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Monday, October 29, 2001

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 29, 2001

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

MARRIAGE CAPACITY ACT

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved that Bill C-264, an act to amend the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act (marriage between persons of the same sex), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today is an historic day for the gay and lesbian community in Canada. It is the first time in Canadian history that legislation is being debated that would allow gay or lesbian couples to legally marry in Canada.

I want to begin my comments this morning by thanking some of my colleagues in the House for supporting this landmark bill. I want to first thank my colleague, the member of parliament for Vancouver East, for seconding the bill and for her long history of support for equality for gay and lesbian people throughout Canada.

I also want to thank those members of the Liberal Party who supported the bill: the member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale, the member for St. Paul's and others. I hear some Liberal backbenchers heckling and indicating they do not support the bill. I would ask that they at least show respect for their own colleagues and for other members of the House. They may not accept equality but surely they can accept the right of members of the House to debate this important issue in an atmosphere of civility and dignity.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the members of the Bloc Québécois who supported this important bill and especially the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, who cannot participate in the debate this morning but who has, for a long time, been promoting justice and equality for gay and lesbian communities in Canada. I also thank the member for Joliette, who will participate in the debate and support the bill.

• (1105)

[*English*]

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the member for Kings—Hants from the Progressive Conservative Democratic

Coalition for his support for the principle of this important legislation.

It is clear that the Canadian public is well ahead of political leaders and of the government when it comes to this important issue of the basic right of equality of gay and lesbian people who choose to marry to be able to do so. The most recent public opinion poll showed that something like two-thirds of Canadians across Canada in every region of Canada were prepared to accept this equality. We are not talking about any kind of special rights or privileges. What we are talking about are equal rights, equal rights that are guaranteed to gay and lesbian people under section 15 of the charter of rights and freedoms.

Under section 15 of our charter, which came into force in April 1985, all Canadians are equal. With respect to gay and lesbian people, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that gay and lesbian people are included under section 15 when they are involved in committed and loving relationships.

We have certainly made significant progress on the journey toward full equality both federally and at the provincial and territorial level. Last year landmark legislation was passed in the House of Commons, Bill C-23, legislation that extended a whole range of rights and responsibilities to gay and lesbian people and couples.

However Bill C-23 fell short in the critical area of recognition of the right to marry. In one of the final days of debate on the bill, the Liberal Minister of Justice introduced an amendment that shamefully explicitly excluded affirmation of the right of gay and lesbian people to marry.

I am confident the courts will ultimately rule that equality means equality and that we as gay and lesbian people should be entitled to the equal right to marriage.

I also want to acknowledge the important work EGALE has done on the issue of equality for gays and lesbians and on many other issues. EGALE is a national organization that speaks out on behalf of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people across the country. It has been tireless in its advocacy of equality and I salute the members of EGALE for continuing to work hard on this issue.

Private Members' Business

Many individuals, couples and organizations across the land have supported the right to full equality. I am proud as a New Democrat that my party is the only national party with a clear policy that calls for recognition of equality for gay and lesbian people in marriage and in all other areas of society. I speak today on behalf of the members of my caucus and the leader of my party, the member for Halifax, who has also, from the very beginning of her career and days in politics, been a tireless advocate for equality for gay and lesbian people.

A number of churches and religious leaders have also been in the forefront of this struggle. I particularly want to acknowledge the work done by Rev. Brent Hawkes of the Metropolitan Community Church who has been promoting equality for many years. On January 14, 2001, Rev. Brent Hawkes, the pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto, celebrated the marriage between Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell, as well as the marriage of Elaine Vautour and Anne Vautour.

As Rev. Brent Hawkes said:

We look forward to the day, when Canada embraces the diversity of all people, and legally recognizes what God already knows—that love has no bounds.

The bill itself is a very short bill. It is entitled the Marriage Capacity Act and states that “a marriage between two persons is not invalid by reason only that they are of the same sex”.

• (1110)

I would note parenthetically that obviously all of the existing barriers to marriage, for example, barriers to marriage between relatives, or between brothers and sisters, remain in the existing legislation under the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act. Nothing changes that at all. Those barriers remain.

This would simply remove the common law barrier to same sex marriage. I would like to emphasize that this barrier goes back to a decision in the British courts from 1886 in a case called *Hyde v Hyde*. Those were the days when marriage had a very different meaning. In fact those were the days in which within the institution of marriage rape was legal and violence was legal. A husband was allowed to beat his wife as long as the stick that he used was no wider than the width of his thumb. Certainly a precedent dating back to those days and that recognition of marriage is not one which should be used to deny equality to gay and lesbian people today. It should certainly not be used in that way.

Indeed there are challenges to that. As I said, there is no statutory bar at the federal level. It is strictly judge made law and in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia there are currently cases proceeding in the courts to challenge that legal barrier.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, a gay couple launched a court challenge, and we hope the two partners will win their case.

[*English*]

In Ontario the city of Toronto is supporting that legal challenge and in British Columbia the former attorney general, Andrew Petter, had the courage to speak out in support of the legal challenge as well.

There has been one ruling to date specifically on these challenges. It came in a British Columbia court decision by Mr. Justice Ian Pitfield, and I must say that many of us were astonished at that decision because it flies in the face of not only justice and reason but fairness. He found that the constitution of Canada itself, in his words, expressed an intention that discrimination would be permitted. This is an extraordinary ruling and one that I am confident will be overturned by the courts when it goes to the British Columbia Court of Appeal and ultimately to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The bill would change the law to allow those gay and lesbian people who choose to marry to do so. It would not in any way affect religious marriage and it is important to underline that. It is strictly about civil marriage. Those faiths that are prepared to celebrate and affirm the marriages of gay and lesbian couples within their faith community would be permitted to do so. Those not prepared to do so would not in any way be required or forced to do so. Just as, for example, within some faiths there are barriers to interfaith marriages today that are not legally challenged in any way so too would that discretion still be there for religions not prepared to recognize the equality of their gay and lesbian parishioners.

I might be asked, what difference does marriage make and why do gay and lesbian people want the right, the choice, the option of marriage? I think it is important to recognize that marriage is the most prominent way today in which two persons' romantic love and commitment to each other are recognized and affirmed. Excluding gay and lesbian people from the institution of marriage sends a clear message that our relationships, the relationships of same sex couples, are somehow not as worthy of recognition and affirmation. On the other hand, including same sex marriages in civil marriage would send a positive message to all Canadians, one that says that regardless of whether someone loves a man or a woman that love will be valued, honoured, affirmed and treated with equal dignity and respect.

I often have the privilege of speaking in schools in my constituency and elsewhere. Kids like to talk about the lives of members of parliament and they ask what kind of life I have, what the challenges are, what I like about the job and what is difficult about the job. Sometimes kids will ask if I am married. I tell them I am not married, that I have a partner whose name is Max, we have been together for seven years and love one another very much, we want to spend the rest of our lives together and that relationship is very important to us and is the most important relationship in my life. Those kids will often ask why I cannot get married or why I do not get married or if I do not want to marry him. I tell them I do want to and I would like to have that choice, but I do not have it because the laws of this country do not allow me, as a gay man, that choice.

How would giving me and my partner Max that choice in any way weaken heterosexual marriage? How would it in any way weaken the strength, the love, the commitment of heterosexual partnerships? It would not change that at all. Surely heterosexual marriage is not so fragile that allowing gay and lesbian people to marry would cause it to come tumbling down like a house of cards. Surely in this time of such pain, in the aftermath of the horrors of September 11, any steps that we can take as a society to strengthen the affirmation of love in our society in a positive way is something we should be encouraging.

Private Members' Business

Marriage is about love and commitment. It is true that some gay and lesbian couples would not want to get married if that choice were available, just as some heterosexual couples choose to live common law, but surely we should recognize the right of choice. Canada would not be the first country to do so. The Netherlands moved earlier this year to fully recognize marriage for gay and lesbian couples.

• (1115)

I am confident that it will happen in Canada as well, but why should gay and lesbian people be forced through the courts? Why should we be wasting taxpayers' money to fight for this small but important step on the road to full equality?

Sometimes it is said that we cannot allow gay and lesbian people to marry because marriage is about children and procreation. The best answer to that came in a very eloquent editorial in the *Globe and Mail* just this month. It said:

The issue of children is a red herring; many couples who are married do not procreate, many couples procreate outside marriage and many gay couples raise children, adopted or conceived with the egg or sperm of one partner. Expanding the tent would enable loving gays in committed relationships to agree to the solemn obligations of the marriage contract. And what are we talking of, if not respect for family values?

That is what I want to appeal to today in closing, those traditional family values. We as gay and lesbian people are families also. The bill would allow the full and equal recognition of our families. I call on all members of the House to support this important legislation.

Mr. Stephen Owen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-264 proposes certain amendments to the Marriage Act to allow legal marriage for same sex couples. I will begin by commending the member for Burnaby—Douglas in as strong and sincere terms as I can for his tireless and principled work over many years for the equality of gay and lesbian Canadians. All members of the House and all Canadians should feel proud of his achievements and his determination.

At the outset I emphasize that the Government of Canada takes seriously its obligations to ensure equal treatment of all its citizens including gay and lesbian Canadians. It is because of this constitutional obligation that the government moved last year to enact the Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act which provides equal treatment for common law same sex partners by extending the same benefits and obligations under federal law that are granted to common law opposite sex partners.

I am proud to say that not only does the Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act fully comply with our constitutional obligations. It goes further than any other jurisdiction in Canada in ensuring equal treatment for gay and lesbian Canadians. I am also proud to say that Canada is in the forefront of the world in ensuring that gay and lesbian couples are treated under the federal law with dignity and respect.

Bill C-264 proposes to fundamentally alter the legal concept of marriage by legislatively overriding the common law and civil law rule on legal capacity that a marriage is "the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others".

Canada is unique in the world for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that our laws are based on two of the great legal traditions, the common law and the civil law. In both these traditions there is a clarity as to the legal meaning of the term marriage which can be traced back into history. Because of this Canada is not alone in its understanding of the legal concept of marriage.

European countries that have provided a registration system similar to marriage have deliberately chosen to maintain a clear distinction in law between registration and marriage. In terms of the approach taken by the House last year, a review of other countries shows that few have enacted legislation designed to extend benefits and obligations to same sex couples on the same basis as to opposite sex couples.

As mentioned previously, the Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act extends equal treatment to common law same sex couples and common law opposite sex couples with respect to federal benefits and obligations.

The act was a comprehensive piece of legislation. It amended 68 federal statutes falling within the mandate of some 23 federal departments and agencies. Some of the major federal statutes of general application that were modernized by the act include the Canadian pension plan, the Old Age Security Act, the Income Tax Act and the criminal code.

The Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act provides a responsible and balanced approach to extending equal treatment to same sex couples and ensuring that same sex couples receive the same benefits and obligations under the law as opposite sex couples.

I will turn for a moment to some of the legal difficulties with the bill before us today. Because provincial and territorial laws are based on the same concepts of marriage that are reflected in federal law, Bill C-264 would affect hundreds of laws from coast to coast. Other legal rules about capacity to marry that are currently in the common law are based on the opposite sex nature of marriage. These rules have been developed over many years and would require radical and even legislative change to fit same sex couples.

For example, opposite sex couples can be granted an annulment under the common law for lack of consummation. Adultery is grounds for divorce. Incest in the criminal code is based on an opposite sex model. All these would need to be fundamentally altered to fit same sex relationships.

Various court challenges address a number of issues including constitutional jurisdiction with respect to altering the definition of marriage. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas has mentioned the B.C. case which is working its way to the British Columbia Court of Appeal. As such it would be premature to act at this time before we receive guidance from the courts on this point. Once we have received guidance from the courts parliament can decide to act if it is necessary and appropriate at that time.

Private Members' Business

With respect to Bill C-264, legally there is an additional problem. The bill proposes to simply change the title of the current act and add one clause. However the whole statute is based on opposite sex relationships and represents the entire set of limitations on who can legally marry whom. If the bill were to proceed without the appropriate adjustments it would effectively create a new discrimination.

• (1120)

The government believes strongly in ensuring equal treatment and legal recognition for people in both same sex unions and opposite sex relationships. Recognizing the commitment of spouses and common law partners, including those in same sex unions, is an important and worthy goal and one that is strongly supported by a majority of Canadians.

The Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act achieves this objective. For these reasons the Minister of Justice cannot support Bill C-264.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are here to address Bill C-264, an act to amend the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act, whose purpose is to enable marriage between persons of the same sex.

The bill as proposed would add the following text to the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act of Canada. It would add subclause 4.1:

A marriage between two persons is not invalid by reason only that they are of the same sex.

I will be opposing the bill on two grounds. First, it is not necessary to modify the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act of Canada to permit same sex marriage. Second, marriage is principally a provincial and not a federal concern.

It must be noted that the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act does not deal in any way with same sex marriage and/or the broader definition of marriage itself. The Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act of Canada, an act respecting the laws prohibiting marriages between related persons, states:

2. (1) Subject to subsection (2), persons related by consanguinity, affinity or adoption are not prohibited from marrying each other by reason only of their relationship.

(2) No person shall marry another person if they are related

(a) lineally by consanguinity or adoption;

(b) as brother and sister by consanguinity, whether by the whole blood or by the half-blood; or

(c) as brother and sister by adoption.

4. This Act contains all of the prohibitions in law in Canada against marriage by reason of the parties being related.

The amendment by the member for Burnaby—Douglas would add the following text:

4.1 A marriage between two persons is not invalid by reason only that they are of the same sex.

The member's amendment is totally and wholly unnecessary. At no point does the current act prohibit same sex unions. It only mentions the types of marriage which are not legally valid. Same sex unions do not appear on that list. It is based solely on common law consanguinity concerns. These exist purely for the purpose of

minimizing the chance of genetic problems in the offspring of a marriage.

History has taught us that siblings should not marry. It has also taught us that parents should not marry their children. These are the types of relationships prohibited in the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act. These prohibitions are based on genetics. Given that same sex couples cannot reproduce, the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act does not address them in any way whatsoever.

At the same time it must be noted that the act does not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, mental disability or physical disability.

Given that the act does not affect same sex couples and that no one has suggested it discriminates on the grounds covered in section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the proposed amendment is wholly unnecessary.

The second reason for opposing the amendment is that marriage is principally a provincial and not a federal concern. In the EGALE case, Mr. Justice Pitfield of the British Columbia Supreme Court wrote at paragraph 122 that same sex relationships were:

—a matter of civil rights of persons within British Columbia. That being the case, the provincial legislature may provide for their formalization and recognition should it wish to do so.

B.C.'s marriage act relies on common law to define "qualification of persons about to marry". The relevant portion of the act, in chapter 282, reads:

In matters not provided for law of England prevails

6 Subject to this Act and any Act of Canada in force in British Columbia, the law of England as it existed on November 19, 1858 prevails in all matters relating to the following:

(a) the mode of solemnizing marriages;

(b) the validity of marriages;

(c) the qualification of parties about to marry;

(d) the consent of guardians or parents, or any person whose consent is necessary to the validity of a marriage.

The ability to amend the B.C. marriage act lies only with the provincial government of British Columbia. The previous NDP government chose not to make those amendments. It had nine years in absolute power with a majority government in the provincial legislature and it chose not to do so.

Two of British Columbia's former premiers, Mr. Glen Clark and Mr. Ujjal Dosanjh, happen to live in the same community as the member for Burnaby—Douglas who is sponsoring the legislation. Had he really wanted to amend B.C.'s marriage act the member would have taken up his cause with either of the two former premiers. They live in his riding. They are members of his party. They led a government of his own party and he presumably knows them on a first name basis. One of them, if not both of them, are constituents of his and vice versa.

The member had a golden opportunity to raise the issue with a sympathetic provincial government that had the jurisdiction to make the changes he seeks. He missed his chance to do so.

● (1125)

I respectfully submit that the legislation fails on the two grounds I have mentioned in my speech. If the hon. member really wanted to impact on whether people of the same sex have the right to unify in the institution of marriage, he should have taken his fight to the appropriate legislature. That would have been the provincial legislature and not the federal one. Frankly I am surprised that a lawyer does not know the difference.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Burnaby—Douglas for his initiative in presenting his bill to allow marriage between persons of the same sex.

In my opinion, it is high time we put an end to this anomaly, this discrimination which spoils the reputation of Canada and that of Quebec by expressing our collective will to fight against discriminations of all sorts.

According to the Supreme Court of Canada, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms already recognizes the equality of gays and lesbians. Therefore, how can we explain that the legislator refuses to grant same sex couples the right to marry legally? We are talking here about civil weddings of course, and I think the member explained that quite clearly in his presentation.

Last year, passage of Bill C-23 repealed almost all explicit references to the gender of partners in federal statutes. As far as we know, there are only four acts left where partners in a couple are specifically defined as heterosexual: the Divorce Act, the Canada Evidence Act, the Criminal Code and the Canada Shipping Act.

What the member is asking for would require very little effort on the part of the legislators. A few amendments would suffice to put an end to this incredible discrimination.

I listened to representatives of the Liberal Party and the Canadian Alliance mention various legislative objections to passing this bill. I do not think that is what is at issue.

If a certain number of amendments to legislation must be made in order to meet the bill's objectives, we will make them but I think the crux of the matter is whether or not Canadian parliamentarians are prepared to remove this obstacle, this discrimination, in order to allow same sex couples to be married in a civil ceremony.

In my opinion, the legal arguments should naturally be consistent with our vision of respect for the freedoms and equality of all citizens of Canada and Quebec.

What is really at issue here is our concept of citizenship. Is every member of society, regardless of religion, political beliefs, sex or sexual orientation entitled to the same treatment, rights and obligations? This is where we must respond in the affirmative by making civil marriage open to same sex couples.

I am referring here to a dissenting opinion by Justice L'Heureux-Dubé, who said in a ruling concerning a civil marriage case:

Private Members' Business

Given the marginalized position of homosexuals in society, the metmessage that flows almost inevitably from excluding same-sex couples from such an important social institution—

She is referring here to civil marriage.

—is essentially that society considers such relationships to be less worthy of respect, concern and consideration than relationships involving members of the opposite sex.

I share this view entirely. In response to this comment by Justice L'Heureux-Dubé, it seems to me that we must make it very clear that citizenship as we understand it in Canada entitles one to the same rights, obligations and institutions, including civil marriage.

As I mentioned earlier, I think it is time to end this discriminatory situation, which reflects poorly on Canada.

Obviously, there is nothing preventing same sex couples from living together. This, I think, is what many of them decide to do, as do many heterosexual couples now.

However that is not the issue. It has to do with whether or not they will be given access to the institution of marriage if they so wish. Some people decide that they do want to marry. I do not see why the fact that they are a same sex couple should prevent them from being able to marry if they choose it freely. Marriage would provide them with some additional protection under certain statutes.

More fundamental, in the context of a relationship between two persons, the decision to marry can improve the quality of the relationship. This reflects their perception.

● (1135)

Let me give a personal example. I lived common law with my wife for several years. There came a time when we decided to marry. We felt that marriage would strengthen our commitment to each other. It meant something more than being in a common law relationship. This was our perception of the situation as a couple. There was no institution preventing us from having a civil wedding, and that is what we did in the end. This year we celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary.

As I see it, the situation is the same for same sex couples. They must have the right, if they so choose, to marry if they think that it will improve the quality of their relationship. Once again, I repeat that it is up to the couple to decide. Granting gays and lesbians access to civil marriage reflects what society believes. Clearly, the law is totally outdated on this score.

In a Canada-wide poll conducted in June by Léger Marketing, Canadians were asked if they believed homosexuals had the same rights as other Canadians: 75.7% answered yes. Thus, more than three-quarters of Canadians believe that homosexuals deserve to have all of the rights available in our society.

As concerns civil marriage more specifically, 65.4% of people said they agreed that same sex couples should be able to marry under our laws.

Private Members' Business

On a personal level, this is a commitment or a position I have had for over 15 years at least. As for unions, as the secretary general of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux since the early 1990s, I fought for the removal from collective agreements of all existing discrimination with regard to same sex couples. We worked hard at that, which led to passage of legislation on this subject by the National Assembly. I think we have to follow that logic through to its conclusion and give same sex couples access to the institution of civil marriage.

During the election campaign I also made a commitment to ensure that gays and lesbians had access to all the civil rights in Canada, including the right to get married. In my case, this is tied in with this notion of citizenship, which I find extremely important. I share the opinion of the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas that, following the events of September 11, Canada must become even more exemplary with regard to the defence of rights and freedoms. What we are doing here is, first and foremost, fighting for rights and freedoms.

I will conclude by saying that two of my three children are still rather young and I do not know yet what sexual orientation they will choose. No matter what their choice will be I hope they will not become social outcasts and will have access to the same rights as all the citizens of Canada.

[English]

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on Bill C-264. The bill would make two changes in the current Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act. The first would be to change the title of the act to the marriage capacity act. The second of course would add section 4.1, which would state:

A marriage between two persons is not invalid by reason only that they are of the same sex.

At the outset, I want to say I cannot support the bill. Obviously, as the title of the act being amended indicates, there are prohibitions on who can marry. Close blood relatives, for instance, are forbidden to marry because of possible birth defects to any children arising out of the marriage. Brothers and sisters may not marry. A divorced person may remarry but not to a child of the previous marriage.

Marriage is considered to be an activity for mature individuals, given the rights and responsibilities that go along with that. Therefore, in this country we do not permit children to marry each other or an adult to marry a child. Both parties to a marriage must be of an age and of an intelligence to understand the serious nature of the institution into which they are entering.

I cannot stress enough the word institution. Institutions are a deep rooted part of our culture and are something that should not be lightly tampered with and should not likely be changed.

Our society, as we are all very much aware, has evolved and these days common law heterosexual or opposite sex couples have the same rights and obligations to property as do married couples. The House, as we are all very much aware as well, recently passed a law extending certain rights with regard to pensions and what have we to common law, homosexual or same sexual couples.

However, at the same time it should be pointed out that the House went out of its way to insert a clause in that legislation reasserting

that while being a couple was one thing being a married couple was entirely different. That clause went out of the way to state that a marriage was a union between a man and a woman only. That must be maintained.

The hon. member's proposed title change takes the emphasis off who may not marry and replaces it with an emphasis on who may marry. I do not support the new emphasis because I see it as eroding a basic concept of our law, namely that marriage is restricted to opposite sex couples only.

I want to make it perfectly clear that heterosexual people have to be tolerant of other ways of life. However, I would submit that it is time for homosexual people to be tolerant of the heterosexual way of life as well, which is that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. That is very clear in the legislation.

Similarly, the new section 4.1 says that being a same sex couple should not preclude the union being regarded as a marriage. That is diametrically opposed, as I said a moment ago, to the clause that was inserted in the bill, which restricted marriage to opposite sex couples only.

The other factor here of course for many of us is that a marriage, whether performed by a judge or a clergy person, is deemed to be more than just a sexual union between a man and a woman. A marriage is one of the basic building blocks of our society. It is one of the basic building blocks of a family. It is therefore also a spiritual union between a man and a woman, a union uniquely designed for the conception and nurturing of children.

● (1140)

That is not to say, of course, that all married people have children, they do not. However, the potential is there and the institution lends itself very well to that potential should it ever become a reality.

A family, of course, is under pressure from many different directions in this fast-paced secular world in which we live. In all conscience I cannot support motions or bills which would put additional pressure on the institution of marriage, as marriage is one of the central pillars of family life.

Again, let me be clear. I do not support discrimination against same sex couples, however, they do not fit the recognized definition of a marriage because marriage is union of two people of opposite sexes.

I would like to quote what I recently read in the Australian Melbourne *Herald Sun*. The Australian prime minister, John Howard, said that the reality of homosexual liaisons did not mean that same sex couples should be granted the right to marriage. He went on to say that the institution of marriage should be protected.

He said that the continuity of our society depended on there being a margin around things like that, around marriage. He added that many people, he being one, saw marriage as one of the bedrock institutions of our society.

The Vatican recently stated that the impact on the family needed to be one of the prime considerations in all political action. There is not a major religion on the face of the globe that does not value the role of family in our society today.

I have made no secret of my personal belief that the family is central to the well-being of our society. I also feel that one of the central pillars underpinning the family is marriage and marriage, by definition and by law, is the union of a man and a woman. Because of that, I cannot support the hon. member's bill.

• (1145)

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver East.

It was just over a year and a half ago that we celebrated in my riding the passage of the historic Bill C-23. It was an amazing step in terms of the equality of our gay and lesbian couples, in terms of their common law relationships and being treated the same as heterosexual couples.

It is important now that the member for Burnaby—Douglas was brought to the House the final step in achieving ultimate equality for these couples. It is clear that couples who would like to formalize their relationship would like the state and their religious faith to recognize that commitment.

Our country will only ever be as strong as the individual family units that have decided that they will look after one another. It is extraordinarily important that these units are recognized and have the full right of other couples. To have any less a relationship speaks against the diversity that we welcome in this country. We must move beyond tolerance and into the respect and the true equality that is beyond the kind of discrimination that prevents these couples from marriage.

There are times for parliament to lead and this is one of them. To be spend time and money in the courts when the Canadian public is way ahead of us on this is a shame. It is truly an important time and it is disappointing that the bill is non-votable because some of the small concerns around the bill could have been very easily sorted out in committee.

It is important that we move forward in addressing this discrimination. I, together with the member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale, support the member for Burnaby—Douglas, EGALE and all the people who have worked so hard to achieve this final step in true equality for all Canadians.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas for bringing forward this issue. It is an historic day because we are debating in the House of Commons the issue of same sex marriage.

I recognize the outstanding, tireless and very passionate efforts of my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas. He has been an advocate for all human rights as well as equality for gays and lesbians in Canada and around the world for many years. His work in bringing this issue forward today so we can debate the bill and hopefully move forward is something that is very important.

I listened carefully to the debate in the House. It was disturbing to hear some of the members who spoke in opposition to the bill because the reasons and excuses they came up with were simply indefensible. At the end of the day it comes down to this: we either have equality in the country or we do not. We cannot have half equality.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-23 was a good piece of legislation in as far as it went. It did not really deal with the issue of equality in terms of marriage. Therefore I feel very strongly about the importance of the bill. We heard arguments that too many laws would have to be changed and that somehow we could not do anything because Canada was based on common law. These were all weak excuses that really did not deal with the fundamental issue before us: equality for gays and lesbians.

I was involved with Bruce Eriksen for 24 years in a common law relationship. During the course of that relationship I never opposed or denied the right of heterosexual couples to have the choice to marry. I am now involved in a same sex relationship. I do not deny or oppose anyone's choice either to be involved in a common law relationship or a relationship that is affirmed by marriage. That is really what the debate is about today.

We must be careful that we do not go down the road of hypocrisy. We heard members say that they do not support discrimination against gays and lesbians. If that is correct we must be true to what the charter says. One of the unfortunate things is that so much legislation comes about because of litigation, forcing people through the courts.

It would be preferable if parliament, as the federal body in the country that has the leadership and mandate to deal with issues like this, would send a clear signal that equality includes the right of gays and lesbians to marry if they so choose.

I hope there are other members of the House who will put aside their prejudice and discrimination and will recognize that if they support the charter and equality then they will support the bill. They will make sure people are not forced into incredible litigation when it is an issue that should be decided by the House of Commons.

• (1150)

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for St. John's East on his speech because he captured the feelings of many of us who are opposed to the legislation perfectly.

I would like to correct an impression conveyed by some of those supporting the legislation. It is true that the majority of Canadians support equal benefits to dependent couples, be they dependent couples in a same sex, heterosexual or family relationship. However the majority of Canadians do not support the idea of same sex marriage and there are some very good reasons for this.

I really do not like to be tarred with the brush of being discriminatory because I do not agree with the bill. I believe that we must provide equality to all Canadians in dependent relationships. The concept of marriage goes back several thousand years and it is intimately connected with religion, not just Christianity but other religions. The religious institution of marriage preceded the civil institution of marriage. We do a great disrespect to religion when civil society takes what was originally a religious concept and turn it to its own ends.

Even as a civil institution, I have difficulty with the idea of marriage as a same sex relationship because it could affect the rights of children. I believe that when all things are absolutely even we should regard children as being better off with a heterosexual parental relationship rather than a same sex parental relationship.

Private Members' Business

This is not to say that we cannot have same sex parents who are very good just as we can have heterosexual parents who are very bad. The natural order of things is that we would assume until there is real proof to the contrary that children are better off, all other things being equal, with heterosexual parents. Until we can prove otherwise we have to allow for the rights of children before the rights of adults.

That is all I have to say on the subject. I believe that the member who introduced the bill believes in what he is intending. I took very much to heart his idea of the romantic concept of the same sex relationship, but in the end we have to set aside our desires for absolute equality as adults and defer to the absolute rights of children.

• (1155)

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are two points that I would like to make with regard to this issue. It has been mentioned that parliament ought to be leading the courts and not the other way around and that parliament should not wait until it gets direction from the courts. I agree wholeheartedly.

Since I was elected in 1993 the House of Commons has dealt with this issue on a number of occasions. I remember the first time when the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve brought in a motion to bring in benefits for same sex partners. I recall that only 10 Liberals voted for it at that time. We have spoken many times on what Canadian society wants when it comes to the sanctity of marriage.

It has been stated that this in no way demeans heterosexual marriage. I contend that it does. Not long ago the House of Commons asked me to fill out a form indicating who I would like to have as my travelling partner because it pays for a travelling partner.

This is demeaning to my wife to whom I have been married for 40 years. She has never worked in an employed position so she has been dependent on me not only for income but for providing for the family and for providing for our retirement. She has worked very hard. I would venture to say, though not being paid, she has probably worked harder than I have. She is a wonderful mother and grandmother and now she is reduced to being a travelling partner.

The legislation does have an effect and I resent that. She is my wife, my dearly beloved, and I hope that we have another 20 or 30 years together as is the habit in our family.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start with the comment by the member for Elk Island who spoke about his relationship with his wife of over 40 years. He felt somehow that relationship was being demeaned by the fact that he designated her as his travelling companion. Let us be clear about why the House of Commons moved in that important area.

I would have loved it if the spouses, companions and partners of those of us who are gay and lesbian in the House were recognized equally. It is precisely because the House was not prepared to extend full and open recognition to our partners that we must designate a traveller. Why should my partner not be treated equally with respect to the rights to travel as the wife of the member for Elk Island? Why should it be any different at all?

With respect to the Liberal member who spoke just before the member for Elk Island, he suggested that the right of a child to be

raised in a nurturing and loving environment was the most important issue. He said very clearly that gay and lesbian families were not in a position to do that as effectively as heterosexual families. That is simply false. A number of studies have indicated that children raised in loving gay or lesbian families are well adjusted. In fact those families are just as strong, nurturing and loving as heterosexual families.

It is insulting to gay and lesbian families and partners who are raising children to suggest that they are not just as able to raise kids in loving environments as heterosexual families.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

I wish to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, who spoke on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, not only for his support of this bill, which recognizes the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry, but also for his work for equality, for close to 20 years now I believe, within the labour movement and elsewhere.

As I have said, the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve has also done an excellent job.

[*English*]

I thank the member for St. Paul's for her support not only today but consistently for equality for gay and lesbian people, along with the member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale who has also seconded the bill. I thank my colleague and friend from Vancouver East for her support and for her courage in speaking out so eloquently and so personally today on this important piece of legislation.

I hope that members of the House will recognize the right of equality. I wish to read from an affidavit that was submitted in the court proceedings for equal marriage rights by Lloyd Thornhill and Robert Peacock, who have been together for 32 years. Bob said:

I met my spouse, Lloyd Thornhill, in 1968. From the beginning, I believed that God destined us to be together. We have been together in a monogamous, loving relationship for the past 32 years. If we could have married years ago, we would have. We have always supported and relied on each other. When one of us is down, the other is always there to bring him back up. Years ago, we exchanged rings as a symbol of our love and commitment and have never taken them off, except on one occasion when we exchanged our initial set of rings for a new set. Being able to legally marry now would simply allow us to gain legal recognition of the reality of our relationship. Denying us the right to marry sends a message that our relationship is less deserving of recognition just because we are gay. I believe that Lloyd and I deserve to be able to legally marry, as heterosexual couples do, and to be recognized as a family unit.

Thirty-two years seems like an awfully long time to be engaged. I appeal to members of the House today to support the principle of the legislation for Lloyd and Bob, and for all the gay and lesbian couples across the country who want the right to equality and the right to make a choice.

I seek unanimous consent of the House to send the subject matter of the bill to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights where it can be studied, strengthened and hopefully passed by the House so that a clear signal could be sent indicating that gay and lesbian people are fully equal in Canadian society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—INTERNATIONAL AID POLICY

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ) moved

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the Chair that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Mercier.

We are at war. That is our reality. In light of this situation, many things are going on at the present time. A military campaign is under way. It is very important—urgent even—to think of what will happen after the retaliation. We need to ask ourselves not only what must be done now, but also what must be done in the future. As well, we need to ask ourselves why the events of September 11 occurred. What is the root of this evil?

We need to understand that many things have changed since September 11. People's mentalities have changed as well, I believe. We have realized that the world is far smaller than we thought. I have often discussed globalization and the distribution of the world's wealth. Where terrorism is concerned, I believe it is essential to ask ourselves whether there is a link between it and poverty. Most analysts, I believe, will confirm that there certainly is. It is not the entire explanation, but there is certainly a connection.

When some peoples are unable to provide for their basic needs, when they do not have a life allowing them to attain their full potential and when they do not have access to security but at the same time witness the wealth of northern countries, this can bring about jealousy, hatred and interrogations.

If I was an Afghan today and I saw what is going on in northern countries, it is likely that, like people do in those countries, I would ask myself why I do not have access to the same kind of liberty, the same kind of life.

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First of all, when we look at the precarious situation which prevails in several countries around the world, it would be normal to feel compassion. Compassion is this very human feeling which makes us realize that living conditions in those countries make no sense. I ask those who are against such questioning to rise. I believe it makes no sense.

Since September 11, we can no longer base our reflection solely on compassion. It may be sad to say, but if we look at the issue in an egoistic way, we realized on September 11 that the misfortune of others could also have an impact on us. As Nelson Mandela said, "Security for a few is insecurity for all". There were many people who believed, before September 11, that the poverty of others was the problem of others.

We can no longer think that way today. I believe the events of September 11 have contributed to promote globalization, eliminate distances in our world and make us realize that we truly live in a global village and that more than never before the problems of other countries are our own problems. Those events will at least have done one thing, that is to question the whole process of international co-operation, all the co-operation northern countries lend the rest of the world.

This is why we believe that poverty, misery and anger are certainly a good breeding ground for future terrorists. This is why we think it is necessary not only to reflect on Canada's aid to other countries but also to ask ourselves whether Canada is really doing its share to deal with the current crisis. Of course, I am still speaking in the context of international co-operation.

There is a major crisis, at present. The bombings and the military intervention have parallel consequences in that they create thousands of refugees for whom food and shelter will become even more of a problem as winter rolls in.

● (1205)

It is essential to examine this issue and to find solutions. And if we want to talk about a new regime to replace the Taliban regime, then we must also consider the economic and geopolitical aspects for that entire region. When talking about reconstruction, we must keep that in mind.

This is why the Bloc Québécois is proposing this votable motion today, which reads as follows:

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

It was agreed in 1969 that all countries would put 0.7% of their GDP into international aid. This target was set by an independent commission working under the aegis of the World Bank. The mandate of the commission was to analyse the effects of 20 years of international aid and the various possible perspectives. It was chaired by Lester B. Pearson, who was then Canada's ambassador to the United Nations.

Supply

Since then, if we look at the situation compared to this international aid objective, we see that Canada ranks 17 out of 22 donating countries. It is no secret to anyone here that Canada has always boasted about being a very compassionate country. Everyone recognizes the work of peacekeepers. Canadians and Quebecers are proud of this reputation. They are proud of these peaceful international missions.

However, words have to be matched by deeds. With Canada ranking 17, we should ask ourselves some questions, particularly since other countries have reached this objective of 0.7% of GDP.

I have here figures that show that Luxembourg has reached this objective of 0.7%. Norway has even exceeded it, since it is at 0.8% of its GDP. Sweden is at 0.81%. The Netherlands are at 0.82%, while Denmark is at 1.06%. This is definitely not an objective that is impossible to achieve, since countries smaller than Canada have reached these percentages.

But this is not the only thing that must be done. I believe we also have to do some serious thinking. It should have occurred before September 11, but now that everyone feels more involved, all of us on this planet must stop and ask ourselves how we can turn international aid into something effective, something that will have a positive impact. Will this be achieved merely by increasing financial assistance? I do not think so.

I believe there are other solutions. We should consider forgiving the debt of third world countries, for instance. There is also the type of aid to be provided. Is the aid provided through CIDA effective? Are we investing enough money in education? Should we invest more in basic needs?

We have a long way to go. I do not think that a day like today will solve all the problems, but the Bloc Québécois should be commended for raising this issue. I hope that greater priority will be given to it. Many questions have to be asked, and much needs to be done, and it is from this perspective that we presented this motion today.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on the motion that the Bloc has brought forward. While in principle I agree with many of the sentiments my colleague from the Bloc has talked about, especially in regard to coming up with innovative ideas to aid the developing world with our assistance dollars, I would like to ask him a question, especially in light of the fact that the Bloc is calling for 0.7% of the GDP as a target for international development. At one point he mentioned that we are 17th in the world, which is true, but in actual dollar values he should recognize that we are actually 8th in the world in comparison to the other countries.

I am interested in knowing from my colleague from the Bloc whether he is asking that this money go through the CIDA budget. This is most important since CIDA is the primary agency for international development. Does he think that this money, this increase that the Bloc has put forward, should be directed through CIDA and that CIDA would be the recipient of the majority of this increase? In light of the fact that most of us do have some problems

with CIDA, I would like to hear his thoughts on what he feels is the most effective way to do this.

• (1215)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is asking a question I touched on briefly in my remarks. The motion before us suggests a certain goal, but it does not spell out the exact means to reach that goal. I have been talking about various options. Other issues should be raised, like the access to markets in the north by developing countries.

Mike Moore, from the WTO, says that the opening up of the markets on countries in the north could generate three times more wealth than does the current international assistance. This is what I want to warn the hon. members about today. There are many options. Should all the money be channeled through CIDA? That is not what we are suggesting today.

If this money goes to NGOs that accomplish useful, efficient and relevant work in the field, I have no problem if the money is not channeled through CIDA. If CIDA can demonstrate with openness that its actions are efficient too, we do no mind if the money goes through this agency or not. Efficiency is what counts. I do not think today is the time to deal with the fine details of our assistance. We should discuss a financial goal that is, ultimately, our responsibility.

That is why this motion mentions the level of 0.7% of GDP. If tomorrow or in his next budget, the Minister of Finance increases considerably the level of our assistance, it would be relevant, in my opinion, if the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade examined the most efficient means to make this assistance more profitable. I think this is the best way to go.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, all the Bloc Québécois members will be sharing their time today. Therefore, each will have ten minutes.

For those listening or watching on television today, I would like to read aloud the opposition motion on which members of the House will be voting:

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

I am very proud to speak to this motion today, since there is a story behind this goal set by the United Nations in 1990.

First, for those listening, “0.7% of GDP” is not 1%; it means seven-tenths of one percent. And the GDP is an accepted manner of measuring wealth.

This goal was adopted by the United Nations in 1990. Canada should have special feelings when it comes to this figure, because the man who signed the United Nations report in 1969 that recommended this goal for the first time was known by many people in this chamber. It was Lester B. Pearson, who was Canada's ambassador to the UN at the time.

In response to the serious international situation back then, and in response to what he considered as the failure of developmental aid, Pearson recommended this goal and hoped it would be reached by 1975. It was only in 1990—when it was proposed by a developing country, incidentally—that the United Nations finally voted to set it as a goal for all countries.

What is interesting for Quebecers and Canadians to know is that, in 1990 when it was adopted, Canada contributed 0.48%. It was close to seven-tenths. It was 4.8 tenths of one per cent.

In other words, since Canada now gives 0.25%, it now gives half, proportionally, of what it gave in 1990 towards the goal set in 1969 by Lester B. Pearson. This is unacceptable. We have said it again and again.

As my young and brilliant colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay was saying, this goal is seen in a completely new perspective since these attacks that disrupted the whole world. I am talking of course of the September 11 attacks in New York, in Washington and elsewhere.

The events of September 11 were very instructive for everybody. The terrorists are not poor people but they feed on the international situation and, moreover, they already have imitators amongst the young people in Arab and Muslim countries, and in many other very poor countries, who have no hope and who live in desperate conditions. I think of Colombia for example, where chaos has almost become a way of life. And what about Palestine?

• (1220)

September 11 was quite instructive. The international aid, which will have to take many different forms, will have to reach at least this goal because the present challenge deals less with unfairness and more with fairness.

There will be people to say that it is a huge amount but compared to the poverty in which many people are living, it is far from being too large. It is interesting to note in passing that it is mainly in small countries that the 0.7% goal has not only been reached but exceeded.

Denmark, which is a rich small country, with a population of about 5 million people share 1.06% of its wealth. The Netherlands have a population of about 15 million and share some 0.82% of their wealth. Sweden and Norway share 0.8%. Those are small rich countries that have realized that they cannot be satisfied with being happy and part of the richest countries if they are alone at the top.

September 11 showed us that there is no longer any country, no matter how large, strong and rich—and I am thinking of the United States and of the European countries—that can hope to ensure its own security without being at all concerned about the rest of the world. Mrs. Fréchette, Kofi Annan's assistant and UN deputy secretary general, who was here and who I had the privilege to teach as a young teacher at Collège Basile Moreau, said that if we wanted to counter the violence, intolerance and fanaticism of terrorists and protect the values that are dear to us, including freedom, tolerance, justice and equality, we had to do a better job at reducing economic disparities between the rich and the poor.

We could also quote numerous World Bank reports, including the 2000-01 report, which says “Poor people live without fundamental

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freedoms of action and choice that the better-off take for granted. They often lack adequate food and shelter, education and health, deprivations that keep them from leading the kind of life that everyone values. They also face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disasters”.

It must be noted that, in countries like ours, less than one—these are statistics—or let us say rather that one out of 100 children dies before the age of five. In poorer countries, one out of five children die before the age of five. Ninety-five per cent of the 160,000 people who contract AIDS daily come from poor countries. AIDS has become a disease of the poor.

Canada must make a commitment to meet that 0.7% target proposed by Pearson in 1969 and set in 1990. The question is not to determine whether or not CIDA is the main vehicle or whether or not CIDA has faults. What is important is to have the political will to meet that target, and I say it is a minimum.

At the Quebec summit, the Prime Minister even said that we needed to do that but we need to do it as soon as possible, not in 10 years. Now we must decide how it should be done. It can certainly be done through multilateral means. In 1990 the rule was that 20% had to go through large international institutions such as the World Bank. We could go back to that.

• (1225)

The important thing is to really start working toward helping restore equity. Yes, we must have open borders but it will not be enough if that only allows rich people in those countries to get even richer. The work to be done is enormous.

[*English*]

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation.

I am pre-eminently privileged to speak on behalf of the Government of Canada and state that we support the motion. I am confident that I reflect to the House similar sentiments from my constituents, the people of Winnipeg North—St. Paul, and other fellow Canadians nationwide because support for international development activities is at the core of Canadian humanity.

I am speaking today on behalf the Minister for International Cooperation who would have been here were she not in the midst of the UNESCO meetings in Paris exploring avenues on how to improve access to education for all boys and girls in developing countries.

Last week the minister co-chaired the World Coalition for Africa meeting in Botswana which focused on organizing support for the development and reduction of poverty, notably on the role of the private sector in the recovery and progress of the African economies so necessary in achieving these goals. Poverty reduction and sustainable development are key global challenges.

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The motion before us calls upon the government to review its international aid policy. In fact the minister and her department, CIDA, are already engaged in a process of reviewing our program to bolster the effectiveness of Canada's aid to developing countries and to make Canada's development co-operation program more effective in building a better quality of life for some of the poorest and most marginalized people in the world.

The minister and her officials visited 10 Canadian cities and heard from over 1,000 organizations and individuals. Many excellent suggestions emerged from these extensive community consultations.

First, that there was a need for more public awareness of the role and importance of international development co-operation and of Canada's international aid program. The debate we are having today in the House should help in this regard. It reminds us that the international aid program is firmly rooted in our sense of social justice and humanity. It reminds us that it is inherently good; good for strengthening democracy and socialist ability for promoting peace. It reminds us that Canadian interests are also served by measures that serve our global interdependence.

Second, we also heard from consultation participants the call for funding increases that would put Canada on track toward the 0.7% target, 0.7% of the gross domestic product, as raised in the motion before us.

Let me assure colleagues and all Canadians that the government remains fully committed to working toward this objective as our fiscal position permits. The 2000 budget provided an additional \$435 million to official development assistance and, in the last Speech from the Throne, we committed to further increases.

Third, we also heard the need for better co-ordination of development initiatives across the international community of donors and recipients and for better ways to co-operate with our partners so that we are not duplicating the efforts of others.

Our support for the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is one good example. Our strategic response has taken into account the priorities expressed by our partners on the ground. We can take pride that Canada was one of the first countries to respond to the UN appeal for assistance to meet the plight of Afghan refugees, committing a total of \$16 million in humanitarian assistance in the past month alone.

Through CIDA, the Government of Canada has provided in the last decade almost \$160 million to help alleviate the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons affected by two decades of conflict and three years of devastating drought in that part of the world. Our current support is directed to various UN agencies and humanitarian organizations that are working to provide the basic necessities of life, food, shelter and health care, to the Afghan refugees and others who are victims of this crisis. The funds are also being used to help support various peace building initiatives in the region. We are conscious of the impact of the situation across south and central Asia and are particularly mindful of the pressure on Pakistan which is providing safe haven for millions of Afghan refugees.

• (1230)

The government acted to relieve some of the burden on Pakistan by converting up to \$447 million of its debt owed to CIDA. This

means that instead of making debt payments, Pakistan will be able to put the money into education and other social programs.

The government has recently focused on four key social development priorities: health and nutrition, basic education, HIV and AIDS, and child protection. These are strategic investments and by nature investing in the future.

Children as beneficiaries have a right to know, to think, to aspire and to hope. Minimum levels of education and health are crucial to sustainable development. We believe that education, among other things, is the development of ideals.

Good social policy begets good economic policy, especially in today's globalized economy. Smaller nations need assistance so they may develop the skills required to take part in multilateral trade agreements and benefit from them. In turn they develop strong and stable democracies.

Last week in Shanghai, China, on the occasion of the meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC group, Canada announced that it would earmark \$9 million toward helping to improve the growth prospects of developing economies in southeast Asia and to help build the capacity of developing countries to integrate into the global economy and thereby help generate wealth for the social well-being of their people.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, a recent Nobel prize recipient, said that the best hope for least developed countries and, indeed, for the developing world in general, lies in a new round of global, multilateral trade negotiations.

May it please the House to know that the APEC economies during their recently concluded ministerial and leaders meetings in Shanghai unanimously echoed the same sentiment.

Our international aid policy is an integral part of our foreign policy objectives as set out in the document "Canada in the World". We shall conquer the great enemies of poverty and neglect in our own Canadian way that has defined the greatness of Canada. We will provide measures to a stricken people in the midst of a stricken nation in peace or in war. We will continue to wave the bountiful flag of Canada so that the gates of opportunity and peace shall be open to all peoples of the world.

We support the motion.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech made by my colleague, and I have a short question to ask him.

In 1990-91, Canada's contribution to international aid was 0.48%. When the Liberals took power, it dropped to 0.41%, which is 0.5% less. Now it is down to 0.25%.

The member could make the best speeches in the world but does he not agree that the federal government has a lot of catching up to do and very quickly? We all know that international aid is used only to face up to urgent situations as there is now in Afghanistan. It is also a tool for the redistribution of wealth. I believe in this matter we were caught in the act, and this goes for all G-7 countries, Canada in particular, of contributing insufficiently—I would even say almost nominally—to the point where we are unable to correct the situation.

Does the member not agree that since a new budget will be presented in a month this would be a good time to make a major effort in this regard? We will have to meet obligations in defence but will we also fulfill our obligations in international assistance?

[*English*]

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars are not insignificant. When our fiscal position permits we will do more, as the Prime Minister has said repeatedly in the House.

What we would like to impress upon the opposition is this. International assistance, international development does not depend on dollars alone. It depends on other strategies and that is why we have pursued this strategy of debt relief as well as promoting international trade. The latter will create wealth and with that social prosperity for the people in the developing nations of the world. That is why the APEC countries, the Asia-Pacific region, that houses more than half of the population's poor agreed that we should pursue a policy of trade so that they too can develop and reap the benefits of globalization.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to ask my question again. Does the member not agree that, presently, with one-quarter of one per cent, and some will say that money is not the only thing we need, we still need money for international assistance? Is there not an important and massive effort to make in the next budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that Canada's expenditure in 1999 as a percentage of GDP was low. That is why in the year 2000 we increased it and why I said we would continue to increase our support for international assistance.

We are not only making fine speeches, we are doing the deeds that ought to be done. The Minister for International Cooperation is in Paris right now at the UNESCO meeting trying to galvanize support for the poor.

We will work with our partners and together we shall achieve the dream of all of us, which is to alleviate and eradicate poverty in the world.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International

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Cooperation, I would like to take the opportunity the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay is giving the government to show its commitment to international aid, especially for refugees and displaced people in Afghanistan.

For several weeks emergency humanitarian aid has been getting all the attention, and rightly so. Humanitarian aid is a fundamental way to meet the immediate needs of men, women and children who are suddenly the victims of terrible conflicts or natural disasters. I will deal with this in a moment, but I want to stress that our international aid program is far from limited to just immediate needs.

[*English*]

Canada's international assistance program is part of a larger picture with universal long term goals. Just over a year ago, the Prime Minister and leaders from around the world, from rich countries and poor countries, gathered at the UN for the millennium summit. There they committed to reaching a number of goals which we now call the millennium development goals.

These goals are: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and empower women; to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; to combat HIV, AIDS, malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and, finally, to develop a global partner for development.

[*Translation*]

Reaching those goals is of the outmost importance for the future of all the peoples of the world, including Canadians. Prosperity, security and stability on our planet not only depend on our collective success as a community of nations but also on our individual will as a country.

This is why the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, continues to carry out its mandate of support for sustainable development in the fight against poverty. This is why our international aid program is one of the priorities of the Prime Minister and his government.

Last week the Minister for International Cooperation was in Botswana as joint chair of the Global Coalition for Africa. With her colleagues from Africa and other industrialized countries, she discussed means to support the new African initiative.

This initiative, which is without precedent, was launched by leaders of Africa in order to give the whole African continent the chance to get out of poverty and achieve the objectives of development for the millennium. We will play a leading role in the development of the answer the G-8 countries will give to the new African initiative next year when Canada hosts the G-8 summit at Kananaskis in Alberta.

Supply

If the Minister for International Cooperation is unable to take part in this debate it is because at this very moment she is at UNESCO headquarters promoting "Education for all" which, as members will have noted, is one of the millennium development objectives. As a matter of fact, access to education is far from being universal.

I wonder if we are aware of the fact that 113 million boys and girls, but mostly girls, do not have access to the most elementary education. This is 20 times the number of Canadian children. Those children are doomed to illiteracy, disease and utter poverty.

We all know that prosperity in Canada is based upon universal and free access to education, without distinction of gender, ethnic origin or any other factor. We all know that if Canadians live peacefully together and with their neighbours, it is because we have an educated population, which is a critical foundation of the democratic institutions we are so proud of.

The Minister for International Cooperation and her department, CIDA, are multiplying their efforts to contribute to education for all on a global scale. Incidentally, in the year 2005 the Canadian contribution to basic education will have quadrupled, for a total investment of \$555 million over five years.

● (1245)

[English]

Now let me turn to Canada's support for the people of Afghanistan. Canada was one of the first countries to respond to the initial appeal by the United Nations. We have provided our assistance strategically and in close consultation with our people in the field and with major humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross, the World Food Program and the UN high commissioner for refugees.

In response to the crisis of the past few weeks, CIDA has given \$16 million, and I do mean given; the money has already been allocated. I am proud to say that when this government makes an announcement for international aid, the money is on its way. Canada has delivered in the short term.

In the past and in the future, Canada has and will continue to deliver in the long term as well. Over the past decade, long before the events of September 11, we were already working side by side with the people of Afghanistan, helping them in the wake of twenty years of conflict and three years of a devastating drought. Providing basic health care and preventative nutrition, supporting teachers in makeshift schools, demining roads, villages and fields and sowing the seeds of peace, we have truly been supporting ordinary people doing extraordinary things to survive and give their communities a sense of hope.

We are already considering the next steps, including peace building activities because fostering opportunities for dialogue, understanding and reconciliation are the foundations of stable societies. We are also looking ahead to the kind of longer term support we will be able to offer to the people of Afghanistan in the event of their choosing a representative, internationally recognized government dedicated to lifting that country out of poverty.

In the words of World Bank president James Wolfensohn:

The greatest long-term challenge for the world community...is that of fighting poverty and promoting inclusion worldwide. This is even more imperative now, when we know that because of the terrorist attacks, growth in developing countries will falter, pushing millions more into poverty and causing tens of thousands of children to die from malnutrition, disease and deprivation.

This is why the government is pleased to support this motion. The motion is consistent with the government's ongoing commitment to international assistance. It is consistent with the government's increase of \$435 million over three years that the last federal budget provided for the international assistance envelope. It is also consistent with our commitment to work in a responsible fashion toward increasing official development assistance to 0.7% of our gross national product as our fiscal situation permits.

Again, the government supports the motion. As I just stated, it is consistent with the actions of the government over the last couple of years to increase the official international assistance envelope. It is consistent with the throne speech of this year where the government committed to increasing international assistance and the envelope for that.

I want to commend the member from the opposition for this motion because it is consistent with the government's policy. We have done a lot in terms of international development and we have a lot more to do. That is why the government has already made the commitment to increase our official international assistance.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of the present debate on today's opposition motion, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to the expiry of the time provided for government orders on Tuesday, October 30, 2001.

● (1250)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the remarks made by my colleague from the governing party, I congratulate the government for supporting the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois. We are very pleased.

Canada being in 17th place out of 22 donor countries, it is to be hoped that the government will agree to meet the 0.7% of GDP target, especially since we are currently at 0.25% only.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell us if the government intends to increase international aid in its next budget? Supporting the 0.7% target is one thing, but meeting it is another thing and that takes action.

What measures will the Minister of Finance take to meet this target?

Mrs. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for his question.

I would like to mention that, in the last federal budget, the government increased the allocation for international aid by \$435 million over three years. This means that each year, for three years, it will be increased by some \$135 million.

This year, in the Speech from the Throne, the government made a commitment, and I will read the quote in English because I do not have it in French:

[English]

"We will increase Canada's official development assistance and use these new investments to advance efforts to reduce international poverty and to strengthen democracy, justice and social stability worldwide".

[Translation]

We will increase Canada's official development aid and use these new investments to advance efforts to reduce international poverty and to strengthen democracy, justice and social stability worldwide.

I think the question is relevant. The government had already made the commitment to increase considerably the allocation for international aid and, in the Speech from the Throne, it clearly made the commitment to continue increasing it.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying is that at the rate the government is starting to increase its commitment, it will take 20, 25 or even 30 years to reach the goal set by international organizations.

This issue has not lost any of its relevance. Should we not make some very significant moves, in the coming budget in early December, and start thinking about increasing from 0.25% to 0.30%, or something like that, the level of aid we are providing? This would be a major increase in the amount set aside for international aid.

We could then show we consider this to be a good way to better share the wealth on this planet.

Mrs. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, Canada has increased its international aid budget since 1990.

In 1989-90 Canada spent \$2.8 billion and in 2000-01 it spent \$3.002 billion. It is an increase, and as I have already said, the government intends to keep on increasing the amount spent.

• (1255)

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on the motion brought forward by the Bloc about international aid. International aid is an important part of Canada's contribution to the international community. The Bloc motion asks for an increase in CIDA's, or international development, aid to respond to the immediate humanitarian crisis and, in particular, for a more effective response to the crisis in Afghanistan.

The Canadian Alliance fully supports this portion of the Bloc motion. The official opposition has long been calling for more aid for the innocent people of Afghanistan. Unfortunately Canada's contribution to this effort has been disgracefully small. We must be thoughtful about finding solutions for this complicated humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Supply

The bombing campaign is in its fourth week and the minister for international development, as has been alluded to by the parliamentary secretary on many occasions, has travelled to Africa and Europe, but has not found time to go to Pakistan to figure out the solution to the refugee problem. The former minister of foreign affairs has already done this with Oxfam. I have also learned that CIDA still has only three field offices in Pakistan.

The Bloc motion also calls for an increase in the international aid budget from .25% to 0.7% of the GDP as recommended by the United Nations. Let us be realistic. I have listened to my colleagues from the Bloc and to the replies given by the government. What I have found is an absolutely vague concept. They both agree to 0.7% as recommended by the United Nations but apparently there is absolutely no plan.

The government agrees and very nicely says that it is committed to this goal when it has the resources. Whether it will be in 10 or 15 years, as the Bloc just asked, we do not know. It is nice for the government to say that it likes this target, that the target has been there for many years and that it will probably be there for many more but there is absolutely no plan on how the money will be raised or when it will be available.

The Bloc is requesting immediate funds in the next budget as there are major important issues facing the country, national security being number one.

This would amount to an increase of 280% or approximately \$4 billion. The nation is currently in a state of war and we have a primary responsibility to enhance the national security for Canadians, not to mention the ensuring physical responsibility.

The Alliance is calling for a balanced budget and will not accept another deficit. Even the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, a respected group of NGOs that understands international development, is only asking for an increase of .25% to .35% over four years. That is the plan.

We must be thoughtful and recognize that any increase would need to coincide with fundamental CIDA re-prioritization of its reform. Why do I talk about CIDA? Because all the money will be channelled through CIDA. We need therefore to re-tool CIDA for effective humanitarian assistance and development aid for the benefit of the poor countries of the world.

This development aid should promote sound investment plans, good governance and adherence to the rules of law. We have come full circle from the 1970s when there was government to government aid, then from the 1980s when aid had been given through the NGOs for more effective accountability. Now we look for other means.

Supply

Let me point at this time to a study by the Australian government on globalization that provides very interesting data on how much world poverty has been reduced. According to this study, up to 1.2 billion of the developing world's 4.8 billion people still live in extreme poverty, but the proportion of world population living in poverty has been steadily declining. Since 1980, the absolute number of poor people has stopped rising and appears to have fallen in recent years, despite strong population growth in poor countries. If the proportion living in poverty had not fallen since 1987, a further 215 million people would be living in extreme poverty today.

● (1300)

The very poorest countries now represent less than 8% of the world's population, compared with just over 45% in 1970. That is quite amazing. In countries that have embraced the opportunities created by global economic integration, strong economic growth has been the result, which of course decreases poverty.

Indeed, most progress has taken place in developing countries that have refined their policies, institutions and infrastructure and opened the doors to create investment. During the 1990s their growth in GDP per person was 5% a year compared with 2% for rich countries. This is amazing.

The fact is that globalization is leading to an economic boom or what economists call convergent growth, where the growth in developing countries that have embraced globalization is fast enough to narrow the gap with the leading economies. If we want to find an innovative solution for the international development corporation, I suggest that it would be crucial for us to recreate CIDA, with sound private investment policies being the key to its development purposes.

To do this, we need to be thoughtful about re-mandating CIDA, not throwing more money to an institution that is having marginal success. The mandate of CIDA must be fundamentally reformed. First, CIDA must function effectively as a conventional humanitarian relief agency, working with international and non-governmental organizations to deliver immediate assistance. Let me acknowledge the excellent work NGOs are doing in addressing the immediate humanitarian and social problems arising in the short term. I am of course talking about the AIDS issue and food shortages and, in the case of Afghanistan, the victims of the brutal regime and war.

Sadly, much of CIDA's social engineering priorities are preventing the agency from delivering effective and functional aid. Even the Minister for International Cooperation has admitted that CIDA has only a 20% success rate with its functions. This must change.

The October 2000 report of the auditor general was critical of CIDA's bureaucratic programs. He reported that CIDA did not comply with treasury board contracting policy or the government's contracting relations. He went on to state:

The terms and conditions for grants and contributions related to the Geographic programs are very general and provide no direction on how and when to use contribution agreements...CIDA's use of contribution agreements to select executing agencies often varied from its stated internal policies or practices.

This is of considerable concern since the geographic programs, which include Africa, constitute about 40% of CIDA's total budget.

The only effective solution before us to increase the private capital flow to the developing world is through a continuous promotion of globalization at this particular juncture. That is why I have been vocal for the opening of new development around the world trade negotiations next month in Qatar.

The Canadian Alliance feels it is Canada's responsibility to support international development and we agree with this concept, but we think it is irresponsible at this stage to call for a 0.7% increase when there is a need for expenditure in other areas at this given time. We feel this is a vague goal with no precise, laid out timelines or anything so it is difficult for us to support.

● (1305)

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member whether or not he is aware of Canada's assistance in other areas that do not fall directly under what we call the international assistance envelope, such as debt forgiveness to some of the poorer countries in the world or to Pakistan, for instance.

Is the hon. member aware of this and is he supportive of Canada forgiving debt to 11 of the 17 poorest countries in the world and the \$700 million that it represents? Is the hon. member supportive of Canada forgiving \$447 million of debt to Pakistan? What that would represent is that it frees up \$16 million per year, that instead of Pakistan reimbursing \$16 million a year, it is forgiven if it uses that money for social development within the country, whether it be for basic human needs or education, health and those kinds of things. Is he aware of that and is he supportive of that?

Mr. Deepak Ohrai: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am very well aware of that. What I find funny about this is that this was in response to a humanitarian crisis that was taking place. While the member very proudly talks about the Pakistan issue, it just happened and was a reflection of the Afghanistan issue. It was not a well thought out or well laid out plan. Of course maybe she is also aware that under the IMF there are certain conditions that countries have to meet for debt forgiveness. The conditions are laid out. The responsibility under those conditions has been thrown onto the governments that need to pay these debts. They have to come up and show responsibility. We cannot write blank cheques.

Therefore, yes, I am supportive of the programs that the IMF has come out with and that have laid down quite clearly the conditions. I must tell my colleague from the other side that there are very few countries that at this point have actually met those conditions, because they have to go through a structural change. The idea behind the structural change is that they take the responsibility for their nation of governing.

We know that in the past government to government aid has been very ineffective, especially in those countries, so we need to be very careful when we are throwing this money around. In reference to Pakistan, which I did not say, that is not a long thought out plan. That has just happened because of the Afghanistan war. We have been calling for a comprehensive package and that is one step forward in going in that direction.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague, the Canadian Alliance member.

First, I am convinced he will support this issue just like Mike Moore did. The WTO official said "If only northern countries would open up their commercial borders, they would generate increased wealth in the southern countries."

Does the member agree with that? Also, does he not agree that this could distribute wealth more evenly but also concentrate it further?

Second, is my colleague aware of the fact that other countries like Denmark and the Netherlands have reached the 0.7% objective? In Denmark alone, international aid stands at 1.06% of GDP, whereas in Canada it is 0.25%. Is this not reason enough for the member to support the motion?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I was with my colleague in Brussels for the least developed poor countries conference and both of us heard quite clearly the call of the developing countries for more access to being part of the world trade system. I have alluded to that in my speech. That is one of the most important routes to the long term sustainability of development in those countries. Yes, in the long term I think that is what has been proven to take so many people out of poverty, as the report in Australia has indicated. I agree very much that this would be the key route for this issue.

While the member says that it would be more concentrated, I think he means that it would not trickle down to the general populace. In my opinion the more we open the free trade market the more equal a distribution of money will take place because at the end of the day the money will not fall into the hands of the government or into the areas where it is misused but will hopefully trickle down to where it can be distributed among more regions of the populace, as has been proven in China and in India.

• (1310)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus to strongly support the motion which has been put forward in the House today by my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

I would like to congratulate the members of the Bloc Québécois for bringing forward this important motion.

[English]

September 11 was a day of unbelievable tragedy and anguish as we saw over 6,000 people die in the crimes against humanity involved in the terrorist attacks on New York, on Washington and in Pennsylvania. We in the New Democratic Party continue to mourn the tragic loss of those victims, to pay tribute to the people involved in the rescue effort and of course to do everything we can to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity.

As well, September 11 was a day on which 30,000 children around this planet died of preventable disease and hunger. UNICEF has reminded us that each and every day on this planet 30,000

Supply

children are dying of preventable disease and hunger, on September 11, on September 12, on September 13 and on every single day since then. There is no CNN, no publicity, but there is death, despair, famine and hopelessness. Five thousand children died in Iraq last month because of the impact of sanctions on that country.

Today we, along with the Bloc Québécois, are calling upon the government to increase significantly the level of Canada's commitment to international aid. Certainly when we look at the current levels of aid, Canada's performance has been nothing short of shameful. Not that many years ago when the Liberals first took office in 1993, Canada was number 5 or 6 among the 22 nations of the OECD. By 1999, after years of savage cuts by the Liberals, we had dropped to number 12. Last year we were number 17 out of 22 countries in the OECD.

As Roy Culpeper, the president of the North-South Institute, said very clearly just this month in a document he submitted to the Standing Committee on Finance for the prebudget consultations:

Mr. Chairman, I will reiterate my remarks to (the Minister for International Cooperation) at her consultations last week on CIDA's new directions. I said to her that Canada should be ashamed of this abysmal performance. Certainly, if they were still alive and with us today, prime ministers Pearson and Trudeau would both be astonished and terribly disappointed at the state of affairs.

Our commitment as Canadians should be to meet the target of 0.7% for the ODA/GNP ratio, which was established, by the way, by Prime Minister Pearson. In order to meet that we should be working to get to the halfway mark of 0.35% within the next five years. The parliamentary secretary has said that they are increasing the level of aid and there will be more coming, but the fact of the matter is that the Canadian Council for International Cooperation has made it very clear that if we are to meet that target of 0.35%, which is after all only halfway to the goal we have committed ourselves to, it will require an annual increase of \$400 million in each of the next five years.

That is what we are calling for as a minimum in order to get us on the road to meeting those commitments. Other countries can and have done far better, as others have pointed out. The Scandinavian countries, for example, Sweden, Norway and Denmark along with the Netherlands, have all consistently exceeded the UN target of 0.7% of GNP: Sweden at 0.7%, Norway at 0.91%, Denmark at 1% and the Netherlands at 0.8%.

• (1315)

Until recently we were actually falling further and further behind every year. If it was imperative that we increase our aid before September 11, it is even more so today.

Supply

As has been pointed out by the World Bank recently, we risk a dramatic increase in the level of poverty in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. These terrorist attacks will hurt economic growth in developing countries worldwide this year and next year. As many as 10 million more people will be condemned to live in poverty next year. It will hamper the fight against childhood diseases and malnutrition. This is all in a preliminary economic assessment that was released by the World Bank on October 1 this year. Even before September 11 the bank had predicted an economic slowdown, that growth in developing countries would fall as a result of slowdowns in the United States, Japan and Europe.

We know of course that the impact of September 11 on wealthier countries means that there will be a decline in their level of spending as well.

The worst hit area will be Africa where, in addition to the possible increases in poverty of two to three million people as a result of lower growth and incomes, a further two million people may be condemned to live on below a dollar a day due to the effects of falling commodity prices. The 300 million poor people in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly vulnerable because most countries there have absolutely no safety nets whatsoever. Poor households certainly do not have any savings to cushion bad times. Half the additional child deaths worldwide are likely to be in Africa. That is the area which has already been hardest hit by the epidemic of HIV-AIDS.

Again, in the aftermath of September 11 we must do far, far more. Gerry Barr on behalf of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation pointed out just this week that it is imperative that there be a significant increase in Canadian aid spending following the events of September 11. He points out that the shock waves of September 11 are likely to devastate the global south.

Foreign direct investment is down and is likely to go even lower. Export commodity prices, on which the economies of many developing countries depend, are anticipated to fall further. Recession in the markets of the developed world, including in Canada, means fewer sales for the developing world and declining revenues for them as well.

We are also very concerned that with the focus in the budget on security measures, international aid and other anti-poverty measures not be squeezed out as a result. We do not want to see Canada's aid spending become yet another casualty of the war on terrorism.

[Translation]

It would be a shame to see the Canadian aid budget fall victim to the war on terrorism. War, conflicts and emergency situations are threats to global security.

The end of hostilities must lead to the first steps towards peace. Peace will only be possible through development, the even distribution of resources and social agreements which, beyond the military action, allow the people to establish security for all those who live on this planet.

I would like to mention the constant efforts of the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, who has worked relentlessly in favour of more justice, more fairness and a better distribution of wealth

between rich countries and poor countries. Since the beginning, he has spoken about the terrible impact of co-operative globalization. I want to thank him for his work on this important issue, which led to this motion by the Bloc Québécois.

• (1320)

[English]

The motion of my friends in the Bloc also speaks about the importance of increasing the level of Canada's humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan is absolutely devastating. It is a humanitarian crisis. Already more than 20 years of war have devastated Afghanistan, destroyed its economy and displaced huge numbers of civilians, including children. Already before September 11 Afghanistan was facing its most severe drought in years. The situation is only going to continue to deteriorate.

Aid delivery is hampered due to this terrible political situation and, I might add, due to the bombing by the United States. We have seen that a number of bombs have already hit Red Cross warehouses. We have seen that too many innocent civilians are dying as a result of the bombing campaign. In a country which is already facing massive challenges of de-mining, one of the countries that already has more mines than anywhere else in the world, we have seen that shamefully, the United States is continuing to use cluster bombs in its bombing campaign.

Six million people are dependent on food and emergency aid already in Afghanistan. Chronic instability and conflict have already displaced much of the population. They are fleeing the terror of the Taliban regime but they are also fleeing from the bombing. With winter months approaching, children in particular are going to be susceptible to the harsh climate without the necessary provisions for warmth. This five million or six million people is the equivalent of the entire population of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba that are fleeing as refugees. As Nadine Grant, the director of programs for Save the Children Canada, said recently, "The crisis looming in Afghanistan has the potential to become the worst humanitarian situation in the world".

The Afghan people are already suffering the devastating effects of a three year drought. The emergency crisis for Afghani children is overwhelming. Three million Afghans are already dependent on NGOs for food. It is estimated that an additional three million people will also need food assistance this winter. Two hundred and fifty-seven children out of every one thousand die before their fifth birthday. It is one of the worst levels of infant mortality in the world. There are currently 900,000 internally displaced people living in Afghanistan. There are approximately 50,000 children working in Kabul to support their families. In the north, as I mentioned earlier, there has been near total crop failure in 1999 and 2000. An estimated 10 million live mines are still buried in Afghanistan, placing children in most danger.

We join today in pleading with our government to do far more than it has already done to respond to this humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. So far, Canada's contribution has been approximately \$16 million Canadian. Norway, a country of under five million people, has contributed over \$80 million. Sweden has contributed over \$60 million. The Netherlands has contributed over \$50 million. We as Canadians can and should do far more.

It is also important that we recognize that in tackling global poverty it is not good enough simply to increase levels of aid. We have also to do far more to cancel the debts of the poorest countries of the world. In fact, the proposal of the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative to have the debt of the world's poorest countries cancelled has been one of the most important priorities for some time. Canada has not done nearly enough in this regard. We cancelled the debt of some of the poorest countries but we have not gone far enough.

This debt is a crushing burden on developing countries. It is the most obvious expression of their poverty. The indebtedness of the south condemns millions of people to lives of destitution. In fact the debt load of the heavily indebted poor countries is such that they have to use their meagre financial resources to make payments on their debts and they can no longer spend that money to meet the basic needs of their populations.

• (1325)

We join in calling for the objective of CIDA to be not just poverty reduction, but poverty eradication. It would not take a lot. In fact it has been estimated by the UN secretary general that some \$40 billion worldwide would be what it would take to meet the needs of the world's poorest citizens.

Debt reduction and opening up the markets of developed countries to the products of the poorest countries is also essential, particularly agricultural products, textiles and clothing. These are the products that they depend upon for their survival, their economic self-sufficiency. Too often our doors are slammed shut. We could get rid of these tariff barriers at a minimal cost to Canadians but this would mean a huge difference in the lives of the poorest around this planet.

I would like to take a moment as well, because the WTO meeting in Doha is coming up, to appeal to our government to recognize that we have to be doing a lot more within the context of the trade agenda to respond to global poverty. Structural adjustment programs which have been forced on developing countries by the World Bank, the IMF and other international financial institutions has simply increased the gap between rich and poor in those countries. It has added to the level of poverty in those countries.

The WTO agenda and the agenda of the FTAA would exacerbate poverty and would drive more peasants and small farmers off their land. They simply cannot compete against the heavily subsidized agricultural products which are flooding their countries from wealthy countries like the United States and elsewhere.

We have to put poverty and its elimination front and centre on the global trade agenda. That means also that we have to look at the impact of TRIPS agreements. These are the agreements that give huge powers to multinational pharmaceutical companies.

Supply

I would hope that the Bloc, in addition to calling for an increase in the level of aid, would recognize that we have to stop pandering to the multinational pharmaceutical companies which are holding the poorest of the poor up to ransom for their patent rights. In South Africa, Brazil, India and elsewhere these pharmaceutical companies are demanding that they have the right to protect their patents even if it means additional tens of thousands of millions of lives lost in the fight against HIV-AIDS, malaria and other preventable diseases.

Canada should be playing a far more active role in speaking out against the current TRIPS agreement. Instead, the Minister for International Trade says that he supports that agreement.

There are many areas in which the battle against poverty can be fought. It can be fought within the context of trade deals and not moving ahead on a new round for the WTO. Developing countries have said they want to deal with some outstanding implementation issues of the existing WTO before we even consider moving ahead on new deals. It means challenging corporate powers within existing trade deals such as the powers given under chapter 11 of NAFTA which the government seems to want to extend throughout the hemisphere in the FTAA.

Nelson Mandela has said that security for a few is insecurity for all. Today, on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, we want to support this motion.

We appeal to the government to significantly increase levels of aid to work toward meeting that target of 0.7% of GDP, to meeting the interim target of 0.35% within the next three to five years, making far more aid available immediately to meet the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, ending the destructive and illegal U.S. led bombing campaign in Afghanistan, and forgiving the debts of the poorest countries and restructuring global trading schemes to ensure that they put people, the environment and tackling poverty against corporate profit.

• (1330)

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening intently to the speech of the hon. member who started by alluding to the unprecedented tragedy in New York. Of course we lament the loss of innocent lives which will forever remain silent. That silence can never be broken. We lament the absence of smiles in the families of the bereaved, smiles we know will take a long time to come back. Yet at the end the member spoke about ending the war against terrorism.

The tool we have chosen to go after terrorists in that part of the world is a coalition of nations. If the member could suggest another avenue other than a military approach at this time, let him say it. The terrorists will not surrender. They will not come out and say here we are, put us in jail, execute us. We must make a distinction. We must pursue the terrorists even if it means using military might because in the end it will mean peace, security and stability in that part of the world.

Supply

To the issue of the negotiations at Doha, may it please the House to know that I have just returned from the meeting of APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group of countries, in Shanghai. We announced there that Canada has donated \$9 million to help developing countries participate meaningfully so they will know their rights as they negotiate their agenda at the Doha conference. It has been agreed by all APEC economies that the agenda will be on growth and development.

In addition to international aid and debt relief, the promotion of fairer trade in the world would be an additional pillar to help sustainable development in developing countries.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague, the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, has raised two important questions. He asked what the alternative is to fighting against terrorism in the aftermath of September 11.

Of course every member of the House agrees that those responsible for these crimes against humanity must be brought to justice. However it was the parents of a young man killed in one of the World Trade Centre towers who asked how on earth we would bring about justice by killing more innocent victims in Afghanistan. They asked how many more innocent people must die before we recognize that the U.S. led military strike is a disastrous failure.

Bombs are hitting hospitals. Bombs are hitting Red Cross warehouses. Bombs are hitting villages and killing many more innocent victims including children. How is this bringing the perpetrators of those terrible terrorist attacks to justice? It is not. It is creating more innocent victims.

Humanitarian agencies and the global community have called for at least a pause in the bombing to enable us to get desperately needed humanitarian supplies into Afghanistan. The United States has refused. It has said the bombing must go ahead.

We have seen this movie before. We have seen it in Iraq. The U.S. was to go after Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Ten years later Saddam Hussein is still very much in power in that repressive regime. What about the people of Iraq? What about the innocent children of Iraq who are the victims of the inhumane and genocidal sanctions? How many hundreds of thousands of people must die? How many more innocent civilians in Afghanistan must die in this misguided, destructive and illegal war?

The member asks what the alternatives are. The alternatives are to work within the framework of the United Nations to establish an international tribunal similar to the tribunals established for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Evidence must be placed before the independent tribunal for those responsible to be brought to justice. If it is necessary to have a focused enforcement action under the framework of the United Nations to bring them to justice, so be it.

Surely we must recognize that the approach taken so far is neither bringing the terrorists to justice nor sparing more innocent lives.

I will say a word regarding the second part of my hon. friend's question. He asks about Doha, Qatar and the WTO agenda. He suggests Canada is promoting a development agenda and that it is prepared to listen to the poorest countries. The leaders of those countries said in their declaration in Zanzibar earlier this year that they do not want a new round of the WTO. They said they want to

deal with a number of outstanding critical problems under the existing provisions of the WTO.

First and foremost among these is the issue of access to pharmaceutical drugs under the TRIPS agreement. The leaders of these countries want to see significant changes to that. The Canadian government has refused to accept any changes at all.

We have a lot of work to do to transform the existing inequitable terms of trade into fair trade. Rather than proceeding with a new round on investment, procurement and other areas, let us listen to the poorest countries in the world. Let us take steps to redistribute wealth and power from the wealthy to the poorest as the Bloc Quebecois motion is proposing.

●(1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my NDP colleague and relates to solutions needed to ensure a better distribution of wealth.

Does he feel that a tax like the Tobin tax could be another way to achieve global equalization?

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes, absolutely. We have long been supporters of the Tobin tax.

My hon. colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle brought forward a motion to the House in support of the Tobin tax. That motion was passed by the House a few months ago.

In principle we definitely support that tax and we are making every possible effort in various international tribunals to promote that tax in order, once again, to share wealth more fairly.

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by raising two points. First, I want to inform the Chair that I will share my time with my colleague from Fundy—Royal and, second, I want to point out the quality of the motion by my Bloc colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

I want to say from the outset that over the last few weeks, since September 11, we have talked a lot about the military aspect and the military involvement. I will not refer to the pills, but we did talk a lot about arms.

Today, the Bloc's motion proposes fresh approach to the problem that arose on September 11. It takes on a human aspect. It is in reference to that that I would like to commend my Bloc Quebecois colleague.

This is not the first time we have a debate in the House on international aid or on increasing the level of humanitarian aid. During the 1993 election campaign, it will be remembered, the red book stated that if the government party were elected, it would accept to increase international aid to bring it up to the level recommended by the United Nations.

Members in the House will not be surprised that this did not happen. There were other elections, other speeches from the throne, and the government kept saying that it would increase international aid. If we look at two other examples, besides the 1993 elections, the 1999 throne speech said that the government was committed to increasing the level of foreign aid, developing new innovative policies, improving the lot of the poorest countries and enhancing the standard of life of their citizens. Perhaps this was not clear enough.

After the following elections, the House was reconvened on January 30, 2001. About 10 months ago the government committed once again to increase the level of foreign aid and to use these new investments to reduce the poverty level and encourage the development of democracy.

This was the third time that the governing party talked about this: in the 1993 red book and in two speeches of the throne. I hope this bodes well. On average, the government introduces a bill three times before it gets passed. It has said three times that it would increase humanitarian aid. I remember that, when the bill on young offenders or other bills were introduced, the first time this did not work, the government withdrew them. The second time, it said the time was right. There were elections, the House was prorogued and a new session was started. After the elections, it introduced the bill once again. Is this a lack of vision? Perhaps. I hope that, after talking at least three times about increasing international aid, the government will now do it.

That said, it must be understood that it is a huge jump from 0.25% to 0.7%. As most of my colleagues on this side of the floor have said, however, we do have to start looking for the light at the end of the tunnel, start looking at an increase. My colleague from the NDP has referred to a middle of the road solution, of 0.35%, 0.40% or 0.46%. That is where we were in 1992. With all the talk of battling the deficit, we need to realize that the humanitarian aid program has been slashed more than all other items in the government's budget. Canada sees itself as a figurehead on the international level, but it is not even preaching by example.

Today's motion proposes a new aspect to this, to ensure that, on the eve of a budget which is coming within a few weeks—and it is important to point that out, as has been said—the House and the government must make an official commitment to step up international aid. One of the effects of this, just between ourselves, moreover, would be to enhance our credibility with other countries.

As several of my colleagues have pointed out, Canada is lagging behind the other OECD countries. Every year, the gap increases. When we realize that we are lagging behind the other OECD countries as far as international aid is concerned, we have to accept that there is a very clear consequence to this. Canada has lost some of its clout on the international scene. If it really wants to resume its place in the international community, as a leader for peace, sustainable development and assistance to the most disadvantaged countries and to those faced with problems, whether natural disasters or other problems, then we have to put our money where our mouth is. Humanitarian aid is very important.

Supply

● (1340)

Faced with deficit problems, most countries have cut their budgets. But Canada has made the deepest cuts of all G-7 countries in humanitarian aid. Yes, other countries made cuts, because there were problems. Unfortunately, although I hope I am wrong, this government will probably experience its first recession. I am anxious to see how it will handle it, but I think it will shoot itself in the foot. After enjoying a fairly prosperous stretch in the years since 1993, it will have to face the music, although, of course, it is not music we would wish on it.

The House should know that countries such as Denmark are contributing 1.06%; the Netherlands, 0.82%; Sweden, 0.81%, and so on.

There are therefore examples. The surprising thing is that these countries are not seeking to be leaders on the military or peacekeeping scene. They are countries which have decided to contribute in proportion to their collective wealth.

We want to be a leader everywhere but a look at our humanitarian aid figures shows that we are lagging behind other countries.

Foreign aid contributes to stability. Coupled with debt forgiveness and liberalization of trade, it can significantly reduce poverty in developing countries, paving the way as it does for sustained economic development.

What is more, if countries are able to crawl out from under an unbelievable level of poverty and infant mortality, there are strong chances that civil wars can be averted or brought to an end. There are strong chances that these countries will really become democratic allies internationally.

We urge the government to get with it, to support these initiatives. As I said, the Prime Minister openly recommended at the G-8 in Japan that industrialized countries collectively increase their foreign aid contributions by 10%. We have yet to see this here.

We therefore hope that in the upcoming budget the motion by the Bloc Québécois member will have an impact, that people will listen. If we are contributing hundreds of millions of dollars toward the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, we should be able to take a look at the more global issue of humanitarian aid and ensure that Canada's contribution is officially increased.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the internationalism and compassion that characterized the Pearson government are a distant memory. We are accustomed to governments of all stripes providing more support for international development.

I hope the government will adopt this philosophy and take the action sought by the motion.

● (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to take the floor today in support of the Bloc motion brought forth in the aftermath of September 11 and related to the ongoing war effort against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Supply

I send a very clear message to our military personnel that parliament supports the valuable role Canadian soldiers are playing in the conflict against the draconian Taliban regime. We owe our military personnel a huge debt of gratitude. The heinous crime which took place on September 11, complete with its disrespect for human life and high degree of premeditation, cannot go unchecked.

Humanitarian agencies are also gearing up for a crisis of immense proportions that is unfolding along the borders of Afghanistan. As of July 1, 2000, before the tragedy of September 11, Afghans were the largest single refugee population in the world of concern to the UN high commission for refugees. They comprised approximately 30% of the global refugee population. In the wake of the military strikes that began after October 7, worst case scenarios suggest that between 5 million and 7.5 million people may flee that country and set up camps along the borders.

Mark Leger, an editorialist in Saint John, New Brunswick, recently wrote:

With no end in sight to the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan, about 7.5 million Afghans lack the basic necessities to survive the coming winter. To make matters worse, they have no government to care for them, no countrymen with deep-enough pockets to help them through the crisis. The families of the U.S. victims have been the recipients of incredible generosity.

We should be very grateful for the generous spirit we have had with respect to looking after our American cousins in that regard. He continued:

Afghan victims have not been so lucky. The UN has collected about \$150 million. Trouble is, they figure they need \$650 million to get the people through the winter.

In the aftermath of September 11 our focus has been on the American victims for very understandable reasons. We feel a very genuine kinship with the Americans because they are our closest friends. Our economies are intertwined. We travel there. We work there and families quite often intermarry. Afghanistan is an alien place for most of us. It is rugged and impoverished. We do not feel the same natural connectedness we have with the Americans.

Afghanistan has endured a 22 year long civil war. It has recorded record drought and famine during the last four years. Most of us on this continent have been oblivious of that fact. After September 11 many people probably opened up their atlas just to find out exactly where Afghanistan was located and its proximity in terms of its borders and neighbours.

Insufficient humanitarian aid is being given to Afghani refugees along the borders and to suffering Afghans still inside the country. Thousands upon thousands of individuals will lose their lives from cold and starvation. We have a moral obligation to assist and to ensure we do not read in the history books that we allowed hundreds of thousands of individuals to die in the midst of this conflict through no fault of their own.

Humanitarian aid is needed to provide stability in Afghanistan. It is necessary to demonstrate that this conflict is against the Taliban regime and not against the Afghani people. If we let people starve or freeze to death, the Afghani people will not understand that our problem is with the Taliban and not with them.

●(1350)

Prime Minister Tony Blair stated in the aftermath of September 11:

On the humanitarian front, we are assembling a coalition of support for refugees in and outside Afghanistan, which is as vital as the military coalition. We have to act for humanitarian reasons to alleviate the appalling suffering of the Afghan people and to deliver stability so that people from that region stay in that region.

Canada has a vital role to play in the humanitarian coalition just as it occupies a key place in the military coalition. We must ensure that we reflect the same sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Blair with respect to our role in the humanitarian reaction as well.

Where is our Canadian leadership on this pressing matter? At its worst it has been mute; at its best it has been feeble. I challenge the government and our Prime Minister to step up to the plate and lead by example. They should show the world the best of our Canadian humanitarian tradition and reputation. Canada and the Liberal government could do more by leading by example.

[Translation]

In 1993, under a Progressive Conservative government, Canada could boast of the highest level of international aid among G-7 countries as a percentage of its GDP.

Today, after seven years of Liberal government, Canada ranks last.

Other governments in the west had to deal with the same deficit problems as Canada in the early 1990s. They also had to make cuts. Of all G-7 countries, Canada has reduced the most its international aid, unloading its deficit problem on the back of the poorest countries in the world.

[English]

Canada must provide foreign aid, which is a necessary component to any foreign policy, if it wishes to be a participant in the global economy. Foreign aid promotes stability and when used with debt forgiveness and trade liberalization can have a real impact on poverty reduction in the third world.

Humanitarian aid encourages sustained economic development and helps countries realize the objective of becoming economically self-sufficient in their own right. It introduces Canada to millions of potential future consumers of Canadian products and helps us merge our economies.

Foreign aid can be provided in a myriad of ways. I have spoken out before in support of debt forgiveness programs like Jubilee 2000. Debt forgiveness is a great idea. It removes pressures from governments and allows them to invest in people and stop paying interest on debt that we know they will never have the capacity to pay back.

As it increases its aid, as the motion calls for today, Canada should look at other ways to better and more effectively take part in these programs. For example, Canada should and must tie debt forgiveness to countries that spend more on education and health programs than they would on issues such as defence.

In the same way in which Canada aids Afghanistan, we must ensure that we learn from mistakes that we have made in the past with respect to foreign aid.

International efforts to prepare for the post-Taliban Afghanistan are necessary. Once the battle is won against the Taliban, we need a long term plan and commitment in the same sentiment that we had with respect to the Marshall plan and as we had in the aftermath of World War II.

Canada and its allies have a responsibility to ensure that the U.S. led Afghan campaign does not decimate a population already tortured by decades of war, poverty and misery. If we are to avert the entrenchment of hate against the west, which could remain in perpetuity, we must have a solid commitment.

Western nations, including Canada, need to ensure that refugee camps are adequately supported but these must be seen as temporary solutions. The long term objective must be to return these refugees back to their homes. This long term assistance, as we all know, will be expensive but we need to continue our help long after the conflict ends and the headlines run out. There must be sustained financial and political assistance. This includes help with developing infrastructure, education and fighting against diseases.

There has never been a more important time to increase our aid contribution. Canada can afford it given its projected surplus for this year. More than that, boosting aid in this time of global upheaval and war will send a very clear signal that when we talk about the long term need to address the poverty that breeds helplessness, anger and sometimes even terrorism, we mean it. That is why the Progressive Conservative/DR coalition is pleased to support the initiative brought forth by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

ADISQ GALA

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night the ADISQ gala was held, honouring Quebec's top leading recording, performance and video artists.

The gala, hosted by the lively and unpredictable Guy A. Lepage, was an emotion packed evening for audience and artists alike. Singers Garou and Isabelle Boulay each came away with awards in several categories, male and female singer of the year in particular. There was also a very fine tribute to Claude Dubois.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to the Laval symphony orchestra, which received the Album of the year award for its album *Mozart* in the non-broadcast segment of the gala, which was held on October 22.

These hard-working artists not only entertain us but also express the joys and values of life. As well, they are cultural ambassadors outside of Canada.

We have every reason to congratulate these performers and to encourage them to continue to share their exceptional talents.

S. O. 31

[*English*]

BROADCASTING ACT

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the 1991 Broadcasting Act will be reviewed and it is about time. Today we have rules to give our musicians exposure on our radios that can disqualify Canadians when they become international stars. We have no incentives for local programming that would build bridges between citizens especially in rural Canada.

We have the CRTC denying access to French language programming in Quebec cable networks if the programs originate outside Quebec. Any review of the Broadcasting Act without a serious examination of the CRTC will be ignoring the elephant in the living room.

When the CRTC was created in 1968 only 13% of Canadian households had cable. Even the writers of Buck Rogers could not have dreamed up the satellites and Internet we use in the 21st century. I am concerned with the committee decision to have minimal time for the CRTC cross-media ownership and resulting convergence issues. The review may be like doing carpentry while wearing boxing gloves.

* * *

• (1400)

LUPUS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that October has been designated Lupus Awareness Month.

Lupus is a chronic, potentially life threatening disease with a variety of symptoms caused by inflammation and damage in body tissues and organs. It is estimated that lupus affects one in every 2,000 Canadians.

Medical researchers across Canada are involved in finding the causes and a cure for this disease. This provides hope to the people living with lupus every day. Lupus Canada is dedicated to helping individuals with lupus, their families and caregivers by providing access to information, support and education regardless of income, culture or geography.

I ask members to join me in congratulating Lupus Canada and wishing it a successful public awareness campaign for now and the future.

* * *

SIDS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October has been designated Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month. Each week three babies in Canada die for no apparent reason before the age of one. Sometimes referred to as crib death, SIDS is a leading cause of death in Canada for babies between one month and one year of age.

S. O. 31

The Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths is dedicated to responding to the needs of families who have experienced the sudden, unexpected and unexplained infant death and to funding medical research on SIDS. The foundation works in collaboration with Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Canadian Institute of Child Health to provide public awareness and education. The incidence of death due to SIDS has dropped by almost 50% in the past few years.

This year the foundation is launching its national awareness campaign "Every baby deserves a kiss—Let's kiss SIDS goodbye". During this month hundreds of volunteers will be selling chocolate lips to help the fight against SIDS.

I ask members to join me in recognizing and congratulating the SIDS foundation for its effort and good work.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the 10th anniversary of Women's History Month. This month focuses attention on the sustained efforts and past accomplishments of Canadian women throughout the history of our great country.

In times of difficulty, the women of Canada and various women's organizations such as the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste and the Young Women's Christian Association continue to provide help to people in need.

The women in these groups provided much needed support during the two world wars and the depression, as well as at numerous other times when needs were felt, both large and small. These groups brought together men and women devoted to serving in Canada and elsewhere when and where there was need.

In this International Year of the Volunteer, let us acknowledge the role played by women in all periods of Canada's history, as well as the positive role played by all volunteers still today.

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

* * *

[*English*]

MERYL MATTHEWS

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I recognize Meryl Matthews, a friend, a constituent and a gracious lady with a backbone of steel. Meryl was a politician until age 75 when she retired from the school board to make more time for bridge. She served as an outspoken city councillor and a school trustee.

For 30 years Meryl was a member of the editorial department of a Kamloops newspaper and was city editor for 10 years. Along with the responsibility of these full time positions she managed a flower shop with her husband Fred. We should note that this was long before there were gender equity programs.

This is a woman who understands balance. She worked all her life in her chosen career and grew fabulous roses for pleasure. Meryl

donated her fabulous rose garden to the city when she moved into an apartment a few years ago. Everyone in Kamloops continues to enjoy them. Named a freeman of the city in 1987, Meryl can still remember every event that shaped Kamloops, the town where she was born 90 years ago, and describe it in accurate, concise words. Meryl is a role model for all women.

I ask my fellow politicians to salute Meryl Matthews as she celebrates her 90th birthday this month.

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● (1405)

GEMINI AWARDS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take this occasion to speak about the 16th annual Gemini Awards that will conclude tonight at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre's John Bassett Theatre.

The Gemini Awards are made possible by the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television. The first national awards presentation took place in December 1986. Since then the event has grown in prominence and stature to become one of the most prestigious in our country.

The Gemini Awards recognize and celebrate exceptional achievements in all areas of the Canadian English language television industry. They showcase the creativity, energy and talent of our many Canadian artists and creators. I thank all those who made the Gemini Awards such a success: the organizers, the artists and the creators without whom the awards would not be made possible.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating all the recipients of the 2001 Gemini Awards.

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[*Translation*]

ADISQ GALA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo paid tribute to excellence in the performing arts. This year, the nominees included 278 artists, producers and professionals in 57 categories.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates the recipients of 16 Félix awards presented at the televised ADISQ gala, including best female performer, Isabelle Boulay, and best male performer, Garou. Awards also went to Stephen Faulkner, for best writer or composer, to Michel Mpambara, for best comedy production, and to Martin Deschamps, for best writer-composer-performer. This year's Félix homage went to Claude Dubois.

Congratulations to the award winners, but also to all those who create song, music and comedy in Quebec, and to all the artisans of our national culture.

STAMP MONTH

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Stamp Month, and Canada Post is taking part in a campaign to promote this activity by visiting schools and providing libraries with materials.

To commemorate Stamp Month, Canada Post has issued four new stamps depicting hot air balloons. These stamps commemorate the invention of hot air balloons in 1783 by two brothers in France. These stamps were first issued on the occasion of Gatineau's hot air balloon festival.

In October, Canada Post also released a stamp marking the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Stamp collecting is an activity which helps increase understanding of the world's peoples and countries, and of their history.

* * *

[English]

CANADA POST

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canada's postal workers deserve our appreciation for the daily job they do, particularly now under these tense and trying times. Canada's mail handlers also deserve the best protection we can provide.

Last week public works issued rubber gloves to protect against disease. Friday the health minister spoke glowingly of American equipment on order that would shake, rattle and roll our mail and then Hoover the air to search for anthrax. That is 1950s technology for our frontline postal service like the Sea Kings in the Arabian Sea. While better than nothing, we can do much better.

Postal workers like our military deserve better. Rubber gloves and bone shaking buckboard technology is not the limit of Canadian technology.

I call on the minister today to go to the advanced electronics industry to seek out with research grants the equipment to properly do the job. Let Canada lead in the technology to counter terrorist threats. Let us have a made in Canada solution, eh.

* * *

[Translation]

SEPTEMBER 11

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the events of September 11 have had an impact on the lives of Canadians. Our values, democracy and freedom were attacked. Because we share these values, we were affected by these attacks.

We feel more vulnerable. However, we must not play into the hands of the terrorists. Our actions must not be guided by fear.

We must not let the propaganda of aggressors affect us to that extent. We must be vigilant but continue to live our lives according to our values.

In the end, we will win.

S. O. 31

● (1410)

[English]

POVERTY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, federal New Democrats stand in support and solidarity with Louise Gosselin and the groups who are intervening at the Supreme Court of Canada today to argue that poor Canadians have the right to adequate levels of social assistance.

It is appalling that the federal government is not intervening in this historic case to defend social and economic rights for Canadians and that four provinces, including unfortunately my own province of British Columbia, are lining up to speak against it.

Five million Canadians live below the poverty line and over two million Canadians do not have adequate shelter and housing. This is a shameful record when Canada clearly has the wealth, resources and international obligation to uphold social and economic rights.

The federal government cannot ignore this case. Nor can the fundamental issue of growing income inequality and poverty in Canada be ignored. We call on the Minister of Justice and the federal government to fulfill their duty under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by ensuring that poor Canadians have economic security and dignity.

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[Translation]

INSTITUT NAZARETH ET LOUIS-BRILLE

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 1861, the Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille has helped blind youth. The first French language establishment of its kind in North America, today the Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille has the greatest concentration of specialized resources for the visually impaired and the blind in Quebec.

There is a great need for this kind of organization. I have a three year old child whose vision was just reassessed from low vision to blind. My family therefore needs the services of such an organization. The Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille is celebrating its 140th anniversary this year.

This organization has helped others for 140 years with rehabilitation services and other state of the art services, and now it is our turn to help it with our support. We must, like the institute, react with respect, courtesy and fairness toward our visually impaired and blind brothers, sisters, parents and children.

The Bloc Québécois commends the Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille for its remarkable work.

* * *

CELIAC DISEASE

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House and all Canadians that the month of October has been designated Celiac Awareness Month.

Oral Questions

Celiac disease is a condition in which the absorptive surface of the small intestine is damaged by a substance called gluten. This results in an inability of the body to absorb the nutrients necessary for growth and good health. According to current research statistics, close to one person in 200 may be affected by celiac disease, although most of them are not aware of it.

The Canadian Celiac Association is a national organization dedicated to providing services and support to persons with this disease.

I invite everyone to join with me in congratulating the many volunteers of the Canadian Celiac Association.

* * *

[English]

TRADE

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, it is time that the government took a serious look at some type of North American trade perimeter. North American internal security is threatened and more resources are required at the border. We could supply those resources for security if we were not doing double duty at the border checking both security and trade.

It is time to ask why a container that is checked and sealed in Halifax, Vancouver, New York City or Mexico City needs to be stopped and checked again when it crosses the border regardless of its destination. The dollars freed up by this so-called trade perimeter could then be concentrated on protecting the security of the individual partners and not curtailing trade.

I do not expect the government to show leadership on this issue until Canadian public opinion forces it to do so. However it is past time that the positive and the negative aspects of such an idea were debated and assessed in parliament.

* * *

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the pine beetle infestation in British Columbia can easily be classified as a natural disaster. One would think the federal Liberals are concerned about the economic impact on B.C.'s forest industry, which provides thousands of jobs and produces billions of tax revenue for the federal coffers.

The federal Liberals have known about this problem for years now but have done absolutely nothing to help the people of British Columbia in the face of this disaster.

In a recent publication entitled "The State of Canada's Forests" Natural Resources Canada devotes a precious three sentences to the pine beetle disaster out of 112 pages, and even then grossly underestimates the magnitude of the problem.

Today I again call on the federal Liberals to drop their historic disdain for British Columbians and give us some of our forest industry tax dollars back to help us in our time of crisis.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[English]

BIOTERRORISM

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, bioterrorism is a top of the mind issue for Canadians today. Just this weekend CTV showed us how easy it is for someone to walk into a store to buy toxic chemicals.

What is the health minister doing to make certain that toxic chemicals do not get in the hands of people who have bad motives?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously it is an effort that must be undertaken by all of us, by all levels of government and by responsible Canadians across the country.

For our part we are working closely with provincial officials and with chief medical officers of health to get messages out into communities about being watchful and about taking the usual precautionary steps.

At the same time we are reassuring Canadians that these threats in Canada are remote, but obviously we must be prudent all the time.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians really want reassurance and not just rhetoric, so let me make a suggestion to the minister. Health Canada could send an advisory to all manufacturers and retailers of these toxic chemicals which might say to them: be aware of someone who comes in without a purchase order that they do not know and let the authorities know about it.

Will the minister take such a step, an advisory to all those individuals so that we are sure that toxic chemicals do not get into the hands of people who should not have them?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to take the member's suggestion under advisement and to work with him and members of his party if they have useful suggestions.

Obviously our caucus is also focusing on these issues. I think it is important that all of us do everything we can to raise public awareness, to be watchful and to do everything that is prudent in these circumstances.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister says that he is willing to listen to suggestions. I can tell him that there have been a lot of suggestions from the official opposition that have gone into the ether.

On this particular suggestion, on toxic chemicals, it is pretty obvious that the minister has not yet considered the suggestion. I would ask him again for an advisory to go out to all the manufacturers and sellers of toxic chemicals to heighten the awareness for Canadians. This would be reassuring, not just a photo op.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to leave the impression that the government has not acted already on this and other areas to increase public awareness and to advise people involved to take precautions.

Oral Questions

I am trying to signal that this is not a partisan matter. It is a matter that involves the health of Canadians. If the official opposition wishes to change its position and be constructive, we would be delighted to accept constructive proposals from all sides.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are asking what help they could expect if there were a chemical or bioterror attack. The World Health Organization says that there are 44 possible bioterror agents and 25 chemical agents.

The health minister has set aside \$5.5 million to stockpile antibiotics and pharmaceuticals. That is barely 18 cents per Canadian.

Why does a postage stamp cost more than medicine on hand for Canadians to prepare for bioterror?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we should be careful now not to veer from constructive suggestions to fearmongering.

Let us be serious about this. We have identified appropriate, prudent targets as we accumulate medications. Our money goes not only for medications but also for training of frontline workers so they will know what to look for and will be able respond quickly. It goes to reinforcing our national network of laboratories so we can test substances and rule in and rule out quickly. It also goes for equipment that may be needed and protocols that are appropriate.

We are taking the right steps and we will continue to do what is required to protect the health security of Canadians.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that the health minister has set aside just \$5.5 million for medicine, yet the smallpox vaccine he is talking about will cost over \$100 million. Experts tell us that at least eight other vaccines on hand are highly desirable.

The minister's numbers just do not add up. Does he really have a plan Canadians can count on?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the medications we have accumulated are antibiotics. They are being stockpiled in order to make sure we are ready in the unlikely event that they are needed.

We have a plan and at the moment we are doing everything that is prudently required to protect the health security of Canadians. Should circumstances change, then we will change accordingly, but at this moment we are doing what is appropriate to protect the health of Canadians.

* * *

• (1420)

[Translation]

TERRORISM

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just days after the bombings in Afghanistan had begun, the U.S. secretary of defence said that they were running out of military targets.

A few weeks later, with the number of civilian casualties rising, Donald Rumsfeld is now saying that the war effort will be long, very long.

Considering that the bombings have probably hit all the military targets, that the response should now take into account the fate of the civilian population—and should have taken it into account from the beginning—is Canada advocating a reassessment of the military strategy used so far to counter terrorism?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, civilian populations in Afghanistan are not being targeted by the alliance against terrorism.

The fight has only been going on for one month. We must continue to fight the Taliban and bin Laden's network.

Again, I am asking for the continuing support of all the parties in this House.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not of course questioning the response, but I remind the Deputy Prime Minister that it is the U.S. secretary of defence who said that they were running out of targets. The second phase of this response is about to begin with ground troops.

Is it not time, before entering this new phase, for Canada to ask the UN to assess military operations?

The response must continue but, as the Prime Minister said, we will not give a blank cheque. How can Canada play a role in this response with the agreement of its allies?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Canadian forces are an integral part of the alliance against terrorism, the Taliban and bin Laden's network. We are constantly in contact with our allies, particularly the United States and Great Britain.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with Ramadan approaching, the bombing of Afghanistan as well as the degenerating conflict in the Middle East are causing agitation and provoking demonstrations in many Muslim countries.

Does the Prime Minister not fear that the conflagration will spread to countries bordering Afghanistan, countries that might try to finish off the work begun by Osama bin Laden and his accomplices?

[English]

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly the Government of Canada is concerned that citizens are involved. We are doing everything we can in our role to stand with our friends and allies, the United States and Britain, to make sure we defend the interests of Canada and the interests of the free world.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this lack of response is worrisome, at the very least.

Oral Questions

Are the accidental bombing of civilians, and the comments made by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, to the effect that they may not get bin Laden and that, in any case, he has a number of accomplices with significant sums of money in 50 to 60 different banks not cause for concern and full justification for a call for a UN sponsored conference, before the world becomes further embroiled in this war?

[English]

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has long been a nation dedicated to peace and security. We have demonstrated this commitment time and time again through many means, including military. It helps define us as a nation.

By flushing out terrorists in Afghanistan, we are working to create a world that is safer and more secure for all nations, for all people, including Afghanis. We are fighting against a force that threatens our freedoms, our democracies and our very way of life. Canada will stand with our allies.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our economy is in trouble. Scotiabank economists predict the loss of 20,000 jobs per month for at least the next six months. What is the government's response so far? To do nothing. What is the government's response to new infrastructure investment? None. What is the government's response to improving employment insurance. More studies. What is the government's response to health and social housing? No new money.

The finance minister has been able to find money to fight terrorism. Will the finance minister also find money to fight the erosion and the impoverishment of our communities?

• (1425)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP simply has to take a look at the programs the government has put in place and listen to the very substantial announcements we have made. The national child benefit is now at a record level. Our transfers to the provinces for health care and education are at record levels as is equalization payments that the provinces use to establish common services across the country.

The fact is we have put substantial stimulus into the economy and that is one of the reasons Canadians are coming through this downturn better than the United States. We will continue on this path.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is ignoring the crisis that is unfolding. Unemployment is already rising dramatically. In September alone job losses have been horrendous. Jobs in the accommodation and food services have gone down 31,000; in recreation, down 20,000; in transportation, down 20,000; and in agriculture, down 5,000.

Canadians want security on the international front but they also want economic security on the home front. We are ready to support the government with extra resources for security. Will the government support Canadians with extra resources for human services and community infrastructure?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that we have to be very worried and every job loss is of great concern to the government. The hon. member knows that in the month of September Canada actually created 20,000 more jobs, which most other countries are not in the process of doing.

At the same time, we are dealing with those areas of economic security, such as the absolute necessity of keeping our borders open, and taking a look at ways in which we can make that more efficient.

We are going through a very difficult time. There is no doubt about that. The government, the private sector, the opposition and all the communities in the country have to work very hard at that, and we will to continue to do that.

* * *

TRADE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, the overly ambitious Minister of Industry is looking for a billion dollars for hooking up the Internet. Meanwhile traffic at our borders is in chaos. He should know that we desperately need to invest in up to date technology that will enhance security and keep the billion dollars a day of trade flowing between our border and the U.S. border.

Why has this leadership hopeful not done his job and insisted on the essentials?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we thought the member opposite was asking a serious question that warranted a serious response, we would certainly give her one.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, certainly keeping the borders open is a serious question. We would hope the minister would treat it as such.

The U.S. is spending \$100 million for new security technology at their northern border. Meanwhile Canada's industry minister is trumpeting his ability to get a billion dollars out of his leadership rival's pocket for his pet Internet project, while downloading the border issue as an infrastructure problem that the provinces should solve.

Why does the industry minister insist on pursuing his pet project at the expense of securing freer trade for Canadians?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House happen to believe that Canadians who live in rural and northern parts of this country have a right to expect the services of the national government. We on this side of the House happen to believe that Canadians who live in rural and northern parts of this country have an opportunity to contribute to Canada's wealth if they have the tools necessary to do the job. We make no apologies for that.

Oral Questions

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this weekend the Minister of Industry showed a sudden interest in clearing up border lineups. Perhaps jealous of the spotlight other Liberal leadership candidates are getting, the minister weighed in in favour of transforming the Windsor-Detroit train tunnel into a truck route.

While we certainly support investments in infrastructure, I would ask the Minister of Industry if he has plans to improve spending at all border crossings or only the ones where Borealis Capital has an interest?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member is telling us that the free flow of goods, services and materials across our border, a border that handles \$1.9 billion worth of business every single day for the people of Canada and the United States, is not a priority for him, I can tell him it is a very large priority for members on this side of the House.

• (1430)

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, minister on the run. Borealis Capital owns 50% of the rail tunnel. Among the senior executives at Borealis Capital are the chief fundraiser for the industry minister's leadership campaign, Steve Hudson and his campaign chair, David MacInnes.

Will the minister admit the obvious; that his support for this project put him in a clear and ugly conflict of interest?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have seldom heard a more empty premise to a question: The notion that any minister or any member for that matter on this side of the House who is interested in making sure the border works well is a conflict of interest. The member opposite should really do his homework and try and dream up a better question. That one is completely nonsensical.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is currently preparing a budget. During the G-20's last meeting, the minister also talked about international equalization.

In order to adequately meet existing needs, the UN recommends that countries allocate 0.7% of their GDP to international aid. In the year 2000, Canada only allocated 0.25% of its GDP to international aid.

Given the current extraordinary circumstances, we know that military spending will increase. Will the minister show consistency and increase international assistance in his next budget?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we look at the situation, and given the importance of trade and globalization, it is crystal clear that, in order for this to work, underdeveloped countries must be helped.

These countries need infrastructure programs. They need help for health and education. In fact, this was the object of the consensus

achieved in Montreal one year ago by the G-20. We will definitely discuss this issue and continue to promote it.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada agreed to write off part of Pakistan's debt to help it deal with refugees, but this measure will not be enough to counter the effects of war on Afghan people.

In this context, does the Minister of Finance intend to substantially increase the moneys earmarked for international assistance to Afghanistan, over and above the \$16 million already allocated?

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting question.

If the hon. member had done his homework, he would know that the Government of Canada has granted \$16 million in international aid to Afghanistan since September 11. This is in addition to the money that Canada is giving to Afghanistan for international aid. For this year alone, it is around \$28 million.

Canada has been there for Afghanistan. For the past 10 years, we have given in excess of \$150 million. We are there today and we will be there tomorrow.

* * *

[*English*]

TRADE

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, just a few moments ago we heard the industry minister say that his billion dollar Internet hookup scheme was, and I quote, "an essential service".

Does the Minister of Finance agree with his cabinet colleague that his billion dollar Internet hookup scheme is as essential as health care, national security and maintaining a surplus?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the member is now making up quotes to suit his question, which is not unusual because he has developed a pattern for doing that in the House. He did not hear me just say what he quoted a minute ago.

Second, yes I happen to believe that getting people who live in rural and northern Canada online and able to access the Internet in a meaningful way is important in building a modern economy.

The Alliance may believe that only those who live in urban centres should get access to technology, I do not.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we believe there is such a thing as budgetary priorities. Now economists are saying that we may be heading toward a deficit next year.

The provinces are demanding more money for health care. We have an urgent need for new spending in national security and defence. What is the government's response? It is to spend billions, \$6 billion more, on pork and corporate welfare as part of the industry minister's wish list.

Oral Questions

Why does the finance minister not get his priorities straight and just say no to new discretionary spending while we are fighting a recession and a war on terrorism?

• (1435)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has made it very clear that it will protect our transfers to the provinces for health care and education. It has made it very clear that the involvement with our universities in research and development will continue. The government has made it very clear that the personal tax cuts, the corporate tax cuts and the increase in the child tax benefit will continue.

The fact is the government has made it very clear that it will operate within its constraints. We will do that because we are indeed building for the future of our country.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with his next budget coming up, the Minister of Finance is singing the usual tune: he does not anticipate a very large surplus.

But figures from his own department show a surplus of \$11.1 billion for the first five months of the fiscal year. Even in the worst case scenario, it will stand at \$13 billion by year's end.

Will the minister admit that playing down the size of the annual surplus will create a worse problem than usual this year, since he must support the economy, and he has the means, provided he is telling the truth?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that we had a surplus of \$11 billion in July. This is a huge cushion.

But the member must know that there was a slowdown in the third quarter. He must also know that the world changed dramatically and profoundly on September 11.

Is the member unaware of the terrible impact of September 11 on the global economy, including on Canada?

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the events the minister has just mentioned. What we want are targeted investments to support the economy.

Will the minister drop his strategy of deliberately underestimating his surplus, give us the real figures, and adopt a balanced approach, which includes targeted investments to support the economy?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a balanced approach is the very approach the government is taking. Now, if the member has any suggestions to make, perhaps he could speak to his colleague, the finance critic, or attend the meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance. I am looking forward with great enthusiasm to the report of the Standing Committee on Finance. Perhaps the member should attend the odd meeting.

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this weekend the immigration minister revealed that fully 40% of refugee claimants are from the United States.

Signing a safe third country agreement with the United States would allow immigration officials to focus on the other 60% who are not from the United States. When asked if an agreement of this nature was a top priority, the minister said on the weekend that she did not think so.

Why will the minister not take this important step and make the security of Canadians a top priority?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the security of Canadians is a top priority for the government. That is why we are working very closely with our neighbour, the United States, to ensure that we do everything we can to speed legitimate traffic at the borders and stop those who have no legitimate reason to enter either Canada or the United States.

I want to assure the member opposite that there are a number of things we are discussing to achieve that goal.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, why will this minister not really work with the United States and sign a safe third country agreement with it? It is needed. This would prevent people who should claim in the United States from having to claim in Canada instead where the system is much more lax. Still, this weekend the immigration minister said it was not a priority with her government.

Why will the minister not make this a priority to ensure the security of Canadians and their jobs?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is once again equating refugee claimants with security threats and that is simply wrong.

There are many things we are discussing with the United States. However, the number one top priority is to discuss security issues. That is what we are doing.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West—Mississauga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is currently in the Middle East, with a visit to Iran. Given the events of the past six and a half weeks, could the parliamentary secretary to the minister please inform us of the purpose of this trip?

• (1440)

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs aims at seeking the widest possible coalition in the effort to fight terrorism and to increase world security. The best way to do that is by direct engagement of key middle eastern regional states such as Iran. This is the first time a Canadian minister of foreign affairs has visited Iran in almost a decade.

Oral Questions

As an important regional country, Iran will be key as a major contributor to the effort to combat terrorism.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The United States is dropping cluster bombs in Afghanistan from B-52 bombers, despite the fact that the Red Cross has called for the banning of cluster bombs which cause so many casualties among innocent civilians, especially among children. There are 10 million live landmines in Afghanistan today after 20 years of war.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Will Canada, as a member of the U.S. led military coalition, condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of cluster bombs in the United States led bombing campaign in Afghanistan?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm that what the hon. member is alleging is accurate. I will check into it.

As I said to another hon. member earlier in question period, it is not the purpose or intent of the coalition to target civilians. This continues to be the policy for Canada, and as far as I am aware, the United States and the entire military coalition.

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INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we just heard that Canada has given \$16 million for refugee aid to Afghanistan. However, in reality the UNHCR has received \$1.19 million, less than what Angelina Jolie has personally donated, by the way.

Canada has now dropped from 10th to 17th place in overseas aid, a pretty dismal record. The Canadian Council for International Cooperation said that Canada needs to increase its aid by at least \$400 million for four years.

Will the Minister of Finance make that commitment for an increase as part of Canada's international obligation to people desperately in need?

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to state that Canada in 2000-01 spent over \$3 billion Canadian in official development assistance. This is a significant increase from the 1990s or even 1989-90 where we only spent \$2.8 billion.

I also want to state that the government increased the budget for official international assistance by \$434 million in the last budget over three years. Just this year in our throne speech we committed to increase our international assistance.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, since 1999 the Prime Minister has run up a hefty legal tab of over \$150,000 fighting a request from his own

information commissioner to review his agenda books. This dispute has its origins in the Prime Minister's well documented interference at the APEC summit.

Since forming a government, the Prime Minister no longer likes accountability or transparency. Neither the information commissioner nor the privacy commissioner can order material be released. Why is the Prime Minister using taxpayers' money to hide behind the powers of his office and subvert the law of access?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not the Prime Minister's private lawsuit. This involves serious questions of interpretation of the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. The decisions in these matters would not only affect this government but future governments. We owe it to the public at large to have these matters looked at by the courts.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, it certainly is not a private lawsuit. The taxpayers are footing the bill.

Time and time again the government has turned its back on concepts of openness and accountability. In Bill C-36 the justice minister's sweeping new powers will indefinitely, if not permanently, hide information from Canadians while sidestepping government watchdogs. Powers of arrest and intercept are expanded, rights are suspended and safeguards against excessive use are minimal.

Given the sense of alarm, will the minister accept sunset clause amendments for intrusive sections of the bill to protect Canadian rights from a cabinet information clampdown?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have made plain on numerous occasions here in the House, I understand the concerns expressed by the hon. member and others in terms of certain provisions of the bill. We on the government side believe that everything in this legislation comports with the charter of rights and freedoms and Canadian values.

However, as I have indicated, I look forward to the advice and recommendations from both the House and Senate committees.

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●(1445)

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, whether it is through lack of skill or lack of will, the foot-dragging government is losing the battle to maintain an open border with our greatest trading partner. The United States is moving quickly to place the security of Americans ahead of trade with this country.

The vice-president of the Canadian Trucking Alliance said yesterday that the government has been too slow to engage the United States in border talks. Will the government immediately initiate bilateral talks on this crucial issue?

Oral Questions

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is quite wrong in the premise of his question.

I have personally been involved in the last two weeks in talks in Washington on these matters. My talks have been followed up by very vigorous talks by the foreign minister. This is something very important to us.

At the recent APEC summit it was stated that Canada, the United States and Mexico would be undertaking talks specifically on these matters not only involving the Canada-U.S. border but the U.S.-Mexican border as well.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is the wrong people doing the talking.

The Canadian people who have the enthusiasm and the motivation to resolve the border issue are not currently engaged in the process. Three-quarters of Canadian CEOs say that Canada and the United States must agree on common security measures. They understand that unless Canada convinces the United States that our own borders are secure, the United States perimeter becomes its border with us.

The government's approach is failing Canadians. Will the Prime Minister immediately immobilize a team Canada open borders delegation of business leaders and provincial representatives to go to Washington and address this issue?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member has been for the last couple of months but our Prime Minister has already been to Washington and raised this matter with President Bush. They both agreed publicly that addressing the issues of the border is a common and joint priority.

I want to point out as well that to deal with these matters requires a lot more than a one shot mission to Washington by business people, members of parliament or ministers. It involves continued ongoing efforts by all the stakeholders and will require very extensive legislative changes, whatever we agree on. That is the reality.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at their meeting this past weekend, all of the provincial ministers of finance were in agreement that they should call upon the federal government for more funding for health and education to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities properly.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that a fair assessment of the surplus would enable him not only to meet his objectives of a balanced budget and to foot the bill for security and defence, but also to meet the demands of the provinces as far as health and education are concerned?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had an excellent discussion at yesterday's meeting. We agreed to get together as early in the new year as possible.

As you are aware, we base our projections on estimates from private sector economists. These projections will certainly be tabled in the House at the time of the December budget.

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only does everyone agree that health and education are total priorities, but there is even more agreement on the significant multiplier effect additional investment would have in this area.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that, if he were to comply with the request of the provincial ministers of finance, he would manage to kill two birds with one stone, that is sustaining the economy, while at the same time meeting the needs of citizens?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that health and education are priorities for Canadians, and they certainly are as well for the Canadian government.

That is why, since we balanced the budget and put public finances on a healthy footing, in excess of 70% of all our new expenditures have been in the areas of health and knowledge.

At the same time, one year ago, the Prime Minister agreed with the provinces on the largest transfer for health funding in Canadian history.

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[English]

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the anti-terrorism bill the government has decided that one's political, ideological and religious motivations are essential elements of the act of terrorism.

Why does the government want to hinder prosecutions and assist terrorists by requiring the crown to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the motives of terrorists?

● (1450)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not believe that the definition as found in Bill C-36 provides any unnecessary or unreasonable impediments to prosecutors. We see those qualifiers as an important part of the definition to ensure we are not sweeping up organizations, groups and individuals who should not be included.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in pursuing the September 11 monsters we should not be concerned with their political, religious or ideological justifications. Quite frankly there can be no justification for acts of terrorism.

Why does the government not amend the bill by removing these unnecessary protections for terrorists?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would agree that acts of terrorism can never be justified. Therefore I would ask the hon. member and his opposition party to get on side and support the legislation.

ZIMBABWE

Hon. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Zimbabwe was in the news this past week.

The Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa has just returned from Harare where he attended a meeting of the committee of commonwealth foreign ministers. Could the minister please let the House know the results of the outcome of the meeting in Zimbabwe?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada insisted in Harare that civil society and independent stakeholders be heard and they were. Many said that the rule of law has not been followed in the constitution of Zimbabwe. The violence and unlawful occupation of farms continue. We were very disturbed by what we saw there. Canada strongly supports the deployment of election observers for the elections in March or April, 2002.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on Friday two men died and two were rescued in horrific sea conditions off the north coast of Vancouver Island. Before I continue I would like to express my appreciation for the heroic efforts of the crew of the coast guard vessel *John P. Tully* in this rescue and the crews of the fishing vessels *Frosty* and *Hope Bay* who assisted the rescue efforts.

Does the minister not agree that the rescue of these men was delayed because search and rescue did not have a suitable helicopter to deploy?

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for congratulating the excellent work of the people in the coast guard in this situation. Every single day coast guard men and women respond to emergencies such as the hon. member talked about.

I am certainly not aware of the statement the hon. member mentioned with regard to the helicopter. I will take it upon myself to look into the matter. I have not been made aware of it. However, I can assure everyone that we have more resources than we did before. In fact \$115 million of new resources have been put into the coast guard.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the Labrador was called at 25 minutes past midnight but refused due to darkness and severe weather. It was called a second time at six in the morning and did not leave until eight.

As the minister suggests, there was a helicopter available but it was not deployed because it was being held in Victoria so that the minister could have a photo op. A photo op for the minister is more important than saving lives.

Does the minister not agree that if the government had acted responsibly and provided proper search and rescue helicopters, these deaths may well not have happened?

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we often hear the opposition making all sorts of allegations. When we look into those allegations we find the facts are

Oral Questions

totally incorrect and they put them out without any foundation. I will endeavour to look into the facts that the hon. member has stated to make sure.

As I said earlier, we invested \$115 million in new funds to make sure that the coast guard has the resources. Every single day it saves Canadian lives. It is unfortunate the hon. member twists the facts into something different from what they really are.

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● (1455)

[*Translation*]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport recently provided a \$75 million loan guarantee to Canada 3000 to help it cope with the crisis in the airline industry following the September 11 attacks.

Will the minister tell us if he also plans to provide loan guarantees for the small regional air carriers in Quebec to help them get through this unprecedented crisis?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I made the announcement last Thursday, I clearly stated that the assistance had to be limited to the five largest carriers: Air Canada, Air Transat, Sky Service, WestJet and Canada 3000.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Delays at the Canada-U.S. border not only inhibit trade but affect the environment. A 30 minute delay at the border equates to hundreds of tonnes of additional greenhouse gases per annum. Why has the environment minister done nothing to address this concern?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the Deputy Prime Minister, the government has done a number of things to try to get changes in the policies at the border, particularly on the American side, so that we can in fact expedite the movement of goods, people and vehicles across the border.

There is no question that there is additional air pollution related to the delays. That said, the fact is the problem will minimize when we get the border cleared. That is our fundamental problem and it is what we are working on. I took this matter up with my American counterparts when I visited Washington.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

Today the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has called on the federal government to make a major investment in infrastructure across the country in areas such as drinking water, rapid transit, the environment and housing.

I want to know what the minister's response is to this request from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Can we expect a major announcement with regard to infrastructure in the budget, which will stimulate the economy and create thousand of jobs in the country at a time when jobs are needed?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the government in the forthcoming budget is focusing on national security, but obviously the necessity of protecting the basic infrastructure of the country is something we will always look at.

I point out that there is a major infrastructure program going on both in terms of roads and the environment. The Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Transport have spoken about this extensively. The minister in charge of CMHC has spoken about housing. All of that has arisen out of extensive discussions with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

* * *

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in light of the concerns of some Canadians about civil liberties, some groups have called for exemptions from Bill C-36.

Could either the minister of Indian affairs or the justice minister tell us whether native people across Canada will be exempted from the provisions of Bill C-36 as some of their leaders are calling for? A simple yes or no would suffice.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the question somewhat strange. Bill C-36 is very clear. It is directed at terrorist activity.

In fact there is no discussion in and around any particular group or organization. The legislation focuses on one thing and one thing only. It is terrorist activity.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, farmers in Canada are waiting with great anticipation for the fall budget expected in December. The Liberal government has a record of stumbling from ad hoc agriculture program to ad hoc program, weighted down in bureaucracy with no long term vision.

Will the Minister of Finance finally commit in this budget to implementing a long term sustainable agriculture policy that farmers will be able to rely on?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the June federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting there was unanimous agreement by all ministers present, all the provinces, all the territories and the federal government to move forward with an agricultural action plan, a policy framework for agriculture to move in a direction, as we said in the last throne speech, beyond crisis management.

I can assure the House that with the consultation with the industry, with the provinces, with colleagues on this side of the House and with the support of colleagues on the other side of the House we will move in that direction.

* * *

● (1500)

TERRORISM

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in media reports over the weekend the United States is musing about using tactical nuclear weapons in the war against terrorism.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Will Canada in the strongest way tell our allies in the United States that under no circumstances will Canada accept the use of tactical nuclear weapons in any case?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member did not provide any evidence to show that what he is saying is a fact. I am not aware of any activity of that sort. There are international conventions about nuclear weapons which I am sure members of the alliance are sticking with.

By the way, to answer further a question by another member of the hon. member's party, I am advised that the United States may be using cluster bombs but only on military targets and the assertion of the NDP member earlier should be withdrawn.

* * *

[Translation]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the Minister of Health came out in favour of mandatory labelling for genetically modified organisms. Recently however, the government voted down at second reading a bill sponsored by one of its members which moved in this direction.

Can the Minister of Health tell us if he is still in favour of mandatory labelling for GMOs, given his government's position on this issue?

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is fully aware of the fact that four ministers on this side have written the chair of the health committee to ask her to bring in members from a number of different committees to have a discussion around the topic of food labelling in Canada. We look forward to the results and the comments of that committee.

PRIVILEGE

MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to charge the Minister of Transport with contempt. The minister has brought the authority and dignity of the House into question and has breached the new procedure that was established by the adoption of the first report of the modernization committee.

On Thursday, October 25, while the House was in session, the minister held a press conference to announce a \$75 million bailout for Canada 3000. While this brand of disrespect is not uncommon for the Liberal government, I believe that this is the first time that such an act has occurred since the adoption of the first report of the modernization committee. At page 4 of that report the committee states:

Concerns have been expressed that government announcements, regarding legislation or policies, are increasingly made outside the House of Commons. While this is by no means a recent phenomenon, it continues to be a source of concern. The Committee is recommending two initiatives to address it.

First, it is important that more ministerial statements and announcements be made in the House of Commons. In particular, topical developments, or foreseeable policy decisions, should be made first—or, at least, concurrently—in the chamber. Ministers, and their departments, need to be encouraged to make use of the forum provided by the House of Commons. Not only will this enhance the pre-eminence of Parliament, but it will also reiterate the legislative underpinning for governmental decisions.

The committee recommended that the government make greater use of ministerial statements in the Chamber and that the House leaders be advised in advance of these statements.

I was not advised of this announcement. When I stood in the House on Thursday and asked the Thursday question, the government House leader had the opportunity right there and then, but failed to do so.

There was no reason why the Minister of Transport could not have advised the opposition and there were no procedural difficulties preventing the Minister of Transport from making his announcement in the House. I am certain that all parties would have extended every courtesy to the minister if he had chosen to respect the House and make his announcement here.

It is important to know that the House adjourned early on that day for lack of business. It adjourned early last Monday and Friday and it adjourned early on Friday, October 19, and on Monday, October 22, so wherein lies the problem with debating these issues on the floor of the House? A \$75 million bailout is no small change. Where does the minister think the authority to spend the \$75 million comes from?

The government and its departments are continuously making a habit of mocking the parliamentary system in this manner. We have had the deliberate leaking to the media of contents of Bill C-15 and, more recently, of the anti-terrorism bill, Bill C-36.

One of the reasons the modernization committee felt it necessary to address the issue was that in the last two parliaments the government got away with mocking the legislative process at every turn, belittling the role of members of parliament. I will cite a few of the more serious examples.

Privilege

On Thursday, October 23, 1997, the government announced that provincial and federal governments had constituted a nominating committee to nominate candidates for the new Canada pension plan investment board. The nominating committee was provided for under subclause 10(2) of Bill C-2. The House had not yet adopted Bill C-2.

On January 21, 1998, the minister responsible for the wheat board met in Regina to discuss the rules for the election of directors to the Canadian Wheat Board's board of directors, as proposed in Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act. Substantial amendments to Bill C-4 tabled at report stage by opposition members were scheduled for debate in the House. While the House debated how many directors should be farmer elected versus being government appointees, the minister was holding meetings as though the bill was already law.

When the Canadian millennium scholarship fund was being established, a published article in the Toronto *Star* announced that Yves Landry had been named as the head of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Mr. Landry was quoted as saying "I am only one member of the board and my job is to be a facilitator". There was no legislation before the House setting up the foundation, nor had the budget announcement allocating \$2.5 billion in revenue to the foundation been adopted.

The Minister for International Trade announced on March 30, 1998, the establishment of a Canada-China interparliamentary group. At that time, the House had not set up a Canada-China interparliamentary group.

Finally, the date of the last budget that was delivered in the House, so long ago we have probably forgotten, was announced by the Prime Minister outside the House.

Each disrespectful act we allow to stand unchallenged becomes a precedent that serves afterwards to justify more acts of disrespect. The modernization committee recognized this and felt it necessary to make a statement.

● (1505)

The adoption of this report outlined what standard the House expected from ministers in this regard.

On page 119 of Erskine May there is a reference regarding a select committee that was appointed to inquire into the conduct and activities of members and to consider whether any such conduct or activities amounted to a contempt of the House and whether any such activities were:

—conduct...inconsistent with the standards the House was entitled to expect from its Members.

The minister cannot claim ignorance because the House pronounced itself on this issue through the adoption of the modernization committee report. When the Minister of Transport made his announcement outside the House on Thursday, October 25 while there was still an opportunity to make it inside, his conduct was clearly inconsistent with the standards the House was entitled to expect from him. As a consequence the minister is in contempt of the House.

Privilege

The other related parliamentary tradition that the government likes to forget about is the issue of and respect for the doctrine of ministerial responsibility.

The Minister of Transport and the rest of his colleagues, and particularly the Minister of Justice, should review the definition of ministerial responsibility from page 63 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May. It states:

—ministers have a duty to Parliament to account, and be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments...it is of paramount importance that ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament—

Where can we find the truthful and accurate information regarding the decision to hand out \$75 million to Canada 3000? Not in *Hansard* of Thursday, October 25. Where it was found was in the *Globe and Mail* of October 26.

I am beginning to think that being held in contempt in the House is of little concern to the government. Let us look at the example of the Minister of Justice who was held in contempt for leaking to the media the contents of Bill C-15.

When I appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to review another charge of contempt involving the minister, I pointed out that we no longer respect, to the same degree as in the past, the principle that ministers have a duty to parliament to account and to be held to account for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments.

I cited the example from 1976 involving the Hon. André Ouellet, the then minister of consumer and corporate affairs. Mr. Ouellet made a comment on the acquittal by Mr. Justice Mackay of the sugar companies accused of forming cartels and combines. As a result, Mr. Justice Mackay cited him for contempt of court. He was found guilty of the charge and resigned his cabinet post over the incident.

A charge of contempt by the House should be considered just as serious, if not more serious, as a contempt charge in a court. Unfortunately the Minister of Justice chose not to take responsibility in the time honoured tradition of ministerial accountability, as did Mr. Ouellet.

Getting back to this case, I will conclude my remarks by saying that had I had an opportunity to respond to this announcement by the Minister of Transport I might have asked the minister why he can justify giving Canada 3000 \$75 million but cannot spend one dime on the softwood lumber industry that lost millions of dollars over a trade dispute with the United States. Thousands of people are out of work as a result and thousands more are expected to lose their jobs.

Also, what about the farmers who suffered through this summer's drought?

These are some of the questions we might have asked if the minister had given us an opportunity, but we did not. The minister might want to talk about timing, about how the House was not sitting. It was not sitting because the government chose not to have it sitting. It adjourned early. We have adjourned early too many days over the last little while.

Certainly I saw the minister on television that night at 7 p.m. The House adjourned early, and I cannot remember if it was 3 p.m. or 4 p.m., but surely he must have made the decision earlier in the day. He

could have spoken to the government House leader and made sure it was put on the agenda so that we could have done it in the House and it could have been done properly.

Mr. Speaker, if you find that we have a case of privilege, I am prepared to move the proper motion.

• (1510)

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity on Friday to discuss the matter with my colleague from the Alliance Party. I am grateful that he raised it today because I could not state the reply on Friday. I will describe the actions taken on Thursday and then deal with the substance of his point.

First, everyone knows that since September 11 issues dealing with airlines are ones that are breaking fast. The problems are occurring rather rapidly and therefore require rapid response.

The hon. member talks about not being available to make a ministerial statement at the appropriate time. I am sure he would have given unanimous consent to revert to statements by ministers on Thursday afternoon had he known. He questioned the integrity of my colleague the House leader for not having informed him during the usual Thursday question that he knew this was coming.

My colleague the House leader did not know the statement was being issued because the final decision on the matter was only taken at 5.30 that day. We felt it was absolutely appropriate to call a press conference at 7 o'clock. The news media was not happy. I was not happy and the hon. member was not happy.

At the earliest opportunity there was final cabinet approval for the compensation package for Canada 3000. We called the press conference so that shareholders, employees and passengers of Canada 3000 would all know what the rules were before the opening of the stock market on the next business day.

I have been in the House off and on for quite a while, like the hon. member. We were here in the early 1970s when ministers made routine statements and were questioned by the opposition. That is something I have always been in favour of. It is certainly something I would never be opposed to.

I was a member of the procedural committee in 1982-83 that brought forward a lot of the reforms of today including the period of questions and comments after debate. That was done to involve members in debate. We do not want to hear only from members with set questions and set answers. We want to encourage the thrust and parry of debate.

My hon. colleague laments the fact that he never had the chance to have this debated on Thursday. He says he would have raised a number of questions. He went on a few minutes ago to tell the House what the questions were with respect to softwood lumber.

He did not raise the question on Friday morning. He did not raise the question this afternoon in question period. He instead chose to make a procedural point for partisan gain. I am very sorry about that. I have great respect for the House leader of the Alliance Party and cannot believe he is resorting to these kinds of tactics.

Privilege

I will use the example of the hon. André Ouellet. We were both in the House when this happened in 1975 or 1976 regarding the sugar case. It had nothing whatsoever to do with statements by ministers. The hon. member should not impugn motives by raising that particularly serious case in this context.

I am sure the hon. member knows this full well. Far be it from me to cast aspersions or impugn motives by saying he wants to use the debate for a spurious question of privilege that is not a question of privilege. It is a point of debate that he should have raised on Thursday or Friday in question period or today in question period. He chose not to do so. He was silent today in question period.

I will quote from Beauchesne's fifth edition, section 264 which states:

The option of a Minister to make a statement either in the House or outside it may be the subject of comment, but is not the subject of a question of privilege.

• (1515)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief comment on this point. I commend not only the person who raised the question of privilege but also the minister for coming here and defending himself, which is somewhat unusual. Normally defending the indefensible is left to the government House leader.

The point is well taken and I hope it would be with the Chair. Particularly seeing as we have had the report of the modernization committee, every opportunity should be taken by the government to follow those recommendations and use the House to make announcements.

I regret that the Minister of Transport is one of the first to get caught up on this because I will vouch for the fact that he was a member of the Lefebvre special committee on standing orders and procedure in 1982-83. I served with him on that House of Commons committee. I believe him when he says he would like to see this kind of procedure used more often. I would encourage him to do so and then we could use him as an example of how other ministers ought to behave.

The Speaker: The Chair has heard the arguments advanced by all hon. members on this point. The Chair has had occasion to rule previously on items of this kind. The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough has raised these kinds of matters when ministers have made statements outside the House that he wishes had been made in the House.

[*Translation*]

I know that many members from both sides of the House are always making the same suggestion to the Chair, that is to do something about this situation which they think is terrible.

[*English*]

I am somewhat constrained because, as the minister has pointed out, there has been a string of decisions on this matter that it is not for the Chair to intervene and not a breach of the privileges of the House for ministers to make statements concerning government policy outside the House. That position has been maintained for a very long time.

The hon. House leader of the official opposition in his very capable argument suggested that the report of the committee on

modernization recently adopted by the House had somehow changed that.

While I recognize that there are words in the report that would be of solace to any member making the argument he was advancing, I question whether the report has changed the situation such that failure to make a statement in the House has become a question of breach of privileges of the House. This after all is a very grave matter and one which has to be treated with the utmost seriousness.

I recognize there is some frustration that the report has perhaps not been followed in its spirit and intent. Hon. members in making their question of privilege today have drawn that to the attention of the government House leader who, I have no doubt, will probably be reading the arguments over again for several nights running with great interest given his concern to see that the modernization report is implemented. I believe he was a member of the committee that helped come up with the recommendations so I know his interest in it will be substantial.

I find there is no question of privilege here but I have one other matter that I want to draw the attention of hon. members while I am on my feet. I would remind all hon. members that apart from the one hour notice requirement for questions of privilege there are other rules governing notice of intention to raise a question of privilege.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, the Marleau and Montpetit book we all read so rigorously, at pages 123 and 124 describes them as follows:

The notice submitted to the Speaker should contain four elements:

1. It should indicate that the Member is writing to give notice of his or her intention to raise a question of privilege.
2. It should state that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity.
3. It should indicate the substance of the matter that the Member proposes to raise by way of a question of privilege.
4. It should include the text of the motion which the Member must be ready to propose to the House should the Speaker rule that the matter is a *prima facie* question of privilege.

The letters I have been receiving lately have been deficient in respect of these matters. I draw them to the attention of the hon. members in case some time I fire the letter back and say I will not hear it today and you will have to send me proper notice. Notice has been accordingly given. Of course we all want to comply with the rules.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I will add briefly to that point. I have great concerns about the issue, as do members of the House. I have concerns about the way it has evolved and the practice of ministers making statements outside this place.

The minister has acknowledged the circumstances around the issue. He has pointed out the timeliness and importance of getting the issue forward and bringing it to the House.

The minister would also be aware that there is nothing stopping a minister of the crown, after having made the announcement due to pressing concerns about the stock market and the security of the industry, from coming back to the House of Commons the next day, availing himself of the opportunity to inform the House, and subjecting himself at that time to a few questions about such an important issue.

*Government Orders***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

• (1520)

[English]

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-406, an act to amend the Divorce Act (custody of grandchildren)

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to table a private member's bill that deals with an amendment to the Divorce Act particularly pertaining to the custody of grandchildren.

The enactment would amend the Divorce Act to allow a grandparent to apply for custody of his or her grandchildren without the leave of the court. This is an important move to allow grandparents greater ability to nurture, protect and care for children in the stead of the parents. I am pleased the member for St. John has agreed to second the motion.

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

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that the answer to Question No. 18 be made an order for return. This return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Question No. 18—**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold:**

For the fiscal years 1997-1998 and 1998-1999, can the government provide a detailed list of all funds paid by departments and Crown corporations to the 75 ridings in Quebec and the 17 administrative regions in Quebec, indicating separately the amounts paid out by the federal government in employment insurance and old age pensions to the 75 ridings in Quebec and the 17 administrative regions in Quebec?

(Return tabled)

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—INTERNATIONAL AID POLICY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we are resuming debate on the motion brought forward by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, I would like to read it again to help members get back into the right context.

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

I think that, in this motion, the member is referring to a general international assistance policy and is asking us to reflect on the current urgent situation, namely the drama taking place right now in Afghanistan and Pakistan where millions of people are seeking refuge to escape the Taliban regime or to escape air strikes by the Americans and the British.

Everybody will agree the government has moved to somewhat improve aid to these people. However, the announcement of a further \$16 million to help close to 5 million people in Afghanistan as winter is fast approaching—a prospect we all dread—is far from enough. For the time being we can only hope that very soon the government will face up to its responsibility and commit further money to deal with the emergency situation in Afghanistan.

I would like to point out that although the situation in Afghanistan is the most highly publicized these days, it is far from being the only emergency situation across the world. For the past three years, Central America has been experiencing a severe drought and thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people, especially children, are at risk. Over the next few weeks casualties could be in the hundreds of thousands. The Canadian government should be able to intervene there too. As we know, some areas in Africa are also experiencing emergency situations.

We focused on Afghanistan because the situation there is well known to Canadians and Quebecers, but I believe that what we are after is an overall policy. We must get back to acceptable levels of aid in keeping with Canada's status within the international community. As the foreign affairs minister said “when you are a member of the G-8, you cannot excuse yourself when it is time to pay the bill”.

The same can be said of our military commitment, and our commitment to humanitarian and international aid. Our wealth allows us to do a lot more than what we are doing currently and also to intervene for the long term.

Clearly, we must respond to emergency situations. However, it must be recognized that it is only through structural changes that we will be able to change the current rules, a system that breeds poverty, disparities not only between countries, between areas in the world, but also within our own societies.

Government Orders

There is an old Chinese proverb that I like to quote, which states “If you give a man a fish, he will have a single meal. If you teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life”. Our approach to this situation should be along those lines. We need to have an international aid program that allows all developing countries, particularly those that have more problems dealing with the new economic realities of the world, to set up measures and programs, especially the needed training programs to pull themselves out of their predicament, out of poverty. There must be forms of aid that strengthen communities and provide them with the means to develop.

When it comes to this, Canada is not fulfilling its responsibilities, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. When you think about a goal of 0.7%—a goal set by a former Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson, incidentally—we are nowhere near reaching this goal proposed by the United Nations.

● (1525)

Currently, our international aid is at its lowest level in 30 years. We are at a mere 0.25% of our GDP, which places us 17th out of the 22 countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or the OECD. In 1999, we ranked 12th. Only one year later, we fell five places. In 1995, we ranked 6th. Canada's position within the international community when it comes to international aid has dropped noticeably and consistently.

Canada does not compare well to countries that are much smaller than us, but that are similar in economic terms: Denmark gives 1.06% of its GDP, thereby exceeding the United Nations' requirements; the Netherlands are at 0.82%; Sweden, 0.81%; Norway, 0.8%; and Luxembourg, 0.7%.

How is it that Canada, which prides itself on being a generous country and on being a good influence for peace in the world, is not included in this list of countries? As far as I can tell, it is a case of saying one thing, but doing another.

These efforts are extremely important. I am making my comments in the context of globalization and economic integration. From a political perspective, we should all agree that we must eradicate poverty in our societies, but also around the world, because poverty, inequalities and injustices are a fertile ground for terrorism. This is not to say that it is the only cause. As we know, there is far right terrorism in the United States, but it is clear that inequalities and injustices are the conditions that generate despair and actions such as the ones we witnessed on September 11.

If we are to fight terrorism effectively and intelligently, we do need a targeted military response but, above all, we need an action plan by the international community for economic and social development, and to fight poverty. Canada should be a leader in the development of such a plan, but this is not the case right now.

As I mentioned earlier, globalization and economic integration generate inequalities. It is true that free trade and the opening up of markets generate wealth, as we have seen over the past 30 or 40 years.

Since the early seventies, world wealth and income have tripled. We do support the opening up of markets and the rules that were set, particularly through GATT, now the WTO, because they have

generated wealth. The world has never been richer than it is now. But the redistribution of this wealth is more uneven than it was 20 or 30 years ago. It is not due to an economical or physical factor. It is wrong to say that poverty is caused by rarity.

I just provided an example. When world wealth triples, we should not look for rarity to explain the growing inequalities between countries, between regions and even within our societies. Rather, we should look for social or political phenomena.

Since the early eighties, since the Reagan era, there has been a lack of will to set up plans to fight poverty, both in our societies and at the international level.

We do need free trade to generate wealth, but we also need measures to redistribute this wealth, so that it can provide levers to all the countries in the world for their economic and social development, and this is possible.

I will use Europe as an example. Even though most European countries are developed countries, they do not all have the same level of development, and in particular, they did not have it in the past. We need only think about Portugal, Spain or Greece 30 years ago, or even Ireland 10 or 15 years ago. These countries were clearly lagging behind the average European countries.

In the context of political construction, European construction, Europeans set up regional and structural development funds that are now producing results.

● (1530)

When we visit Portugal, Spain, Greece or Ireland, we realize that we are really in developed societies, which was not necessarily the case about 30 years ago. Thus, it is possible, if there is a political will, to eradicate poverty. Clearly, this will not happen overnight, but considering what was done in the past, which was giving up, it seems to me that this is not the right attitude and that we must instead move forward.

I take this opportunity to disagree with the image of the proverbial pie often used for domestic poverty problems as well as international poverty problems. People say “Before we can redistributing the pie, there has to be one in the first place”. We will make the pie as big as possible with free trade and we will then redistribute it among all the partners. If we really want to make the pie as big as possible, we must at the same time redistribute the wealth. Everybody has to be able to get his or her share of the pie.

This two-stage image of the pie being created and then served up is a false one. This is not the economic reality of things. The economic reality is that we are part of a system where, to produce, one must be able to sell. Taken on a national or global scale, this means that it is in our interest, the interest of developed economies, that there be purchasing power in southern hemisphere countries and that it be as widespread as possible. That is the logic of co-operation, which should accompany the current logic of globalization.

Government Orders

As I have already explained, there are no physical barriers to this. This poverty is not an inevitability of nature. It is truly the product of social and political phenomena.

In this context, I therefore think it extremely important that we rectify this state of affairs, that we once again have an aid program worthy of the name and that it have the necessary funding for these countries—I mentioned this earlier—because this is a well understood logic of what is known as globalization, but also for us right now.

I remind the House that 36,000 Canadian jobs depend on development aid. Of every dollar spent on aid, over 70 cents comes back to Canada. So, basically, when \$1 billion is spent, \$70 million comes back to Canada. In Canada, there are 50 universities and 60 colleges, including the college in Lanaudière, which benefit from aid program related contracts. Two thousand Canadian companies benefiting from aid related contracts are gaining prominence in certain markets and making enviable inroads internationally.

The motion we are moving therefore responds in a timely manner to a need which is critical and shared, I think, by all Canadians and Quebecers. In the medium and long term, it is the only logical approach if we are to avoid situations such as those we have witnessed in the last decade or so, from the slaughter in Rwanda to the events of September 11, or what went on in the former Soviet Bloc countries.

In conclusion, this international aid program should be part of a comprehensive set of measures to rectify the situation. Earlier, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay reminded the House of what the Tobin tax could do to civilize speculative transactions and create international development funds, and to bring about respect for fundamental rights.

We have initiated this debate in the House and we will keep it alive in the context of the Costa Rica free trade agreement. The Canadian government made no move to take the social, democratic and environmental dimensions into consideration in the bilateral trade agreements it signed.

I say again that Canadians and Quebecers would never have accepted to sign a free trade agreement with Pinochet's Chile. We now have a trade agreement with Chile; we should also have included clauses concerning fundamental rights such as human, labour and environmental rights.

I also believe that measures could be taken immediately to show that Canada is going in another direction. For example trade sanctions on Iraq could be eliminated for things that have nothing to do with military equipment or that cannot be used for a military build-up. As we know, over the last 10 years thousands of children died in Iraq because of those sanctions and Saddam Hussein is still in power.

More globally, I am calling for the restructuring of international institutions and the means at their disposition. It is obvious that the challenge we are facing is similar to the one that existed during the great depression of the thirties.

● (1535)

When Roosevelt launched his new deal, maintaining free enterprise while creating a series of institutions favouring a more equalitarian and national redistribution of wealth, recognizing among other things union rights, that lead to the situation we now know.

With globalization and the integration of economies, we have to recreate this new deal but this time on an international basis.

This is the debate, the issues raised by the motion that our colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay tabled in the House. If hon. members agree with me on the importance of the challenges we face, they should at least adopt this motion unanimously.

● (1540)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Joliette on his speech. I found it very well presented, particularly his comparison between the programs developed to cope with the depression in the thirties and the situation we are experiencing today. I believe this is an interesting comparison.

Last week I took part in a discussion with some one hundred students at the Cégep de la Pocatière. With me were church representatives, a sociologist and a teacher, an Arab originally from Morocco. The students were particularly interested in two things.

They asked many questions about the effectiveness of the strikes but also had many queries about short and long term international aid. They asked whether we were indeed playing our part correctly. I think the Bloc Québécois motion of today responds to this in part.

I would like to ask my colleague from Joliette whether what we have been seeing in terms of international aid since 1993-94 is not the application of the very same principle the Liberal government has applied within Canada?

There were many cuts to be made and they were made in the sectors where people are perhaps the least organized, the least capable of defending themselves, the least anxious to assert themselves, for instance the unemployed, who do not necessarily have big organizations to defend them.

As far as international aid is concerned, hon. members will recall that funding was cut to COSI, a Quebec agency consolidating all NGOs involved in international co-operation. Its funding was cut so much that it was less able to assume its mandate of organization and thus the public felt less inclined to invest.

Is it not in fact this principle that has led us to the conclusion that Canada is absolutely not pulling its weight as far as international aid is concerned? Unfortunately, other countries are doing the same, which is what has led to the terrorism we have unfortunately experienced, particularly on September 11.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: I thank the member for his question, which I find extremely relevant. What he is referring to is in fact a real danger.

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I do think that the Liberal government, and, I must say, the previous Progressive Conservative government, have both attacked social programs, which meet the needs of the most disadvantaged, the less organized people in our society.

It is rather surprising to see that, when governments want to restore fiscal health, an objective we agree with, it is always easier to cut employment insurance than it is to cut other programs. However, when the money is there, the Minister of Finance suddenly announces that he now has some fiscal flexibility and that he will put all the funds into the military and security when, in theory at least because that is what they told us, we never had the means to help the unemployed.

I think the situation is the same on the international level.

Nowadays, some regions of the world are totally disorganized and are unable to have an impact at the international level. Just think of Africa. Even private investors have lost interest in a good portion of Africa. It is not a question of exploitation. Those regions do not even have the privilege—I am being ironic here—of being exploited by multinationals anymore. The multinationals ignore them and the international community ignores them.

There is something dangerous in the current policies. Very sincerely, I wonder if we are not actually developing, through bilateral free trade agreement programs with South American countries, for example, trade agreements with countries that show some potential for us and letting other countries down.

It is in that sense that I feel the negotiation of a free trade area of the Americas, well understood, multilateral and with a concern for rights, is a much more interesting way to go than bilateral agreements.

What we could find at the end of the day is that Canada has bilateral agreements with a number of economically promising countries, like Costa Rica, but has let down other countries that seemed to be too hard hit to be worth salvaging.

Does Bolivia, for example, show some potential for Canada? I think that on a short term, the answer is no. Under a multilateral agreement, Bolivia would be included.

What concerns me now is that parts of the world are left out and are no longer of economic interest for the great powers, particularly the United States.

In that context, I feel we should give a very clear indication that, as Canadians and as Quebecers, we are concerned about the whole world and that we will commit resources at the level expected of us. The 0.7% of Canadian GDP is what we are being asked to contribute in international aid, and we will be able to reach that level within a few years.

• (1545)

Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the motion de Bloc Québécois has presented today. During this last month, we have had numerous debates on security, the economy and immigration.

However, we did not discuss international aid much. So, it is very important that we have this debate today.

[English]

I have always believed we must be a nation that measures our strength by the mouths we feed and the environment we protect. I have always believed that has been the value system of our country. It has been the value system of Prime Minister Pearson, Prime Minister Trudeau, Prime Minister Turner, the right hon. member for Calgary Centre and the present Prime Minister.

I am also excited today because the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for International Cooperation, who is here in the House, has stated that the government will be supporting the motion. This is more than a signal. It is a commitment to act immediately and deal not only with reviewing our international aid policy programs but to immediately inject some serious resources into the department if we are going to continue being a nation that measures our strength by the mouths we feed and the environment we protect.

On September 18, I believe it was, at the Canadian Club in Toronto, the United States ambassador to Canada gave his first public address after September 11. He opened his remarks by saying that on September 11 and 12 the United States had to reach out to leaders of many countries around the world in order to put together a coalition to deal with the terrorist actions that took place in the United States. He said that the United States did not have to reach out to Canada because the Prime Minister called him directly within minutes of the planes crashing into the World Trade Center. He said that the Prime Minister told him “We will be with you. Whatever you need we're there”.

I was sort of amazed because I never saw that statement of the ambassador of the United States reported in any of the print media. Obviously I saw that speech on television. I was amazed because I had seen so much media coverage saying that the government did not really get into the play right away, that it really did not step up to the plate and support our neighbours to the south yet here was the United States ambassador saying that the U.S. did not call Canada, that the Prime Minister called him within minutes.

From there the government went on to deal with many different issues, such as national defence, immigration, RCMP, CSIS, et cetera. While that was going on, an article appeared in the *Globe and Mail* about three weeks ago by Margaret Wentz. She said that the security files, the border issues and the immigration problems were being dealt with but that we had better start dealing with the human deficit. She said that we had better start dealing in parallel with what must be done to deal with the human suffering going on in Afghanistan.

Today we have a motion from the Bloc that deals specifically with that and I celebrate it.

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•(1550)

It is difficult for us who live with a very special standard of living in Canada and an almost cocoon-like existence in Ottawa to feel or imagine the pain of what is going on right now in Pakistan and Afghanistan. I have to believe that anyone who watched television last night and saw the children who were bombed inadvertently and the children out in the Afghanistan desert waiting for yellow bags to drop out of the clouds so they would have something to eat, would have to ask what we are doing as a nation.

I realize that within hours \$500 million, which was development money to Pakistan, was forgiven. I realize that we have given approximately \$160 million additional dollars to Afghanistan through various agencies, such as the United Nations, the Red Cross and other agencies working there, but I know every member in the House believes we must do more and we must do it immediately.

We are a nation that has been blessed with incredible amounts of resources in terms of food supplies. If there were ever a time for the great asset of agriculture and the food supply we have in Canada to be put into action and provide international aid, it was at this moment.

I appeal to my colleagues and officials that in the next few days we think outside the box. Let us figure out a way to take advantage of that strength. Let us work on making sure that Canada's history of being there and of reaching out to people in need continues. Let us use food and water as our instruments of peace, especially for the young people.

There is something else we can do. Last week a number of us had an opportunity to be present at a meeting that took place on the Senate side of this parliament. It was a meeting hosted by one of our senators for an organization called Olympic Aid. This organization was set up back in 1994 when Olympic Aid lent support to the war victims in the former olympic city of Sarajevo. Olympic Aid has gone on subsequently and worked in many different wartorn countries.

The guest speaker was the chairman of Olympic Aid, Johann Koss, a former gold medal olympic athlete himself, who donated his prize money from his olympic experience and challenged Norway and other countries. They have raised millions of dollars. For those who were not present at the meeting, coaches from all over the world go into wartorn countries, work with young kids and teach them how to play because they believe that every child has the right to play. While these young children are being distracted by war and every other difficulty, Olympic Aid coaches take a holistic approach through sport.

•(1555)

The coaches teach them lifestyle. They talk to the children about peace and working with each other. I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation to please appeal to the minister that we as a nation get behind Olympic Aid. There is no one in the House who would not support a child's right to play.

Where better to have Canada's presence, through sport and through coaches teaching and bringing hope to young people, than in a wartorn country like Afghanistan? So often we do not think of that

type of action being really important but the record will show that from Sarajevo on, wherever Olympic Aid went and worked with young children in wartorn zones the reactions and the hopes of those young people has created a lasting impact.

I believe that as a country we can make a very special contribution in that area, on top of our food and water and on top of all the other infrastructure and support systems that CIDA brings to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As we support the Bloc Quebecois motion today, I appeal to my colleagues in the executive of the government to ensure we have a very special presence in the lives of those young people who have a right to play and a right to a holistic development of their own beings. Let us make sure we support Olympic Aid.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I participated in this meeting with Olympic Aid. I do not think the problem is finding out which agency or NGO could manage this money.

The problem is we have a lack of involvement, not a lack of rhetoric. All members of parliament and all those who go abroad proclaim their commitment to helping the poor and the developing countries. We should go beyond words and take action.

Olympic Aid is a group that has been in existence for a number of years. It is not a new thing. How much, exactly, did Canada contribute to this organization?

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Mills: Mr. Speaker, I believe Canada put close to \$500,000 into Olympic Aid two years ago. I am not standing here today saying that \$500,000 is enough. I am standing here today saying that it may have to be 10 times that. It may have to be \$5 million.

I am not sure where the member is coming from, but in my remarks I said that we had to move immediately, not just on the fronts of food, water and infrastructure but that we should make sure the Canadian International Development Agency or the Agency for International Cooperation has the resources so that Olympic Aid and all those young Canadian men and women coaches who want to give freely of their lives and go into war zones, can work with young kids who have a right to play. I am saying that we as a parliament and as a government should support that action and not just talk about it but do it, and yesterday.

•(1600)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech, and I would like to ask him the following question.

During the weekend, I read that, according to the UN's estimates, close to 7.5 million people will need humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. The United States decided to give \$320 million, Europe, a little more than 300 million euros, and Canada announced that it would contribute \$16 million, when we have billions of dollars in surpluses.

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When I think about the employment insurance fund, which the government appropriated and which amounts to more than \$30 billion, I would like to ask my colleague how he can imagine all that. This is all very well, he made a very positive speech, and I thank him for it, but is he ready to make a commitment in the House that will force the government, in this budget or the next, to invest 0.7% of GDP, which is the level needed? That is the meaning of the proposal. Is he ready to spend that money in a reasonable period of time so that we can know how much time it will take for us to reach the minimum that is supposed to go to international aid?

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Mills: Mr. Speaker, I do not know today what the exact number is, but I have absolute confidence in the Prime Minister who is following in the line of Pearson, Trudeau and all those other great prime ministers who acted on international challenges like this. The Prime Minister said on September 11 that we would do what we had to do.

I am absolutely confident that when the budget comes in December, which is too long for me as I feel we should move on this file immediately, there will be resources there for international co-operation.

Canada cannot become a nation that measures its strength by the mouths it feeds, or the environment it protects or the children with whom it wants to work unless it spends some serious money. That has to happen and I believe it will.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear such comments but, as I said earlier, we need more than words on the part of the government, we need action.

Allow me to read the text of the motion once again so members can understand that humanitarian aid is not frivolous but is necessary and vital:

That this House calls upon the Parliament to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available to Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7 % of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

I also wish to quote paragraph 1 of the Vienna declaration and program of action on the occasion of the World Conference on Human Rights of 1993:

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their promotion and protection are the first responsibility of Governments.

It has been several years since the protection and promotion of fundamental needs of human beings were reaffirmed as the responsibility of governments but unfortunately the government has done very little in this regard. This is unacceptable.

The idea of allocating 0.7% of GDP to international aid was first raised in 1969. However, this principle was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations only in 1990. At that time, Canada voted in favour of this principle. Since then, our country's contribution, far from reaching this objective, has been reduced, from 0.48% in 1990 to 0.25% today. This is totally unacceptable. It is therefore easy to conclude that there is a wide gap between the government's intentions and its actions.

This is all the more shocking when we remember that the Prime Minister himself said in this House, on April 30, 2001, that our aid to developing countries would continue to rise. What actually did happen? The opposite, as we have just seen.

The Prime Minister also said that Canada as a country is among the best positioned to make rich countries aware of the needs of poorer countries. When will Canada itself become more aware?

There is a real concern in the country about the situation of refugees. The situation of the Afghan refugees is really tragic and something has to be done immediately. Military support is not enough in the current context. We have to ensure that innocent people are not paying for what their government has been doing, particularly because of the events that unite us in this fight against terrorism. This is in essence what Kofi Annan said in his September 27 press conference at the UN headquarters.

The United Nations takes the issue very seriously and we should do the same. We have a responsibility to help the UN, as we promised to do more than 10 years ago. We have to keep our engagement to offer humanitarian aid of 0.7% of GDP. What more evidence do we need?

The United Nations should lead the diplomatic, political and, above all, humanitarian actions since it is in a better position to evaluate the consequences of this crisis and not only the military actions.

And what is this crisis all about? There is a continuous influx of Afghan refugees in the neighbouring countries, in the wake of the military strikes. Over 2,000 Afghan refugees gathered at the Iranian border in the last couple of days, for a total of 4,000 refugees in this camp alone. The United Nations high commission for refugees is concerned for their security.

● (1605)

The high commission also fears that the Taliban will recruit within refugee camps. There are also grounds to believe that over 300,000 refugees are massing at the Pakistan border to escape the bombings, adding to the numbers already there.

It is worthy of note that, even before the military strikes, the Afghans were the largest refugee group in the world, surpassing by far those from Iraq, Burundi or Sierra Leone. The Afghan people are therefore in urgent need of our assistance, because the situation is only getting worse.

What are we to do? This is what the Bloc Québécois is proposing. In the absence of any clear federal policy on bilateral development assistance provided directly to foreign governments, it would be appropriate to put in place a specific plan aimed at attaining the objective of 0.7% of GDP, the target set by the UN.

Second, such a bilateral policy would ensure that funds are not misappropriated by regimes in which corruption is systematic.

Third, in the short term, we propose the injection of an additional \$3 billion into international humanitarian aid.

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Fourth, it is urgent to provide a positive response to the request for monetary aid from United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan, for \$US 585 million to deal with the Afghan crisis. It is unacceptable that Canada has so far contributed only \$16 million for all humanitarian organizations. Let us keep in mind that this is the \$16 million that had already been announced, not an additional \$16 million. It is still the same amount. This is totally unacceptable.

Fifth, in the long term, the Bloc Québécois believes that the root causes of the scourge of terrorism must be eliminated: poverty, despair and war. These are the real issues behind any conflict that leaves countless innocent victims in its wake.

Sixth, we must review our military objectives because destroying the organization of Osama bin Laden will merely eliminate the threat it represents. It will not eliminate terrorism, which will exist for as long as abject poverty continues to exist.

Seventh, the Bloc Québécois is of the opinion that the federal government must review its foreign policy, which emphasizes the commercial aspect of international relations. One must realize that human rights also need to be taken into consideration.

The Bloc Québécois demands that the federal government attain the 0.7% of GDP objective, as recommended by the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation and the North-South Institute. These are all organizations which can see the results of this crisis and bear witness to it.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, governments are mainly responsible for protecting the rights and freedoms of any human being. Canada, which boasts about being a rich and privileged country always willing to help poorer countries, has a duty and an obligation to take concrete financial measures in this regard.

The Bloc Québécois proposes concrete and feasible solutions. Now it is up to the federal government to take action to honour the commitment it made 10 years ago to Quebecers, to Canadians and above all to Afghan refugees.

Not long ago, during the debate on Bill C-36, I said that I hoped the funds allocated for the fight against terrorism would not be used only for sanctions but also to fight poverty, which would help solve the terrorism problem.

Today we have an opportunity to pursue this discussion and to see to it that our words are supported by concrete actions. Bombs are not enough to curb terrorism. We also need to provide support to the innocent population and to take concrete steps within the country.

The Bloc Québécois proposes short and long term solutions. Let us not kid ourselves, terrorism will continue to have a hold on disadvantaged nations as long as the root causes of this scourge exist and these nations remain without a voice to express their feeling of helplessness.

It is incumbent upon us to give them the tools they need to advance toward democracy, and that is what the Bloc Québécois is proposing.

● (1610)

Mr. Serge Marciel (Beauharnois—Salaberry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a comment.

Of course everybody is in favour of mother and apple pie. Today we are talking about Afghanistan but there are more than 40 million refugees on the planet, of which 2 or 3 million were Afghans. Those 40 million refugees represent more than the population of Canada.

As other countries do, the Canadian government sets aside part of its budget for humanitarian aid and assistance to developing countries. I wonder if we are not trying to outdo the others when we say That country gives that much, so Canada should give this much and that other country gives that much more, so Canada should give this much more.

Should we not seek a global solution? Should it not be everyone's responsibility to participate in humanitarian aid and not only a Canadian responsibility? The Americans are giving but are they doing so because of the war to improve their image? Maybe we should discuss that.

I wonder if our way of helping developing countries is appropriate. Maybe we should be contemplating another type of formula.

According to the figures, there are more than 500 million wealthy individuals on earth but 5 billion people are living below the poverty line. Wealth is being created but not shared. Instead of always asking countries to contribute according to their GDP, what other solution could we come up with?

Asking countries to do their share is still appropriate but maybe we should consider another way of going about it.

● (1615)

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: Mr. Speaker, I think there are very important NGOs that can take the money and distribute it properly.

The hon. member says that we are asking Canada to provide large sums of money and that other options must be available, but let us not forget that Canada made a commitment. It signed a document stating that it would comply with the objective of 0.7% of the GDP. Canada made a commitment to do so.

Now, out of the 22 donating countries, Canada ranks 17th. In 1995, it ranked fifth. This means that this Liberal government has reduced funding essential to developing countries.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the Chair and the hon. member for Châteauguay that I had the honour and the pleasure of welcoming 450 students who took part in the Cultivons la paix march in Trois-Rivières, on Wednesday as part of the international debate.

I hope to have time to read one of the 160 letters sent to me as the member for Trois-Rivières, and to the hon. member for Saint-Maurice, the Prime Minister of Canada. Let me read an excerpt from that letter:

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I know that the United States have suffered a tragedy on September 11 with the terrorist attacks that killed thousands of people. For this reason, you have decided to help the United States in the war that they are waging against a poor country. Think of all the innocent men, women and children who will die just because their religion or country is the same as that of the terrorists. There are already too many victims; do not add to the numbers.

There are other ways to come to an agreement than waging a war. Our country should help the good people in that country and all the others, so that they do not become desperate to the point of engaging in terrorism.

I am asking you to make peace and to help poor countries. War only breeds war.

I wonder if the hon. member could share his feelings about such a sensitive testimony by a young high school student from my riding.

Mr. Robert Laucôt: Mr. Speaker, that fits in with what I said when I spoke on Bill C-36, the anti-terrorism act.

I said then that the money the government was promising today goes only for military sanctions. No money is provided to fight destitution and poverty, the root causes of this war. As long as there is destitution and poverty, the freedom that we are advocating will never be, and the war which is raging now will never cease.

• (1620)

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to add my voice to those of my colleagues calling upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

There are at least two reasons for increasing the assistance to developing countries.

The first one is essentially ethical in nature. Canada is a rich country enjoying a certain measure of comfort and economic security which make developing countries envious. We in the western world are considered as privileged, rich people. The tragic events of September 11 have severely affected our economy and are forcing us to review our forecasts. But that is nothing compared to the situation that poor countries are faced with.

Does that mean that Canada must review the part of its budget concerning international assistance in order to increase it? Most agencies working in this area agree with us that Canada must do so.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that Canada has not lived up to its humanitarian responsibilities. It appears this government is not responding adequately to expressed needs.

Proportionally Canada ranks 18 out of 22 donor countries for international aid. We are among the least generous countries in the world. That was enough for the head of Rights and Democracy, Mr. Allmand, to urge the Canadian government to increase its foreign aid budget.

Let us take a closer look. Recently the United Nations asked for \$900 million Canadian to help some 7 million Afghans whose survival depends on international aid. So far just over 11% has been collected. Since September 11, Canada's share has reached \$16 million. We must do more.

Over the last decade, Canada has contributed \$150 million in aid to Afghan refugees and Afghanistan. In view of the prosperity

Canada has known over the past eight years, this is not enough, not to mention unacceptable.

In the meantime, other countries are showing us the way. In 1995, Canada ranked sixth in terms of international aid. However, last year the British government increased its aid by 35%. This increase was 22% in Belgium and Sweden, and 10% in the Netherlands.

According to media reports, even if our 2001-02 humanitarian aid budget were increased by \$45 million over last year to \$2.6 billion, we would still be investing 20% less than 10 years ago when the Liberals came to power. This is unacceptable.

Our participation has greatly deteriorated. We are lagging far behind, especially in view of the many years of prosperity we have experienced. The government might want to argue that since 1990 its efforts have been hampered by the need to make substantial budget cuts. However the Prime Minister himself acknowledged that Canada should do better in the future, but nothing concrete has been announced yet in this regard.

Of course the Minister for International Cooperation is reviewing Canada's processes with a view to providing more effective international assistance. But that does not change the facts. The government is miles away from the target set by the UN, which is a contribution of 0.7% of the GDP. By increasing the budget by \$1.6 billion over the next four years, we will increase our contribution to 0.35% only, or half our commitment as a signatory to the UN convention.

• (1625)

Concerning the events of September 11, Canada wishes to maintain its influence in the international arena. The Minister of External Affairs himself came to this conclusion. So, what is the government waiting for?

This minister admitted that Canada has a good reputation but that it cannot live up to its reputation. We all know that. Within the context of any realistic foreign policy, it is crucial to look at the gap that is growing between rich and poor in the world.

Let us not forget the facts: in 1993, the Liberals promised to contribute no less than 0.7% of Canada's GDP to international assistance. Seven years later, this same Liberal government is devoting only one-quarter of one per cent of the GDP to international assistance.

The need to increase this assistance is very real and urgent. In a few weeks, Ottawa will host an important meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The events of September 11 and their impact, particularly on the poor, will be at the heart of the discussions. The reduction of the debt of disadvantaged countries will surely be a focus of attention.

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It is high time that the government re-evaluated the situation. It has enough flexibility to increase its aid program. We have the necessary resources, since the surplus forecast for the end of the year is over \$10 billion.

But most of all, we have to increase international aid because many people are condemning the growing gap between the rich and the poor. We have to send a clear message. When we talk about fighting poverty, we can walk the talk.

It is important to act right now. Afghan women and children have been suffering the horrors of war for much too long and the bombing their country has faced since the beginning of the allied retaliation is putting them into a very difficult situation.

Allow me to come back for a moment to the reform of the Canadian International Development Agency. The planned reform is well accepted by the non-governmental organizations specializing in international co-operation but there are still some reservations.

The Canadian Council for International Cooperation, which represents more than a 100 non-governmental organizations, does not support the action recommended by CIDA, which would rather fully subscribe to the World Bank global approach. In fact, the council is concerned that this could lead to a reduction in the level of aid given to the most disadvantaged populations, thus diminishing the importance of Canada as a donor.

Canadian international co-operation organizations have expressed some reservations and are concerned about some major issues in the proposed reform:

CIDA would redefine its mission to include Canada's strategic interests...by extrapolating trade interests.

History tends to show that trade interests and human rights do not go together well.

Furthermore, the marginalization of civil society organizations, which have largely contributed to democratic development and the solidarity—

These organizations would simply implement policies set by governments.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund see the integration of poor countries into the market system as the remedy for the planet's ills. By contrast, many stakeholders in international solidarity do not share this vision. The Women's Network, among others, claims that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are responsible for the continuing poverty and its increase in the world.

In closing, the effect of increasing poverty is that the production of wealth is up against its opposite, the factors of destruction. Among these factors is terrorism driven by revolutionary ambitions of changing the system. What can we do? Fight at all costs the profitability of terrorism, which would have the effect of relegating world security and peace to a position of secondary importance.

●(1630)

We must thoroughly re-examine the contemporary world order and, thus, seek world justice. We must prevent the use of terrorism as a weapon for political purposes and, of course, eliminate poverty in the world.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, and I would like her comments on this.

Should Canada not re-evaluate its way of doing things in matters of foreign policy?

Clearly, the world has changed. Canada is not the only country that must change its foreign policy. The cold war has just ended. From now on, the only thing that matters is trade. The agreements signed in China are an example of this. We only take care of the trade aspect, without going beyond it.

Perhaps we should also talk of the human rights before making the decision to trade with another country. We could re-evaluate our approach and consider another foreign policy instead of insisting on signing a trade agreement and forgetting everything else. If we can make money with a country, we go ahead and trade with it.

Should we not consider something else? I give human rights as an example because there could be something other than trade. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this.

Mrs. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comment and for his question.

I agree with him completely that it is vital that foreign policy be reviewed and that there must be a greater focus on human rights. Everything would seem to be inter dependant.

We see this in CIDA's new reform. With all due respect for the minister, who is making a great effort, CIDA's policy must not be strictly trade oriented.

This opening across borders must not be allowed to fall into the hands of the large multinationals, which is what seems to be happening right now. We see this in the G-7 countries. In addition, there are non-government bodies infiltrating the policies of these countries. These are huge multinationals, which are taking over and having a very destructive effect on all the people of the world.

Some direction is vital. We must pay more attention to the gap between the rich and the poor and not neglect developing countries, which can be used by the large multinationals in trading activities which ignore human rights.

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember the speech by the member for Joliette, earlier this afternoon, when he stressed how important it was not only to send food to the Afghan people but also to teach them to feed themselves. This is an example that everyone knows.

I think we have to admit that the bottom line is that the international humanitarian aid effort by a number of countries has not amounted to much. This does not go back five or ten years, but a hundred years. For several decades now, Canada has participated in the international humanitarian aid effort.

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In the event of a budget increase, I would like to know if the issue of poverty in the world would be solved? Could the member confirm to us that this is strictly a budget issue, or is this a case of inappropriate action? In the event of a budget increase, should it be done through public organizations, or should we go through the private sector, which would give these people more opportunities to participate in the marketing process?

The member greatly criticized the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. I would like to know what the main lines of action will be in the years to come. What should we do to be more—

• (1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I have to interrupt the hon. member, if we want the hon. member for Drummond to answer.

Mrs. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, what I can say, is that it is also a question of money. I am not saying that it is only a question of money, but it is also a question of money, of distribution of wealth.

I am somewhat surprised to hear the member say that I criticized the IMF and the World Bank. I mostly wanted to question their current role and to warn the G-7 countries that are meeting to discuss world organizations. That was what I intended.

Yes, wealth needs to be distributed if we want to avoid situations like the one in Afghanistan right now.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): 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 Lakeland, National Defence.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

The best guarantee of a good quality of life is democracy, as the ravages of current wars demonstrate. What Afghanistan needs, more than short term humanitarian assistance, is a government that will respect human rights and treat women as equals, so that children will grow up happy and healthy.

It is easy for our friends opposite to ask for, and expect, the moon. They know they will never form a majority. The Bloc is asking for a substantial increase in the funds allocated for Canada's humanitarian assistance, particularly in the context of the military intervention in Afghanistan.

Governing is about planning. I believe Canada has an excellent track record in the world. Our country provides assistance through CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency. This organization is very active and generous with its aid because it is what must be done in terms of ethics, justice and human solidarity.

CIDA's approach is careful, which is good. CIDA's mandate is to support developing countries in reducing poverty and contribute to a safer world, one that is fairer and more prosperous.

As we know, this mandate was the result of broad consultations in 1995. In 1996, CIDA approved a policy on the reduction of poverty

aimed at encouraging countries to work on their self-determination rather than dependency.

My question today is this: should we link our foreign aid to our country's long term interests while acknowledging that extreme poverty must be eliminated?

For some years now there has been debate on the question of whether CIDA should concentrate on a limited number of countries. We are all aware of foreign policy pressures and pressure from the opposition for us to distribute our resources widely. The discussion is open. What countries take priority? Today we are told it is Afghanistan.

I think we as a government must ask ourselves this and seek to find an answer, saying that what must be done is to target our international aid so that it will be more efficient and effective.

This is not an easy answer to come up with. In the case of Afghanistan, CIDA has provided \$150 million over the past 10 years to help lessen the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons. These people have been hard hit by 20 years of conflict and 3 years of drought, which have devastated their country.

As a Canadian, I find it extremely painful to see the extent to which the people of that country are downtrodden and destitute.

It took the events of September 11 and the destruction of the twin WTC towers to focus world attention on Afghanistan. Why is that? Because terrorists can hide out there, with the complicity of the reigning Taliban regime.

What we have discovered in Afghanistan since the cameras of the entire world have been focussed on it, is that there is a reign of terror. Women have no rights. They can be beaten or stoned and their suffering is immense. A large percentage of the population is illiterate. I think that must suit the Taliban, as it makes it easier to control the population.

Canada provides Afghanistan with an average of \$12 million yearly. These funds go to support numerous NGOs and UN agencies. The breakdown is as follows: CARE, \$3 million; World Food Program, \$1.7 million; International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and so on. We have a whole list.

• (1640)

The minister responsible for CIDA recently announced a further contribution of \$10 million to help deal with the immediate needs of Afghan refugees and displaced populations in the area. This brings to \$16 million Canada's contribution for Afghan refugees since September 11, 2001.

I am pleased to learn that Canada spends about \$21 million a year in Pakistan and that the objective of the program continues to be the reduction of poverty. For example, we give \$12 million through a governance program to promote democracy at the local level and to increase public participation in local affairs. The emphasis is on women's participation.

Humanitarian aid is much more likely to succeed in poor countries if women are involved. CIDA deserves praise for having been doing so for a number of years.

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Let us not forget that Canada's wealth is not unlimited. Let us also not forget our own children. Poverty exists in our country too. There are children who go to school on an empty stomach. It was found that serving breakfast in some schools increased attendance by 30%.

Here poverty is more hidden but nevertheless very real. In Laval, on l'île Jésus, which is located in the riding of Laval East, there is a volunteer centre with a very long list of families that need food.

I am thinking of one of my constituents, Louise Beauchamp, the director of the St-Claude soup kitchen in Laval-des-Rapides. She knows about the plight of some residents of Laval.

In Saint-François, which is located in my riding, many seniors would not eat regularly if it were not for the visits of volunteers from the meal on wheels program.

In conclusion, it is true that our government is committed to investing more resources to strengthen democracies, justice and social stability in the world. We also want to reduce poverty and eliminate the debt of poor countries.

For example, we proposed a moratorium on the repayment of the debt of 11 of the 17 most indebted poor countries to allow them to invest in critical areas for their people.

It is not true that we are not taking action. We are. We are doing our best and we must prepare to help the Afghan people give themselves a government that will be representative of the population once the war is over.

I said at the beginning that democracy is the best option for people. Again, Afghanistan needs a government that will respect human rights and treat women as equal persons.

• (1645)

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a letter sent to me by a student in secondary I at the École secondaire des Pionniers, in my riding. The letter was about the conflict that is going on right now. I will then ask my Liberal colleague what she thinks of it. The letter reads as follows:

I am writing you this letter to suggest to you not to go to war but rather to give money to help people instead of hurting them.

You could give money to provide food, shelter, education, medical care and clothing to those poor Afghan refugees who had nothing to do with the events that occurred in the United States.

The other day, I saw a report about Afghan refugees. They have practically nothing to eat but bread. Winter is coming and many of them do not even have shelter. They do not have warm blankets. Two or three children die of hunger or of disease every day.

You could help them by giving them good food, water, medicine and a roof over their heads.

I hope this letter will make you think.

I wanted to read this letter to my colleague opposite. What does she intend to do? Does she think that her government's attitude, in terms of humanitarian aid, is satisfactory? And, finally, will she support our motion?

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard: Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure the hon. member on the other side of the House will be able to inform the person in his riding that the Canadian government has already gone a long way toward helping the people of Afghanistan. Indeed, we are

setting up all kinds of measures to relieve these people, whose government supports terrorism.

Therefore, I think it is very important that each and every member does his share to speak the truth in their ridings.

[English]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. According to the UN there are 7.5 million people affected by events in Afghanistan. I should not say affected by events because it is certainly not just the war; people in that country were in terrible poverty even before the war began.

If all of a sudden the federal government came up with the extra \$5 billion the Bloc is asking for, which of course is not very likely and would put us into a deficit position, is it not a fact that we would be unable to use a lot of that money very effectively in Afghanistan because of the war that is going on there? At this point we can help somewhat with refugee camps in Pakistan.

Even the UN has asked for \$900 million and other countries will be contributing. A lot of the money the Bloc is asking for obviously could not possibly be used in Afghanistan right now. The 0.7% target that it has suggested is really an arbitrary figure. It is a UN figure but it is quite arbitrary and in this context all that money could not possibly be used to help out in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member raised the real question. In fact it is easy for the Bloc to make that request knowing it will never form the government.

I think it is the Canadian government's responsibility to take things into consideration and to ensure that money is spent in a rational way, to keep our finances in order.

Poverty exists in this country too and it is very important to ensure the survival of our communities and, of course, to help the international communities facing wars and conflicts. However I believe we have to act in consultation with other countries and to avoid giving more than we can.

• (1650)

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay for his motion, which I would like to read to the House. The motion asks, and I quote:

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

I had the pleasure of acting as parliamentary secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation for two years, between 1999 and 2001. I witnessed the fact that the minister is dedicated to helping those in need and wanted to increase humanitarian assistance. Formerly, CIDA's assistance was mostly focused on building infrastructure, such as bridges and dams. More and more now, it is directed toward humanitarian assistance.

Last year the Minister for International Cooperation announced that her department and the Canadian International Development Agency would strive to direct their programs toward the four priority areas of social development: health and nutrition, basic education, the fight against HIV and AIDS, and child protection. I would like to congratulate the minister for this new direction.

I am pleased to support the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay in our common objectives for international co-operation. Through our Prime Minister, Canada has committed to fulfilling the development objectives for the millennium.

These objectives include access to education for all boys and girls around the world, reducing the number of children who die of preventable diseases, promoting gender equality and eliminating extreme poverty and hunger.

Canadians are concerned about what is happening to children on the planet. What is being done, or rather what is not being done now to protect these children will have a catastrophic effect on their lives and a severe effect on our own future.

The Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, takes these concerns very seriously. It has developed an action plan for children, children who require special protection, children who are often exploited, abused and discriminated against. Its plan is aimed at all boys and girls growing up in the poorest countries of the world and who are directly threatened by the most serious dangers.

With this plan of action, CIDA is launching a new and better approach, which places Canada on the frontline of world action for the protection of children. The agency does not limit itself to answering the needs of children who are usually forgotten, it also wants to ensure that the rights of those children are recognized and respected. Respect for the rights of children is the key to a real and sustainable change in the life of those children and communities. This is positive action for development, an good way to eliminate the root causes of poverty and exclusion.

Children who have to work and who are affected by war are those who benefit from the initiatives of CIDA for children protection. Those initiatives are a complement to the agency's efforts for all children in other areas, namely in health and nutrition, basic education, the fight against HIV and AIDS. CIDA has committed \$122 million for the protection of children under a five year action plan.

• (1655)

Since the world summit for children, which was held in 1990, Canada has taken the lead of the children protection movement.

We have also played a key role in the development of international agreements on the rights of children, whether it is for children forced to work, sexually abused children or children forced to become soldiers. When the government hosted the international conference on children affected by war last autumn in Winnipeg, we pioneered by inviting children to play an active part in the debates and decisions.

The government has also obtained the support of the retired Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire as a special adviser to the Minister for International Cooperation on the issue of children

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affected by war. The practical experience of the general will be most useful to CIDA, in terms of its program and will allow us to bring this question to the attention of the public.

With the House now debating our overall program of humanitarian and development assistance for countries less privileged than ours, including Afghanistan and other countries in southern and central Asia, we must ensure that the emphasis remains on children.

The future of societies torn apart by war lies in the ability of communities and parents to pass on to their children values such as peace, tolerance and respect for others, even if these children have often witnessed horrific acts. The success of these societies will have an impact on our own safety and stability. These people deserve our support and our assistance.

Canada should be able to provide greater support for this sort of initiative. This is why we will be supporting the motion before us today.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc mentioned a letter received from a constituent. I want to go on record as saying that I got a number of e-mails from Yukoners who also supported the provision of grain and other support to the people of Afghanistan and that region. I am sure they will be happy today hearing the support from the government and many members of parliament. We could continue providing that aid and increasing it in the future so that we remove some of the root causes of poverty and help those who are most destitute.

Would my colleague care to comment on anything he did not get a chance to say in his speech?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Yukon. What the member opposite brought, a letter from a pupil in his riding, is very apropos since we are speaking about childhood.

We have witnessed some truly heart-rending events, which began on September 11. And now we have television images of what is going on in Afghanistan. Canada's children are seeing these images and talking about them with their friends. Classroom discussions are being held and this is as it should be.

Unfortunately the events now unfolding in Afghanistan are shocking. They bring tears to the eyes. We see children in distress, children dying of hunger.

I appreciate the fact that our children are sending us letters telling us that they want peace. I find this extremely promising for the future. One day these children will grow up and they will have intestinal fortitude. They will want to help their fellow citizens, not just those in their municipality, in their province and in their country, but around the world.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief, although I would like to say more. First, I simply want to say that people on all sides of the House are shocked by the poverty in Afghanistan. It is truly a crime.

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My question has to do with something the member said early on in his speech when he talked about poverty around the world and the people affected by it.

Does the member think it is appropriate that Canada still levies tariffs on least developed countries for things like textiles and food, remembering that textiles and food are often the only things these countries can produce?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is very pertinent. I have no doubt that the government is now looking at this.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to take part in this debate. I believe it is appropriate at this time to remind the House of the content of the motion moved by the Bloc Québécois and which seems to be well received by the majority of government members. I believe the mere fact of reading it might convince people like the member for Laval-Est, who did not seem to be swayed by our arguments. The motion reads as follows:

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

Since the beginning of the day we have seen that the government supports this proposal. I believe it is important for this debate to take place today. It is equally important to have firm support. This motion is votable. In this regard, the Bloc Québécois played its part well in ensuring that the House would vote on this issue. We tried to get the government to hold a vote on our military involvement but we failed so far. However on the issue of international aid there will be a vote. We will be able to see where people hang their hat.

I believe the Canadian government must make amends in this matter. According to an OECD report, Canada ranks 17th out of 22 OECD countries contributing to international aid. We only contribute 0.25% of our GDP to international aid whereas Denmark's share is over 1%, the Netherlands, 0.82%, Sweden, 0.80%, Norway, 0.80%. A lot of smaller countries invest much more in this area than Canada.

We know that international aid does not only mean aid for refugees and emergency assistance. It also means aid for developing countries so that they too can create wealth and give a future to their youth. Very often it can be an important tool for preventing situations like the terrorist attacks we witnessed recently.

We cannot say for sure that if humanitarian aid had been higher those attacks could have been prevented. However it can be said that when wealth is distributed more adequately, situations like those terrorist attacks can be prevented. Humanitarian aid can help educate people, give them some hope, a chance to have a future. Then they are less receptive to desperate arguments like those expounded by people working for terrorist groups.

The position of the Bloc Québécois in the present debate is also the position of Canadian non-governmental organizations such as the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internatio-

nale, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation and The North-South Institute. These three associations represent many NGOs and wholeheartedly request that we re-establish the 0.7% objective as soon as possible, just like the Bloc Québécois is requesting.

Since 1993 the Government of Canada's contributions to international aid have dropped considerably. I think we can draw a parallel with this and how we treat the poorest and less organized in our society.

Since 1993 we have also witnessed significant cuts in employment insurance. We have done the same thing when it comes to international assistance. These are two spheres where people are less organized and less able to defend themselves. Some years ago funding for ACCO, an organization that raised public awareness about international assistance, was cut. Because of these budget cuts people may have become less aware of this reality in the end. Today that decision has come back to haunt us. We must consider the situation and take real action.

On Wednesday of last week I spoke with a 100 or so students from the Cegep de La Pocatière. There was also a representative from the diocese, a sociologist, a professor from an Arab state and a professor of political science. The questions these young people asked made quite an impact on us. They were concerned about the real effectiveness of the military strikes and their effect on civilian populations but also by the whole issue of international assistance.

● (1705)

Right now, when we are asked whether it makes sense to drop humanitarian assistance over mine fields, we have to say that some blunders in the system should be avoided. At least we can make up for this with medium and long term international assistance by substantially increasing our budget.

The Minister of Finance has said that he will table a budget by early December. While he tells us that security requirements are very important, he should at the same time seriously consider a significant increase in our humanitarian assistance budget.

Our assistance budget stands at 0.25% of the GDP. If we are to send a clear message, it is very important that we set a goal of 0.7% of the GDP and that, as early as December, we say that, over the coming year, we will do something significant and increase substantially our budget so that this will be felt in our various assistance programs. A new attitude is needed from the Canadian government. That way, we will really fulfill our role and we will be in a position to take to task other G-7 countries, which may be the ones not fulfilling their role in this matter.

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Right now there are very important problems. We have heard what the hon. member for Trois-Rivières had to say. Children are dying. They will not make it through the winter. Our short term assistance should be increased but so should our long term assistance too.

We will have all the time to discuss the most efficient ways to bring our assistance to those in need. What kind of organization should be in charge? Is CIDA as efficient as it should be? Should we be developing different forms of assistance? These are questions we should ask but those in charge should have adequate means to reach the goals our society has set for itself.

Those actions have not been adopted just out of charity. The member for Joliette spoke earlier of the distribution of wealth in our society. I think it is a splendid and very significant picture. After the Great Depression of the thirties in the United States there was the new deal. It was found that social programs could be created in order to establish a safety net and to ensure that those who were the most affected during a recession or economic slowdown would be protected. These programs were efficient. In the following decades they allowed us to avoid overly negative impacts, rough economic situations and slowdowns.

At the international level, we have to ask the same question. We have to adopt as quickly as possible solutions that will give hope to people in order for those who are in complete deprivation to make it out. At the same time we probably should continue to search for a way to eradicate terrorism through all the means of action possible.

In the meantime, to avoid the development of terrorism, we have to intervene to eliminate at the source the conditions on which it relies: ignorance, illiteracy, destitution, under development. If we eliminate all these conditions and gradually succeed in improving the situation there will be fewer extreme events such as the one we unfortunately witnessed on September 11. This situation did not begin on that day, but is rather the result of an anger which, albeit unacceptable, could be explained globally by an unfair distribution of wealth. We could play an important role to correct it.

In closing, we need a global strategy to act on every aspect of terrorism. One of the ways in which we can play our role as a rich country, is to commit important additional funds.

This is what the Bloc is calling for today. I hope that tomorrow, when we vote, this motion will draw a large consensus which will translate into important new funds in the next budget in early December. That is when we will see if the government has really understood our message.

• (1710)

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate because last Friday I experienced a particular situation in my riding.

I had the pleasure of meeting with four students from the Les Pionniers high school. Two are first year students and the other two are enrolled in the IEP, the International Education Program. Their names are Cynthia Lacourcière, Kate Denis, Mathilde Bélanger and Mathieu Hubert, the latter being the president of his class. They were accompanied by Mr. Gérard Garceau, with the campus ministry.

They wanted me to know that 450 students had gathered on Wednesday, October 24, and marched in the streets around the school to demonstrate under the theme "Let's Cultivate Peace".

That meeting was not only very moving but also very instructive for me. All the more so since first year students wrote some 160 letters, half of them addressed to your humble servant, the member for Trois-Rivières, and the other half addressed to my colleague for Saint-Maurice and Prime Minister of Canada.

These letters show that not only are those students very much aware of and sensitive to the situation, but they are also, like the rest of the people in Quebec and around the world, traumatized and concerned, particularly by Canada's participation in the war. That is especially obvious in the letters addressed to the Prime Minister.

The key themes are "no to war", "no to armament", "no to vengeance", "no to violence", and "yes to peace and humanitarian aid", as can be seen in the letters I will quote in the time I have available.

While all of course focus on the same themes, they are all different at the same time.

I will start with this one, a poem in which the student expresses an opinion.

Over there in Afghanistan, the sky lowers darkly.
Bombs rain down on the houses.
Scarcely a breath of wind
Stirs the smoke that billows through the smoldering streets.
The Americans smolder still with hatred
While people are dying,
Even children, innocent children.
They cannot go to bed and dream sweet dreams,
Dreams that the winds of hope may be blowing when they awake.

Another letter:

Dear Mr. Rocheleau:

I am writing to share my opinion with you. I feel we ought not to join in the war; instead we should be sending people to help the children who are dying of hunger, to care for all those in need of care, and provide them with drinking water and other necessities to build peace between us.

My friends and I are not in favour of this war. Let us say no to violence and war.

Another letter reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Rocheleau:

This is to express my point of view on what is taking place in Afghanistan. I do not want Canada to participate in an offensive, but rather to help people suffering from the consequences of war. I think we should, amongst other things, send medicine and food to help those who are suffering.

Thank you for your patience.

The following letter clearly has a philosophical tone:

Dear Mr. Rocheleau:

Human beings often brag about what they do or what they invent. They describe themselves as the most intelligent living creatures on our planet Earth. However, seeing all that is going on right now, I think that they are slightly off, because when I look at the way animals and plants behave, I find they are more caring for their own kind than humans.

If we gave more thought to our unique planet, we would realize that we are turning it upside down.

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I think that man was not created to fight individuals of neighbouring continents but to pursue good deeds.

This is why, in the wake of the events of September 11, I ask you, as a human being, to get involved for the sake of humanity rather than for its suffering, because I tell myself that war can make more innocent victims than guilty victims.

I thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

● (1715)

Another letter reads:

I am writing to you, Mr. Rocheleau, to express my disagreement with Canada's participation in the war against Afghanistan. We can send troops, but they should go not to kill but to take humanitarian assistance to the Afghans, who are dying of starvation, or to protect them from the American bombing.

This does not mean hurting the United States, but helping them to hit their targets and not civilians. And even if they destroy Osama bin Laden's training camps, bin Laden will retaliate with other terrorist attacks and the army will counter-attack and on and on it will go.

In any case, I hope that you understand why I do not like the war. I also hope that this will change your mind on this decision.

Here again, the letter is in poem form:

In Afghanistan far away,
The war gets worse every day.
Some are dying
Others crying.

Send in soldiers
But not to fight.
Send them to help,
Do what is right,
And never regret.

For if you send us
The losses would stagger.
Think of the death
And all who would suffer.

The greatest dream can hardly come true
Is peace in the world for me and for you.
But all of us must do what we can
To bring about this noble plan.

I would remind the House that these are grade eight pupils.

Here, I have a letter that sums up the whole issue perfectly.

I am sending you this short note, Mr. Rocheleau, to tell you this : no to war, no to arms build-up, no to violence.

I am in favor of humanitarian aid for Afghanistan. War has never benefited anyone. Our neighbours to the South should learn tolerance, that if we disagree with them, it does not mean we are against them.

War always brings misery and starvation, and children are the ones who pay the price. I was not put on this Earth to see such misery, but to live an active and peaceful life in harmony with God and my fellow human beings, to respect the other races and religions, not to kill or interfere with other people's liberties, trying to make it work the American way.

What is good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander. We are put on this Earth to be different from one another; life would be boring if we were all alike.

It goes without saying that I am truly happy to read these testimonies in the House of Commons. Many of them, 160 letters in all, remind us, by the candor of their authors, that children hit it right on the head. I believe these letters speak for themselves. I was really impressed by their quality, sensitivity and interest. When we have

doubts about the next generation, about the meaning of collective life and about the responsibilities of citizens, reactions to such an event give me hope for the future.

I will read one last testimony that is more blunt. The writer expresses his ideas in a more straightforward manner. He says:

The attack where a plane crashed into the World Trade Center was masterminded by bin Laden who was trying to provoke us and show us he wants war. But we are stupid enough to wage war against a third world country.

I think this sums up quite well what the government, cabinet and the Prime Minister should consider. I am very proud to see that our youth is in sync with the people of Quebec when it comes to sensitivity.

The latest polls show it: the concerns of Quebecers are quite different from those of the rest of Canada. Again that shows that a sovereign Quebec would have a different voice in the community of nations at the United Nations and humanity would benefit from it.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville.

I am pleased to join in the debate on the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois calling upon the federal government to “review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in light of military intervention in Afghanistan” and to raise the level of ODA to 0.7% as recommended by the United Nations.

Let me begin by noting that my colleagues on this side of the House support the motion. The events of September 11 have made it crystal clear that Canada and the developed world have an obligation to assist those nations whose populations continue to live in abject poverty. Poverty and its consequences are threats to the stability and the security of nations and to those who are directly impacted by it.

As the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and many of the representatives on this side of the House have stated, we will use not only diplomatic and other means but also humanitarian assistance in the fight against international terrorism. It is ever more important to strengthen our resolve to promote sustainable development in every corner of the developing world.

We must help developing countries to provide their populations with access to education and health care, promote and protect rights of children and women, fight HIV-AIDS and eradicate malnutrition, and we must help and encourage them to develop practices of good governance and capacity building which are so necessary for building peaceful and stable democratic societies.

The impoverishment of peoples affects us all. Troubling social realities in one country today can become a challenge for all of us tomorrow. CIDA cannot afford to renege on commitments that Canada has made at UN conferences and in international agreements aimed at addressing issues in international development. This is even more relevant and true in time of crisis and war, as in the case of Afghanistan.

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I would like to comment briefly on CIDA's assistance to Afghanistan and on development assistance in the context of HIV-AIDS.

For over 30 years Canada has been working with its international partners and civil society to provide assistance to peoples of the developing world. In recent years, deficit management and fiscal restraints have reduced Canada's ODA envelope, making it impossible to reach the UN target of 0.7% of GDP.

As the member of parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, I, with so many others who work with me in the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, together with all of our NGO colleagues, have been pressing for Canada to reach that 0.7% of GDP.

However, CIDA and the Government of Canada are taking steps to turn around this trend and to focus development aid in times of limited resources on urgent areas. In the last federal budget, ODA funding increased to the tune of \$435 million over three years, providing a clear signal of a return to long term growth in a generous, measured way. The Prime Minister is determined to work with other countries in the G-8 to see poverty reduction and development issues addressed at the next G-8 summit here in Canada.

CIDA has implemented its "Social Development Priorities: A Framework for Action", which aims to strengthen resources devoted to basic education, health and nutrition, HIV-AIDS and child protection. The agency's cross-Canada consultations to review the government's international aid policy and to strengthen aid effectiveness are testament to the government's commitment to move the development assistance agenda forward.

The situation in Afghanistan is one of urgency. We know that the country was in need of international assistance prior to the military interventions. Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries, which has been devastated by drought and civil war.

• (1725)

The UNHCR and the international Red Cross have warned us that, in light of the present crisis in Afghanistan, they are facing one of the largest humanitarian crises. Thousands of Afghans are internally displaced and are refugees. They are in need of the basic necessities of life. The people of Afghanistan do not have the protection of a government. They are in this situation due to no fault of their own.

I am pleased that Canada is one of the nations at the forefront providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Over the past 10 years CIDA provided close to \$160 million which has helped to provide food and shelter for Afghans, remove deadly landmines, fight the spread of disease and educate children, especially girls.

Canada has contributed \$16 million to the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. With this funding, we are helping to provide food, basic health care, adequate shelter and safe water. CIDA is working in partnership with the world food program and through Canadian NGOs, such as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, CARE Canada and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the Afghani people.

It boggles the mind to listen to members of one opposition party talk about waste in CIDA and question the need for CIDA's intervention. Everyone would agree that development assistance helps countries on the road to self-sufficiency and economic prosperity. It is important that any type of foreign aid must be sustainable or else it becomes ineffective over time.

We can ensure that the quality of aid is effective over time by setting benchmarks and targets that would help to determine progress and improve conditions. We must put strategies in place that would encourage countries to meet the needs of their citizens.

Economic prosperity cannot be achieved among developing countries unless there are strong social policies in place. These policies must address the root causes of poverty and the systemic reasons that thwart development.

Encouraging developing countries to meet their own social priorities is most desirable in providing development assistance. Forgiving the debt of heavily indebted poor countries is a positive step in this direction.

I remind members that the Government of Canada was first among the G-8 partners to commit \$40 million to the heavily indebted poor countries trust fund in 1999 and has followed through in the 2000 budget with an additional \$175 million. As of January 1, 2001 Canada has stopped collecting debt payments from heavily indebted poor countries. They were able to use debt relief savings productively and were developing poverty reduction strategies. This is the way we have to go.

Let me also remind the House that there is a great emergency on our hands that cannot be ignored. That emergency is the spread of HIV-AIDS. The Government of Canada, through CIDA, has been responding to the HIV-AIDS pandemic which threatens to thwart the economic development of developing countries. Fighting HIV-AIDS is one of CIDA's key development priorities.

Last June the United Nations drew our attention to the problem facing the world when it convened a special session on HIV-AIDS and our Prime Minister and members of the G-8 addressed the matter in Genoa. AIDS is wiping out decades of hard won development gains. Thousands of children are being orphaned, threatening the economic survival of nations and communities. The spread of HIV-AIDS is undermining investments in education and human resource development.

Canada is working hard in the fight against HIV-AIDS. The federal government is quadrupling development assistance funding for HIV-AIDS through CIDA's HIV-AIDS action plan. We are at a turning point in the fight against this terrible disease. Now is the time for a substantive and renewed commitment from the entire global community and Canada must be there. Canada is moving forward in its aggressive efforts to address this pandemic through international co-operation.

Government Orders

We therefore support today's motion because, while Canadians can be proud of their country's support for sustainable development, poverty reduction and education of children, it is clear that we can do more.

● (1730)

Our communities expect us to do more. Our communities expect us to reach 0.7% of GDP. I support the motion at this time and ask colleagues from all sides of the House to focus on our responsibility to the rest of the world. As Canadians, we are expected to stand up and be counted.

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find myself in a rather unusual situation as a politician because I can actually speak with some knowledge on this issue.

I congratulate the House for entertaining this motion because we have had approximately 45 to 50 hours of debate in the House dealing specifically with the coalition initiative against terrorism. That is an important item that needs to be discussed. However today's motion brings a semblance of balance to the debate.

If our actions are targeted toward the terrorists, it is incumbent on the partners in the coalition to make sure that they are there on the ground to make sure the civilians in those countries understand not only by language but by action that this is what we intend to do.

I congratulate my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay for sponsoring this motion. I am comforted that someone at that tender age takes this issue seriously because it is an extremely serious issue. Global poverty is something that we must come to grips with sooner or later. The sooner we do it, the easier the solution will be on everybody.

The reason I prefaced my comments by saying I thought I could speak to this issue is that I was a teacher in my former life and spent a number of years overseas on international projects that CIDA funded. I will target my remarks to those experiences because I get concerned when I hear criticisms about Canada's international development aid policy. I believe that with the experiences I have had I have a right to address some of those misconceptions.

I spent two years on a project in Ethiopia in the 1980s. To bring credibility to my argument, the Liberals were not in power at the time. The development staff on the ground and the embassy personnel were of the highest quality in terms of making sure that Canadian taxpayer money was spent efficiently and in a manner consistent with the objectives and the values underscored in CIDA's documents.

One of the issues that we focus on in international aid as Canadians is the notion of women and development. We have learned that if we are to get at the root causes of poverty, treating the causes as opposed to the symptoms, we must ensure that the women in the country are engaged in any solution that is being proposed. That is an oversimplification, but money spent to increase the capacity of women in countries is money that manifests itself in a higher standard of living for children. Canada makes sure that the projects it undertakes address the issue of women and development. I encourage the government to continue to make that important intervention.

One of the things that struck me in Ethiopia was that a lot of the aid was very politicized. Ethiopia is a strategically located country. Over the years it was important to this country or that country and a lot of money went to Ethiopia. I saw \$80,000 tractors at the side of the road because there was no gasoline. One of the things that Canadian aid focuses on is sustainability. We have to be able to sustain development otherwise when the aid runs out the project runs out.

One of the most successful projects I saw was a German one. It developed a very simple prototype for an ox pulled cart based on the rear wheel assembly of a Volkswagen bug because there were thousands of these cars littering the landscape. These were built by the Cubans, interestingly enough. There were no spare parts and no gasoline to run these cars. Sometimes low technology must be used that matches the technology of the country.

Before I leave Africa, one of the proudest moments I had was when I went to one of the water wells and saw it identified as a Canadian project. Another aspect of Canadian development aid relating to the root causes of health is clean water.

● (1735)

Every Canadian can be extremely proud of the fact that we have drilled literally thousands of wells and maintained and trained local personnel to maintain clean water supplies so that the children who drink the water are getting clean water and are not getting viruses and other things from their water which in most cases would end up killing them.

I then spent three years on a CIDA project in Hungary. This was a different situation because one of the things that happened in that country after the fall of the communist economic system was that lawyers previously employed by the state were essentially told to hang out a shingle and make a living. The Canadian government, through CIDA, got involved in training lawyers, and one might ask what would be the reason for that? The reason quite simply was that if we were to open up eastern Europe as a potential market for Canadian companies, then we needed a system and a legal framework there that would minimize risk to Canadian companies.

When I started working on that project I thought it was a tremendously useful strategy that the Canadian government had undertaken. Someone mentioned earlier a simple phrase that rings true: the Canadian development assistance strategy is one where we would rather teach someone to fish as opposed to giving them a fish. As for people who try to suggest in my presence that Canadian foreign aid is just buckets of cash being thrown around with no accountability, I can tell members that those people have had no experience with foreign aid projects, because the accountability measures and processes that are in place are extremely tough.

We focus on prevention. We focus on capacity building. We focus on making sure that women are included in these development projects because that speaks to their sustainability. We are very concerned when looking at the root causes of poverty. One of the issues that Ethiopia faced was that with such dire poverty any cooking going on was being done through cutting down trees for fuel. The deforestation of the area around the city when the big rains would come in August was causing tremendous problems with what arid or tillable land was left. It was Canadian engineers who went over and started setting up systems of pumps for irrigation and workings and having agricultural workers out in the field talking to people about the importance of not engaging in that kind of activity.

As a final point I would also like to say that in my personal experience one of the other advantages to international assistance is that the people who are engaged in it learn just as much as the people at the other end. One of the things that Canada has been criticized for is that we are kind of an island within ourselves and it is very difficult for Canadians to travel. International assistance experiences for students, exchange programs between various universities and faculty exchange programs which CIDA funds are extremely beneficial, not only to the country we are working with but also to the Canadians who participate in these projects.

I will conclude with that point, but to underscore it I want to say that Canadians can be extremely proud, not only of the people we have employed in our international development agencies but also of the direction, the scale and scope of these projects. I absolutely agree with the motion from the Bloc. It is very timely. It is a matter of ramping up to that figure, which is also contingent on the growth of the economy. That is one of the downsides to using GDP as a measure, but I think there is a definite payback for engaging in these types of activities. I would suggest that in terms of getting a bang for our buck, Canada is one of the leading countries in making sure that the money is spent both efficiently and effectively. We can all be very proud of that.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has just spoken of pride and the effectiveness of the current aid programs.

Nobody can be against virtue, but I have a question for him concerning today's debate. Speaking of pride, is the hon. member proud that Canada ranks 17th out of 22 donor countries?

Hon. members will understand that this is very damaging for Canada's reputation. Does the hon. member believe that the finance minister will pay heed to this motion and, in his next budget, earmark additional funds for international cooperation?

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member is not suggesting that we as Canadians are not proud of the efforts of our international development agencies. It is contingent upon all of us to take steps forward on this file.

The purpose of my speech was primarily aimed at some of the people who today tried to criticize the policies of Canada as somehow being spendthrift, out of control and a waste of money.

Government Orders

That is not the case at all. If the hon. member is suggesting that we need to increase our efforts in this area, I agree. However I would also suggest to him that that has to be a non-partisan effort. Anybody who feels that way has to work together to try to accomplish that.

We can see from today's debate that sometimes we are up against some pretty harsh critics. Sometimes we are up against people who have convinced themselves that international development aid is what we want and we kick the crumbs to some other country. I would suggest that there are tremendous opportunities. A rising tide tends to lift all vessels.

I know from the past speeches of the hon. member and his gestures in the House that he feels very strongly about this issue. I look forward to working with him to move this item forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is in my capacity as Bloc Québécois member on the Subcommittee on Human Rights that I am taking part in this debate, which is closely related to human rights.

In my opinion, it is always good to reread the motion by my colleague for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay:

That this House call upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

First, I wish to commend the hon. young member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay who proposed this motion. I have known him for five years and I think this is very representative of the work he has been doing so far. This hon. member speaks with generosity and always for the people in his riding.

I also appreciated the approach of our colleague from Trois-Rivières, who presented here in parliament the thoughts of students, of young people about this whole issue as well as the questions they are asking themselves.

A few weeks ago I was invited by a secondary 5 class and an Amnesty International group at a high school. Young people are very concerned about the current crisis. Everyone is concerned, including young people. They are very interested in this issue and they are very worried. The comments made by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay accurately reflect the feelings of the members of his generation. I continued my consultation with teachers and many other people.

This morning, the results of a poll—I will not go into the details—indicated that Quebecers see the Afghan conflict from a slightly different perspective than other Canadians do. I am not surprised.

Let me be clear. We supported a response, a reaction by the Americans, under the aegis of the UN, to punish those responsible for the September 11 attacks and their accomplices. I think we should be clear on this.

Government Orders

All this brings us to the source of the problem. In my opinion, the growing gap between poor and rich countries is at the root of this problem. We must be careful not to let the current conflict degenerate and become a terrible ordeal for civilians, not only in Afghanistan, but also elsewhere in the region, and even at home. A victim, whether in the United States or in Afghanistan, is a victim nonetheless. We must never forget that.

The reason I reread the motion earlier is precisely because it puts us in the context of the current crisis. Let us not forget it. Of course the pre-September 11 humanitarian assistance is an altogether different issue but there are people and NGOs who are meeting. They were even consulted by the minister. They told her as recently as September 6, before the attacks, that they wondered about the international humanitarian assistance provided by the Canadian government. They felt that the aid provided was increasingly governed by a commercial or economical framework or vision.

Coming back to Afghanistan for example, this country has been suffering the horrors of wars for at least 20 years. People do not know where to go so they keep moving. Even before September 11 this country had the greatest numbers of refugees of all, with over 2.5 million people displaced.

• (1745)

Since September 11 at least 500,000 more people have been internally displaced or have fled to neighbouring countries to be safe. They have to protect themselves not only from the Taliban but also from the bombings. More and more misfires are reported. A victim, whether in Afghanistan or anywhere else in the world, remains a victim.

I was sitting in my office this afternoon getting ready for my speech when I overheard some MPs talking. I do not want to tell you who they were but I can tell you that what they said worried me somewhat. Members from the other side were saying that we could perhaps question the international and humanitarian aid to which Canada currently contributes. As if it were very significant.

One of the problems is that Canada's international assistance is dwindling. At 0.25%, it is far from the 0.7% target. It is actually less than half what former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson had proposed for all countries. At the time, OECD countries had agreed to move in that direction but since the Liberals took office, we have been moving in the opposite direction, with declining assistance. Some members are wondering if we should continue in that direction while others suggest it is not worthwhile.

I am in favour of the most urgent humanitarian aid. Let us take for example a person whose life is in danger, whose health is threatened or who is hungry. Maslow taught us that when primary needs are not satisfied is not the time to consider development projects. How can a person think of development projects when his life or the lives of his children or his neighbours are in danger?

Since I am a member of the Standing Committee on Human Rights, I would like to read once again a few sections of the charter of human rights that was adopted by the UN more than 50 years ago. It is not asking too much to read this again.

Article 1 says, and I quote:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

We must ask ourselves whether there is still a spirit of brotherhood in this conflict. There are 30 articles in the charter. For example, Article 3 states:

Everyone has the right to life—

This is essential when we are threatened with death by bombs or by people pursuing us. I go on:

—liberty and security of person.

Article 13 says:

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

When people are forced to flee their residences, I do not think they do it freely. They do it to save their lives. When people cross borders they do it because they are threatened.

Article 14 says this:

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

It is a right. People are given that right, but they also need food and medical care.

Article 22 says this:

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

An underdeveloped country may not have the same ability to provide foreign aid as another country.

Article 25 says this:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability...or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

I wanted to remind members of that. Human rights are fundamental but too often we have a tendency to forget that. We can ask ourselves why. Yes, bilateral aid from Canada or any other country must be conditional on respect for human rights.

• (1750)

This is the meaning of the motion and it is in this context that the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay is presenting the motion. International aid would be sent out through the UN, the international organizations of the UN, the UN High Commission for Refugees and international agencies accredited by the UN, therefore, we could help the countries within an independent framework.

Over the weekend I discussed the issue with many people of all ages in my riding. This is what I came out with. Why would Canada not contribute as much to humanitarian aid, and we are talking about 0.7%, as it contributes to the military for participation in the offensive? We do not disagree with offensive action but we should always give as much to build and to save lives as we give to destroy a country.

Government Orders

• (1755)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take only two or three moments. It might seem a bit out of the ordinary for a minister to rise during questions and comments. Usually a minister rises for a speech or to state a government position.

But it is certainly not the case today. I do not intend to state any policy but I do wish to take part in this exchange with colleagues, and I do so with pleasure.

I listened to speeches in the House from my seat and a bit earlier today from my office. On the whole, I commend all members in the House for the excellent quality of their speeches today. I did not agree with all that was said but I think most of the debate was very interesting.

Without criticizing other debates, I must say that today's debate was more interesting and probably less partisan than some other opposition day debate, if I may say so.

Where I am perhaps less in agreement with the member who just spoke is with the comparison he made at the end of his speech. He tried somewhat to make a comparison between the need for a state to protect its citizens and, of course, the duty of a state to contribute to foreign aid.

This is like comparing apples with oranges and it is impossible to do so in all cases. I believe we have a duty as a society to protect citizens against terrorist acts and to take every action possible. I want to dissociate all this from our contribution to international development aid.

I was also a minister of International cooperation, a role that I loved. I travelled to 25 or 30 African countries and to many South American countries. I spent quite some time in Haiti. Our country has done a lot in several parts of the world.

I find it rather interesting to note that today in China, generally speaking, people know two things about Canada: they know of Dr. Bethune and of CIDA. Those are the two things the Chinese know about Canada.

CIDA, or ACIDI as it is known in French, is well known but it is the English acronym that is known in China, since of course when a foreign language is spoken in China usually it is not French but English.

I would not like Canadians in general think we have the right to draw a comparison between our duty to protect our citizens, which is our collective duty, and the duty to invest in development aid.

I will conclude by dissociating myself from those—which was not the case of the last speech, of course, nor the case of the last few speeches I heard—who think, wrongly, that we do not have the duty to offer a helping hand to other human beings who need us. We have such a duty. I do not know if that can be considered generosity. It is a duty for all of us. I think it is also our duty, as members of parliament, to make the population aware of this duty.

I wanted to share those feelings with my colleagues.

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Mr. Speaker, concerning the last words of the government House leader, I think that he was absolutely right when he said that it was a matter of rights. Rights, duties and responsibilities go hand in hand. That is why I was drawing attention to some clauses in the United Nations charter of rights.

However, I want simply to reply by saying that, when I made the comparison I was merely referring to what I and most of the members were hearing when we went back to our ridings on the weekends. It was the conclusion that I drew from what these people told me during the weekend when they said that we have to give as much importance to humanitarian aid as to the means necessary to ensure the security of Canadians and Quebecers.

Meanwhile, what should be considered now is the possibility of making a financial contribution together with sending a military force to punish the suspected terrorists. I think we have to put the matter back into its context.

I am very happy the government House leader, now that he is aware of the issue, has thought it was sufficiently important to intervene personally in the debate, which is not his custom. I want to thank him for that and it bodes very well for tomorrow evening's vote. I hope he will persuade all the other hon. members who are a little less aware of the issue to vote in favour of the motion of the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

• (1800)

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is very important for me to participate in today's debate on the motion put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay. The motion reads as follows:

That this House calls upon the government to review its international aid policy with a view to substantially increasing the funds available for Canadian humanitarian aid, particularly in the context of the military interventions in Afghanistan, and to increasing the level of its aid for development to 0.7% of GDP, as recommended by the United Nations.

In a remark made earlier this afternoon, a member seemed to wonder where this famous 0.7% came from. Why do we use that number? Why was it included in the motion?

This figure was set by the United Nations. My colleague for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière reminded us that this discussion began in 1959. Lester B. Pearson, who was then our ambassador to the United Nations, made this suggestion to the organization. The idea made its way through all sorts of obstacles, it was discussed, and all kinds of calculations were made. In 1975, there was a new attempt to implement the 1959 decision. Ultimately, the final decision was made in the 1990s, so that rich countries could contribute to the development of mainly third world countries.

It is important that we get involved in development because, collectively, we are responsible for what is happening out there. We would all like wealth to be shared better. We all realize that we were lucky to be born in a country that has never been affected by famine, war, despair and all the terrible things that have been happening elsewhere.

Government Orders

Our involvement is also important because aid to developing countries is crucial. This contribution is an integral part of our openness to the world and it is an extremely effective tool against poverty.

Terrorists have reasons to do what they do. We speak of the U.S. response to what we could perhaps call another kind of response. For some, what happened on September 11 was a response to what they were living, to what they were unsatisfied with, to the reason they were not happy. So this is a response to a response to a response. When will this ever end?

My young colleague proposed an extremely important motion. Another speaker reminded us earlier that several countries are still far from making the contribution asked by the UN. As far as I know, it seems from the documents I read that only five countries have so far accepted to make that contribution, that is, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Luxembourg.

None of these countries are part of the G-7. Thus, none of them are among the main industrialized countries.

• (1805)

And yet, they have managed to give between 0.7%, for Luxembourg, and 1.06%, for Denmark. If we are aware of the fact that it is important to share that wealth, if we want to put an end to starvation, to extreme poverty and to violence, it is probably a good idea to try, as quickly as possible, to fulfill this commitment that was made many years ago.

Looking at the refugee situation in Afghanistan, somebody else was saying that there was short term action being taken. Of course, Afghanistan is a major concern at the present time, but we also have to think about the long term.

There are many countries where action is required: Palestine, Sudan, other countries in Africa and South America, but what concerns us most at present is the situation in Afghanistan. We were upset to learn that there have been mistakes, that eight children were killed Saturday night. I do not think anybody is rejoicing over that. However, this does not stop us from considering that the response was legitimate. But now, we have to ask ourselves what we can do to help these people.

I have read articles of European magazines such as *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Le Point* or *l'Express*. NGOs are very unhappy about the fact that the United States has engaged in military action and humanitarian action at the same time. Those are two major operations that are normally separate, not as much in time since aid must be forwarded to people anyway, but more from the point of view of natural helpers. NGOs are the ones that normally provide humanitarian aid.

If the war ended tomorrow, we would still need to give humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which has been at war for 22 years and has gone through a three year drought. When a drought lasts for three years, it is not easy to grow anything.

During a program I was listening to recently, it was mentioned that NGOs, having been unable to enter Afghanistan as easily as before, could not bring the necessary seeds for next year's harvest. Because of that, the situation in Afghanistan will get even worse.

It must be understood that humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is vitally important at this time and that it will remain so in the future. According to the United Nations' estimates, seven million people will need aid, which is about one third of the country's population. The country will need to be rebuilt. Different kinds of support will have to be put in place.

We will have to rebuild what the bombs will have demolished. We will have to remove all mines in that country. Apparently, this will take the whole next century.

What seems more important to me is what a former president of Médecins sans frontières said, and I quote:

Modern humanitarian aid developed by breaking loose from politics. Enslaving it to the logic of states would be a step backward.

I invite Canada to play a leadership role in this field so that we can offer our aid, give food, not any food but food that conforms to these people's eating habits. What the people of Afghanistan now need is wheat, oil and sugar, and not biscuits, peanut butter or jam.

• (1810)

That is not what they need today but that is what is being air dropped to them, putting their life in danger because they have to run through minefields to get the famous yellow packages.

[English]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the indulgence of members of the House in allowing me to say a few things before the debate wraps up.

Members of the Canadian Alliance are concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. The situation there is as dire as it is in many countries around the world. We have seen people in many countries torn apart by war, famine and poverty. There are many situations that are completely untenable. There will always be a need for humanitarian aid. That is a sad fact. We will always have, I am sorry to say, famine, poverty and those kinds of things in the world. There will always be a need for humanitarian aid. There is no question about it.

Where would we get a figure like 0.7% of GDP? Where does that number come from? It seems it was drawn out of thin air. What is the basis for that number? In Canada's case this would mean an increase in foreign aid of \$5 billion a year. That is a tremendous amount of money. It comes at a time when we already have big demands for new spending to strengthen our military, hire more people to screen our borders and hire more people at CSIS. All these are demands on the treasury.

The UN has asked for \$584 million U.S. or about \$900 million Canadian to help with the problems in Afghanistan. It is pretty clear that other countries would be expected to contribute. The money is not all for Afghanistan, obviously. However even if we had all that money we could not help Afghanistan right now because the country is torn apart by war.

We could help some of the people who make it to Pakistan. Maybe we could help in the northern part of Afghanistan. There are refugee camps on the border with Turkmenistan and other places. The situation in those places is not good. In one refugee camp last year I read that when it turned cold it dropped to 25° below zero and 150 people froze to death.

There is no question that we can help, but we could not possibly spend all that money right now in Afghanistan. The country is so ripped apart by war that we would not be able to help a lot of the people behind enemy lines. There is no way we can help all those people, unfortunately.

I will wrap up by asking my colleague one final question. Canada imposes tariffs on textiles and food to less developed countries like Afghanistan. Does my colleague think that is an appropriate policy given the level of poverty that countries like Afghanistan and others face?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for my colleague from Medicine Hat to know that the task of finding out how to help developing countries was given to a fully independent committee established in 1959 under the aegis of the World Bank.

Experts were asked to study how much money was needed, for how many years, and what would be the end results if x amount of money was given over a period of 20 years.

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Around 1990 they concluded that if we gave 0.7% of our GDP, we could provide enough help to developing countries break free from chronic poverty.

Fighting against poverty is a way of working against terrorism. When we ask the Canadian government to increase its participation, we are saying “Give us an idea of the time needed to reach the 0.7% level. We are not expecting that all the billions of dollars will suddenly flow into Afghanistan. The needs are so great all over the world that we will have to ensure a fair distribution of these amounts according to the best of our knowledge”.

•(1815)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the business of supply are deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, October 30, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[*English*]

It being 6.17 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.17 p.m.)

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