have announced their intention to compensate hepatitis C victims not covered by the first settlement. Other premiers are considering the issue. But the Prime Minister of Canada, the principal player, is not budging.

Why is the Prime Minister putting off assuming his responsibilities and adopting a more humane attitude?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, we were almost the only ones willing to compensate the victims, since most of the provincial governments and ministers of health were refusing to do anything.

We showed we wanted to do something because we had a responsibility and we were facing a class action before the courts.

Now they are expanding the debate to include compensation for everyone. That is fine, but they have to pay. The Quebec premier wants compensation paid in two or three years by the federal government. Generosity means putting your money up front.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Roberval.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must remind the Prime Minister that his statement that he was the first willing to provide compensation is incorrect. Yesterday, I read out a resolution approved by the National Assembly on December 2. I ask him not to repeat such nonsense.

Why is the Prime Minister keeping his mind closed and refusing to try to find a solution for these victims, as his colleagues are doing? What is making him so stubborn?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Health answered the question very well yesterday, when he said he had clearly established that the Quebec minister of health, who defended the agreement vigorously, had initially been one those who did not want to do anything.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the Prime Minister's estimation, Premier Harris is a petty politician and a turncoat, while Premier Bouchard is a man who keeps changing his tune and is in political hot water.

How can the Prime Minister heap scorn and ridicule upon those who are showing some compassion and looking for solutions and label them turncoats?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have already said, we are always glad to meet with the provincial health ministers. In fact, preparations for such a meeting are under way and I will be in attendance.

• (1425)

Last summer, premiers Harris and Bouchard refused to compensate victims. They downright refused. Only the federal government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, started up the process. The victims will be getting compensation because of this government.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are two essential conditions for finding a solution for the hepatitis C victims. First of all, the Prime Minister must accept the principle of a humanitarian settlement. Then, he must accept the principle of financial involvement by his government, since it can afford to do so.

Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that he must agree to fulfill these two conditions so that the hepatitis C matter can be settled properly for once and for all?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just made reference to a humanitarian settlement.

I can tell the hon. member that I myself suggested the federal government be the only one to make a financial payment, while the provinces, Quebec included, would provide all medical services to the people including pharmacare. All of them refused, Quebec included. That was Quebec's position. It was not a humanitarian one.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Many Canadians are concerned about the possible export of Canadian water. We are very concerned to hear that the Minister for International Trade had said that water is tomorrow's oil.

Given that we export a lot of oil and that under NAFTA we could not ban the export of oil, would the Minister of Foreign Affairs kindly dissociate himself from the remarks of his colleague, the trade minister?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we said in the House yesterday very clearly that we consider the stewardship of our water resources a high priority.

We already took action yesterday in concert with the province of Ontario to refer the matter to the International Joint Commission that works under the boundary waters treaty over which we share jurisdiction with the United States.

We are taking the appropriate action to make sure that we have a system in place and to make sure that the security of our water resources is well protected.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not inappropriate to refer it to the International Joint Commission, but it does not have the authority to ban export of Canadian water and it does not provide a legislative framework for Canadian policy in this regard.

Will the minister commit to bringing forward a legislative framework to regulate the export of Canadian water and hopefully ban it, and will he dissociate himself from the view, whoever holds it, that water is tomorrow's oil? Oil is a commodity to be sold and bought in the marketplace and that is not what Canadians want done with their water.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has already taken steps to look at the broad question of the place of water within our society. The Ministry of the Environment has commissioned a major study on water resources including the question of exports.

The key to it is that we are undertaking major consultation with the provinces which have the right to give permits on water. We will arrive at a Canadian decision in the best interest of Canadians.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MINT

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, since 1993 the Liberals have had a policy that government should not compete with private industry where business is better able to provide the service.

Yet today the government has introduced a bill that will put the Royal Canadian Mint into direct competition with Westaim, a successful Canadian company, and jeopardize the future of 120 workers.

My question is for the minister of public works. Is it now the policy of your Liberal government to use federal borrowing power to destroy successful Canadian companies?

The Speaker: The hon. member should address all questions through the Chair. If the hon. minister heard the question, he may answer.

Oral Questions

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill that I tabled this morning in the House has nothing to do with the new plating plant the mint is building in Winnipeg. It is to streamline the corporation and to make sure the decision to issue new coins, not necessarily the way it is doing it now, and to produce them faster.

In terms of the issue between Westaim and the mint, I remind the hon. member that it is before the courts. I do not think it is appropriate for me to comment on the issue.

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, if Westaim were located in a Liberal riding we would not be having this debate right now.

• (1430)

In some countries when governments decide to take over certain industries it is referred to as nationalization. Others might refer to it as expropriation. The fair minded could legitimately call this political pork barrelling.

Will the minister agree to table a full listing of other industries his government has in its cross hairs so that these businesses can prepare for the onslaught?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mint is celebrating 90 years of existence. It has produced coins, it has produced collector items and all Canadians are proud of it.

There is an international market. It is a crown corporation that operates with a profitable base and is working with the private sector. I believe it has been doing a good job but unfortunately I cannot go into the details because this case is before the courts. When this is all over I am sure the hon. member and all Canadians will realize the Canadian royal—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, surely the government is not so addled that it is going into negotiations with the provinces without having any kind of position at all. That does not make any sense.

We have heard government members talk about excuses, about processes and have seen them pointing fingers at the provinces. All that is irrelevant. This is about people's lives.

What position is the government taking into negotiations with the provinces? Is the hep C file open or closed?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may have heard me say the other day that in view of

the position now taken by Ontario, indeed Quebec, those are significant developments and we are prepared to sit with provincial ministers.

I can assure the hon. member and his leader that by the time we sit with colleagues next week to see if a new consensus can be developed we will indeed have a position to bring to the table.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, while the health minister is being coy I should remind him that people's lives are hanging in the balance. I do not see how he thinks he can get away with that.

The fact is people have been waiting for months for a decision on this. The government says the file is open, it is closed, it is open. When is it going to make its mind up and tell Canadians whether people with hepatitis C are going to get full compensation?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the great differences between this side of the House and that is that people on this side put their faith in the good judgment of the Canadian people.

The Canadian people know when they listen to the member talk about people's lives being on the line where that comes from. They know that last summer when we began speaking about compensating victims, last fall when we were working on it persuading provinces, these members were nowhere to be seen. They were not heard from at all.

It is this government that has acted on behalf of victims.

* * *

[Translation]

MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the matter of the millennium scholarships, the spokesperson for Quebec's education minister said that "negotiations are stalled because federal officials do not have a mandate to negotiate".

How can the Prime Minister explain that federal government negotiators are without a mandate, when he said in March that there would be negotiations with Quebec?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our friends most certainly do have a mandate, which they received from the office of the Prime Minister in the presence of Mr. Bouchard, Mrs. Marois and myself. We held a meeting for the very purpose of determining if we would hold such negotiations and we undertook to do so.

I can say one thing. I know from my experience in negotiating, and this was the key to our success in the manpower issue, that

negotiations cannot be held in public. That was the reason for our success in the manpower issue. I therefore have no intention of launching into public negotiations today.

The Government of Canada promised to negotiate in good faith. We want to reach an agreement with the Government of Quebec in order to assist young people wishing to pursue their education and in order to celebrate the millennium by promoting skills and knowledge.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister admit that the only obstacle to a negotiated settlement with Quebec in the matter of the millennium scholarships is his stubbornness and arrogance, the same stubbornness and arrogance that we have seen in the hepatitis C affair?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that shouting out names in the House is going to accomplish anything. The government has given its word in good faith. We have already held four negotiation meetings and another meeting is scheduled for May 15.

• (1435)

I can assure members that we are setting out with the intention of doing well by the young people of this country. I am confident that the present framework gives us the room in which to arrive at a solution that will meet the needs of all stakeholders.

* * *

[English]

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are guaranteed freedom of association both through our long democratic traditions and also in the charter of rights and freedoms.

The use of the secret ballot in selecting those we wish to represent us is essential to this fundamental right of association. In its new changes to the Canada Labour Code, why is this government not giving workers the right to a secret ballot when they choose a union to represent them in collective bargaining?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, the issue has to be taken before the labour board. If it can be proven that management has acted inappropriately, then the labour board has the authority to sanction the union.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we in this House are chosen by secret ballot. Therefore in its new labour bill, why does this government deny Canadian workers this fundamental right of a secret ballot?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite simply, we are not denying Canadian workers any right. We are protecting their rights.

We are making sure that if a vote is held and it can be proven to the labour board that management has acted inappropriately, then the board has the right to certify that union.

* * *

[Translation]

MILLENNIUMSCHOLARSHIPS

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Government officials have estimated the cost of managing millennium scholarships at 5% of the total cost, or \$16 million annually, which represents some 5,000 fewer scholarships for students.

In the face of such damning facts and figures, how will the Minister of Human Resources Development be able to live up to his commitment not to duplicate existing programs with the scholarships?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said just a moment ago that the best way to ensure negotiations are successful is to not conduct them in public.

Our legislation and the budget itself are very clear in this respect. The foundation is actually mandated to avoid any duplication and ensure close co-operation with the provincial authorities concerned.

That is precisely the goal we have set for the foundation and for our negotiators. I trust that the goals we have set for ourselves will be achieved.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even University of Ottawa Professor John Trent, who can hardly be called a staunch separatist, stated that “The fund will inevitably lead to federal-provincial duplication. —It is in direct competition with the Quebec loans and bursaries program, which is considered by many to be superior”.

My question is quite simple: What does the minister have to say to that?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to see how open-minded the hon. member for Quebec is in recognizing that federalists too can have valid points of view. We thank her for being open-minded. This is great, and what a change, because this is rather unusual.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: What I can say

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for Human Resources Development has the floor for a few more seconds.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, our goal in this is to help give more young people access to skills and knowledge. So aware are we of how much expertise there is at the Quebec Ministry of Education that we want to work in partnership with the ministry to ensure this program's success.

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[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the governments of Alberta and Ontario have written to the federal Minister of Labour pointing out serious flaws in Bill C-19, the labour bill.

Typical of this government, the minister has ignored the provinces. Now we have learned that all the federal ministers from B.C. have written to the labour minister demanding that the bill be changed.

• (1440)

We know how the Liberals treat the provinces and we know how they treat their backbenchers, but are they really going to ignore their own ministers?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even my hon. colleague I believe realizes that Bill C-19 is very important to labour and management in this country. Members will see that this government will pass this very much needed and important legislation very shortly.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in his opinion it is much needed. This bill is very undemocratic. One of the most undemocratic aspects is that it would allow the labour board to certify a trade union even if most of the workers voted against it. That is unfair to business and it does not represent workers' democratic rights.

Why does the labour minister think it is okay to certify a trade union without the support of the majority of its workers?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what my hon. colleague is referring to is when a certification vote is taken and there is less than 50% and the union can prove to the labour board that inappropriate action was taken by management, the board as a quasi-judicial body has the right to approve and certify that union.

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[Translation]

TOBACCO SPONSORSHIP

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

It has been one year since the Prime Minister pledged, during the last election campaign, to make the tobacco legislation more flexible. While the festivals are getting ready for their last season under the current sponsorship rules, the government seems willing to help professional sports teams.

Would it not be reasonable and politically honest to say exactly and truthfully what is happening with the government's election promise?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows full well, we are always reasonable and honest. We are committed to amending the tobacco legislation and we will do so when we are ready.

* * *

QUEBEC CITY

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today, the conferences of 1943 and 1944 are being commemorated in Quebec City with the unveiling of busts of Roosevelt and Churchill. But to deliberately ignore former Prime Minister Mackenzie King is to ignore the war effort of all Canadian veterans.

Does the Prime Minister find this situation acceptable?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I find it absolutely deplorable that some would play politics by trying to rewrite history.

Canadian soldiers, at the request of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, were the first ones to intervene during the second world war. It was thanks to an initiative taken by Prime Minister Mackenzie King that the meeting between Churchill and Roosevelt took place in Quebec City.

To ignore Prime Minister Mackenzie King in commemorating the conference held in Quebec City during the war is totally unacceptable. It is in very bad taste and should never have been approved by the Quebec premier.

* * *

• (1445)

[English]

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Alberta's energy minister says that he will not sign the Kyoto deal until he gets some solid facts and figures on how this will directly impact on ordinary Canadians' lives.

When the federal minister was in Kyoto she betrayed the provinces by unilaterally raising the scale. How does the minister

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expect the provinces to sign on to any agreement after the way she treated them at the Kyoto conference?

Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government went to Kyoto with the collaboration of partners across this country.

We are committed to achieving our goal and that is to reduce our emissions by minus 6% below 1990 levels. A couple of weeks ago we met with all of our provincial and territorial counterparts. We agreed to develop a strategy. We are working with all sectors of our economy and with the municipalities. We will achieve our Kyoto target.

* * *

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in the last three years, four western provinces got 8% of CIDA's contracts. Four eastern provinces got 2% of CIDA's contracts. Ontario and Quebec got 90% of the contracts.

In response to my question earlier, the CIDA minister said that she was sorry for British Columbia. Today in the foreign affairs committee some Liberal members said that B.C. companies should move to Ontario.

Can the Prime Minister stand up and confirm that this is his government's position?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will have to repeat it again because obviously the member of parliament did not understand my answer.

There is an open bidding system to which all contracts are posted. Companies from across the country are invited to bid for these contracts. The companies from the west are every bit as good if not better than many others. What they have to do is bid for the contracts in a fair and open manner. They will win as many as anybody else.

The idea is to get the best price and the best value for Canadians.

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BANKS

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

U.S. evidence shows that big banks make fewer loans to small business, that big bank service charges are at least 15% higher and that the bigger the bank, the smaller their small business loan portfolio. This is what the U.S. congressional committee is being told about big bank mergers.

If American congressmen are receiving this evidence and questioning their bank mergers and the needs of small business, why will the government not allow all-party committee hearings with all five political parties?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange. The NDP called for a denial of any bank mergers outright before we had any hearings. Then it wanted the finance committee to look at it. Then it wanted another committee to look at it. Now it wants the industry committee to look at it. At the same time it said do not look at it, deny all the mergers.

We are not like that. We are putting in place a process involving a report of the task force which will come in September, extensive hearings by the House of Commons finance committee, and the Senate committee. We are going to have Canadians involved in this decision. We will not make a decision until they are.

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems the government wants to give the big banks lots of time to do their lobbying to soften people's views on this issue.

A *Wall Street Journal* analysis found that small business lending declined in U.S. banks which merged but went up with the non-merged competitors in the same period. In Canada small business lending is dropping and our banks have not even merged yet.

Will the government join with the CFIB and the four opposition parties in support of my motion this afternoon for all-party hearings at the industry committee into the impact of the proposed bank mergers on small business consumers and rural Canada?

• (1450)

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put in a process. We are going to have extensive all-party hearings at both the Senate and the House levels. Meanwhile our party has taken the initiative of setting up the special task force under the very able leadership of the member for Trinity—Spadina. If you want to participate in some public hearings, either hold your own or agree to come with us and help.

The Speaker: Once again colleagues, please address the Chair. The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MINT

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC): Mr. Speaker, the bill that the minister of public works introduced in the House this morning authorizes the Royal Canadian Mint to borrow \$30 million to build a plant that will get into direct competition with

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Westaim Corporation from Alberta. This plant will be built in Winnipeg in the backyard of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In the 1970s the Liberal government of the day moved into the oil industry and we all know what a disaster that was. Millions of tax dollars were wasted on Petrofina and the national energy program.

Will this minister immediately stop—

The Speaker: The hon. minister of public works.

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I think the hon. member has all the facts mixed up.

First of all to build a plant in Winnipeg does not need extra borrowing authority. They have enough and the decision was made previous to the bill. The bill streamlines the operations of the Royal Canadian Mint and also increases the amount of the corporation's borrowing authority since the government decided that the corporation has to make a profit and has to operate on a commercial basis.

In terms of the plant in Winnipeg, a plant already exists in Winnipeg. This is an extension so we can save—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works also stated a while ago that this matter was before the courts and he could not comment. The problem is if the matter is before the courts, why is the minister going ahead with the construction of the plant in Winnipeg?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a proceeding before the courts concerning patent protection. It has nothing to do with the building of the plant. This is a decision that the corporation made in accordance with the rules of the corporation and with the approval of the government and we are going ahead.

* * *

ALBERTA FOREST FIRES

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of National Defence inform this House as to what action this government is taking to help the people of Alberta in regard to the devastating forest fires in that western province?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are monitoring this situation very carefully both through Emergency Preparedness Canada and through the land forces western area. General Ross has been in touch with provincial officials. I have placed a call to the minister who is responsible and if we can be of any assistance we will be. We certainly want to be of assistance to the people of Alberta.

JUSTICE

Mr. Paul Forsyth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the days of the justice minister's failure to act on victims rights are numbered. It has been 738 days since the victims bill of rights motion went to committee. The clock is ticking, or should I say the calendar is flipping.

The other day the minister talked about a national forum and writing to the committee but victims do not want a professor's lecture about "timely" or "maybe soon". How many more days do Canadians have to wait before the justice minister takes real action for victims of crime?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the hon. member's question very interesting. As late as last week I had the opportunity to meet with the representatives and leaders of national victims groups in this country. As far as I was able to tell, they were very pleased with the strategy that this government is taking. They are looking forward to participating in the national forum in June.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour.

Yesterday in federal court, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers filed an application for disqualification of Justice Guy Richard. At the same time, CUPW was calling for the Minister of Labour to sign a negotiated agreement.

Does the Minister of Labour intent to bow to the demands of the union and to resume negotiations?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, both labour and management, CUPW and the post office, have the right to sit down and negotiate.

The union has filed before the court and hearings have been suspended until the 12th. The union has the perfect right to do this and the courts will decide.

* * *

[Translation]

HERRING FISHERY

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is another crisis brewing in southeastern New Brunswick.

The fishers of southeastern New Brunswick took only a few days to fill their herring quotas. This proves the resource is there. The

Oral Questions

processing plants tell us they are running at half capacity, et the fish are there and the people need to fish.

Will the Minister of Fisheries give serious consideration to the recommendation presented to him today by the Maritime Fishermen's Union that he do something to help the families who depend on the herring fishery?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue with respect to the crab in area 12 is that the stocks have declined some 25%.

I have to tell the hon. member and hon. members from all parties that we will not jeopardize the stocks of our natural resources and our fish stocks simply because of political pressure exerted on behalf of those who want to continue fishing despite the fact we do not have the resources to support it.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Greg Thompson (Charlotte, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister in response to a question by the member for Macleod was talking about the provincial minister's statement last week with regard to the upcoming meeting on the hepatitis C compensation package. I am quoting from page 6597 of *Hansard*. The Prime Minister said "they all said"—referring to the ministers—"that there should be in the statement further compensation for the pre-1986 victims".

Does the Prime Minister live by those words? Is that a change in position or just more confusion on the part—

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member can immerse himself in details from this statement or that, but it is clear that the provincial authorities changed their position over recent days. That is the very reason we said we want to meet with them and forge a new consensus because our focus is on the best interests of the victims.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in this House some 13 months ago I asked the former justice minister about a nine time convicted pedophile who was released into my riding. The experts said he would reoffend. I asked the minister what would I tell the parents of the 10th victim. The minister said that we have new legislation which will prevent an offending pedophile from ever doing this again.

On Friday I met with the father of the 10th victim, a five year old girl.

I would like to know from the present justice minister what sort of an excuse she is going to have—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the situation that the hon. member refers to is a very serious one and a very tragic one. My colleague the solicitor general and I have discussed this issue and we are going to be looking at it further.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the consortium that includes Bombardier has just made a proposal to the governments of Canada, Ontario and Quebec in order to complete studies for the construction of a high speed train between Quebec City and Windsor.

Could the Minister of Transport tell us whether this proposal will be included in his review of passenger train services in Canada?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just received the Bombardier report. It is a long and complex proposal. It must be studied in the context of our review of policy on shared rail services.

As the hon. member knows, the Standing Committee on Transport is currently studying the situation. I eagerly await the committee's recommendations.

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STATISTICS CANADA

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

Charles Castonguay, a noted expert, testified before the Standing Committee on Official Languages that Statistics Canada took unacceptable liberties in incorrectly interpreting the data from the latest census on the status of French in Canada.

Is the minister prepared to bring scientific rigour back to Statistics Canada and restore the credibility it had before it became a propaganda tool?

• (1500)

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of Statistics Canada. It is recognized worldwide as one of the finest statistics agencies. It is recognized every year in the English magazine *The Economist* as the world's top statistics agency.

Privilege

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, it is a very special day for all of us in the House because we will be honouring some of our own.

I draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of some of the military and civilian personnel who were so instrumental in helping their fellow Canadians cope with the devastation caused by this winter's ice storm.

[Translation]

Our distinguished guests worked day and night in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick helping their fellow Canadians deal with the effects of the storm. Many ice storm victims have said how delighted they were at the arrival of the military and the volunteers. They knew their burden would be lightened.

[English]

It is appropriate that we on behalf of all the citizens of Canada honour these, our very own Canadians, this week, the week of emergency preparedness.

When the ice storm hit you, my fellow Canadians, were prepared to answer the call for help. You answered it with bravery and selflessness.

On behalf of all the members of the House who represent 30 million Canadians, we thank you.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Colleagues, there will be a reception where you can meet each of these people in Room 237 after question period. You are all invited.

* * *

● (1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we would like to ask the government House leader about the business of the House for the remainder of this week and next week. Perhaps he could give our colleagues in the House an idea of how many days are left in the business schedule of the House of Commons.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most reasonable questions I have heard in a long time. Today and tomorrow we will continue with the report stage of Bill C-19, the labour legislation, which we certainly hope to have completed by tomorrow.

On Monday we shall call the report stage of Bill C-26, followed by Bill C-3, the DNA bill. On Tuesday we will likely return to Bill

C-19. I would like to consult my colleagues more formally about that bill.

If Bill C-36, the budget implementation legislation, is reported from committee in time, we would commence report stage of that bill on Wednesday. Otherwise, during the rest of the week we hope to complete Bill C-19 and Bill C-26, and get a start on the report stage of Bill C-39, the Nunavut bill, or Bill C-37, the Judges Act amendments, if ready, and perhaps to make progress on Bill C-3.

Next Thursday shall be an allotted day.

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PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS OF PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Greg Thompson (Charlotte, PC): Mr. Speaker, in question period today I referred to a reply given by the Prime Minister yesterday in response to a question on page 6597 of *Hansard*. In that reply he said "there should be in the statement further compensation for the pre-1986 victims".

Apparently there was a lot of pressure by the PMO to change that statement in *Hansard*. I am trying to find out from the government whether the Prime Minister is willing to live by those words. It would mean a great deal to all—

The Speaker: At first blush it would not be a question of privilege. I did hear the hon. member raise that as a question today. For whatever reason the question was not answered directly. I make no judgment on that. But I judge this is not a question of privilege.

We have looked at *Hansard*, we have listened to the tapes. The words quoted by the hon. member are the words in *Hansard*. If there has to be any clarification, perhaps it will be forthcoming from another place. As far as we know from our research there was no pressure brought to bear and no changes were made from the precise words that were said.

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege about an incident that brings this House into disrepute. During members' statements my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam was speaking eloquently about an important national skills competition happening in British Columbia. A member from the official opposition was clearly heard by me and others in the House to have yelled at him "speak English".

All members of this House are privileged to be elected. This Chamber is enriched by a wealth of individuals from a variety of backgrounds. We represent various regions and we all have unique accents. Each of us comes here to participate equally in representing our constituents and all Canadians. When members belittle the participation of certain populations of our nation, when they use comments designed to intimidate and inhibit—

Government Orders

The Speaker: In my view this is not a question of privilege. I did not hear the statements made. Perhaps they were made. No member was mentioned. I would hope all hon. members, if these words were used, would not do things like that. It does not help us in the course of debate.

• (1510)

I hope that whatever accents we have, I or anyone else, this will in no way be reflected on. As far as I know, this is not a question of privilege.

Mr. Lou Sekora (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard it directly from the member for Langley—Abbotsford while I was speaking.

The Speaker: I do not know that this is a question of privilege. The hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford was mentioned by the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam. I hope we can settle this fairly quickly.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the new member in this House is talking about, quite frankly.

I think the member should withdraw these comments. I do not recall saying anything like this.

The Speaker: We have one hon. member saying one thing and we have another hon. member saying another thing. Surely this is a debate. It is not a question of privilege and I want the matter settled right now.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations between the parties and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the members of the Standing Committee on Transport and the necessary staff be authorized to travel to western Canada from May 20 to May 23, 1998 to gather information in relation to their study on the national passenger rail system.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (Part I) and the Corporations and Labour

Unions Returns Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 6, 7, 8 and 30.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to resume my presentation after the interruption for question period.

An hon. member: Get those insignificant things out of the way and get to the real things.

Mr. Jay Hill: A member opposite is saying that we had to get something as insignificant as question period out of the way of my presentation. It is too bad it had to be interrupted. I am sure I would agree with the hon. member. The key, despite all the heckling from the opposite side, is that it is question period.

• (1515)

As we well know, after having been here close to five years, it certainly is not answer period. I think the people watching on television understand that now.

When I was interrupted by question period I was speaking about the need for democracy and specifically the need for democracy in Bill C-19. I was using a bit of a comparison about how even in this Chamber sometimes we do not see democracy.

In my remarks I was trying to assist those watching the debate at home to understand what all of these quorum calls mean. When there is government legislation before the House, the responsibility rests with the government to have its members present to listen to the debate, to the amendments, to the rationale behind them and to participate in the debate as well.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In answer to the hon. member, I have been listening and unfortunately there is not much talk about the actual amendments. I am very interested in the points on the amendments. However, the Reform Party refuses to talk about the amendments. It talks about everything else but the amendments. Can we please get back—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The Chair was not paying close attention at that specific time; however, the Chair does pay close attention to debate and I am sure that if the necessity to bring people back to the discussion at hand arises, you can count on this particular chair occupant to do so.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, just to prove my point, if you look around I do not think you will find a quorum in the House. We should have a quorum to listen to this speech and it should be the members of the government so they can enter into this debate in an intelligent fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have a call for quorum.

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Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, just so that everyone, not only those in the Chamber but the viewers at home watching the proceedings on television this afternoon clearly understand, do the House rules stipulate that when there is a quorum call the individuals have to be seated in the Chamber, or is it enough just to poke your head in the curtains that surround the Chamber?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): As members will know, this is not the first quorum call today. The rules on quorum calls have been carefully considered by chair occupants. If the Chair can see them, they are here. In answer to your question, if the Chair is able to see a member, that member is considered to be part of a quorum and the Chair occupant is considered to be one of the quorum.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the viewing audience at home this afternoon appreciates that explanation. It is sort of similar to groundhog day. As long as there is a shadow showing you are considered to be in the Chamber and participating in the debate.

I appreciate the comments of the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour. She has been present throughout the day, diligently taking notes, I am sure, as individual members of the opposition have actually addressed the amendments that have been put forward.

As I address this amendment that deals with democracy, a fundamental premise for the entire nation, and the fact that the will of the majority is supreme, I am reminded of the dilemma that faced our nation during the most recent Quebec referendum and how the official opposition and opposition members tried to get the Prime Minister of the country and the government of the day to state what they considered to be a strong enough no vote. Was it 50% plus one, or was it something else? The Prime Minister never clearly said what he would consider to be a strong no vote or a legitimate yes vote. Was it 50% plus one or not?

• (1520)

In the legislation we see that the government, when it suits its needs, is quite prepared to accept 35%. That is a problem. What we are saying is that if it is the will of a group of employees, then a secret ballot should be held. If it is the clear will of the majority of those employees that a union should represent their interests, then that is the way it should be. But if it is the will of the majority of those employees that they do not wish to be represented by a particular union that is trying to organize in their particular

industry, then that should also be the determining factor in whether or not that union is actually certified.

I have some personal experience in this. One of the jobs I had as a young man many, many years ago was working for a company in the oil and gas industry in northeastern British Columbia, in the region of the country that I come from. At that time the company was called West Coast Transmission. It was in the business of transporting natural gas through a series of pipelines through northeastern British Columbia down to Vancouver and points south. There was quite a debate during my time of employment with that company about whether the needs of the employees of West Coast Transmission could be better met through representation by a union. It never actually came to a vote because it was very clear that the majority of those employees, after some very careful deliberation, ascertained that it was not in their best interests and they did not wish to be represented by a union.

There is a company in the small village of Taylor, which is in my riding, just south of my hometown of Fort St. John. It is a pulp and paper company that is non-unionized. Those employees felt they did not need the representation of a union.

Very clearly, with respect to this particular amendment, we see a need that democracy should reign supreme when it is time for workers to decide on who will or will not represent their best interests.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I realize that at the time I rose previously on a point of order there was some confusion because a question of privilege had just been dealt with and I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to, in fact, raise the same incident as a point of order.

I would like to refer to citation 485 of Beauchesne's, especially subsection (3), which refers to unparliamentary language as language offending against the proprieties of the House.

Citation 486(1) goes on to refer to unparliamentary language as being injurious reflections uttered in debate against a particular member. I think there is no question that the comment to someone to speak English—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): With respect, the issue was raised as a question of privilege. It was dealt with as a question of privilege. The Speaker ruled that it was a point of debate, not a question of privilege.

The hon. member is bringing in a point of order through the back door. If it was not appropriate as a question of privilege, it is not appropriate as a point of order.

• (1525)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Speaker has ruled already on the question of privilege and the subsequent point of order.

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What I am distressed about is that the government, the Chair having ruled on it, continues to raise this bogus point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Order, please.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will do my utmost to change the subject. I am sure you are in tune with that thought process as well, Mr. Speaker.

Once again I find myself speaking on Bill C-19, the labour bill, which was also known as Bill C-66 in the last parliament. This time I am speaking on the second set of amendments. Earlier today I spoke on the first set of amendments and earlier this year I spoke on second reading of this bill, which is now at report stage.

This bill is all about industrial relations in the federal sector. One thing I know, and I think all Canadians upon reflection would know, is that when we are talking about people who belong to trade unions we are talking about average Canadians who reflect the demographics, the characteristics, the concerns and all the aspirations of average Canadians.

One of the things that distinguishes this country from many countries of the world is the fact that we all consider ourselves to be living in a democracy. That is an important principle that we must try to adhere to on each and every occasion when we can do so.

This is a very important piece of legislation because it deals with human endeavour. It deals with certification of unions. It deals with the negotiation process in the federal sector. It deals with a whole host of things. It deals with the ultimately very serious matter of who represents who. If that somehow becomes corrupted, if that somehow becomes usurped, or if that somehow becomes a set-up that is not representative, then we indeed have a major problem.

This legislation fails the basic tests of democracy.

There is something very essential here which deals with the whole question of secret ballot voting. It is not a requirement of this legislation.

There is another circumstance which deals with remedial certification and we have the circumstance where a breach by the employer would lead to automatic certification.

This is non-democratic. As an example, we are all here because we were elected. If any one of us had committed a minor breach of the Elections Act, would that mean that the person who we ran against would automatically win? We all know that is incorrect, not appropriate, not proper and does not occur. Why should it occur as a consequence of this legislation? It is totally inappropriate. It is non-democratic. This government should not be doing such a thing or allowing it to happen.

• (1530)

This bill eliminates the need for unions to report on their financial status. That is totally inappropriate. If we are going to have bodies representing a lot of people governed by public legislation, there should be a reporting mechanism. It is only right and proper not only for democratic purposes but also for accountability purposes. The government has an obligation to make that happen under this legislation.

The other thing I find highly dangerous in this legislation in a general way before I talk to the amendments is that there are provisions in the bill to allow the Minister of Labour to suspend collective bargaining and open tenders. This takes us right back to all of those things we want to avoid.

As I mentioned this morning, we want to do things that will reduce confrontation, not increase it. We want to do things that will prevent it if at all possible. We need to change that part of the package as well, for everyone, for the union membership, for management and for society at large. We need to bring a balance into this package. That balance is not there if the minister is going to have that kind of discretionary authority. It takes us back to where we do not want to be.

We talked about the fact that the board will be hand picked. We can make other comparisons. We know the problems inherent in our justice system as a consequence of parole board appointments and the inappropriateness of that. Those tend to slap us in the face. This one is a little more inconspicuous but it is still every bit as important in its own right.

These are leadership issues. We look to these boards for leadership from time to time. These are issues where the public has been sadly let down. These boards are expensive. They are expensive to run and to maintain. When they do not perform, the very people they are supposed to benefit are let down. The people who are supposed to benefit in essence are penalized. We must get this right.

In virtually every endeavour these days, it does not matter whether we are talking about the financial world or any other aspect of society, there are two competing pulls and tugs going on. There is a trend globalization on the one hand and on the other is the necessity for action that involves local phenomena. One of the ways we can try and balance those two things and make it come together is to utilize federal institutions when there is no other appropriate mechanism. This is the appropriate mechanism and as a consequence it is so important that we get it right.

So many of the things I have described do not portend well in this bill on this front in order to accomplish the things we want to accomplish.

There are four motions grouped. Once again we are talking about Reform and Bloc amendments. The Reform motion is very supportable of course. The legislation as it is written now states

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that with the 35% of employees signing cards indicating they want union certification, the minister may order this. We are saying in tune with our basic commitment to democratic principles that the board must.

• (1535)

With that I will conclude my remarks.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to address Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code. This bill has been hanging around for quite a while. I imagine the government is getting tired of hearing about it in the House of Commons and would like to have it moving forward.

Frankly the legislation is flawed. I think parties on all sides of the House have huge problems with it that I doubt very much it is going to get the speedy passage the government wants it to have.

We are addressing Group No. 2. There are a couple of specific motions I would like to address. They deal with the issue of democracy, as my friends have pointed out earlier.

Obviously in the House of Commons of all places we should be concerned about an issue like democracy. It is very ironic that we would be dealing with an issue of democracy in the wake of the hepatitis C vote here in the House of Commons.

Colleagues across the way had the chance to stand up for their constituents and exercise their democratic right in the House of Commons and actually support an opposition motion that would have provided compensation for the victims of hepatitis C who received hepatitis C because of negligence on the government's behalf. But they did not do that. They did not stand up when they could have despite the fact that many of them said they were going to do that and many of them said that they could make a difference in this place. They could have. They had the chance but they dropped the ball.

Now we see that same tenuous commitment to democracy in Bill C-19. I think that is a powerful reason to reject it.

Our party is trying to make some amendments. One of the motions we are moving is that under the current legislation the Canada Labour Code states that the board may order a representational vote on union certification to satisfy itself that the workers want the union. Our amendment calls for the board to hold a representational vote when at least 35% of the employees sign cards calling for union certification. That is what we are proposing.

We do not want this left up to the board to make those types of decisions. We want to make sure that workers have a voice in all of this. We believe that democracy if it stands for anything should be reflected in legislation like this in a very clear way, where we state

clearly that we do believe in democracy and in this particular case we want a vote on an issue of union certification.

I point out that there is no guarantee under this legislation that people will be allowed a secret ballot which I find amazing. I find it amazing that we are proposing legislation that does not guarantee people the right to a secret ballot.

In this place when we elect the Speaker we do it by secret ballot. When we are chosen as legislators we are chosen by secret ballot. There are a thousand reasons for that, not the least of which is that people have the right to decide in private so that they do not have to appear before the scrutinizing eyes of their neighbours who in some cases may try to browbeat them to vote another way, or they do not want to fear consequences from people who have power over them if they do not vote in a particular way.

That applies when we are talking about labour unions as well. To me it is a fundamental right. I cannot understand it in a country where in the charter of rights and freedoms we go to great lengths to lay out fundamental freedoms including the right to democracy. Sadly somewhere in the charter I guess we were not specific enough and did not suggest that we needed to have democracy apply at every level including when it comes to votes for labour unions.

• (1540)

Now we are stuck with a piece of legislation like this which is reprehensible. I am disgusted with the Liberals across the way for not fighting for workers who in some cases will be coerced into voting a particular way because if they do not vote that way they will feel pressure from people who have sway over them.

That is wrong but it is not inconsistent with the Liberals' actions on the hepatitis C vote. We heard them say over and over again "we are going to stand up to the government, we are going to vote with the victims of hepatitis C". But when it came to the crunch did they bail out in a hurry, did they cast their principles over the side in a hurry—

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I fail to understand what hepatitis C votes and Bill C-19 and I would ask—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The motions being debated in Group No. 2 are Motions Nos. 6, 7, 8 and 30. They have to do with the voting and the representation on the board. They have to do with how the 35% is determined. I grant that it is a stretch. It is a long stretch, a very long stretch, but it is still there.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I feel sorry for my colleagues. Obviously their conscience has been tricked. They have been stung by their own actions, and that is sad. I regret that very much but it

was within their power to fix the problem instead of being cowed into voting the way they did, and I am sad for that.

Democracy is important in this place. We saw in the hepatitis C vote that the government set in stone a philosophy that is now reflected in Bill C-19 which is very regrettable.

Let us move on to Motion No. 30, an instance where the government could have stood up stronger in the name of democracy than it did, but here all kinds of conditions are placed on democracy. I do not think conditions should be placed on democracy.

Motion No. 30 deals with part of the labour code that would allow the industrial relations board to certify a union, even if there is no evidence of majority support, if the board believes there would have been support had it not been for the employer's unfair labour practice. Rather obviously, if the industrial relations board is concerned that there was some kind of unfair pressure being put on a particular group of workers, why would it not just ask them to hold another vote, a secret vote? Why not do that? Why not have another secret vote instead of leaving it to an appointed board to make that decision? Why not democracy? What is wrong with using democracy?

I recognize that democracy in this country is relatively new. In the modern world it is relatively new. It has only been around for about 300 years, but surely over the last 300 years we have come to be able to figure out how to utilize it in all kinds of institutions. Surely we should be able to figure out how to use it when it comes to dealing with employers and employees.

It is amazing that the government is proposing to grant to the Canada Industrial Relations Board this extraordinary arbitrary power to decide whether or not it will certify a union, irrespective of the will of the workers. That is ridiculous. That is not democracy, that is tyranny.

I point to a situation in Windsor, Ontario which occurred not that long ago. The labour relations board decided that the employer had used undue coercion on the workers and therefore overturned a vote that would have seen a union not come into being at a Wal-Mart store. Subsequent to that the employees moved for another vote to decertify that union. The initial vote was 151 to 43 not to have a union. The labour relations board said that they will have a union whether they like it or not.

• (1545)

That is the type of power that has been given to the industrial relations board. It is wrong. It is anti-democratic and it tells me a lot about this government. It tells me a lot about why backbenchers on the Liberal side voted against democracy, against the victims of hepatitis C and stood cowering behind their government. It think it is shameful and we will never support that type of legislation.

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Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you can tell, our blood has been boiling on this side of the House and I am sure on the other side of the House as we listen to our colleague, the member from the Reform Party, pretending that he and his party support the workers of Canada.

Speaking about democracy, it was not long ago when the very same party had ejected one of its own just because she spoke her mind and because she said what she wanted to say. She was kicked out. It is ironic, speaking about democracy. These are the same members who when they came into this House told us and the public that they will allow each member of parliament to vote according to their conscience and as instructed by their constituents.

I have not yet, with the exception of a very few votes, seen the members over there stand up and vote according to their conscience or as instructed by their constituents. They all stand up like hordes of sheep and vote collectively. We rarely see those members stand up and vote according to their conscience. I have not seen that. Have other members seen that?

Speaking about democracy, there are two faces to democracy. There is the Reform face to democracy and there is the other face to democracy. Now they are concerned about the workers of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to point out to you that the House cannot continue to sit for lack of quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1555)

[*English*]

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to mention that the member who called quorum call left the room immediately and he is still not in the room. There are no Tories at all in the room.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): As the hon. member knows, we do not refer specifically to the presence or absence of members.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, is it ironic. Speaking about democracy and allowing people to express their views in a public forum, these are the very same guys who have been polarizing democracy. They wanted to call themselves fathers of democracy. They are not even distant cousins of democracy. They never heard—

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Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member is referring to members on this side of the House as being guys and so on. My understanding—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Obviously this is not a point of order.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to put things in the context of Bill C-19, when we speak about democracy and the rights of people to express themselves in a free and democratic way. If we are truly concerned about the right of workers then we should be able to allow the workers to express themselves in a free way. If that is the case, the workers of Canada from coast to coast have told us that what is before us is a good step. It is a first step, it is an excellent step and it is something that is required and long overdue.

On this side of the House we have taken the initiative in order to respond to their needs. It is not an issue of a secret ballot or standing up and voting. Every day in the House we stand up. Compared to my colleagues on the other side, especially in the Reform Party, I am not afraid to express my views and say whether I am supporting a motion or not.

The notion of 35% is nothing short of trying to establish whether there is an interest in establishing a movement within a workplace. Once the employees establish their unions, once they certify themselves and become an organization, they can democratically, if they choose so, decertify themselves. Nothing is stopping them from doing that. The underlying thing in this debate for my colleagues in the Reform Party is that they are openly opposed to the right of workers to organize themselves. This is their true agenda.

I had an opportunity to listen to debates when public hearings were taking place. Frankly, I was ashamed to see that the level of debate had sunk so low. What do we call it? Is it sugar coated poison? This is absolutely terrible.

• (1600)

Those fellows have no idea what it is to be a member of an organization that defends the rights of workers. They do not believe in it. It is not in their philosophy. If it is up to them they will decertify every union or organization in the country.

We have a society that works. Employers and their employees, government, unions and corporations, work hand in hand in the best interest of the organization, of the government and of society as a whole. There is nothing wrong with it.

Germany is a perfect model. In Canada over the past 100 or so years our experience has not really been that bad. Unions have not bitten anybody's ears.

Why is there this agenda of being anti-workers? Why is it my colleagues in the Reform Party do not want to allow workers to organize themselves if they choose to do so? I do not know what they think. They think we do not know that. Of course we do.

They are trying to say that they are concerned about democracy. The bottom line of the agenda is anti-workers. Would members agree? My colleagues from Gatineau and Laval I am sure would agree that the agenda of the Reform is not to allow workers of Canada to organize themselves in a democratic fashion.

Let us not beat around the bush. They should stand one by one and say why they are anti-workers.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In compliance with the member's wish, I would love to respond by pointing out the error in what he is saying. We are the exact opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): This is obviously a point of debate and not a point of order.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. They are afraid of hearing the whole argument.

We are trying to enlighten them by saying that we live in a democracy. In a democracy the majority has the right to rule. If the workers of Canada want to organize themselves why do they want to stop them? At every single corner they try to block the people of Canada from—

Mr. Jim Gouk: Maybe this is Liberal democracy.

Mr. Mac Harb: Liberal democracy; I am frustrated by the illogical argument of my colleagues on the other side. I want one of them to tell me why they are anti-workers. I will sit now.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am at a loss for words. I am glad to make this intervention, particularly with you in the chair, because I know you are always interested to hear what I have to say. You always listen very carefully unlike our friends on the other side. That is why we have to keep repeating ourselves. We are not breaking through yet, but we will; give it another three or four years and we will break through. We certainly will be making breakthroughs at the polls in the next election as hon. members on the other side know. That is why they are so afraid right now.

All the synapses over there are not firing. I am pretty sure that is the case because on the one hand the member says he believes in democracy and in the right of the majority to make a decision. On the other hand he does not, because the legislation does not provide for it.

While growing up I belonged to several unions. I belonged to the pulp and paper workers union when I worked in a pulp mill in Kitimat, British Columbia, in the mid-seventies. I belonged to the operating engineers as a heavy equipment operator during the 1970s and then I went on to become a part owner of a unionized

construction company. We had signed agreements with the tunnel and rock workers, the teamsters, operating engineers and carpenters.

• (1605)

It is not like I am coming out of a vacuum on this matter. In my life experience I have had membership in a couple of different unions and have been part owner of a construction company which had collective agreements with unions.

There are companies that deserve unions. There are companies so badly run, badly managed and that care so little for their human resources there is only one course of action for the employees: to have a union to protect themselves. There are not many companies like that but they are there. I have seen them firsthand.

In the same vein there are also unions that are badly run and badly managed.

An hon. member: Which ones?

Mr. Mike Scott: The member did not ask me to name the companies that were like that. I do not know why he would be so interested in having the unions named.

Continuing my thought, noble or villainous attributes cannot be ascribed to humans based on their station in life. People are not good or bad because they are in a union. They are not good or bad because they are in management in a company. Everybody is different. Everybody is a human being. There are good people and bad people.

There are those in the union movement—and I have seen this firsthand—who would put the individual rights of people at a much lower level than the collective rights of a union. That is the problem. When the union becomes so powerful that it has a right to tell individual workers what they can and cannot do, I have a great deal of difficulty.

I also have a great deal of sympathy for people who find themselves in a position of not having the right to exercise their individual right to decide whether or not they want to be in a union or out, whether or not they want to have a union representing them. I also have a great deal of sympathy for people who are forced to accept a course of action when it is not what they want.

We are talking here about a fundamental collision between collective rights and individual rights. Obviously in society we have both. We have individual rights which are very important and we have collective rights which the union movement represents. There are other collectivities as we know.

My colleagues in the Reform Party and I are much more interested in individual rights than any other rights. We want to promote the idea that the individual is the most important unit in society, not collective rights but individual rights, to the greatest

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extent possible. This is the very essence of democracy. It is individual rights. It is the right of the individual to choose. It is the right of the individual to vote. It is the right of individuals to have control over their own destiny and their own life.

It is not difficult for me to see that the Liberals do not understand this basic concept of democracy based on their actions of the last few days. It is easy to see that the Prime Minister does not understand that the House of Commons is supposed to be about democracy. It is supposed to be about the right of individual MPs to come here and represent their constituents and to vote according to their conscience.

The Prime Minister said to his backbenchers that if they do not do his will they will pay the consequences. That is why people on the other side do not understand the fundamental flaw in the bill before us. They do not fully appreciate the fundamental concept of democracy.

• (1610)

I was in the finance committee this morning. I was helping my friend from Medicine Hat who is a permanent member of that committee. We were going through the budget implementation bill clause by clause. During the course of debate it became apparent that the opposition MPs on that committee were totally frustrated and had found that the committee was basically nothing more than a side show. From the time the Reform Party has had a presence on that committee, which is going back five years, not one opposition amendment to a budget implementation bill has ever been accepted by that committee.

We hear members on the government benches talk about the wonderful work of committees, how it is a non-partisan way of people getting together and working in a spirit of co-operation. That is just a load of hooey. I have never heard anything more ridiculous in my whole life.

Members on the government side do not want opposition members on committee to have any real influence or to have any real impact. No way. The committees in parliament are nothing more than an opportunity to occupy backbenchers and opposition MPs, to keep them out of the government's hair. This is the government's view of democracy.

It is also the government's view of democracy that the people in the other place should not be elected but should be appointed by the Prime Minister and that we should not even be able to raise this matter in the House of Commons. Is it democracy if I cannot as a member of parliament come to the House and talk about the other place because I might be offending somebody?

It is not difficult to understand that our friends on the other side have not grasped the meaning of democracy. They have not grasped the meaning of individual rights and how those two are intertwined and cannot be taken one from the other.

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The legislation does not provide individuals their proper and full individual rights when it comes to whether or not a union should represent them and whether or not they should be required or forced to join a union.

I recognize there are companies that are badly managed and do not properly consider or care for the rights of their workers. They deserve to have and actually need to have unions to protect the interests of the employees.

Union leaders are not always the noble people they are made out to be. It is very important that individuals in every circumstance have the opportunity, the right, to decide whether or not to be in a union or to have union representation. That should be based on a secret ballot. It should be based on the majority in a secret ballot making that determination.

The bill clearly does not provide for that and the Reform amendment clearly would give workers that right. That is what this set of amendments is all about. I appreciate the indulgence of the House and I will let my colleagues carry on from here.

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted a little clarity from the member of the Reform Party. He made some allegations about some private companies that were either abusive or not taking care of their employees the way they should. More important, he made some accusations about some unions, that some, not all, unions were not representing the membership but rather the collective bargaining units themselves.

It is very easy for the Reform member to speak in generalities, to be very vague and to pull these things out of the air. Would the member name one or two of these unions? If in fact it is true, all I would like is for him to name one or two of these unions that are not properly representing their workers. It is that simple.

• (1615)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey has a great deal of latitude in posing that question and has 10 minutes in which to pose the question because we are in debate and there are no questions and comments.

The Chair has allowed a fair degree of latitude regarding relevance, which is pretty evident to anyone paying attention to this debate today. As this latitude has been allowed on one side, it is obviously to be allowed on the other.

The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey has another nine minutes in which to speak to the motions on the floor.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Mr. Speaker, my point was purely for clarification. There were some allegations made in this House and I simply wanted clarification on them.

I apologize for not standing and asking for a point of clarification rather than debate.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-19.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre mentioned that Reform members all do their act together. I do not know where he has been. Four times since this session began in September I have voted against my leader. We have the right and the freedom to do so. The hon. member knows very well that he never had that choice.

One of the things that young people learn at school is how to vote. When they have a vote, they count the ballots and then they elect somebody. That happens even in the elementary grades.

I want to deal with thinking that is terribly flawed. I want to say what the rest of Canadians think at times when they are deprived of their livelihood because of unbiased or unequal thinking toward an issue.

Motion No. 7 simply says that the Canada Labour Code “may”. It does not say they have to. It does not say they will. It says that they “may”.

In serving my time in various capacities and in various positions to which I have been elected, I have never in my life been subject to the concept that a vote of fewer than 50% will make the decision. I have never been introduced to that.

I have chaired hundreds of meetings. When a board has an opportunity to vote, the motion never carries unless it has 50% approval. I have been a CEO to a board and that board never came down with a decision unless 50% of the board was in agreement.

All we are asking is that Motion No. 7 be changed to indicate that the board “shall”. We do not believe for one minute, unlike members opposite, that 35% is good enough for union certification.

When government members talk about 35% they refer to management interference. What is management interference? We have labour on one side; we have management on the other. We never hear about labour interference. It is always management interference. We think it should be a balanced situation.

Canadians think that way. Ask the people across western Canada what they think about a handful of people being able to take away their livelihood. Members opposite say it is democracy and we say it is deplorable. We do not believe that 35% constitutes a majority.

• (1620)

The motion states that when 35% of the people have signed cards for certification they should cast a vote. When 35% have not signed cards for certification they should also cast a vote. All we are saying is that it should be equal. However, this government does

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not want to do that. It does not want to deal with the realities of percentage.

In my public life, for every single call I have had from an employee about manager interference, I have had 50 calls from employees talking about union interference. However, those members never talk about that. I am pro-democracy and that is what bothers these people. They do not want to look at a balanced scheme for employment.

In our committee work on transportation it has been absolutely enlightening in the last while to listen to how the railway companies have organized and streamlined the situation in Canada. When we talk about CN double-decking out of the port of Halifax and how it can beat the competition in the United States through Chicago, it does that with the co-operation of all the different unions along the way.

However, this is what happens. What is the largest petrochemical company in Canada? Imperial Oil. It has operated all of these years, with its largest plant being in Sarnia, without a union. I have talked to Imperial's people and they tell me they are satisfied and do not want a union. Why would anyone want to tell those people they must have a union with 35%?

Unless a 50% majority shows up, it is in violation of our democratic principles. No one in this House would allow a 50% vote.

The answer is very simple. Hon. members opposite are trying to move themselves into an outdated, undemocratic process of allowing less than 50% of the people to make a decision.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Shame on you.

Mr. Roy Bailey: No, I am not ashamed to say that. I am very proud to say that I believe a democratic vote should be 50%-plus. Obviously the hon. member opposite does not and I hope everybody knows that. I hope everybody recognizes that when those members feel like it they decide that 35% will be control.

We in the Reform Party do not believe that. We believe they have a right to organize, to form a union and to form that union when their mandate states that 50% of them shall claim a union. However, the member does not believe that. That is too bad because that is where we stand. That is all we are asking for in this clause.

How can anyone dispute the fact that when 35% of the employees sign union cards there should be a vote to decide whether they will unionize? What is wrong with that? Obviously those members do not understand the principles of the democratic process that 50% or 51% makes the majority. They do not believe that and it is very difficult for us to understand.

However, if this government wants to pass the bill it is going to pass it anyway because it has determined that it is going to play into the hands of a very undemocratic situation. We do not believe

that and that is where we differ and where we are going to continue to differ because we believe in democracy right across the board. We also believe in individual rights right across the board. We believe that a person has the right to vote on a secret ballot right across the board, but you people do not believe that. Go ahead and not believe it. That is your privilege. We are going to stay with the 50%.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I would ask hon. members to address each other through the Chair. From time to time people get really wound up in their debate and it tends to make it a little less tense if the debate is directed through the Chair.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Churchill River, the environment.

[*English*]

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate at the report stage of Bill C-19. It seems that the debate, I guess because of the latitude allowed in this place, is deteriorating into some kind of debate over the different conceptions of democracy rather than perhaps the motions before us on this bill. I guess I will have to make my comments as well before I get into the technicalities of the bill.

Some of my career was spent in labour-union negotiations and collective bargaining. Quite clearly, in that process there is a very delicate balance between the rights of the union and the rights of management. It can be easily skewed one way or the other. In my view this bill certainly skews the advantage to the union side. I think that is a dangerous direction in which to go.

When members opposite stand and tell me, having been here five years, that I am not voting with my conscience or for my constituents—

An hon. member: No one said that.

Mr. David Chatters: Someone did say that. The member at the other end of the House said exactly that. I would ask him how he can judge what my conscience is or whether I am voting for my constituents.

On the other hand, a couple of days ago the member who sits opposite, the member who is running off at the mouth over there, during a very emotional vote in this House was crying her eyes out simply because her party and her leader had threatened her and coerced her into voting the party line. The evidence was pretty clear that she was not voting for her constituents, or with her conscience for that matter.

This bill has a lot of flaws and a lot of problems. The robbing of the democratic process is only one of them. There are many other

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issues about replacement workers and about taking one particular commodity out of the process, such as protecting the right to load grain in the port of Vancouver while not providing that same protection for other commodities and causing all kinds of problems in a strike situation.

This is a bad bill in many ways.

The proposed motions in Group No. 2 include two motions moved by my hon. colleague from Wetaskiwin which would greatly improve the quality of the bill and go a long way in bringing back some democracy, some fairness and effectiveness to the bill.

Before I discuss the motions of my colleague from Wetaskiwin, I want to mention two motions that were moved by the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. Motion No. 6 proposes the removal of clause 6 from the legislation. My colleagues and I are opposed to the removal of that clause. Clause 6 allows the board to decide a matter without having to hold an oral hearing. I think this clause is important to the process of streamlining the CIRB's procedures.

The whole process of scheduling an oral hearing and adhering to the strict oral hearing procedures unnecessarily prolongs many board decisions. Many decisions can simply be made by the board without the need for oral hearings. Such oral hearings are lengthy and expensive and should be reserved only for the most important matters.

This clause increases the speed and efficiency with which minor cases are dealt by bypassing the oral hearing process.

• (1630)

Therefore I am opposed to Motion No. 6 which calls for the removal of clause 6. I am also opposed to Motion No. 8, also moved by the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. This motion removes a phrase in clause 16, amending it to allow the board to revoke the appointment of an employer representative without having to satisfy itself that the employer representative is no longer qualified to act in that capacity.

By removing this part of the clause the government would be removing the employer's right to fair representation. Typically, a group of employers would select one representative and if this representative is arbitrarily removed because as few as one person in the employer's group calls for it, the wishes of the other employers in the group are disregarded. Again, it is a sleight to the democratic process.

It is my position that there should be a vote by which the majority of members of the employer's group have the opportunity to decide what action is taken.

The selection of the clause requiring the board to be satisfied the employer representative is no longer qualified to act in that capacity protects the wishes of the majority. The removal of this

part of the clause as proposed in this motion would only serve to weaken the employer's association. Therefore I think in good conscience I could not support this motion.

I certainly can and do support the two motions in this group proposed by my hon. colleague for Wetaskiwin.

Motion No. 7 calls for the inclusion of a clause requiring that the board hold a representational vote on union certification when 35% of the employees sign cards requesting union certification. Of course this is getting into the particular motion that has caused all the controversy this afternoon.

In its current form the Canada Labour Code states that the board may hold such a representational vote but does not bind the board to the vote. This means the board could choose to ignore the wishes of workers in one respect or another.

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I am calling quorum because there is not a single government member present.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mr. David Chatters: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that my speech is not so exciting that everyone in the House would want to stay and listen.

Motion No. 7 calls for the inclusion of a clause requiring that the board hold a certified representational vote on union certification when 35% of the employees sign cards requesting union certification. In its current form the Canada Labour Code states the board may hold such a representational vote but does not bind it to it.

This means the board could choose to ignore the wishes of workers in one respect or another. Union certification may be forced on workers or denied to workers if such a democratic process is not in place. The proposed clause ensures that the wishes of the majority are heard and upheld.

The second motion in this group moved by the hon. member Wetaskiwin is Motion No. 30. This motion has my unwavering support and should have the support of every other member in this House.

Motion No. 30 calls for the removal of clause 46. Clause 46 allows the board to certify a trade union despite lack of evidence of majority support. This is the issue that has caused all the controversy this afternoon, the trampling of democracy and the lack of respect for the democratic rights of union workers.

This is unacceptable and it allows for the board to make assumptions about the wishes of the workers. This clause suggests that it is acceptable for the board to force union certification on workers if it believes that it was only unfair labour practices that prevented workers from voting in favour of union certification. This might be acceptable if there were a concrete way to determine

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unfair labour practices. The reality, however, as exemplified in the Wal-Mart case is that the board does not always know the minds of workers.

• (1635)

In the Wal-Mart case the board assumed that Wal-Mart was using intimidation tactics to bully workers into voting against trade certification. This was not the case and now the workers have launched a decertification drive.

This clause leaves it up to the CIRB to determine what constitutes unfair labour practices and in essence to presume to know the minds of the workers better than the workers themselves.

To go against the wishes of the workers and to override their democratic right to determine the majority opinion through a representative vote is absolutely unacceptable. Members from the other side of the House are saying this clause protects workers who are being intimidated by their employers. However, if this is the case, that employees are afraid to vote honestly by secret ballot, then there is something wrong with the voting process and not with the way this legislation operates to protect them.

I certainly cannot support this bill in its current form without other amendments being proposed.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I entered politics I was a trade unionist working for the Nova Scotia government, unlike some of my colleagues on this side of the House, with respect to trade unionism and workers.

Those years taught me everything I know about why employees need protection and why allowing workers to organize is an important part of our society. That is why I am happy to stand here today and speak in favour of Bill C-19 in its present form, a bill modernizing the Canadian Labour Code for the first time in more than 20 years. It says something for the timeliness of the House that it has been two decades to update this act.

Think of the changes to the workplace since 1978. Changes in technology have affected everyone. Changes in the global economy have made it easier for people and money to move from one corner of the world to another. The stability our parents' generation grew up with has evaporated. The days when you started a job when you finished school and kept that job until you retired are over. The heavy industries and natural resources that generated so much of the nation's wealth have been downsized or wiped out like the east coast fishery.

Today workers have to face the prospect of changing jobs several times, acquiring new skills as they go. People often move from coast to coast within the country and often from country to country. Coming from the maritimes, we are very well accustomed to the

citizens of the maritime provinces constantly moving to other provinces to seek work.

For many people such as my colleagues in the official opposition these changes to the workplace are a universally good thing and offer an opportunity to escape from what they see as a restrictive web that developed to protect workers during the first seven decades of the century. They are free to erode the protections given to workers by saying they were specific regulations tied to specific industries and job sites.

We hear groups like the National Citizens Coalition, the Fraser Institute, the Business Council on National Issues all singing from the same song book of deregulation and decertification. To hear them talk we would think the right of an employer to fire their workers at will is a right protected by the charter.

This has been the problem of the last two decades, that businesses and workers have grown apart, that management increasingly sees workers and unions as obstacles to be overcome, speed bumps on the highway of economic progress. Unions and workers often with good reason look at their bosses and wonder why when profits are soaring and their friends and neighbours who work side by side with them for years are collecting welfare.

They see corporate salaries going up at rates thousands of times the increases being given to people on the shop floor and in the offices. They see governments responding to their bosses and the special interest groups that represent them, lowering taxes for the wealthy so they can make more and more money that will, in theory at least, trickle down the line. If anything has been trickling down from the bosses standing over the workers it certainly is not money. Real wages have been going down in Canada while the business sector thrives and job security is a thing of the past for most citizens.

• (1640)

There is an important distinction that many employers and members of the Reform Party are failing to grasp and that is at the core of why this bill needs the support of the House. It is a great life for someone with a specialized skill and lots of education to go from short term contract to short term contract, playing off employer against employer and getting the best deal for him or herself. It is a different story for someone who has a grade four education and has worked for 30 years in a fish plant or in the woods.

The brave new world of global capitalism is great for the first group, but for the second group it means hunger for their children and their families and death to their communities.

To me there are few things more obscene than government funded consultants turning up in towns and villages that were

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passed by by globalization and lecturing people on the need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

There are millions of people in this country who are never given the skills needed to compete in the world of high finance and high technology. That is a fact that no one can deny. Those people need even stronger protection today than they did in past years.

The moral issue for me at the heart of this debate is the need to protect the more vulnerable members of society from exploitation. It goes deeper than that, to the right of all people to work together in a way that will maximize the benefits for all involved.

The left in general and my party in particular have often been accused of being opposed to profits, opposed to the market, opposed to business. This is nonsense. While I know Reform members will take pleasure in attributing my party's support for the bill to our supposed dependence on trade unions, I am proud to stand in the House and say that the New Democratic Party is pro-business, pro-profit, totally in favour of more and more people earning more and more money. Contrary to what the members of the opposition might think, there is no conflict between that position and our support for organized labour.

This is what Bill C-19 is about, a reassertion of the moral obligation to include and empower workers in the business of making business work.

When Bill C-66 died on the order paper when parliament was dissolved just over a year ago, I thought the progressive changes we see resurrected before us today had been shuffled aside permanently.

The minister deserves credit for bringing these issues and the bill back to the House and I hope it will receive the support of all right thinking members. Specific aspects of the bill are worthy of special mention.

Carrying on from my previous comments concerning changes in the workplace, it is good to see that the issue of disseminating union information will no longer be restricted to onsite workers. With more people commuting with computers it is critical that solidarity among workers be maintained and that no one be discriminated against because of where they work.

The clarification surrounding strikes affecting grain shipments is a critical matter and all parties that contributed to the drafting of the legislation deserve credit for reaching a compromise that preserves the right to strike for all those involved yet preserves the tens of thousands of jobs connected to the industry and the vital flow of grain that feeds millions of people around the world.

The creation of the new and improved Canada Labour Relations Board is perhaps the biggest single change that will have a positive impact on the life of Canadians.

The board's ability to arbitrate in disputes over certification and strike votes means a faster and fairer process that will hopefully reduce the already low strike rate in Canada.

My colleague from Winnipeg Centre made mention in his remarks on this bill that between 95% and 97% of all labour disputes are resolved without strikes, lockouts or work stoppages of any kind. That should put paid to the fearmongering that members of the official opposition have engaged in. They should be reminded that groups from all sectors of society have contributed to the legislation.

I would just like to ask the members of the Reform Party as an active trade unionist to please stop insulting the intelligence of workers across Canada by wanting to appear as though they are in true support of workers across this country. My experience over the last 10 months in this House has been that Reformers have clearly demonstrated that as trade unionists they are anti labour.

• (1645)

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Blackstrap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member from down the way as she gave her speech a few minutes ago. At the end of it she talked about how Reformers should take note, that we put ourselves forward as protectors of labour. She said that with a great deal of sarcasm so I am assuming she did not really mean it that way.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to say to the member that I am not the member from down the way. I am the member for Bras d'Or.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Bras d'Or has made her point. The hon. member from the other end, Blackstrap.

Mr. Allan Kerpan: Mr. Speaker, it is a point well taken, rest assured. I meant that it was to my far left.

One thing struck me as being odd about the member's remarks. About a year ago we were campaigning in the 1997 election. One of the big reasons the federal New Democrats and of course the provincial New Democrats are so much in love with labour is that they get most of their election funding from that area.

My wife is a school teacher. She belongs to the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation. Her union dues to a large degree go to the person who ran against me in the federal campaign as a New Democrat. I do not know whether or not she likes that but there is something wrong with this whole picture. That is a bit off topic and I would like to get back to the topic at hand which is of course Bill C-19.

In this parliament and in the last parliament, there was a great deal of talk about labour, about unions, about how they are constructed, about how they should negotiate, how agreements

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should be made, how strikes should or could or may not happen. I remember in greater detail as it related to the business of agriculture, something which I am personally involved in, along with a large number of others in my province of Saskatchewan.

We went through a series of strikes in those years. Railways were on strike at one point in time or another with different unions. I think there are something like 27 or 29 unions that a bushel of grain must go through from a farmer's gate until it gets loaded on to a ship on the west coast, at Thunder Bay or at Churchill.

From firsthand experience as a farmer, that is one of the most frustrating areas. A person works all year to grow grain and spends huge amounts of dollars and if he is lucky he may make a profit but it is seen at the end of the tunnel. Then there will be a union that will put the kibosh on that, or in some cases management will put the kibosh on that, because there will be a slowdown or stoppage in grain transportation.

What it really is doing is affecting innocent third parties far more than anything else. It is the innocent producer of the grain who suffers most. We have to come to a system in this country where we do not allow those types of things to happen.

I am all in favour of negotiation and consultation between unions and management. I know that without management, unions cannot exist.

As my colleague from Skeena mentioned a few minutes earlier, there certainly is a need for unions at least in some companies. We all have seen companies that have taken advantage of their employees. There definitely needs to be some control and unions are a very important part of that.

• (1650)

We are getting to the point where we are allowing groups—and I am not going to say special interest groups because they are not, they are unions—but we are getting to the point where we are allowing small segments of our workforce to tie up entire industries. A few minutes ago I mentioned the grain transportation system.

I know that a couple of years ago the Grain Services Union, which is the union for Sask wheat pool employees, voted to go on strike in September. September in Saskatchewan is a very important time of year. It is harvest time and we definitely need our elevator agents. It was very interesting that in this particular strike many of the employees refused to walk out. Many of the employees at the local elevator agents and in fact our local elevator agent Mr. Brent Hartman refused to go on strike. He crossed the picket lines and opened his elevator.

In a small town of 350 people such as I live in, to have a fellow stand up for the producers' rights even though he is a union

member and a good union member, is admirable. I take my hat off to these people. It was very important and a very critical move by those people.

The other half of this bill that I see as a huge negative is the way the democratic process is being handled. It has been mentioned today how undemocratic things are not only in some areas of the labour process and the labour force but also in this House of Commons.

We profess in this country to have one of the greatest democracies in the world. Certainly I do not think anyone would argue that we have the best country in the world. There is no question about that. However I look across at some of the Liberal members who were heckling our members when democracy was discussed. The fact is I have been here now for almost five years, some might say too long, and we have all seen in the last five years a good number of occasions when members on the opposite side were whipped into line by their whip.

Obviously the latest occasion was the vote on hepatitis C which was held last Tuesday night. I walked out of the Chamber after that vote was held and I ran into a couple of the Liberal members. They had rather sheepish looks on their faces. We got to chatting. When I asked them what they thought, they said that they really had two options. They said that they could have voted in favour of their constituents and in favour of our motion but they felt that no one would talk to them the next morning at caucus. They said that they had to make that decision as to whom they were going to support first, their party or the people who elected them.

If it comes to that serious of an issue and members of parliament do not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up for the people who elected them in the first place, they have no business being in this place.

The member for York South—Weston had the courage to stand up for the people who elected him. What happened to that member? Everyone knows he now sits right beside the curtain on the opposition side. He is history. Those members over there knew that. They knew that if they voted for the Reform motion on hepatitis C there would most likely be serious retribution and they could end up sitting on the opposite side of the House, out of government.

What is more important? Why are we here as members of parliament? If we are not here to represent the people that elected us first, then that is a dishonest way to become and remain a member of parliament. It is fraudulent to forget who elected us.

We talked a lot about that in the campaign. In fact I was thinking about that yesterday. A year ago we were involved in a federal election campaign. One of the issues in that campaign was democracy and the way MPs should represent their constituents.

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Every member of parliament I will admit has a different way of representing his or her constituents and well that should be.

• (1655)

The bottom line is that the people who elect us pay us. We owe that first debt of duty to them, not to the whip or the party leader. Until that changes, the things we see in this bill are going to continue to happen. We are not allowing for the regular Joe Public to have his or her input into this country's business. That very critical point of argument has to be dealt with.

I will not support the bill the way it stands. That is a given. If members from all parties, including the New Democrat members who seem to think it is a pretty good piece of legislation, could take a step from their own political parties, they could have a good look at the bill and see what it really means to democracy and the average worker. They may find that the bill has some serious shortcomings.

I call on all members of parliament to take that step back from party lines just for a second if they could. They could think not about what their whip or party leader wants them to do, but about what their constituents may want them to do. Ultimately, when we are done with this business, our constituents are the people we have to live with when we go home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I remind the House that we are debating Group No. 2 motions. It would not hurt if every once in a while members who are speaking would alight somewhere near the motions being discussed.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on the Group No. 2 motions in Bill C-19. We have all been speaking quite eloquently on Group No. 2 today.

It is instructive to look at history to see what this bill will do for the Canadian economy. Everybody in this House wants to improve the health and welfare of Canadians. Heaven knows that we have the worst structural unemployment problem of any OECD nation in the world. The number is over 9%. It is not a cyclical problem. It is a structural problem. Bill C-19 will only make that structural problem worse.

It is instructive to look at two countries that had to labour under labour laws which would be supported by Bill C-19, Britain and New Zealand. As my friends from the Liberal Party well know, back in the 1970s and the 1980s, New Zealand and Great Britain were labouring under rules and regulations that supported the unions and which caused a dramatic negative impact on unemployment. Their labour laws sought to crush their economies through various methods which I will get into later.

Bill C-19 will ban replacement workers. As the Sims report very clearly said, banning replacement workers will have a significant

negative impact on our economy. It will increase the number of part time workers which will cause a decrease in investment, an increase in union premiums and a decrease in employment, that is, an increase in unemployment.

It causes a decrease in the reliance of permanent workers. Who would like to be in the situation of working part time job to part time job having to continually seek for a job? It causes an enormous amount of personal and economic uncertainty for Canadians. That is happening more. Instead of alleviating the problem, Bill C-19 will make that problem worse.

The proposed legislation would also provide for union reps to have the names and addresses of all offsite workers.

• (1700)

That is an infringement on and a violation of people's individual rights and freedoms. It will also cause an increase in union premiums and a decrease in investment. What has been clearly found, when we look at the impact of unionization on economic performance, is that there is no change or a decrease in productivity within an economy with an increasing in the strength of union rules and regulations.

Unions have done a tremendous job historically in providing job security, fair wages and clean and fair environments. But in the last few decades they have taken on an entirely different tone and tenure. Some unions are engaging in behaviours that produce and increase their political leadership rather than behaving in a way that is beneficial to their members. It is the members who pay the price.

If union wages are increased, if members are forced against their will to join a union, labour costs are increased. If labour costs are increased what happens? The employer is forced to increase the price it charges for goods and services. This causes a decrease in the competitiveness of that business. That causes a decrease in employment in that business. Unless wage increases are matched with increased productivity a firm becomes less competitive domestically and internationally.

This kind of bill will to decrease the competitiveness of our industry and will strengthen the structural unemployment problems we have. This is very serious.

There are a number of things we can do. It is constructive to look at what the United States has recently done. In many states right to work legislation has been introduced. For those states that have adopted right to work legislation, 75% of the new investment in the United States has gone to those states.

Is the individual worker better off with or without right to work legislation? The last thing we would want to do is in any way, shape or form harm the individual worker's ability to gain safe and secure employment. Facts prove that right to work legislation increases

the amount of money that workers have in their pockets by almost \$2,300 per person.

If we look at the historical evidence from Great Britain and New Zealand we see very clearly that the increasing strength of labour laws and regulations which strengthens unions within a country actually crushes the economy, increases unemployment and impedes the ability of workers to seek what people see as a necessary part of living, gainful, successful, enjoyable and safe employment. That is what Bill C-19 and Group 2 motions will do, except for the ones the Reform Party has introduced. They will improve Bill C-19.

There are other things we can do that are constructive. I will quote some from some labour laws and regulations that have actually strengthened and improved workers' positions. How can we protect individual workers rights? One, make it unfair to dismiss an employee for non-membership in all circumstances.

Two, give union members the right not to be disciplined by their union for not supporting industrial action. Three, make it unlawful to organize or threaten industrial action to establish or maintain a closed shop.

Four, make it unlawful to refuse employment on grounds related to trade union membership. Job advertisements cannot specify union membership.

Five, make unions responsible for unofficial strikes. Unofficial strikers can be dismissed. There is no immunity for industrial action to support a dismissed striker.

We could also do the following that was in the trade union employment act in Great Britain. We could establish a commissioner for the protection against unlawful industrial action. We could also require unions to provide all members with annual statements of financial affairs, including pay and benefits of union leaders. Hundreds of millions of dollars go into union coffers every year. Does anybody know where that money goes? Do the workers know where that money goes? No.

• (1705)

They pay out a lot of money and many union workers tell me they wish we could find out where that money goes. They pay a lot of money out of their pockets but do not know where it goes. They are concerned that money goes into the pockets of the leadership of the unions or for the leadership of the union's benefit and not for the people.

An audit of these moneys making the ultimate outcome of the union dues transparent to all members is a useful thing for the membership and would strengthen and safeguard those union leaders who are honourable and trying to do the best for their workers.

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We could also give individuals the right to join the union of their choice. Right now they do not have that choice at all. We could also require employers to seek an individual written consent to the checkoff of trade union subscriptions from pay every three years.

All these things could strengthen labour laws, strengthen the individual's position rather than strengthening the position of the union leadership.

No one in this House, in particular members of the Reform Party, wants to see in any way, shape or form individual rights compromised. That is why our members are working very hard to quash this bill or at the very least change it so that individual worker rights are put ahead of the rights of union leaderships. How can anybody argue with that? I ask members to join us in producing a bill that will strengthen the position of the workers and not the leaders.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to speak on the amendments to this bill and so I think it is a choice opportunity.

Labour laws in Canada are trying to strike a balance between the rights of management and the rights of workers. That balance is a balance that I think we all look for and all strive for. I am not sure that the correct balance has been struck in this bill and I would like to bring forth a few examples as to how I think it could be improved.

We are speaking on the second group of amendments. The whole idea of balance is so that the workers will have a safe, secure environment, which is very important. I had lots to do in my previous life with employment problems and non-safe working conditions. I think the unions had a good part to play in making workplaces safer. I endorse the work unions have done in that area.

Looking back through history I have found evidence where workers were not paid properly. I am convinced that the unions have had an excellent record in terms of getting fair wages for their individual workers.

As long as the balance is there and not tipped in favour of the unions, I think we have the best of both worlds in Canada. I look to other countries and their experiences and share some of the comments of the member from Juan de Fuca who talked about Britain and New Zealand as classical examples where the balance was tipped.

It is interesting to me that when the balance became so tipped Britain had the lead in national health care. It had a system that was completely and totally socialized. In Britain, as these things often work, the health care system deteriorated. Most people know now that Britain has both a private and a public system. Which groups were the first ones to speak out loudly for the private system when the public system failed them? It was the unions. They sought private health care for their workers instead of the public system where the waiting time was long.

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• (1710)

The unions got together and thought the national health system was the answer for all the problems and then ended up pushing for a private system, an experience that is quite interesting and quite unique. I digress a little, however, from the actual topic here.

This grouping of amendments deals with the democratic process when it relates to union activity, a democratic process where it does not look fair to me for 35% of the workers to vote for a union and for the labour board to decide that the union should well be certified. It reminds me of a dictatorial process. We saw such a process not so long ago in this House.

I wonder if members opposite would reflect on the forced vote on hepatitis C a few days ago. It generated media interest that was intense. If the Prime Minister had not done that maybe the story would not have been so vigorous.

I saw what I consider to be the harshest cartoon I have ever seen in a political arena relating to this. It showed on one side a victim of hepatitis and asked how do you recognize a victim of hepatitis C. It also detailed the sad things these victims have, yellow skin, jaundice, swollen liver and fatigue. On the other side of the panel it asked how do you recognize a Liberal backbencher. It drew a person in a business suit and labelled them. The labels were devastating, two faced, no heart, spineless, gutless.

They were placed in the position of being called all those things. Individual members I had talked to and knew did not want to vote that way sincerely and humbly were forced to vote against their conscience. I consider that action to have—

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member knows it is improper to reflect on a vote in the House. I invite him to move on in his comments and deal with the matter before the House today. I know the hon. member would want to comply with that rule.

Mr. Grant Hill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that timely reminder.

The issue is democracy, voting for constituent wishes and, in terms of the union here, looking at how union members could be so far off base as to be certified when there are only 35% voting for a union.

It is a sad commentary that this legislation is coming from a government that has not acted in a democratic way.

I was asked a piercing question by a journalist today as to how this issue of democracy in the House could have got so far away from where the government should be, a government of compassion, a government of kindness and a government of sincerity. I could not answer.

There were four or five opportunities for the government to change its mind on the non-democratic position it took. I could list the opportunities. The latest one is where the provinces, which had a stand that was supposedly unified, broke ranks. What a perfect opportunity for the Prime Minister to simply say they had made a mistake, that they would listen now reflecting on that error and go back to the drawing board.

Instead the government dug in its heels and became aggressive and belligerent on behalf of a position it took, a position I am convinced most Canadians know is wrong.

How does the government get out of a position when it has been non-democratic? It is really quite tough. How does an individual go back to their constituents and say “when we talked before the vote I promised you that I would not vote for this package and I changed my mind”? I guess the cartoon that says spineless really says a lot.

• (1715)

There are members opposite who, I am absolutely convinced when they go to public events over the next few months and answer the questions of their constituents, will have trouble explaining to them why they went that route. I feel sorry for them. I feel in my heart that they did not want to do that. I guess they can find some excuse to say to an individual with hepatitis C, but frankly it is difficult for me to explain. I could not explain it to the journalist. Maybe they could.

Mr. Speaker, I see you getting ready with Beauchesne's. I presume that means I should be moving into another area.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am pleased that the hon. member for Macleod brought it to my attention, but most definitely this does not have anything to do with the amendments.

If members of the Reform Party are serious about trying to make some amendments, would they please talk about them? We have been here all day and there has been very little talk on the amendments. Obviously this is not a serious—

The Deputy Speaker: I have corrected the hon. member for Macleod once. In case he wanted to know the reference. I refer the hon. member to citation 479 of Beauchesne's, 6th edition.

A Member may not speak against or reflect upon any determination of the House, unless intending to conclude with a motion for rescinding it.

The hon. member is not in a position to move such a motion today since we are on debate on another bill. There are motions already before the House concerning another bill and a motion to rescind the motion he was referring to earlier would be out of order.

In his remarks today I know he was working to draw them into Bill C-19, which is after all the subject of our discussion. I had not

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noticed that he had strayed further than some other members had strayed from the topic in the course of the day.

Mr. Grant Hill: Mr. Speaker, once again I defer to your wisdom and judgment on these matters, as I recognize your profound experience in the rules and practices and regulations of the House. It would be very unwise of me to try to argue such points.

I will go back to the point that I was trying to make before, the undemocratic nature of Bill C-19. Members opposite have some difficulty understanding this principle. I was trying to point out when one has not been democratic in one's own affairs it is difficult to be democratic in the affairs of others.

It is very important to have balance in labour laws. This sort of balance is what Reformers seek. We would like management and workers to have the proper balance. We think it can be improved. We have made amendments to do so. I would ask my colleagues to consider the amendments we have put forward with care and with sincerity.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on some of the comments made by my colleague from Maclead.

I recognize that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour has sat here all day. It is a shame that she has not been accompanied by too many of her government colleagues in this debate while listening to the concerns of the opposition parties to government legislation.

Unless I am mistaken, the whole purpose of report stage is for the government to look at amendments placed on the floor by opposition members to try to make a better piece of legislation than what the government has provided.

• (1720)

Our job in this place is to hold the government accountable and to make sure the legislation that the government passes on behalf of the Canadian public is the best it can possibly be. It is sometimes very disarming for us when debating to an empty House to try to convince an empty House that the legislation is inadequate, needs to be corrected and needs changes. Today is just another example of what we put up with day after day in trying to hold the government accountable for bad legislation and to offer some innovative changes.

We have a genuine concern with Bill C-19 under Group No. 2. Let there be no mistake that I will be speaking about the lack of vision the government has shown in Bill C-19.

I represent a province which has had labour legislation that has been very damaging to the economic well-being of our province and of employment. We have a problem in our province with labour legislation. We do not want to see as representatives of that

province those problems compounded by labour legislation brought in by the Liberal government.

We have a concern with the democracy that is not being supported in the legislation. We are talking about legislation that would allow a union to come in and organize in a place of work and to convince some people, sometimes the ones with a lot of influence, to consider unionizing. These people of influence, although they may be a minority, could end up placing that place of work in a situation where somebody declares that it will be a unionized shop even though the majority of workers, for very good reasons perhaps, feel that they are not ready to be unionized and do not want to be unionized.

That just rubs the wrong way any Canadian who believes in democracy, who believes that people have a right to make decisions for the best of the majority in the situation. That means workers and that a majority of the workforce in a particular work environment should feel that a union is required to speak on their behalf.

In many instances people find themselves in a union when they do not really want to be. They are paying union dues when they do not see any benefit from it. We even have young people who are union members. They get accreditation, their journeyman certificates, but because of union salaries they find themselves too expensive and the union shops do not hire them.

I have talked with several young people who have found themselves unemployed for years on end because they cannot work outside a union shop. The employers are being asked to pay them journeyman wages which they cannot afford to pay. The young people find themselves in a conundrum: they cannot work because the union will not allow them to work and have no options open to them.

Many people are looking at unions in a different light. A majority of workers should be required before a workplace decides to belong to a union. I do not think we should be taking that right away from the average employer.

Another concern I have with Group No. 2 is the motion the Bloc has put forth. I have difficulty with it. I like some of the concepts but not all of them. This is an opportunity in the House of Commons for people to debate the motions in amendment raised by other parties.

I do not like the idea that we have a government which feels that this is a waste of time and that we should not have the right to be raising points on other people's motions that we feel may be going in the right direction but do not quite make it.

• (1725)

Bloc Motion No. 8 talks about the automatic removal of an employee representative upon the receipt of an application. This is when employers are being blended. I have a problem with the way it is being dealt with. I like the concept that there needs to be some negotiation, but who should decide which side is to have the

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employer or employee representatives when there are amalgamations or mergers. There may have to be a concession that all of them are represented or a means of figuring that one out.

This is the vehicle. This is the process. In parliamentary debate we debate these issues. I resent that we have a Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour who is trying to say that we do not have the right or that we are wasting time debating these issues.

In Motion No. 7 we indicate that the wording is not quite right. One word can make all the difference in the world. "May" rather than "shall" can make all the difference in the world to workers who are looking for somebody to represent them.

I do not think it is wrong for us to move a motion to say to government that a word is not quite right, that it can be interpreted in such a way that it is not representing the best interest of the employee, and that we feel it should use another word in the legislation instead of the word it has chosen to use.

In the motion we are saying that the government is offering the labour board a choice that it may or may not call for a representative vote of the workers. That should be automatic; that vote should be required. It should not be conditional and not something the board can choose to use or not to use.

It may be naive of me after five years in this place but I would like to think the government is open to suggestions, that the government is open to having motions brought forward and debated pointing out the usage of words that may make a difference in the interpretation by the board being created by a court if it comes to a court situation.

We would like to think that the government is open to those kinds of suggestions. However my experience tells me otherwise. My experience tells me, no matter what the issue, that once the government has made up its mind it is not willing to accept that maybe it has made a mistake.

It does not matter whether it is in the drafting of a bill or in the hepatitis C debate. We very seldom see a government that says that maybe it made a mistake, maybe it could do better, maybe it should listen to the opposition side, maybe it will make a change because of something suggested that offers improvement.

Rather than listening to the cat-calling, the hissing and the screaming from the other side, maybe they should be listening to the logical and well presented arguments from the opposition side to improve government legislation so that Canadians can receive the best possible legislation from the House.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if we could have unanimous consent of the House to see the

clock at 5.30 p.m. rather than starting another speaker at one minute to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The House has heard the suggestion. Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock as 5.30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There is agreement and by serendipitous circumstance it is also 5.30 p.m.

It being 5.30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[English]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should dissolve the regional development agencies, including ACOA, Ford-Q, WED, and FedNor, and redirect funds targeted for the agencies toward tax relief, debt retirement, and the reduction of the size of the federal government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support this motion. It is one of those motions that create responsibility in the minds of all members of parliament. Regional development agencies are big business.

According to the auditor general, \$4 billion was spent in the eight years leading up to 1995. Compare that to the public accounts revelation that in the year 1996-97, the bill for ACOA, WED and Ford-Q was \$1.1 billion in terms of authorization, of which \$999 million was spent. One billion dollars in one year is a major acceleration.

Regional development agencies were set up to do one thing and they are doing another. They were set up to fill gaps in the financial markets that were not being filled by the financial institutions in the private sector. They are now in direct competition with the services provided by the private sector financial institutions. I will show exactly how they are doing that.

In April 1996 the report of the Senate banking committee concluded that while the agencies are meant to fill gaps in the capital markets, there is no consensus on the method determining where those gaps exist and there is no way of analysing whether the gaps are being filled.

The regional development agencies are but one part of crown corporations in dealing with finances. Among those other institutions the following are included: the Business Development Bank

of Canada, the Farm Credit Corporation, the Canadian Export Development Corporation, Canada Lands, Canada Post, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and many others totalling up to 50 such agencies that deal in the financial sector. They were all set up to support ventures that do not have access to financing in the private sector. Today those ventures have the same difficulty getting access to the crown corporations and regional development agencies as they have accessing agencies in the private sector.

Let us recap. Regional development agencies spend over a billion dollars a year of taxpayer money. Their purpose is to fill gaps in capital markets yet there is no way of determining where those gaps are and no way of analysing whether the agencies are filling those gaps. The agencies are part of the crown corporate structure, of which there are 50 bodies. Crown corporations were established to increase access to capital but business today has difficulty getting it.

Why has this happened? What has caused agencies to become ineffective? The Liberal wisdom of balanced budgets is to maintain institutions without determining their effectiveness, to insist they become self-sufficient even though to do so the agencies will be forced to compete with the private sector, and they move away from their original mandate to fill gaps in the capital market and financing needs of the people. This wisdom is costly. It promotes inefficiency and fails to contribute to the growth of the economy.

The Reform wisdom would be to eliminate these costly agencies which have outlived their purpose and which compete with the private sector. In doing so, a Reform government would eliminate a significant amount of unnecessary spending and would empower the private sector by getting out of its way. This would allow the private sector to function more effectively without competition from the public sector and it would stimulate growth.

These agencies have become ineffective because of their inability to do the things they were set up to do. Do we need further evidence? No, we do not. But there are additional issues. For instance, a newer selling point for the regional agencies is that they become one stop doors to government programs.

There are two issues here. First, if there are so many government programs and agencies to help small businesses that we need a guide to steer us through them, then there are too many programs.

• (1735)

A business wants access to capital. It does not distinguish whether it is TPC, SBLA, FCC, WED, CANARIE, NRC, MRC, ACOA, FORD-Q, FedNor, BDC or CMHC. That is just the beginning. Each of these is an acronym for a government pro-

gram. The labyrinth carries on. Each dispenses billions of dollars for one purpose, the help small and not so small business.

We are concerned here only with three agencies. The second issue here is that if the government is to be involved in western economic diversification, Atlantic Canada opportunities, the regional development of Quebec, and the economic initiatives in northern Ontario, there are other federal crown agencies that do exactly the same thing. Two of these are the Business Development Bank of Canada and the Farm Credit Corporation.

One could easily enter into debate about whether FCC and the BDC, the Farm Credit Corporation and the Business Development Bank, are doing what they were intended to do. That is a subject for another day.

The government is failing in its responsibility to business, to the marketplace and to the taxpayer. The government continues to build a labyrinth of sources for capital and still is no closer to understanding why the gaps exist in the first place.

The irony is that it is no easier with all these government programs for business to gain access. It is becoming increasingly difficult. The government has not improved the marketplace. Instead it competes with the private sector. More important, the government has failed to analyse why we have these gaps in the marketplace in the first place.

The government is taking the easy way out, more spending, more activity but less and less effectiveness. The people in business who need access to capital are not getting it. The marketplace is not improving and the promised long term jobs are not resulting.

The original regional development agencies are a failure by anyone's standard. It is time to eliminate them.

Much work has been done in the past two years by the standing Senate committee on banking, trade and commerce. That committee published a report in April 1996 which recommended "the phasing out of regional development agencies; they should not exist independent of crown financial institutions when institutions such as the Farm Credit Corporation and the Business Development Bank of Canada target the same market as the regional agencies".

The committee goes on to say: "If there are regional economic development programs funded at the federal level that do not involve direct business related services, then provincial agencies are best able to deliver such programs". These are sound recommendations given the committee's findings, but the Liberal government ignored them.

Perhaps this is an indication by the Liberal government as to how effective the Senate could be, but that is another debate which we will not get into now.

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It is not just that regional agencies do exactly the same as some of these crown financial institutions. Other crown financial institutions can leverage their paid in capital and as such are in a much stronger position to help business because their financial strength is much greater than that of regional development agencies.

Not only do regional development agencies compete directly with the private sector, they duplicate the work done by other crown financial institutions.

In 1995 the auditor general had some concerns, lack of information on which programs have worked and which have not, the need to be cost effective, the lengthy approval times, the need for continued co-operation and the challenge of implementing changes.

In 1997 the auditor general reviewed those same things and asked what has happened. Here are three of the agencies he examined and gave a conclusion on.

In the auditor general's words it was still too early to determine whether FedNor is adequately monitoring its projects. Let us review the history of FedNor.

It was created in 1987 to address the economic disparities and adjustment problems of the region. In 1992, five years later, all the programs were all consolidated into one program the FedNor business incentives program. In 1996 its strategy was changed again, this time to improving access of small business to capital, to information on markets and promotion of community partnerships. Three changes in mandate in nine years. The obvious question is what evaluation was done that resulted in the changes in mandate. Is the focus right now? Will it again be changed before it can be evaluated? Was it wrong the first time? Was it wrong the second time? Is it wrong now? What assurances do we have that it is right now? If it keeps getting changed we will never know.

• (1740)

That is why these changes are such a useful vehicle for patronage, disposal of money. No one can ever pin the government down because before we can find out what it is really doing the government has changed so we never really know what its mandate was. And yet it is costing money, taxpayer money.

The government must be held accountable. How many businesses went bankrupt because of these grants and subsidies to these development agencies? Who will ever know? For that reason if no other they should be scrapped. How can the success of a program be seriously valued in such a short time if the mandate changes constantly? I will go on to the next thing.

FORD-Q is the biggest spender of them all. The only improvement observed by the auditor general was: "Our review of a small

sample of files suggests that the documentation supporting project funding recommendations has improved".

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not see a quorum. I see only three Reform members and no Conservatives.

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

• (1745)

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kelowna.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, the auditor general in 1997 also did a comparison of what happened in the two years in ACOA. The main purpose for setting up ACOA was, according to the auditor general's report of 1995, to create employment. That was its main purpose.

In 1997 the auditor general reviewed again to see what had happened. He made this observation about ACOA: "The agency continues to use the assumption that all of the jobs created by the program will last for a period of 10 years. As in 1995 we were not able to find support for this assumption".

The very purpose for which it was set up was not being met.

The report goes beyond that and states that the objectives were so general they could not be measured. The assessment process used by the agency was not significantly different from that found in the 1995 audit. This is an abysmal failure in the way in which that particular agency is run.

We go beyond that. How effective is another group? The western economic diversification agency was set up recently to cover a whole lot of things. It is supposed to do new things. Canada business development centres were set up to provide access to various government departments through the communication network. They were working. Now they are subsumed under WED.

The notorious infrastructure was working, but now it is subsumed under WED.

• (1750)

The community futures program was working. It is now under WED. What has been the result of all of this? In Kelowna the infrastructure program has never been less successful. The community futures program has not brought more people into the marketplace and into the working field. The business development centres do not distribute any more information than they did before.

What are the results? We have an organization. We have staff. We have bureaucrats. And the only jobs that were created on a permanent basis were for the bureaucrats.

The regional development agencies are not doing what they were set up to do. They are costing taxpayers billions of dollars. They

are duplicating the work of crown corporations. They are competing directly with the private sector. They are doing the exact opposite of what they should be doing.

The wisdom is that we should eliminate them. If we have to fill the gaps that are not being met in the private sector and in the financial sector, let the agencies that exist outside of the regional development agencies, like the BDC, do the work.

Hon. Ronald J. Duhamel (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development)(Western Economic Diversification), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is obviously a fundamental difference here in terms of the approach to the development of the nation. There is a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of development agencies.

I will start by thanking the hon. member for Kelowna for all of the good work that he has been doing with the Central Okanagan Community Futures Development Corporation.

Community futures development corporations are funded in large part by regional agencies. They play a very important part in the economic development of rural and non-rural western Canada. The Central Okanagan Community Futures Development Corporation is part of western diversification's western Canada business services network.

Since his election, the hon. member for Kelowna has continued his good work by meeting with management of this community futures development corporation to discuss the corporation's business plan. He has continued by attending that community futures development corporation's networking evenings for small business. In September 1996 he was one of the opening speakers at the Central Okanagan CFDC's annual meeting, where I am told that my hon. colleague spoke glowingly of the achievements of the community futures development corporation.

I say to the hon. member: Good work. Keep it up. He knows that these community development futures corporations have a niche, that they are filling a need, that they work and that they do help in the creation of thousands of jobs.

At the same time I must confess that I find it strange why this member, who knows the benefits that the regional economic development agencies provide to small and medium size businesses, would put forward a motion to disband these agencies.

[*Translation*]

Regional economic development is, without a doubt, one of the cornerstones of our nation. The federal government has promised to pursue economic development and to promote equal opportunity for all Canadians. Whatever our party or background, we must agree that strong regions contribute to a strong Canada.

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[*English*]

The federal government, the industry portfolio in particular, plays a critical role in pooling and marshalling the resources that businesses in Canada need. Canada's regional development agencies are largely responsible for the development and delivery of these resources across the country. They exist to help businesses in the regions develop and grow to meet the challenges of the globally competitive world.

I am very proud to be responsible for our regional agencies. Let me give members a few reasons for that.

• (1755)

In my province of Manitoba, western economic diversification, as lead federal agency for federal assistance, hit the ground running during the Manitoba flood with its economic recovery efforts. The mobile restart program, le program mobile de redémarrage, took applications on the spot, returned in a week with a cheque, provided \$8.8 million to almost 2,000 small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Over 1,000 businesses have been helped with WED providing more than \$13.4 million, cost shared with the province of Manitoba.

Helping displaced fishers, for example, affected by changes in the west coast salmon fishery, WED brought together federal departments and 12 community future development corporations, made over \$5 million available for small business planning and financing. Fishers can begin their own businesses.

[*Translation*]

The western Canada business services network plays a key role in creating jobs and fulfilling needs in that part of the country. There are also community futures development corporations, commonly known as CFDCs. Service centres for women entrepreneurs, business service centres and WD's own offices are other examples.

We have more than 100 points of service in western Canada, more than 1,000 volunteers in the network and another 325 people working at WD. They serve most urban centres and small towns like Morris, Manitoba, Bruno, Saskatchewan, and Bonnyville, Alberta. This goes to show that these centres are not serving only or mostly larger cities. Their primary focus is small towns and rural areas.

[*English*]

I want to tell this House very briefly about some success stories. Barbara Dale from Edmonton came to Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association with an idea for a business in 1996. She received business planning help and qualified for a \$100,000 start-up loan. Last year her company, Labour Now Industrial Staffing, had sales of over \$1 million and is forecasting \$4 million for this year.

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Each of WED's products and services must meet the needs of a specific client group, follow the agenda of the federal government in terms of economic development, provide key needs of small business, information and capital.

Canada Business Service Centres, les Centres de services aux entreprises du Canada, are an important element in this economic development.

WED is a managing partner in the west. Last year these organizations took an average of 33,000 requests for information and 50,000 website hits every month.

[Translation]

With respect to the loans and investment fund, WD makes contributions to loan-loss reserves to raise capital for small business from financial institutions.

For every dollar invested by WD, financial institutions invest eight. As a result, \$420 million was made available to small and medium size businesses. WD helps businesses fill in loan applications. Loans are administered by financial institutions at arm's length from WD.

While still a new program, more than 240 loans totalling \$55 million have already been approved. Also, CFDCs have granted more than 1,500 smaller loans, which helped create 2,500 jobs in rural areas in western Canada.

[English]

Look at WED's efforts with aboriginal peoples: contribution of \$950,000 given to the Aboriginal Business Development Centre in Winnipeg to encourage entrepreneurship among urban aboriginals; a contribution of \$5 million toward Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

[Translation]

To promote linguistic duality, \$1.6 million was granted to the Manitoba bilingual communities' economic development board to help 11 bilingual municipalities further their economic development. Other investments were made in other western provinces to meet the needs of francophones.

[English]

For the youth employment strategy, four programs: the international trade personnel program, first job in science and technology, the western youth entrepreneurship program, and the community economic development internship program. Let me give a concrete example of what this has done.

Glas Aire Industries in Vancouver, an automotive accessories manufacturer, hired a graduate under the ITPP to try to crack the Japanese market. It resulted in contracts with Nissan and Toyota. Omar Essen, general manager of the company said "Our Japanese success is largely due to WD".

• (1800)

On partnership agreements, we are currently negotiating five year agreements with four western provinces to collaborate, work together and co-operate on economic priorities. Alberta's is in place. We are nearing completion with three other infrastructure works programs.

WD is the federal delivery agent in the west with over 5,200 projects approved, more than 33,000 jobs created by that program. It is clear that WD is helping to build a strong economy in the west. It is equally clear that a vibrant economy in one part of the country benefits all other parts of the country.

I could speak much longer but I will finish by saying that WD works. I have given many examples. There are literally hundreds of others.

Mr. Speaker, you and I and perhaps a few others know that what is good for western Canada is good for Canada. What is good for western Canadians is good for all Canadians. My colleagues could make similar comments with other regional development agencies that exist and which are tailor made to respond to the unique needs of other regions of the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in my capacity as the Bloc Québécois critic for regional development on Motion M-224, presented by my colleague on the industry committee, the hon. member for Kelowna. I can attest to how hard he works on that committee, and he often asks pertinent questions. entirely

I believe it would be useful to reread his motion:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should dissolve the regional development agencies, including ACOA, Ford-Q, WED, and FedNor, and redirect funds targeted for the agencies toward tax relief, debt retirement, and the reduction of the size of the federal government.

All of the components of this motion make sense, but there is a problem, I believe, when they are put together. Then some clarification becomes necessary.

The Bloc Québécois would be in favour of dissolution of the regional development agencies, but is not opposed to investment in regional development. Our Reform colleague is suggesting less intervention in the economy. On this point, my thoughts are along the same lines as the Liberal minister who has just spoken. It is certain that the rural and isolated areas need help. They must be given special assistance or they and their local businesses will not have an equal opportunity for development.

In our opinion, however, the federal government is not the one best placed to develop the regions. The government in Ottawa creates agencies right and left, but there are services in place at the provincial government level for this. Such is the case in Quebec,

with its regionalized structure made up of 16 regional development councils. There are local development councils, one in each of the MRCs, and these structures are characterized by representativity. The public can run for membership on the board of these bodies.

The minister may well say “Oh yes, we do the same, we have CFDCs in our region”. But this duplication of energies and of staff constitutes a problem. I am speaking for Quebec, because it is what I know best. In our opinion, the federal government is not the one in the best position to look after this matter.

• (1805)

The federal government will be present because of its need of visibility. Whether the government is Liberal or Conservative, it has to have its visibility. It must at all cost show it is doing something even if regional development services exist in the provinces.

According to the logic of our statement, money for regional development should go to the provinces, which are in a better position, in our opinion, to look after such matters, or federal-provincial agreements should be established.

That was long the case. It could have been the case, for example, in the infrastructures program in which municipal, provincial and federal governments acted on a one time basis. Such agreements are possible, therefore.

One such one was renewed in the east. Since 1994, with the Liberals in government, renewal of the regional development agreement with Quebec has been impossible. There has been no agreement since 1994, and on top of that, the federal government continues to spend money on regional development without a thought to regional development council strategies or to the priorities and approaches of local development councils. It is therefore acting unilaterally, driven by its concern for visibility.

This is so much so that they changed names. They are no longer calling it the federal office for regional development—Quebec. Since early March, it has been called the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions Agency. They have to show their maple leaf. This is for visibility. When ministers cannot make announcements, they send government members to do it, to cut ribbons, so as to always ensure the visibility of our good federal government, and particularly that of the Liberal government. Money is spent. But we need to allocate that money to development initiatives that reflect the priorities.

An example of duplication is the \$33 million spent in Quebec for administration purposes. There are 264 federal public servants who duplicate the work of provincial public servants, or of development officers paid by municipalities, regions or communities. And they

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seldom sit down to put their heads together. We must put an end to this situation.

However, I will admit one thing. We must recognize the work of the CFDC's in Quebec that are funded by the federal government. Over time, they developed an expertise in regional development. In recent days, I talked to Quebec government people involved in regional development, and they were saying that their government is willing to recognize the expertise of the CFDC people who have been involved, and that it would be pleased to continue to work with them. These people include permanent employees, but also many volunteers who became involved over the years.

In conclusion, the federal government's participation in Quebec's regional development activities has considerably evolved toward unilateralism. Indeed, while the federal government used to provide financial support to activities determined by the Quebec government, it is now implementing its own programs and activities, and it funds them in a unilateral fashion.

What is more, no reference is made to either strategic planning or framework agreements between the Quebec government and the regions for the choice of priorities, but rather to the study results on which the former federal office of regional development based its own view of the regions of Quebec. This situation does not augur well in any way, because in future the two governments will be taking action on parallel paths in regional development, so there will be still more duplication and overlap, thus creating an atmosphere of confusion for the clientele in the regions.

If, with the abolition of these agencies, the federal government were to convert the amounts it was already spending into transfer payments to the provinces, we would be in favour.

Quebec does not get its fair share in regional development funding. Looking at the per capita amounts, and comparing with the Atlantic provinces for instance, I would like my colleague from the Atlantic region to know that there is a five-to-one ratio, with his region getting five times as much.

• (1810)

Comparing the number of unemployed, the ratio is four-to-one. I have not done an analysis for other regions, but I believe that if the government wants to continue paying out money and if it were to accept a federal-provincial agreement for doing so, it should at least respect the principle of fairness. There is already the principle of equalization, which applies to transfers to the provinces. The Minister of Finance has jurisdiction over this, according to certain calculation formulas too complicated to go into here. This is a system already in place.

When it comes to regional development, where the focus should be on giving isolated regions of a province, or sub-regions, the same opportunities as the rest of that province, it should be up to

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the province to decide on priorities and on the mechanisms to be used.

Conditional on such a balance, there should be transfers to the provinces for regional development, because we feel that the provinces are best placed to be responsible for this.

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my Bloc colleague for the good news about his comparison of the Atlantic and Quebec.

[*English*]

I have to say I am not surprised to see this private members' motion today. We are finally starting to see the true colours of the Reform Party. Bit by bit through this whole parliament we are going to see Reform Party members coming up with motions and private members' bills and they will slowly try to dismantle all programs in this country. They will start, as they have shown today, by attacking the most unfortunate.

That is why we have regional development agencies. Being the critic for ACOA I have to say there is a need for these agencies but unfortunately the Reformers do not see a need. They do not see a need to help the unfortunate of this country. There has been proof today.

I have to say I am not surprised. I am alarmed because my fear of that party is coming to realization. I hope Canadians will finally see through that party. It is scary when you hear some of the things its members say.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency creates jobs. I am not saying that ACOA is set up perfectly because it is not. There are changes I would like to see in ACOA. I would like to see it closer to the community but it does help to create jobs.

We could try to forget that there are provinces and regions not only in the Atlantic but all across the country that are less fortunate than others. We could do like the Reform Party does and say we are going to forget about them, let us take away the financing they have, let us take away whatever prosperity this may give them. Not everybody in Atlantic Canada has big bucks to start small businesses. They need help. That is what ACOA is there for.

Again I am not saying that it is a perfect agency but I would rather see it the way it is now than not see it at all. There is a need for it. I get calls on a daily basis from people asking how to start up a business, what is out there to help them. If we did not have agencies like this one, we would not have small businesses. The self-employed create jobs in the Atlantic provinces. There is a need for them. There is the fixed link fund. It might not have helped as much as we would have liked but it certainly helped.

One criticism about ACOA is that there is not enough follow up. There is money to help start businesses but it lets it go too fast.

There is a need for follow up. There is a need to make sure that the businesses are stable and can survive. That is not there right now.

• (1815)

We have to look at the motion as one coming from a member of a party that wants to dismantle this program. It is a start at dismantling regional development agencies. If it could succeed—and I am pretty sure it could not—it would try it on health care, CPP and on and on. That party believes that if one is not rich then tough. It is unfortunate how it addresses the poor in Canada and tells them that it will relieve them of taxes.

I was in that bracket. I was paying taxes and I was not making a whole lot of money, but when my son was sick he could go to the hospital and it did not cost me anything. My daughter spent a week in the hospital last year and it did not cost me anything.

That is the part Reformers forget to say. They are going to reduce the taxes but they forget to say that taxpayers will have to pay for their children in hospital or have to buy insurance if they can. It is all in there.

The Reform Party has it very well laid out. Its members know what to say and they know what to try to make believe to Canadians. I am telling Canadians what the Reform Party would really do. It is trying to do it today by trying to dismantle these agencies. It is just the start of it.

That is how Reformers work. They tell Canadians that is not true, that they care about the unfortunate, the poor and the small and medium size businesses. However they would destroy them. This would destroy the possibility of creating small and medium size businesses in the Atlantic provinces. I am just showing their true colours. I believe that very much.

I probably paid more in taxes this year than I made working the year before. At least I have services. My mom and dad have pensions. They can have a half decent life. It is all there. The day we start slashing and slashing, the services will be gone. It is very important for Canadians to remember that. The motion is showing me exactly what the Reform Party wants to do.

When Reformers talk about tax breaks, do they often say a tax break only for the very poor? No, they do not say what kind of tax break they would give to the very wealthy. We do not hear them say that. I wonder why. They will never say that large corporations do not pay enough tax. Those are their buddies.

Members in the Liberal Party probably have quite a few buddies. I am sure when the Minister of Finance has supper he does not go to the soup kitchen. I am sure he goes with his bank buddies and they tell him to keep up the great work, that he is doing just great. He goes along and keeps doing what he is doing because of what all his buddies are saying. That is what happens.

Members of Parliament who have never experienced too much hardship should go to a soup kitchen for supper once in a while or should see the line-up at social services. Maybe that would give them a reality check.

When it comes to ACOA and when it comes to this motion it is disgusting.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to say a few words in French. ACOA is needed in the Atlantic regions. I have no doubt of that. We need help starting up and developing small and medium size business. This agency is there. It is not perfect, and I would certainly like to see some changes, but I would rather have it as it is than not at all. It is my duty to work toward progressive and positive changes in this agency that will help develop our regions.

As I said earlier in English, suggestions such as these calling for the abolition of agencies helping Canada's poorer regions are alarming. This is only the beginning and it reveals the real Reform Party. Its purpose is to destroy our national programs and to continue to help its friends, who are luckier than others in this country.

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot blame my colleague from New Brunswick for being concerned, but have no fear the Tories are here.

It is a pleasure for me to rise before the House in response to Motion No. 224, calling upon the government to dissolve all regional development agencies.

For years, successive federal governments grappled with the problem of regional economic disparity. In 1969 the Department of Regional Economic Expansion was created in an attempt to address the situation.

Later in 1982 the department evolved into the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion. Both these endeavours failed to adequately address the specific problems facing the many diverse regions of the country.

One of the major criticisms of these two departments derives from its often poor focus on a centrally devised, one size fits all answer to regional problems.

Canadians wanted a greater say in developing their own programs to respond to their own economic problems. They were no longer willing to accept Ottawa's often ill advised solutions being thrust upon them.

As a result, in 1987 the Progressive Conservative government disbanded DRIE and announced a new direction for regional

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economic development policy in Canada. New agencies were created for the western and Atlantic provinces, moving much of the government's regional development decision making out of Ottawa and closer to the people served. Western economic diversification was created to help expand and develop the business face of the economy in the western provinces.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency was given a legislative mandate to increase opportunity for economic development in Atlantic Canada and to enhance the growth of earned income and employment opportunities in that region.

ACOA has enabled many small and medium size businesses in Atlantic Canada to create jobs that otherwise would not exist. Its involvement in the economy of the region has resulted in an important net positive contribution.

Since its inception ACOA has had a total employment impact of 82,000 jobs. ACOA's investment has created \$233 million annually in new export sales. Each dollar invested in the business by ACOA, its provincial government and private sector partners results in \$5 of benefit to the Atlantic region.

Similarly the return to the government in taxes, savings and employment insurance payments equals \$3 for every dollar invested by the government. ACOA has a proven performance record in achieving real results in our Atlantic economy.

Dissolving ACOA would have a devastating effect on most Atlantic Canadians. Unlike the western region whose economy presently leads the nation, Atlantic Canada continues to struggle particularly with the serious downturn in the fishery.

There are presently over 25,000 fishers and fish plant workers in Atlantic Canada who were forced from the fishery by the downturn in the fishery and who are subsequently awaiting word from the government on a new TAGS program.

The Progressive Conservative Party was the first to champion the cause of tax relief for ordinary Canadians. However, the cancellation of this regional development agency would provide little or no tax relief for these 25,000 individuals.

Unemployment figures are still too high in Atlantic Canada. The best way to confront the serious unemployment situation is to encourage Canadians young and old to start their own business.

Figures show that 94% of all new jobs in the country are created by small and medium size enterprises. We need ACOA to help people start and to expand their own businesses. It has the ability to provide individuals with much needed capital along with expertise on how to begin new ventures.

• (1825)

Most chartered banks in Atlantic Canada are quite reluctant to support small business ventures unless they are willing to provide

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about 30% to 50% of their own equity to the project. Unfortunately most aspiring entrepreneurs are incapable of meeting this demand. Therefore, without ACOA having taken a chance on individual projects, many would not have got off the ground.

Atlantic Canada need ACOA to reduce the regional economic disparity that exists among provinces. Therefore we cannot support the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The mover of the motion, the hon. member for Kelowna, has five minutes to conclude.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I express appreciation to some of the speakers who have entered into the debate. I am somewhat disappointed in some of the views that have been expressed because some of them left a lot of imagination between what was said and what the actual truth of the situation really was.

One thing ought to be made very clear. The reason behind the motion is to eliminate inefficiencies, to eliminate duplication, to eliminate grants and subsidies to businesses which really divert funds from successful businesses and gives them to other businesses. Is that to say that none of these programs have worked? Of course they have worked but at a cost and inefficiently.

There have been some suggestions that we should have grants and subsidies. Let me just look at a couple of things that have happened. Some \$11 billion of assistance was authorized over the last 16 years. Some 32,000 separate grants have been given, and 18% of them were given to 75 of the largest corporations in Canada.

If we are talking about helping the poor, that is not where this money is going. It is not going to the poor people. Hundreds of millions of dollars are going to Pratt & Whitney, De Havilland, Bombardier, Canadair, to Le Group Montreal Inc. and Air Ontario. In fact it was almost \$1 billion. What has the repayment schedule been? It has been abysmal. Very little money has been repaid.

We need to recognize that some serious questions have to be asked. How can parliament continue to accept that subsidies are cost effective when we know that the evidence clearly shows that they are not? We have no way of evaluating them. How can parliament continue to support regional development agencies when study after study shows that they are not accomplishing what they were set out to do? How can parliament continue to support regional development agencies when they contribute significantly to taxpayers' burdens with so little return on the investment? These are serious questions that have to be asked.

Turning to inefficiency and overlap in particular with the BDC, SCC and Community Futures, now a big bureaucrat is sitting over top of them and saying "Look at how much more responsibility I have now. I have to have a bigger budget. I have to have more staff.

I have to have bigger offices". It is bureaucratic entrepreneurship, and it does not build the economy.

We must make all efforts to eliminate the regional development agencies and redirect the funds so that they will do what they are supposed to be doing toward tax relief, debt retirement, building the economy and reducing the size of government. That is what this was about. In this way we will support the private sector.

There is a rule for government agencies but the issue is duplication. The issue is building the private sector. Taxpayers spend money better. Left in their pockets they will manage their money better. Business will manage money far better than any government agency or any government department ever dreamt of doing. That is the principle here. Government should get out of business and let them help those people who really need the help, not the big corporate welfare bums.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

• (1830)

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 23, I asked the Minister of the Environment which departments will be stopping hazardous waste dumping in Ontario sewers.

At that time I raised my concerns shared by many Canadians on the minister's assurances regarding the harmonization accord and the continuing decline of environmental protection across the country.

The minister's response as recorded in *Hansard* included: "We will assure all members of this House that we are following through with our supervision, inspections and maintenance of standards".

Program review one and two led to losses in financial and human resources which have devastated a once respected department.

The growing concerns over global warming, pollution prevention and community health issues are of prime concern to Canadians. The majority of Canadians believe more should be done to protect our environment.

Environment Canada's own internal report identified a need for over 300 staff to provide adequate environmental inspections,

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enforcement and protection. Yet the minister is comfortable with 60. The minister defends this policy and the lack of enforcement and protection as sufficient.

I would like to draw attention to another issue, ASD, alternate service delivery. Canadians have witnessed examples of this failure policy through NavCan, food inspection branch and Ports Canada; bad ideas, poor service and Canadians at risk.

Now the Liberals wish to continue this policy with components of the atmospheric sciences branch. This is at a time when our major trading partners are increasing funding to atmospheric sciences. Canadians across this country have stated time and time again do not close more weather stations, where are the up to date storm alerts, and why do they have to pay for weather information as taxpayers.

With this conscious abandonment of fiscal excuses coupled with the continued devolution of environment duties and responsibilities through ill advised harmonization accords with the provinces, this Liberal government approach will lead only to further degradation.

How can Canadians be reassured on the protection from hazardous waste dumping when there is little proof that Liberals care about our environment?

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of hazardous wastes, including their generation, transportation and disposal, is one which touches all Canadians. It is one which the federal government takes seriously.

Canada has shown its intentions relating to the responsible management of hazardous wastes through the Canada-U.S. agreement on the transboundary movement of those wastes between our two countries. As a signatory to the international Basel convention,

Canada again indicated its commitment to environmentally sound transport and handling of hazardous wastes.

In terms of municipalities and the environmental protection measures they may take, municipal governments have the authority and bylaw making powers granted to them under provincial laws which create or incorporate them. It is consistent with the overall Canadian experience that municipalities have demonstrated over the years their environmental conscience.

In many cases they can and do act to prevent noxious and harmful substances from being disposed into municipal sewers or through other municipal facilities.

The hon. member also addressed a number of other concerns in his address and one of them has to do with issues around enforcement. The hon. member is well aware, because he is a participant on the environment committee, that the committee is doing a report that will be given to parliament on this issue. I believe all members have taken good use of committee time around the table. Everyone has made a very sound contribution to this very important issue.

On the issue of global warming, the government has established a national secretariat that will be dealing with the global warming challenge. In terms of alternate service delivery for the weather and climatic systems across the country, the government is undertaking a national review.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.)

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