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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

Prayers

• (1400)

[Translation]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, led by the hon. member for Edmonton North.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Université de Moncton, which this past Monday inaugurated its master of forestry program at its Edmunston, New Brunswick, campus.

This long-awaited master's program will equip local young people, as well as students from elsewhere, to work in a field that is essential for the survival of our planet. Forests are a resource that disappears if mismanaged, hence the importance of training in this field.

What is more, this program represents a feather in the cap of the francophones of New Brunswick and of francophones throughout Canada. This young French language university, a mere 38 years old, and its 15 year old faculty of forestry have every reason to be proud of this accomplishment, and I congratulate them on it.

To all those who had a hand in it, my congratulations, and to all the future graduates, my best wishes for success.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, House of Commons committees are already rolling and I would like to give one person's opinion of what committees are like:

O give me some pity, I'm on a committee
Which means that from morning to night
We attend, and amend and contend and defend
Without a conclusion in sight.

We confer and concur, we defer and demur
And reiterate all of our thoughts
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda
And consider a load of reports.

We compose and propose, we suppose and oppose
And the points of procedure are fun
But though various notions are brought up as motions
There's terribly little gets done.

We resolve and absolve, but we never dissolve
Since it's out of the question for us
What a shattering pity to end our committee
Where else could we make such a fuss?

* * *

JAMES MERRITT HARRISON

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—Cochrane, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a great Canadian scientist who was recently inducted into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame. The late Dr. James Merritt Harrison was the former director of the Geological Survey of Canada.

During his 17 year tenure, this organization enjoyed one of the most successful periods of its venerable history. Indeed, during this time many government programs were developed that helped make Canada a world leader in mineral exploration and resource development. Later, as a senior officer with Natural Resources Canada, Dr. Harrison became a respected spokesman on mineral industry issues.

Dr. Harrison greatly deserves this prestigious honour and he deserves public recognition for his accomplishments in the mining industry.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if human security is an organizing principle of Canadian foreign policy, then it is human insecurity which is the most serious dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today including the fear and fact of terrorism and violence, the demonizing of the other, and the harm to children caught in vortex of conflict. Each side sees itself as victim and the other as victimizer.

Accordingly what is required now is a parallel set of confidence building measures by each party for the Israelis to lift the closure, permit normalization of life and adhere to the strictures of the Oslo accord and the Sharm El Sheikh agreements; for the Palestinian authority to cease acts of incitement and violence, combat the terrorist infrastructure, and similarly adhere to the Oslo and Sharm El Sheikh agreements.

In a word, if there is one thing that both Israelis and Palestinians require today, and to which Canada can contribute, it is the restoration of a sense of human security as a prelude, if not condition, to a negotiated peace.

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• (1405)

SHIRLEY BUOTE

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I send my sincere congratulations to one of my constituents, Shirley Buote. Shirley returned to Prince Edward Island on Monday night after an excellent performance at the International Special Olympic Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska.

On Friday, Shirley put her best foot forward and secured a bronze medal in the 200 metre snowshoe competition with a time of 1:24:67. This is a sport, I may add, that I share her enjoyment of. Shirley then joined three other Canadians to win a silver medal in the 4x100 metre relay event with a time of 1:55:11.

Shirley was the lone Islander competing for Canada at the winter games and she has made all Islanders proud. I congratulate Shirley on a job well done.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today thousands of desperate farmers are demonstrating across Canada. They are praying that the public will understand that the government's recent aid announcement fails to provide even short term relief.

Canadian farmers receive a mere 7% of their income in government subsidies. Europe subsidizes its farmers by 65% and the U.S. subsidizes 34% of its grain farmers' income. Many farms in Canada are subsidized only when both husband and wife leave the farm to provide their own income.

Here are some basic questions facing Canadians. First, do we want safe food? Second, do we want an agriculture industry? Third, do we want a dependable supply of food?

Canadians and their government are in danger of losing what we now enjoy with a safe, dependable and cheap supply of food. We must address short term solutions before we can deal with any long term strategy.

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CENTENARIANS

Mr. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to congratulate two fine ladies from Millville, Cape Breton. Sister Mary MacIntosh and Annie MacAulay are turning 100 years of age this month. As young girls, they both went to a one room schoolhouse in Millville.

Sister Mary MacIntosh became a Sister of Charity and worked in various convents and hospitals. She enjoys doing counted cross stitch and always has one or two crochet projects in progress. Affectionately known as Sister Henry, she is still an active member of our community.

Annie MacAulay went on to become a teacher. She married Dan Allen MacAulay. They raised four children and have 16 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.

She has a beautiful property on the Mill Pond Road overlooking the Bras D'Or lakes, and as a farmer I am proud to be growing crops on her land.

Over the last century these two ladies have contributed greatly to our community. I am proud to rise today to mark this occasion.

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[Translation]

VIRTUAL PARLIAMENT

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 7, I sent a letter to all the members of this House on the need to develop a virtual parliament. Subsequently, at the interparliamentary forum of the Americas, which was held here in Ottawa last week, we passed the following proposal:

Recognizing that co-operation among parliaments is essential and that globalization brings about issues that require debate and actions that go beyond national frontiers;

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Recognizing that we must participate in an active manner in those debates and that we must increase exchange and dialogue among parliament members from other countries, from the hemisphere and the world;

Recognizing that a new formula, apart from occasional summits and gatherings, must be developed to increase the productivity of our work, in order to allow parliament members to exchange on a more regular basis;

We, parliamentarians from the Americas, will acquire the proper and available telecommunications instruments that will allow us to hold virtual assemblies or committees between parliamentarians from the Americas.

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[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, calls by the reform alliance members for increased income support for our farmers borders on hypocrisy.

This is the party that wants to wipe out agricultural support programs. Its policy book, passed at its convention just last year, says that the Alliance wants to force our farmers to be "self-reliant". It states that the Alliance members "support the phased reduction and elimination of all subsidies, support programs and trade restrictions".

This is not a new stand for that party. The policy book passed at the Reform Party's founding convention said "We advocate the removal of agricultural subsidies at home and abroad". Later, the party told us that "The Reform Party supports a shift from a government dominated and supported agricultural industry to an industry shaped by market forces".

Why would Canadian farmers now consider that party their new champion?

* * *

• (1410)

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, foot and mouth disease is spreading like wildfire through Europe. The disease would devastate our livestock industries if it were imported to Canada.

Travellers returning from Europe have told us that customs officials have failed to determine if they had visited farms. Farmers have also reported that there were insufficient security inspections to ensure that potentially contaminated food was not being brought into Canada.

On March 2, Linda and Bill Plank landed at Vancouver airport directly from London and indicated that they had visited United Kingdom farms. They were not even questioned by customs

officials let alone referred to food inspection officers. This was in the middle of the crisis in the United Kingdom, yet again our government was failing to fully protect the Canadian livestock industry.

It would only take one person transferring the virus on their shoes or clothing to begin a Canadian infestation. We must prevent transmission of foot and mouth disease into Canada before it happens. We must therefore ensure complete security and inspection for travellers and imports coming from all of Europe. Canada cannot afford to react after the fact.

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GREECE

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to welcome, first and foremost, a good friend, and second, a parliamentarian from Greece, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs who is visiting our capital city and Canada.

Never before have the relations between Canada and Greece been better, both on the cultural side and the economic exchange side. We welcome the deputy minister to Ottawa, where he can see that the voices of 30 million people are heard right here. I welcome the deputy minister. It is good to have him here.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at noon today I was among many people at the farm demonstration in Ottawa. There were also thousands of farmers demonstrating in Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Swift Current, the Toronto area and right across the country.

They are doing so because farmers are in the biggest crisis they have seen since the 1930s and many are going bankrupt and being forced to leave the land. In the prairies alone, between the fall of 1999 and the fall of 2000, 22,500 farmers left the land. It is hard to believe that so many have left the land. The reason is that our federal government has not been supporting our farmers like governments have in other parts of the world.

In Europe grain farmers get about 56 cents on the dollar from the European Community. In the United States they get about 38 cents on the dollar. In this country it is only 11 cents on the dollar.

We need more money from the federal government. Five hundred million dollars is not enough. It has to be doubled to around \$1 billion in the short term, and in the long term we need a long term farm program based on the costs of production.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

MINISTER OF FINANCE

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance dared to call the Premier of Quebec barbaric. In doing so, he insulted all of Quebec.

A barbarian is uncivilized. The dictionary describes a barbarian as cruel, merciless, and inhuman.

Cruel, merciless and inhuman were the cuts the Minister of Finance imposed on the health and education systems.

Cruel, merciless and inhuman was the reform of employment insurance, which excluded the majority of unemployed persons, especially women and young people, from the benefits of the system.

Cruel, merciless and inhuman was the attitude of the federal Minister of Finance toward the Canadian tax system when he excluded his ships from Canadian taxes while he hacked hospital budgets to bits.

Who is barbaric? The person who defends the interests of Quebec, the dignity and pride of Quebecers, as Bernard Landry has always done, or the person who sits atop his pile of money spouting insults that spatter Quebecers with disdain, as the federal Minister of Finance has done?

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[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday the Ottawa *Citizen* reported yet another threat to the commercial fisheries in the Great Lakes. It appears that a small yet vitally important crustacean is disappearing from the lakes at an alarming rate. This shrimp-like bottom feeder called the diporeia is the primary food source for numerous young fish species. At this point the creature has not been seen in Lake Erie for over three years and is on a steady decline in the other four lakes.

Scientists are unclear as to the impact that these waning numbers will have on populations such as smelt, whitefish, trout and salmon. However I strongly feel that we must act quickly. As is the case with sea lamprey scourge, it is suspected that the root problem of this situation is a biological foreign invader. I regret that control of a problem is needed because efforts to prevent the attack were not taken. We need to start tackling these issues head on or we risk disaster for the entire Ontario freshwater fishery.

• (1415)

I would encourage the government to strive to resolve these matters through increased R and D funding, more stringent control

of ballast water exchange and by adding sea lamprey control to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans a-base funding at the \$8 million level requested by the standing committee.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, although the Russian diplomat involved in the recent fatal crash in Ottawa has been sent home to face criminal charges, there is still an outstanding obligation by the Russian embassy.

The Russian ambassador himself owes an apology for allowing his staff members to continue the dangerous practice of driving under the influence on an ongoing basis.

I call on the Russian ambassador to correct the record about his knowledge of prior infractions by his staff members and to assure the Canadian people that Russian diplomats will be disciplined or sent home if they are involved in behaviour that puts the safety of Canadians at risk.

The ambassador had several opportunities to take action that may have prevented the death of Catherine MacLean but he simply failed to act.

The ambassador owes Canada an explanation, the facts and an apology.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said “We need evidence and warrants before we can arrest and deport someone. We do not rely on whisper and innuendo”.

We have the evidence now that a warrant for the arrest of Gaetano Amodeo was sent to the RCMP in January 1999 for the murder of a police officer but the government waited two years to act.

I am just curious. Does the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration consider a formal arrest warrant and request for extradition from the Italian government to be merely whisper and innuendo?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP does not arrest under Italian law. It must arrest under Canadian law, and that is exactly what happened here.

Oral Questions

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to wonder if the RCMP arrest under any law.

[Translation]

Yesterday in the House the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made the following statement:

We need evidence and warrants before we can arrest and deport someone.

Now we have evidence. Why? Because the RCMP was in possession of a warrant for the arrest of Gaetano Amodeo as far back as January 1999.

My question is simple and specific. Why did the government wait two years before taking action?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, the RCMP does not arrest anybody under a foreign warrant. It must be under a Canadian warrant.

I do not get involved in investigations, but I get my facts from the commissioner of the RCMP. I am advised that the RCMP did not positively locate or identify this individual until December. He was then arrested and jailed and is awaiting deportation hearings.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anything is investigated by that particular minister. There were pictures of this gentleman with people in the underworld in Montreal.

Since he is trying to evade the question let us switch it. The warrant for Mr. Amodeo came through in January 1999. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration claims she was unaware of the warrant until January 2001, two years later.

My question for the solicitor general is simply this. Did his department inform the Department of Citizenship and Immigration about this particular warrant? Simply yes or no.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has it wrong. The fact of the matter is that the RCMP dealt with the Italian officials for over two years, since 1999. There were some problems with pictures and other things as to whether or not it was the proper identification.

In December of last year the RCMP did locate and properly identify the individual. Appropriate action was then taken. The individual was arrested. He is now in jail awaiting deportation hearings.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, during question period yesterday the solicitor general

praised the effectiveness of the Canadian police information centre database.

My question to the solicitor general is very simple. When did the RCMP add the name Gaetano Amodeo to this database?

• (1420)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague ought to get a few things straight. I do not run CPIC. I do not run the internal operations of the RCMP. I do not put stuff on CPIC. The only people who can answer that are the RCMP.

[Translation]

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is the same thing here all the time. The name of Gaetano Amodeo has appeared on two applications for permanent residence status. The first dates from June 1999 and the second from September 2000.

Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell us exactly when her department checked the name of Gaetano Amodeo with the Canadian Police Information Centre?

[English]

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, it is important for people to know that this individual is not an immigrant. There was an original permanent resident application made. His name was removed from that application by legal documentation. When he was subsequently sponsored his application did not go forward. He is not a permanent resident of Canada.

As soon as we sufficient information was given to us by the RCMP he was arrested. He is in custody and is awaiting a deportation hearing.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, still on the Amodeo affair, yesterday the Minister of Justice confirmed that an extradition request had been made in September 1999.

She told the House, and I quote: "The confidentiality imposed upon that communication prevents me from making the contents of those communications known publicly." That is not what we are asking for. We do not want to know what was in the request. What we want to know is whether she informed the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Since discussions in cabinet and between ministers are not a matter of public record, we can assume that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration knew in September 1999 that a request for extradition had been made.

Oral Questions

Yes or no. Did the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration know in September 1999 that a request for Mr. Amodeo's extradition had been made?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify for the hon. member that CIC was informed by appropriate federal agencies when Mr. Amodeo was positively identified and located and when there was adequate evidence to commence deportation proceedings.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is rather strange. When we put a question to the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration rises, and when the question is for her the Minister of Justice rises.

Something is not right. Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell me whether or not in September 1999 she was advised by the Minister of Justice that Italy had made a request for Mr. Amodeo's extradition?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought I was clear in my previous response but let me repeat it for the hon. member.

CIC was informed by appropriate federal agencies when Mr. Amodeo was positively identified and located by the RCMP and when there was adequate evidence to commence deportation proceedings against him.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no wonder they can lose all track of Mr. Amodeo when they cannot even tell whom a question is for.

I am asking the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration when she learned that there was an extradition request. Did the Minister of Justice in fact inform her in September 1999 that there had been a request for Mr. Amodeo's extradition? My question is not for the Minister of Justice but for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. It is impossible to hear the minister, and she has the floor.

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me simply reiterate that CIC was informed when the RCMP positively identified and

located Mr. Amodeo. At that point the decision was made to commence deportation proceedings against Mr. Amodeo.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether there has been a cabinet shuffle, but my question was for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

I ask her again whether, in September 1999, her colleague, the Minister of Justice, informed her, as it was her responsibility and duty to do, that Italy had requested Mr. Amodeo's extradition, when this individual and his wife had already begun the procedures to immigrate to Canada? Did she know? Yes or no.

This question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, not the Minister of Justice. We know that she knows nothing.

[English]

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration I have responsibility for deportation. As soon as the RCMP had sufficient evidence so that we knew the whereabouts and identity of this individual, my department was notified, the individual was arrested, detained and deportation proceedings began.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers are suffering. They have faced cut after cut. They are facing strong, subsidized competition from the Europeans and the Americans and even the Japanese, and then there is the cost of gasoline.

Unfeeling, the government has done nothing. I hope the Prime Minister has seen the farmers' despair today. Will the Prime Minister finally wake up and stop ignoring the agriculture crisis?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food explained very clearly to the House yesterday all of the measures the government has already taken in this matter.

A few days ago, we put an additional program in place worth \$500 million, which will lead to an additional contribution of 40% from the provinces. Furthermore, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Agri-Food have made available to the farmers interest free lines of credit up to a maximum of \$700 million.

I think these are very significant initiatives, since we have been aware of this problem for a long time.

Oral Questions

I note that the opposition has not asked a question on this for weeks. It was the Liberal caucus on this side of the House that raised the problem.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing we have a *Hansard* record in the House.

The farmers of Canada are paying a big enough price for the government's neglect. It is the last straw to have the Prime Minister steadfastly refuse to acknowledge that we have a crisis, let alone allocate the appropriate resources and initiate the measures necessary to resolve the crisis. Behind the tens of thousands of farmers being driven off the land are the broken lives and the shattered dreams of real live people.

Who does the Prime Minister think he is helping by ignoring the crisis? Does he think the farmers of Canada—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there will be \$2.6 billion available this year, plus the \$700 million that will be loaned to the farmers interest free. It is a big improvement over anything that was on the table some years ago. We recognize that.

I want to repeat that for five weeks there were no questions from the other side. It was the members on this side of the House of Commons who had to finally put it in front of the public.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The government has announced \$750 million in new funds for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, nearly \$50 million of new subsidies for the gun registry and a farm aid program that is so inadequate it is driving thousands of Canadian farmers into bankruptcy. No Prime Minister in 50 years has treated agriculture with more contempt or less priority than the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister provide at least another \$400 million now to stop the Canadian farm crisis?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been in the House of Commons for five weeks and the leader of the fifth party never asked a single question on this problem, so we know how serious he is.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, because that is the kind of answer we get. I understand that the Prime Minister told his caucus this morning that the polls do not show a crisis in agriculture.

How callous and how typical for the Prime Minister to use polling data from urban Canada to justify throwing farmers into bankruptcy. This is not about polls. It is about responsibility. Will

the Prime Minister tell the House just why he gives such a low priority to the survival of Canadian farm families?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for five weeks the leader of the Conservative Party did not raise one question on that. It was the caucus of the Liberal Party that went and talked to the farmers, discussed that with them and came back to us. We proposed a package of \$500 million plus \$700 million interest free loans so they could start the next season.

The problem was put on the table by this side of the House while the leader of the fifth party was throwing manure.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Order, please. The Chair appeals for a little order. It is very difficult to hear the questions and answers today and I do not know why. I know the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford will assist the Chair in every respect.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): I can end some of the happiness over there, Mr. Speaker. The solicitor general just said that the RCMP does not arrest under a foreign warrant but a Canadian warrant.

If there were pictures taken of Amodeo meeting with a Montreal mob boss in 1999, and he was considered armed and dangerous, and he was wanted in Italy and Germany, and he was in Canada, then why would a Canadian arrest warrant not be issued?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I tell my hon. colleague that I do not run the internal operations of the RCMP, but I get my facts from the commissioner of the RCMP. The hon. member's statement is just simply wrong.

There were pictures taken. There were pictures sent back and forth, and some of them were wrong. I had been advised that the RCMP located and identified this individual in December of last year. Following that, he was arrested, jailed and is now awaiting deportation hearings.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that he says there will be deportation hearings because the immigration minister just said Amodeo is not an immigrant. If he is not an immigrant, why is there a deportation hearing? Maybe she could clarify that.

Under what pretence was he in Canada, meeting in Canada, meeting with a mob boss and considered armed and dangerous? Pictures were taken. Is he here on a visitor's visa? Let us hear the immigration minister once again convince us that he should not have been arrested in—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be as helpful in explaining this to the member as I can. If someone is in Canada without legal status, the individual can be deported.

Once we had evidence that was provided by the RCMP to my department at the end of January, this individual was arrested by immigration officials and deportation procedures began. I was personally informed about this around the end of February. I think the facts speak for themselves.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tells us that the deportation process comes under her department and that she commenced the deportation proceedings toward the end of the year 2000, as soon as there was sufficient evidence. This is all fine and well, but it is not the issue.

• (1435)

The issue is whether in September 1999, when a request for extradition was made by Italy, the Minister of Justice informed the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration accordingly at that time. This is all I want to know.

[English]

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for members to understand the procedure. As soon as the RCMP investigation provided evidence as to the identification and the whereabouts of this individual, my department was informed so that deportation proceedings could begin.

He was arrested. He is in detention and is presently awaiting a deportation hearing. He is not a permanent resident.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is still not answering the question.

Could the Minister of Justice tell us if, in September 1999, she informed her colleague, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, not publicly but during cabinet meetings or confidential discussions with her, that a request for extradition had been made by Italy regarding a person who was in Canada or who wanted to enter Canada?

Did the minister inform her colleague, back in September 1999, that a request for extradition had been made? This is what I want to know. I am not asking when the deportation proceedings began. I am asking whether the minister informed her colleague back in September 1999. It is as simple as that. Did she or did she not?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have indicated, and my hon. colleague has also tried to indicate, that the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was informed by appropriate federal authorities when Mr. Amodeo was positively identified and located by the RCMP, and when there was sufficient evidence to commence deportation proceedings.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I was at the protest today and I will tell members what farmers are saying right from Saskatoon to Ottawa. They are saying that this minister had better resign because he is not dealing with the agriculture crisis in the country.

Let us talk about those statistics from when the government first heard about the crisis. In 1998 we put it forward in the safety net committee and the agriculture minister stood in the House and said that NISA and crop insurance were plenty enough for farmers, and that was all they needed.

When will the other \$400 million be given to farmers because the crisis is still on the go?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can say what he likes but it was not too long ago that they changed their minds. In the last term they said very clearly in their platform that they would remove subsidies. Finally they have seen the light. I am sure Canadian farmers are pleased.

When they said there should be no support for farmers, we increased the support from \$600 million a year to \$1.1 billion a year, and two weeks ago to \$1.6 billion a year.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. In 1993 this government came to power. In 1995 it drove farm support down to around \$650 million when it should have been up to about \$1.5 billion.

The gap between Canada and the United States is big and the government has not narrowed it. Farmers are asking for another \$400 million. Will you commit today to get that \$400 million or will you quit?

The Speaker: The hon. member from Selkirk—Interlake is an experienced member and I know he wants to address his remarks to the Chair, not to anyone else.

Oral Questions

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the record of the government speaks for itself in increasing the support for agriculture to the highest level since 1995.

With the support from the provinces there is \$2.66 billion for safety net support this year, as well as up to \$700 million in interest free loans to assist farmers this year.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la-Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last year Europe and the United States each provided more than \$300 per capita in assistance to their farmers.

At the same time Quebec and Canadian farmers received barely half that, \$163 per capita. The measures announced by the minister are therefore totally inadequate.

• (1440)

The farmers here today are desperate because they are unable to compete with Europe or the United States. Does the government understand their need for assistance and will it commit to providing them with the \$400 million they need?

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is continually working to find support and strength for the agriculture and agri-food industry in Canada.

I remind the House once again that in the last two weeks we have provided an additional \$500 million. With the provincial support it takes that to \$830 million more than there was two weeks ago. We increased the interest free loans by two and a half, up to \$50,000 per farmer interest free to assist them this spring.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la-Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past two years, farmers have had to pay \$816 million more in fuel costs.

The vote seeking measure taken by the Minister of Finance with his \$125 or \$250 cheques has completely missed the mark.

What then is the minister waiting for before he corrects his mistake and helps those who are really suffering from the increased fuel prices, that is farmers, taxi drivers and self-employed truckers?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is why we have substantially reduced taxes for all Canadians, why we have inaugurated a very extensive farm assistance program, and why we will continue along the same lines.

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are several things missing from the

government's self-righteous and feeble response to the agriculture crisis.

It is missing any coherent, long term farm policy. It is missing a meaningful commitment to agriculture. It is missing the feeling of desperation that families feel as their livelihoods go down the drain. It is missing \$400 million. When will the government come up with the additional money needed to stabilize this Canadian farm income crisis?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really refreshing that Alliance Party members have finally as the sixth or seventh question today raised agriculture. They have seen the light. I appreciate their support and so do farmers.

We were there with the financial support back when they said there should not be any and back when they said they did not even support supply management. Farmers will be encouraged with that, but I remind them that the government has been there, will be there and will be there in the future.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, according to the main estimates for the 2001-02 fiscal year, the department of agriculture's budget has been reduced by \$470 million from last year. Two days after these numbers were released, the minister of agriculture announced \$500 million in conditional disaster relief.

Unless we use the Liberal new math, the additional money was only \$30 million. When I count on my fingers and toes what I get is that it is only 6% of the money the minister claims to be giving. Does the minister of agriculture think that Canadian farmers cannot add?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I offer again a briefing. The President of the Treasury Board has offered a briefing for hon. members on the other side.

What showed up in the supplementary estimates was that the support for the AIDA program for one year is there. The liability was created for CFIP for the next year, and it was booked in the same year. That shows there are two items booked in one year and not in the next year. There is no change as far as the support at that time in agriculture. Since then we have added \$500 million more.

* * *

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

Canada's mining industry is going through some very difficult times, especially in my riding, with the closing of gold mines in various regions of the country. We must intervene in order to ensure the future and the security of thousands of jobs in this sector. Between 1948 and 1976 the government adopted a program of emergency assistance to provide support to the industry during such periods of difficulty.

What will the Minister of Finance do to help Canadian miners keep their jobs and ensure a prosperous future for our mining industry?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the tireless efforts of the hon. member and of the other members from northern Ontario, Quebec and the Territories, we have introduced a new flow through share credit.

• (1445)

I can now tell the House that following the meeting of the association in Toronto this weekend this is working very well, once again thanks to the efforts of these members. I am prepared to announce today that my department has undertaken broad consultations on fiscal matters in order to help the industry.

I would like to thank all members for their ongoing and intense interest.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister misleads the House when he says the opposition has not—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Obviously it is provoking disorder. I know the hon. member for Palliser will want to be more careful in his choice of words, especially in a preamble.

Mr. Dick Proctor: He says the opposition has not raised agriculture as an issue. What is factual is that when we do ask a question of the Prime Minister on this topic he invariably deflects it to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. It is noteworthy as well that on the emergency debate he did not even participate.

The fact of the matter is that in 1993 when the government took office there was more than \$2 billion more than currently for agricultural assistance. When will he put that money back into agriculture when it is needed most?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not have to remind the House that when the Liberals formed the government we were losing \$42 billion a year because of the fiscal management of the party on the hon. member's left.

We had to make some changes to everything that everybody did. Canadians contributed to that change. We are now in a completely different fiscal situation. We have shown support to agriculture as we have increased support to agriculture considerably since that time.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality of the farm crisis in the country is the fact that the Liberal Party just stole the Alliance's agricultural policy and now we have a crisis in the country.

More specific, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced a measly package for the P.E.I. potato farmers yesterday. He is five months late and \$50 million short. If that is all the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food can do for P.E.I. potato farmers, why does he not take the bullet for his party and resign today?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, \$14.1 million is not an insignificant amount of money. Along with that, those producers also have the opportunity to use the Canadian farm income program. They have the net income stabilization program. They have a portion of the money that we announced two weeks ago and they have the \$14.1 million of new money that we announced yesterday.

I remind the House that agriculture is a shared jurisdiction and that there is a responsibility for the province of Prince Edward Island as well.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Documents in the possession of the minister's department confirm that the Amodeo family application for permanent residence status was filed with her department in June 1999. Six months earlier the Italians had requested Canadian assistance.

Is the minister telling the House that she was totally unaware of a man wanted in connection with three murders. He was listed on Interpol and CPIC for a year and a half, and she did nothing. When did she know and when did her department know?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question. The department was notified at the end of January by the RCMP that it had sufficient information on the individual's identity and whereabouts.

It asked us to proceed to arrest, which we did. We detained him. He is presently in custody and awaiting a deportation hearing.

Oral Questions

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Amodeo family had applied for permanent status a year and a half earlier. The minister told the House that her department needed evidence and warrants before it could arrest and deport someone.

It is clear the Italian authorities contacted the RCMP, the Department of Justice and Interpol requiring warrants, extradition, information about the whereabouts of Gaetano Amodeo. This information is available to her department.

Is the minister suggesting that all these efforts by the Italians, the Canadian justice authorities and the RCMP were insufficient to get her department to act for a year and a half?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is incorrect. My department received last year and annually over the last few years some 300,000 applications.

At one point in time there was an application made by this family. His name was removed from the application by a legal document. When the spouse attempted to sponsor him, he did not become a permanent resident of Canada. He is not a permanent resident. He is in jail awaiting a deportation hearing.

• (1450)

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are some inconsistencies going on here. The minister just replied to this question by saying that her department was informed at the end of January. A couple of questions ago she announced that she was personally informed about the end of February.

There are all kinds of dates and times going on here. The Minister of Justice said that when it was appropriate and everything was positively identified the department of immigration was notified. The problem is that since April 1999 when the RCMP took photos of Mr. Amodeo the Italian authorities confirmed that. It seems that everyone knew that but her.

Why did she allow this person to stay in Canada and risk—

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely reject the premise of the member's question. I will once again repeat for her that my department was notified by the RCMP that it had sufficient evidence so that we could proceed with deportation at the end of January.

I was personally informed and briefed mid-February. At that time the individual had been arrested. He is in jail and he is awaiting a deportation hearing.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, now it has gone from the end of January, to the end of

February, to the middle of February. The problem is that Amodeo and his wife ran a business in Canada. They were very visible in Montreal since 1996. They owned a home. If Amodeo was hiding out it was in plain sight, yet the minister comes up with all kinds of fictional dates. We need to get to the bottom of it.

When did her department know—the Minister of Justice or the Solicitor General of Canada—that they were harbouring a criminal in Canada and why did they wait two full years until he was arrested?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been very forthcoming. I will repeat again for the House that at the end of January my department received information and evidence from the RCMP sufficient that it went out and arrested the individual. He is in jail and awaiting a deportation hearing.

I was personally briefed about three weeks later, the middle to the end of February. At that time he was in custody, awaiting a deportation hearing. Those are the facts.

* * *

[Translation]

LUMBER

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after the contradictory statements made in recent weeks by the Minister for International Trade, who suggested that Canada's position on the lumber issue might change, we are now learning that the Prime Minister met with the U.S. vice-president to discuss the lumber issue and a possible North American energy pact.

Could the Prime Minister guarantee that he never attempted to link the energy pact to the lumber issue in his discussions with the Americans?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I received a call from the U.S. vice-president and we discussed energy issues. I took that opportunity to raise the lumber issue.

I told the vice-president that we had a free trade agreement with them and that we wanted them to buy Canada's lumber because we can sell it at competitive prices since Canadian producers are very efficient. A free trade agreement should not apply to certain areas only. It must apply to all sectors, including energy and lumber.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, more specifically, can the Prime Minister assure us that, since the United States are wrong on the lumber issue, the Canadian position remains and will remain a return to free trade in that area, as provided under NAFTA, and that no other issue should be tied to the lumber issue?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a free trade agreement and we want the Americans to comply with it as regards lumber.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health. Quality care at the end of life is a frequently overlooked element of Canada's health care system. The Senate report on the subject points out that Canadians are still dying in needless pain and without adequate palliative care.

Could the parliamentary secretary inform the House what action the government is taking to ensure that dying Canadians have access to adequate palliative care?

• (1455)

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that earlier today the Prime Minister announced that the hon. Sharon Carstairs will take on special responsibility for palliative care. On behalf of the Minister of Health I welcome this appointment.

[Translation]

As we know, Senator Carstairs will be in a position to support the federal government's commitment to develop palliative care by working with the provinces, territories and non governmental organizations to provide palliative care that meets the needs of caregivers, families and patients.

* * *

[English]

THE SENATE

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in a letter to the premier of British Columbia today Senator Pat Carney has asked that Premier Do-sanjh reintroduce legislation to elect senators.

In an historic declaration somewhat similar to that of Canadian Alliance Senator Gerry St. Germain, she has also offered to resign her Senate seat if the Prime Minister agrees to appoint the successful winner of a Senate election in British Columbia.

When will the Prime Minister agree to fill any further Senate vacancies with senators who have been duly elected by citizens in the provinces they will represent?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some years ago there was an agreement called the Charlottetown accord that clearly provided for elected senators.

Who fought against this accord? It was the Reform Party at the time and the Alliance members. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot be against that in one week and for it the week after. We respect the constitution. We made an offer to have elected senators and the Alliance rejected that some years ago.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Alliance has never rejected Senate reform. We have surveys which show that an overwhelming majority of citizens in British Columbia want to elect their senators. As a matter of fact we see numbers as high as 84% in favour of electing senators in B.C.

Now Senator Pat Carney has offered to vacate her seat if the Prime Minister agrees to appoint a senator elected by British Columbians. Why will the Prime Minister not agree to take the opportunity to establish a true legacy, a legacy to democracy and respect for democracy, by honouring the will of British Columbians and appointing an elected senator?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember very well how hard members of the Reform Party of the day campaigned against the package called the Charlottetown accord. Senate reform was contained in that package and they campaigned against it.

We have a constitution that provides for a Senate. The elected members of parliament on this side of the House can represent the people very well. The house of second thought has been here since 1867 and we cannot change it because the Alliance Party opposed—

The Speaker: The hon. member for North Vancouver.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in October 1993 when the Liberal government took power the Canadian dollar was worth 76.75 cents. Now, eight years later, it has gone down by 11 cents. That is a 14% drop in value in just eight years of Liberal mismanagement.

What is the finance minister's target for the Canadian dollar one year from now and three years from now?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that finance ministers do not answer that kind of question.

He also knows full well that in 1993 the unemployment rate was 11.5%. Today it is 6.9%. In 1993 there were two million fewer jobs than there are today. In 1993 the disposable income of Canadians was on the decline. Today it is on the rise. In 1993 our productivity was on the decline. Today it is on the rise.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the finance minister does not care about the value of the dollar. He does not care if it drops to 50 cents U.S.

For ministers who have their assets offshore this may not be a problem, but for the seniors in our country who have to travel to the United States, for importers and for other Canadians who travel, this erosion of their wealth is very important. How could the minister justify this lack of concern about the plunge in our currency?

• (1500)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the fundamentals of the Canadian economy.

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, the fact is that Canada has had the strongest job growth of any G-7 country over the last four years.

The fact is that Canada is expected to have the highest growth of any G-7 country this year.

The fact is that over the course of the last decade we have become one of the major high tech economies in the world.

The fact is that because of the changes brought in by this government, we will ride through the U.S. downturn better than any other G-7 country.

* * *

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the *National Post* reported that the Minister of Industry was preparing to announce federal financial support for the shipbuilding industry.

Are we to understand that the minister managed to overcome the opposition of some of his colleagues regarding the need for a shipbuilding policy, as the Bloc Québécois has been asking for several years?

[English]

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report of the committee, which is looking into the question of how to modernize and make more efficient and competitive shipbuilding in Canada, is not yet filed.

However, I assure the member that every member on this side of the House is interested in seeing shipbuilding succeed in Canada, seeing shipbuilding workers put back to work and seeing Canada maintain its great shipbuilding tradition.

Routine Proceedings

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Grigoris Niotis, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic of Greece.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1505)

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian group of Interparliamentary Union which represented Canada at the 104th interparliamentary conference, held at Jakarta, Indonesia, from October 12 to October 21, 2000.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the selection of votable items. In accordance with Standing Order 92, this report is deemed adopted on presentation.

I also have the honour to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of some committees. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the seventh report later this day.

[Translation]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts regarding reports presented to the House in the course of the second session of the 36th parliament.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the following reports:

*Privilege**[English]*

The 11th report, Canada infrastructure works program, phase 2 and follow up phase 1 audit; the 12th report, sole source contracting for professional services using advanced contract award notices; the 14th report, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, elementary and secondary education; the 15th report, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and Department of Finance, handling tax credits, claims for scientific research and development; and the 16th report, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the economic component of the Canadian immigration program.

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations.

* * *

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-15, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to amend other acts.

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

* * *

● (1510)

PRIVILEGE

BILL C-15

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege in regard to the Department of Justice briefing the media on a bill intended for the House before and at the exclusion of members of parliament and their staff.

My question of privilege will argue that the Minister of Justice and her department are in contempt of parliament since they have brought the authority and dignity of the House into question. The government and her department made a mockery of the parliamentary system and members of parliament.

Erskine May describes contempt as:

—any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

I want to tell the House what has happened. The Liberal government and the Minister of Justice gave a briefing on an omnibus bill today at 11.45 am. It is the bill that the Minister of

Justice just introduced to the House. I am bringing this motion at the quickest and most appropriate time.

I received a copy of the bill when I came into question period today. It is a bill that is 78 pages long. The Liberal government gave a briefing and denied members of parliament and their staff access to the briefing. The only ones allowed into the briefing session were members of the media.

This is not simply a small bill. It contains 78 pages. I had an opportunity to quickly glance through it when I came into the House. I could not even tell members of the media who were calling my office what my reaction was to the bill.

The issue is not the embarrassment it has caused to me or the members of the opposition, it is the embarrassment it has caused the House. It is an embarrassment for the people of Canada who voted to send members to the House of Commons so they could be consulted and have an input. We have been denied even a most basic briefing.

According to the minister it is not the opposition she has to convince, it is the media. She gives the media the appropriate spin and we are left in the dark. We have been embarrassed and the House has been embarrassed. I am angered and disgusted by this process.

I am a novice in the House of parliament but I have also served in legislatures. I was also a crown counsel for the Manitoba government for years. I advised governments on matters. I advised the premier of Manitoba in 1990 on the Meech Lake accord. I am not a novice when it comes to dealing with government matters and government issues and the basic respect that each member here deserves.

We were shut out of a briefing and treated like beggars at the door waiting for leftovers. We did not even get a news release. I do not know if members of the press got a news release. I received 78 pages of a bill that is not just on one matter.

One of the Liberal members across the way just asked me if I could read. Let me say what the bill includes because it is important to all members of the House. It says “secret until introduced in parliament”. That secrecy seems to only apply to the people here. We are the ones who are being shrouded from the truth. The secret is being kept from us. The media were briefed and had full access to the bill.

● (1515)

Some may ask whether I can read. Being a lawyer and having served government I should be able to easily and quickly read 78 pages. With all due respect, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, members of the House and the people of Canada what the bill includes.

“This enactment amends the Criminal Code”. This is the summary of what is printed in the bill so I assume it is the truth. I

do not know if it is the truth because I have not had a chance to read it. However, let us assume it is the truth based on what the minister has put in the bill and what she has shared with the media but not with members of the House because it is a big secret from us.

I will begin again. The summary states:

The enactment amends the Criminal Code by (a) adding offences and other measures that provide additional protection to children from sexual exploitation, including sexual exploitation involving the use of the Internet;

This is a huge issue. However, before I attended the House, members of the press were asking me what I had to say about the issue. I had nothing to say because it was a secret. It was kept secret from everybody in the House. All of Canada knows, the moment it is introduced the Liberal's spin on the document is already out on the airwaves through the media. This is disgusting. It is an absolute subordination of the powers of each member, as well as your powers, Mr. Speaker, and those of the House.

It does not end there. The minister will say that we have been talking about this for a long time and that it was high time the legislation was introduced. Absolutely, it is high time that it is introduced, but that is one issue. The next issue is increasing the maximum penalty for criminal harassment. If that is in fact what it says, I applaud that. The Manitoba government, when I was a member, worked very hard to convince the Liberal government to take steps in that respect.

Now we find out about it in a secret document that we cannot release until it is introduced in parliament. Who knew about it before I did, before you did, Mr. Speaker, and before every member of the House? It was the media, the new opposition. The government does not care about the elected voices of people. It has insulted every single member in the House, including government members on the opposite side. We have all been insulted by this piece of trickery.

I will continue on with what the bill contains. It says:

(c) Making home invasions in aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes;

Yes, we did ask for this but can we not discuss it beforehand? Could we at least get a briefing two hours before? Could we have the decency and the courtesy that was extended to members of the media but not to us?

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has a point but I think going through every clause of the bill and telling us that the message is the same is perhaps unnecessary.

The member has a point and he has made his point. If he has more to contribute on the question of privilege, I would like to hear him, but I would rather not hear about the contents of the bill, which, with great respect—and I think the hon. member would

Privilege

agree with me on this point—are irrelevant to whether or not the privileges of the House have been breached.

If I understood the member correctly, his point was whether the bill was released before its introduction in the House. If he would stick to that point, I think it would be more helpful to the Chair.

Mr. Vic Toews: I appreciate the direction, Mr. Speaker, but I thought it was important not to quote the clauses of the bill but to give a brief summary of the bill. I was not quoting clause by clause. I was trying to impress upon you, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a small bill, that this is not a housekeeping bill, that this is a substantive bill to which we, as members of parliament, were denied access. We did not even have two hours. We were not shown the courtesy that was given to the media.

• (1520)

However, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your direction and I will move on.

In the last parliament, Speaker Parent issued a warning to this very same government for a similar offence. The Minister of Justice was a member of the government and, despite the clear admonition from the Speaker, the same trick is being played again on members of the House. On November 6, 1997, the Speaker said:

The Chair acknowledges that this matter is a matter of potential importance since it touches the role of members as legislators, a role which should not be trivialized. It is from this perspective that the actions of the Department are of some concern. The dismissive view of the legislative process, repeated often enough, makes a mockery of our parliamentary conventions and practices. I trust that today's decision at this early stage of the 36th Parliament will not be forgotten by the minister and his officials and that the department and agencies will be guided by it.

Despite the warning, the government went on to announce to the people of China that a Canada-China interparliamentary group had been created. There was no such group created at the time. The government briefed a foreign country before it briefed its own members.

The naming of the head of the Canadian millennium scholarship foundation before there was legislation setting up the foundation is another example. There were many other cases in the last parliament.

If the House is to function with authority and dignity then it must be respected, especially by the executive. Every elected member is not the servant of the executive. The executive is the servant of each and every elected member. When a member of the executive thwarts the parliamentary process they deny the rights and privileges of each member and destroy the authority of the House. If the House is to function with authority and dignity then it must be respected, especially by the executive. They are responsible to parliament, not to the media.

Privilege

On page 63 of Erskine May it states that ministers have a duty to parliament to account, that ministers should be as open as possible with parliament. Refusing to provide information and refusing to allow us to participate in the briefing when members of the media are present is not in the public interest. The government has been warned enough. It is time the House took action and protected itself from this happening again.

Mr. Speaker, when you were elected these were the issues that were being discussed. Members from both sides of the House voted for you. There was a real recognition that the executive needed to understand that each and every backbencher and opposition member deserved respect. Mr. Speaker, you were entrusted with our belief that you would carry out that obligation and restore the dignity that the House deserves.

• (1525)

The executive has not only slapped us in the face, but it has slapped you, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Canada in the face. I know that other members wish to speak on the matter.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule the matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege, at which time I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, exaggerating points seldom make the argument any better. What we have before us is, in large measure, two bills of the last session which have been made omnibus and tabled in the House.

The hon. member went into a long diatribe that I listened to patiently even though there was plenty of reason to be impatient given the nonsense that we were hearing. I wish the hon. member would take the time to listen to what I have to say, but obviously he does not intend to do so at this point.

The bill as presented today in the House is almost the same as two bills from the previous parliament. Reciting the titles of every clause will not change anything.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The House is entitled to hear the arguments on all sides. I realize there is disagreement on the issue but the Chair would like to hear the different points of view.

[*Translation*]

It is important for all points of view to be heard on such a matter, and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has the floor.

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria: I think we heard the deputy House leader of the party across saying that the opposition has the right to speak but

that the other side of the House has less rights. I think we just heard the official position of that particular party in that regard.

Let us correct the inaccuracies made in the House earlier. First, as far as I know and the Minister of Justice knows at this point, the media did not receive a copy of the bill prior to introduction. The only people who received a copy of the bill before the introduction were opposition critics. They received a copy an hour and fifteen minutes ahead of time for courtesy reasons. The bill, as I said, was not released to anyone.

The Chair will know that embargo briefings are not something that were recently invented. Embargo briefings, without documents, have been held in the past on a number of issues. It is true that an embargo briefing was provided to the media earlier today. The information given to me was that no release of any document or any bill was given to anyone else. Any briefing given to the media was under embargo. No documents were given.

As I said previously, the opposition critics were provided a copy of the bill one hour and fifteen minutes ahead of the introduction. Even though the rules of the House, and the Speaker knows them far better than I, do not require that such is done but it was done any way.

I do not believe there was any attempt to breach anything. If anyone has breached the embargo, I am willing to look into that. If that means that in the future when people do breach embargoes that it should be recognized in the way things are done around here, then we would be willing to look at that as well.

However, that is not the same as to say that the Minister of Justice has committed an act of contempt or any other such issue against the House, nor does it mean that the hon. member across has a *prima facie* case of privilege against the House. That is a different proposition altogether.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on this matter, since this is not the first time the same thing has happened in the Justice Department.

The minister need not wonder why sometimes bills get off on the wrong foot. That is the way things are done, even by the Minister of Justice.

• (1530)

How do they justify, even if it was only a briefing, even if the government did not hand out the entire text to the journalists—which I doubt, and we will look into this—how is it that the journalists knew all the ins and outs of this bill before the parliamentarians, before those who are elected to represent the public?

Knowing the officials of the Department of Justice as I do, in the case of the Young Offenders Act, I question the accuracy of the

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information. What the minister did today is very serious, and what she did in the past with other extremely important bills is also. It is not even a matter of finding out whether the bill is complex or not, because we can all read.

The Minister of Justice was very kind. She gave me the bill as she came into the House at 2.00 p.m. for Oral Question Period. It was as if I, a member of the opposition, did not have Oral Question Period, as if it was not important for me to follow what went on in it and I had to read between 79 and 85 pages of the minister's text to keep up with the journalists at 3.00 p.m. That makes no sense. It is treating the opposition members, in fact all members with disdain.

An hon. member: And the House as well.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: And, as my colleague has said, treating the House with disdain as well. Mr. Speaker, you should intervene to put an end to the way the Department of Justice is operating.

There is a small example in the case of the Young Offenders Act worth recalling, where everything went off the rails following a briefing of journalists. The officials had failed to give out the entire text of the Young Offenders Act. The government talked about flexibility, when in fact there was none. On that occasion, when the officials did not give journalists a copy of the text, how could the journalists leave with all the information? They left with the information the Department of Justice wanted them to have.

As things stand, as a member of the opposition and critic for justice issues, I cannot even properly inform these journalists because the government did not give me the documents on time. What was so urgent? Perhaps there is an urgent matter. Why was the Minister of Justice in such a hurry to introduce this bill today, before members of parliament had a chance to look at it?

We are well aware, and the Chair even more so, that there are days during the week when bills can be introduced, when the minister could introduce her bill, in the morning, around 10 a.m., as she did today. She could also have met the media in the morning, at 11 a.m., like she did this morning. But why did she act differently? Perhaps it was to engage in politics, to catch the opposition with its pants down, or whatever.

Perhaps it was to not give the media the appropriate information at the appropriate time, so as to throw them off track. The minister need not wonder why her department is having problems. It is simply because her department's way of operating is not right and shows contempt for members of parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in order to prevent another such mess, I am asking you very sincerely—because I know that you have great qualities and broad experience as a parliamentarian—to not let this practice go on at the Department of Justice or at any other department. You must take action because you care a lot about the work of the members of this House and you want to ensure that they have the

necessary tools to carry out their duties as parliamentarians, properly and in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking you very sincerely to take action so that the Minister of Justice stops showing contempt for members and the House, as she has been doing since assuming her responsibilities.

[English]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately this is the second day in a row on which we have had to rise on points of order or privilege having to do with ministers doing things outside the House that either should be done in here or should be done first in here.

• (1535)

I appeal to your sense of history, Mr. Speaker, and your place in it. When the history of parliament is written, and when the history of this parliament is incorporated into that longer history of parliament, will this be the parliament in which the long, slow but steady decline of parliament is arrested? Or, will it be just one more parliament in which there is a long, slow and steady decline of parliament into a more and more irrelevant chamber? Will more and more things continue to happen outside parliament, either in the press gallery or in briefings that could not be attended by members of parliament or whatever the case may be?

The government House leader did his best in a bad situation. Knowing what I think I know about him, I cannot believe he thinks this was the appropriate way to proceed. It is his job to defend the indefensible on occasion, and I suppose he did the best with what he had at his disposal.

Whether or not the bill represents an amalgamation of two bills that existed in the last parliament, even if they are identical the fact is that the media would come to know they were identical before we came to know they were identical. They are not identical anyway because some new things have been added.

It was a pretty pathetic defence of what went on. The Minister of Justice indeed showed contempt for members by giving any kind of briefing. It does not matter that it was an embargo briefing.

Let us put on our imagination cap. Let us imagine a political culture in which the House of Commons is the centre of the political life of a nation and a new piece of legislation in the justice area is coming forward. Perhaps it is even an amalgamation of bills that died in the previous parliament.

What would happen in that imaginary world? The Minister of Justice would come into the House of Commons and table the bill. Members of parliament would be given a copy. Perhaps the critics might be given a courtesy copy earlier, but that would not matter so much if parliament were getting the copy first.

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The media might then have to actually listen to the debate in parliament about the bill. What a novel idea. They might have to say that if they are to find out what people think about the bill they will have to come into the House of Commons and listen to members of parliament. God forbid they would not be spoon fed at secretive briefings by spin doctors in the minister's department. Let us imagine the wonderful fantasy I have just laid out.

At one time that was probably real life around here. Now it is just a fading dream, a dream that gets more distant and more unreal from parliament to parliament.

I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker. Only you, by using the powers vested in you in the chair in terms of moral suasion, procedural decisions and procedural rulings, can stop this slide into total irrelevancy if you choose. It is on occasions such as this one, by virtue of what you say, that you can either contribute to that or not. I urge you to stop the slide.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice and my dismay to what has occurred here as well.

The hon. member for Provencher has outlined quite clearly what has happened but I would add something. I believe it goes back even further than this morning's briefings. I left the House of Commons yesterday after question period and was asked very specific questions about this omnibus legislation by a CBC reporter from Radio-Canada.

This highlights again the absolute contempt and disregard the government has for this place as being the forum, the speaking point and the stepping off point from which legislation is announced. Major announcements should be made in this chamber. As the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona has clearly set out, that should not be so unattainable. That should not be so beyond the realm of possibility.

• (1540)

Opposition members in this parliament, the last parliament and the previous parliament have become all too familiar with receiving the back of the cabinet's hand, particularly from the Department of Justice which has an army of administrators and obviously some very effective spin doctors who like to float these ideas out to gauge public opinion. We know that is in keeping with the Liberal way, to govern by polls and make sure everything is okay before they step in any direction.

This takes it to another level. It takes it to the direct contempt the government has for opposition members to be involved in the process at all. By engaging with the media first it is able to have the clear advantage of getting its message out first. By not informing members at all until 24 hours later, even 5 or 6 hours later, it obviously has the upper hand.

The government knows and is familiar with the information in any event. It does not need this advantage. To refer to the comments of the House leader for the New Democratic Party, if the announcements are made in the House the media will come.

Mr. Speaker, you have been around long enough to know that the media will come. They will report on what takes place here. The Department of Justice does not have to go to them. It does not need to seek out the media to ensure its message is heard. It has ample opportunity to do so in the foyer. It can go to the press gallery after it has shown the proper respect for members of the House.

The minister shrugs her shoulders and says that they tried, that they did their best. That is not good enough.

I know you are most familiar and most attached to the Marleau and Montpetit publication, Mr. Speaker. With reference to breaches of privilege, I refer the Chair to page 67 where it talks about the range of contempt that can exist. It states:

Just as it is not possible to categorize or to delineate what may fall under the definition of contempt, it is not even possible to categorize the "severity" of contempt. Contempts may vary greatly in their gravity; matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts.

That is footnoted at 91 on page 67. On the previous page again it refers to the types of contempt and the privileges of the Chamber. Mr. Speaker, you have been a long serving member of the House. You know that members want to engage directly with ministers. They want to have an opportunity to partake in what is their duty, what they have been sent here to do. That is on occasion to criticize the government. That is on occasion to improve legislation. That is also on occasion, a perhaps more modern responsibility, to engage with the media on the message, on the legislation or on the issue of the day.

With what has happened here, members have been denied that right. Members have been denied the ability to speak directly to information. I was asked specifics about a bill that I had not seen. Clearly that reporter had received some specifics.

It does not take Sherlock Holmes and a fleet of detectives to figure out that the information came from one source, the Department of Justice. That is wrong. It is absolutely inexcusable that information is leaked out of the department and given to reporters who can then assail members of the opposition as they leave the Chamber and ask them to comment on something they have not seen.

The minister must take responsibility for this. It goes to the broader issue of the absolute melting away of ministerial responsibility that we have seen in the government's administration. Heaven forbid that a minister would stand to apologize to all members for what happened in the department, to agree to find out what happened, or to give assurances that it will not happen again

and to try harder. It has never happened. The government refuses to take responsibility.

The Speaker: I know the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough was trying to be helpful to the Chair but there are a lot of hon. members who could go on at length on the subject he has raised.

I would like to deal with the question of privilege that has been raised and that is this bill. If we stick to that, I think I am getting to the point where I will have heard the points to be made on this and would like to get on.

• (1545)

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I will take that advice to heart and try to stay more directly on the point. To that point, Mr. Speaker, you would be very aware of the range of actions, the way in which you can respond, that is available to the Chair.

I again refer to Montpetit and Marleau at page 69 where it states:

The reluctance to invoke the House's authority to reprimand, admonish or imprison anyone found to have trampled its dignity or authority and that of its Members appears to have become a near constant feature of the Canadian approach to privilege.

This goes to another point. There has to be a line drawn in the sand. There obviously has to be another message sent. There has to be another shot across the bow of the government, similar to what happened in the last parliament.

This is the second occasion in two days. In fact, there were two occasions yesterday, not one, where the government chose to make announcements outside the House and then come in and parrot those same remarks, which shows nothing but contempt for the members present. We know that this is a partisan administration, but this has to be the Chamber where this information is exchanged, first and foremost.

In your authority and your wisdom, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to look at this serious breach of privilege and to act, to at the very least respond to the government, to take it under advisement, to look at precedent, because this slippery slope we are on is clearly adding to the impression of the Canadian population that this Chamber is becoming irrelevant. That should be cause for all members to sit up and take notice. If this Chamber is further diminished in its usefulness, we are all in serious trouble.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take the hon. member for Provencher's question of privilege very seriously. I know that you will. I know you have great respect for this Chamber and for the privileges of members present. You, Mr. Speaker, are the protector of all members. I would suggest that quite clearly some members, mainly members of the opposition and possibly members of the backbench

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of the Liberal government, have been completely denied their rights and privileges by virtue of what has occurred out of the Department of Justice.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the process involved in tabling this omnibus bill on justice strikes at the very heart of democracy in parliament, and the process that we have just seen is the very heart of the problem.

A notice went out stating that there was going to be a briefing session at 11.45 a.m. today, and it was to be held on the omnibus bill that was to be tabled by the justice minister. We know that the government has made it a practice to leak information but this is a blatant contempt of parliament, Mr. Speaker. The notice went out, and it did not say media only. There was not even any mention of them.

The problem I have is that my staff member went to this briefing expecting to be told what was in the bill. No briefing was given to us or even scheduled before the bill was tabled. My executive assistant went to the briefing but he was not allowed in. However, a Liberal staff member was seen to enter. A little while later a reporter asked me questions about the bill, so it was not a lockup.

I am really shocked and dismayed by the contempt that the Minister of Justice holds for us as members of parliament. I cannot do my job as an MP if the government withholds information from us and it is obvious that this is a deliberate attempt to withhold information from us. The Liberals are deliberately undermining the opposition's ability to do its job of holding them accountable. We know why the Liberals do this. They want the media to give a favourable report on what they do. They want to avoid criticism.

In regard to this lack of process that is directed at the opposition, I take this personally, Mr. Speaker, because contrary to what the House leader said, that these were just a couple of bills from last year, rumour has it that there were substantial amendments to the Firearms Act. The government wants to draw attention away from that disaster.

• (1550)

The justice minister should be held in contempt of parliament. That is my main point. Democracy cannot operate if there is not a free flow of information, and this issue strikes at the very heart of the way Canadians want this country to be governed.

Canadians want us to hold the government accountable. I have had to submit over 70 access to information requests to this point already to find out what has been going on in the justice department and in the administration of that particular piece of legislation known as Bill C-68.

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A key part of our role is to respond to legislation in the media in a timely fashion, to use the minister's own words. A point of privilege was dismissed earlier this week because it was ruled that the government made announcements outside of parliament on major issues. However, we could at least attend those. Here we were restricted. We were not allowed to go.

Now the government has done something designed to deliberately undermine our ability to effectively criticize legislation. It was deliberate, so that we were not able to respond in a timely fashion, and the news reports have already gone out on this.

It is no secret that the firearms legislation is a disaster. This omnibus bill contains amendments to—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has tried to be helpful and, I am sure, some of his comments have been very helpful to the chair, but getting mixed up with the firearms legislation and the value of that and so on is not really very helpful.

If he has another point to make in respect of this question of privilege, I will hear him, but I would prefer to bring this to a conclusion. I think I have the point, and I am not hearing new facts. The member gave me a few new ones earlier on in his remarks which I found very helpful. If he has more of them I would like to hear them, but I do not need to hear about other bills.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, my main point is that it strikes at the very heart of democracy: the operation of parliament. This was not a secret, as it was supposed to be until it was introduced into parliament. The media was briefed, but we were not. This is a prima facie question of privilege.

The Liberal House leader made a couple of points. I would like to counter them. If this is simply about bills that were introduced previously, why did the media even need a briefing on this? This is the House leader's own argument, really, so he is not being upfront. It was not embargoed, because we were already being asked before the bill was introduced to comment on the bill. It was not embargoed and all the arguments I heard from that side are not true.

I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker. Canadians are so disillusioned with the process in this place and with democracy that if we do not do something to fix it right now, the perception will be that we are totally irrelevant and we might as well just shut this place down.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I just want to again point out to you the House leader's argument, which is that because parts of this bill were introduced in the last parliament, this parliament does not need to have the same kind of briefing.

However, members of our caucus were approached by the media as they came into the House of Commons and were asked to comment on that bill. These are new members of parliament who

never had the honour of serving in the last parliament. How on earth could the government House leader use that argument?

Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring your attention to page 86 of Marleau and Montpetit. Speaker Fraser ruled at an earlier time that:

The privileges of a Member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions.

The privileges of a member are violated when any action impedes his or her ability to do the job. On the next page, page 87, Speaker Jerome actually ruled that there is also a prima facie contempt of the House that exists when a government official, one that deliberately misleads a minister, has "impeded a Member in the performance of his duties and consequently obstructed the House itself".

• (1555)

In other words it does not matter, I would argue, whether it was the officials giving the briefing who somehow fouled up something so that a briefing was given when it was not given to other members. It does not matter whether it was the minister who fouled up and whether it was deliberate or not.

What happened is that actions were taken today which impeded members of parliament from doing their jobs and by so doing, Mr. Speaker, I feel you must find that this is a prima facie case of contempt. I urge you to ask the member to put the appropriate motion, which is to move this into committee where a full investigation can be made and it can come back to the House with the appropriate recommendations.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Provencher for raising this question of privilege. I also thank all the other hon. members who took part in the discussion this afternoon—namely the hon. House leader of the official opposition, the hon. member for Berthier-Montcalm, the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, the hon. government House leader and the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville. I greatly appreciate your comments.

[*English*]

The Chair will take the matter under advisement and will get back to the House. If hon. members have any documents relating to this briefing that might be helpful to the Chair, I would appreciate receiving copies through the Clerk in order that I may look at them in respect of the matter. I assure the House that I will come back to the House in due course with a ruling on this point.

Routine Proceedings

CANADA ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION ACT

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-295, an act respecting the protection of wildlife species in Canada from extirpation or extinction.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in briefly introducing the bill I will say that it is intended as such to protect wildlife species in Canada from extirpation and extinction.

Nine years ago in Rio, Canada signed the international convention on biological diversity. The bill reflects Canada's commitment and takes into account reports that in Canada 364 species are at risk of extinction and that habitat loss is the number one cause.

If the bill becomes law it would make the scientific list of species at risk the legal list. It would make it an offence to harm, disturb or kill endangered species or their habitat. It would ensure that provinces implement equivalent legislation through the bill, thus providing mandatory habitat protection to all endangered species in Canada.

The bill is intended to serve as a benchmark for Bill C-5, the legislation introduced recently by the government.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-296, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (allowances paid to elected officials).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this private member's bill seeks to enforce into law recommendations made by the independent commission on compensation for parliamentarians, which conducted its business three years ago. I note that a similar commission is now engaged in a similar review.

The bill would eliminate from the Income Tax Act those provisions that exempt from taxation allowances paid to elected officials, and not just members of parliament but all elected officials, for expenses incidental to the discharge of their duties. This would end the very disturbing practice of parliamentarians exempting themselves from the same tax laws they impose on all other Canadians.

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

OBSERVANCE OF TWO MINUTES OF SILENCE ON REMEMBRANCE DAY ACT

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-297, an act to promote the observance of two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day.

• (1600)

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is identical to one I introduced which was debated in the previous parliament. It is based on a similar statute adopted by the parliament of Ontario and the Westminster parliament.

It would formally recognize and invite Canadians to observe two minutes of silence on Remembrance Day. It is the fruit of recommendations from the Royal Canadian Legion and other veteran organizations.

I look forward at some point in this parliament to presenting over 50,000 petition signatures in support of the bill.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-298, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (exemption from taxation of 50% of U.S. social security payments to Canadian residents).

He said: Mr. Speaker, my third and final private member's bill today would re-establish the status quo ante with respect to the taxation of social security payments made to Canadian residents from the United States government.

The Liberal government had renegotiated the tax treaty with the United States in such a way as to prejudice financially seniors resident in Canada who receive social security payments.

The bill would correct that egregious mistake, which has cost many low income and fixed income seniors very dearly in financial terms, by restoring the original inclusion rate of 50% for social security payments to Canadians.

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

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PARLIAMENTARIANS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-299, entitled Parliamentarians' Code of Conduct.

Routine Proceedings

She said: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say a few words about my private member's bill to establish a code of conduct for parliamentarians.

It provides for an ethics counsellor who would report directly to parliament and would do so annually. Such legislation exists in every province and territory in the country and in many other countries that have parliamentary systems similar to that of Canada.

It is clear that we need such conflict of interest legislation and such a code of conduct to prevent the further erosion of confidence in parliament as an institution and to restore confidence that parliamentarians will act not with conflict of interest but with the public interest at heart.

I know I do not have time to outline it in detail, but the attempt to get such a code of conduct into parliament has had a long history, including a committee which our current Speaker co-chaired.

In conclusion, my former colleague from Halifax West introduced a similar bill not once but twice in the previous session of parliament. If the government had seen fit to follow the lead of Gordon Earle in this matter, we might have been spared the unseemly spectacle of the swirl around the Shawinigan affair and the defamation matter that has surrounded the official opposition.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Does the parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1605)

[*English*]

The Speaker: At the request of the chief government whip, the vote on the motion is deferred until the conclusion of government orders later this day.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present to the House a petition signed by residents of the city of Val-d'Or and the Vallée-de-l'Or RCM regarding the Sigma-Lamaque and Beaufor mines.

The petitioners call upon parliament to set up a financial assistance program for thin capitalization mines in Canada's resource regions.

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition which calls for the elimination of inequities in the tax code against single income families with children. The petition is signed by some 70 residents of the province of British Columbia.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present two petitions. The first petition deals with child pornography.

The petitioners are asking parliament to take all measures necessary to ensure that possession of child pornography remains a serious criminal offence and that federal police forces be directed to give priority to enforcing this law for the protection of children.

CANADA POST

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition addresses the issue of collective bargaining rights and rural route mail couriers.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners ask that subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act be repealed so that private sector workers who deliver mail in rural areas have collective bargaining rights, as do public sector workers who deliver mail for Canada Post in urban areas.

VIOLENCE

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I bring to the attention of the House a petition organized by one of my constituents, Mr. Cran Campbell.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House the level of violent material on the Internet in interactive video and computer games. They want the House to understand the detrimental effects that this interactive marketing of violence has on children and on society.

They also want to express their concern with the definition of obscenity in the criminal code and the fact that there is a linkage in the criminal code regarding obscenity between sex and violence. They feel this issue should be addressed by the House to protect Canada's children from this exploitive marketing of violence.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I should like to present two petitions signed by 666 Canadians. The first one is from Falun Dafa of Canada, the peace team that is asking Canada to act as a mediator, if necessary, with the Chinese government to assist those who have been imprisoned for practising Falun Gong.

The second petition asks the Canadian government to apply for diplomatic immunity and visas for Canada's Falun Dafa peace delegation to visit China.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition signed by many Canadians who feel strongly about our health care system.

The petitioners want to see the government enforce the Canada Health Act and the five principles of medicare.

• (1610)

They feel so strongly about our health care system that they call upon parliament to enshrine the Canada Health Act and the five principles of medicare in the Canadian constitution to guarantee national standards of quality publicly funded health care for every Canadian citizen as a right.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to submit a petition signed by residents of my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard.

As the right of landing fee of \$975 for each prospective immigrant creates an impediment for those with large families wishing to immigrate to Canada and places a heavy burden on those who are seeking to integrate themselves into the Canadian

economy, the petitioners are asking the Canadian parliament to abolish this right of landing fee.

PENSIONS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is also signed by residents of my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that the 10 year residency requirement of the Old Age Security Act for eligibility for full pension and partial pension primarily applies to landed immigrants and causes a hurdle for them to integrate and contribute freely to Canadian society.

The petitioners ask the Canadian parliament to abolish the 10 year residency requirement for all seniors.

CANADA POST

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition signed by 30 people mostly from my riding of Red Deer.

My constituents are concerned that rural route mail couriers often earn less than the minimum wage and that private sector workers who deliver mail in rural areas have collective bargaining rights, as do public sector workers who deliver mail for Canada Post in urban areas.

Therefore the petitioners call upon parliament to repeal subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

HEALTH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from my riding of Mississauga South, which is particularly apt since we have a votable motion, Motion No. 155, on health warning labels.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that the Food and Drugs Act is designed to protect Canadians from potentially harmful effects related to the consumption of products.

They point out that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems. In particular, fetal alcohol syndrome and alcohol related birth defects are 100% avoidable by avoiding alcohol during pregnancy.

Therefore the petitioners call on the House to mandate health warning labels such as prescribed by Motion No. 155, which is a votable motion, to caution expectant mothers and others of the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

TAXATION

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by some 3,500 residents, principally if not completely from Ontario.

Essentially they are supporting the private member's bill which I introduced that seeks to restore a more fair tax regime for

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Canadian recipients of U.S. social security payments, and to undo the negative effects of the third protocol between Canada and the United States by restoring the 50% tax inclusion rate for social security payments.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In relation to questions on the order paper I have a very legitimate complaint. I have a number of questions on the order paper dating back to the last parliament. In two months' time these questions will enjoy their first birthday in the House without a response from the government.

Reading through Beauchesne's and Marleau and Montpetit, the questions were accepted by the Clerk of the House. They were deemed to be in order but I have not had a response from the government.

The urgency on this matter has to be made public. Two questions in particular have to do with the selling of military equipment by the government through a third party. The third party is called Lancaster Aviation.

Not to deviate too far from the rules, this is important because we are questioning the government on the selling of 40 Bell helicopters.

• (1615)

There is some legitimate concern being expressed by the public that these helicopters may have fallen into the hands of paramilitary groups, rogue nations and terrorists.

The Speaker: The hon. member is on a point of order and is not here to make a speech. I presume he has made his point that these questions have not been answered for an extended period. I think that is the point of order.

Perhaps we could hear from the hon. parliamentary secretary in that regard, if he wishes to respond, and bring the matter to a conclusion.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member's point of order. I admit to being a little unclear personally as to the status of questions asked and unanswered in a previous parliament. If it is the practice or convention or rule that questions asked in a prior parliament carry over to a subsequent parliament provided the member is re-elected, then I certainly would see to the obtaining of the answers the hon. member has sought and would do that forthwith.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, the questions have been put on the order paper in the 37th parliament. The point I am making is

that we have gone through two parliaments in almost a year, and we will be blowing out the candle on this one before the answer is received. There is no excuse for the government not coming up with these answers. It is a consistent pattern of—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the clarification for the benefit of the parliamentary secretary. I am sure the matter will be looked into. If we do not receive a satisfactory response, perhaps we will hear from the hon. member again tomorrow when the questions come up.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has asked that all questions be allowed to stand. I am sure the House would want to hear from him again if he does not have a response.

Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in routine proceedings the matter of concurrence in the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs came up. As a result of that, there was a recorded division requested and deferred.

I am asking if there would be unanimous consent in the House at this time to dispense with that deferred recorded division and to deal with the matter of concurrence at this time.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to withdraw the motion from consideration later this day?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

**SALES TAX AND EXCISE TAX AMENDMENTS ACT,
2001**

The House resumed from March 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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The Speaker: When the House last had this matter under consideration the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest had the floor and he had eight minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for your generosity. Those eight minutes will mean a lot to our party at this end of the Chamber.

What we are talking about on Bill C-13 are technical changes to the GST. The point I was making when we last debated this is the fact that our party will certainly support those technical changes to the GST.

It is somewhat ironic that we are supporting a bill on the GST, which the government said it was going to eliminate when it took office in 1993. I think it is important that the government address that very issue of the elimination of the GST and why it did not live up to that red book promise dating back to the 1993 campaign.

As everyone well knows, just about every member on that side of the House—possibly yourself, Mr. Speaker, although I am sure you were probably more reserved in your comments on this than some of the members—went door to door talking about the elimination of this dreaded tax. Now this dreaded tax which the government promised to eliminate is one of the taxes that is certainly filling its coffers and helping to balance the books.

• (1620)

One of the other points I made and that I think will be made later today by our party as the debate unfolds is the fact that there are other matters of urgency on the economic side which the government should be but is not addressing.

The Prime Minister and the finance minister are sort of whistling by the cemetery in their walk through la-la land. There are some troubling signs that the economy might be stalling, that it might be in trouble. They are ignoring those signs and not even extending some sort of courtesy to the House in terms of at least introducing a budget.

The last time the House actually discussed a budget was with regard to the so-called mini budget on the eve of the last election. Things have changed in the last 120 days. I suggest that it was probably a strategic move on the part of the Prime Minister. Knowing full well that there were some troubling signs on the horizon in terms of the economy, he made what would turn out to be the right decision, I guess, in the timing of the election.

Again, a lot of things have changed in the last 120 days. What we are saying is that the minister should introduce a budget to address some of the concerns we see and to possibly offer some suggestions to the government on how it can deal with the faltering economy.

The belief that we are going to be somehow insulated from what might happen in the United States is absurd when 80% to 85% of

our exports go to the United States. They are our biggest trading partner. When they catch a cold we are most likely to catch pneumonia. It is possible.

The truth is, those are some of the considerations that should be taken in the House to address some fast changing circumstances on the economic front.

With that I will conclude my remarks. As always, I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the yeas have it.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

The House resumed from March 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, an act respecting shipping and navigation and to amend the Shipping Conferences Exemption Act, 1987 and other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la-Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-14, an act respecting shipping and navigation and to amend the Shipping Conferences Exemption Act, 1987 and other acts.

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With such a long title, members will surely understand that the bill will be better known as the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, its short title.

Once passed, this bill will replace the Canada Shipping Act, other than the portions that concern liability. So, basically it will modernize the current legislation and will promote the safety and economic performance of the commercial marine industry as well as ensure the safety of those who use pleasure craft.

• (1625)

Referring to Clause 6, it states that the objectives of the bill are: first, to protect the health and well-being of the crews and passengers; second, to impose standards as to the proficiency of the crew; third, to protect the marine environment from damage due to navigation and shipping activities; fourth, to protect the vessels and the environment; fifth, to develop a regulatory scheme and consequently to design administrative sanctions for violators; sixth, to ensure that Canada can meet its international obligations under bilateral and multilateral agreements with respect to navigation and shipping.

Before getting any further in the review and analysis of this bill, I would like to draw your attention to a clause that raises many issues and intrigues me a lot. I am talking about the definition of the word “passenger”, in fact, about what comes after that definition.

Clause 2 of the bill defines the various terms used in the act and gives an interpretation for each one. The word “passenger” is defined as follows, and I quote:

—means a person carried on a vessel by the owner or operator

So far, so good. Traditionally, with this government, the definition of “passenger” has always been very clear. The term refers to a person who boards a ship that belongs to the owner or the operator.

However, when I keep on reading, I start wondering. Right after, it says, and I quote again from Clause 2:

—other than

(a) a person carried on a Safety Convention vessel who is

(i) the master, a member of the crew or a person employed or engaged in any capacity on board the vessel on the business of that vessel,

It is quite clear that the master and crew are excluded from the passenger category. What is strange is the exclusion coming next: a person who is under one year of age. Why?

Why is a child under one year of age not a full-fledged person under Canadian law? What would be the impact of that definition, or rather that exclusion, in the event of an accident or a shipwreck, for example? Since they are not considered as passengers, would children under one year of age be excluded from any insurance settlement?

Puzzled, I sought to know and I asked questions. I got answers, but disturbing and rather strange ones. The Canadian government

would have been forced to include this exclusion clause for children under one year of age in the bill because Canada would be bound by international treaties, protocols or resolutions it had signed.

Has Canada forgotten that former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney himself presided over the community of nations that agreed to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child? Is it really necessary to add that the United States were not part of that community of nations?

After having been such a leader on the issue of children’s rights, how can Canada accept that children under one year of age be considered as non-beings? This is unacceptable according to me.

If there are countries which do not respect children, we must refuse to sign conventions or protocols with those countries. If we do sign such documents for valid reasons, we must require that this exclusion be removed.

Canada should be ashamed of including such a clause in one of its laws. Canada should be ashamed of hiding behind a document signed with another country. Since when has Canada relinquished its sovereignty?

• (1630)

There is hope however. Three clauses in this bill refer directly to international conventions, protocols or resolutions. Under clause 31, Governor in Council may even amend international agreements. Therefore, the government cannot use the signed documents as an excuse to justify refusing to amend clause 2 in order to delete that exclusion of children under one year of age.

As the answer was not satisfactory to me, I continued to investigate and ask questions. Someone pointed me in another direction. What I was told is so far out that I want to share it with you. To have a good understanding of the explanation given to me, I will go back to the bill and quote clause 115:

115. (1) Every passenger on board a vessel shall comply with any direction that is given to them by the master or a crew member to carry out the provisions of this Act or the regulations.

(2) Every passenger on board a vessel shall comply with a direction to leave the vessel that is given to them by the master before the vessel embarks on a voyage.

Perhaps this clause excluding children under one year of age was included in the bill because these children who are 364 days old and under would not be able to obey the captain’s order, whereas those who are 365 days old and over would.

I am a pre-school education expert and I can assure you that several captains and several crew members will soon be encountering multiple problems when asking children barely over a year old, at least up to five years old, to leave a vessel. They will need help to make these children obey that order from the captain.

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That explanation given to me to justify the exclusion of children under one year of age is totally ridiculous. A 364-day-old child could not obey the captain's order, but a 365-day-old child could.

I have another question regarding this clause excluding children under one year of age. Nowhere in this bill does it say that these children cannot board a ship. It just says that they are excluded from the definition of "passenger". Then how should we interpret clause 110? I quote:

110. (1) The master of a vessel shall ensure that the number of persons carried on board is not more than the number of persons authorized to be on board under any certificate issued under this Part or under an international convention or protocol listed in Schedule 1.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, this legislation provides that children under the age of one are not passengers, but it does not define what a person is.

Consequently, the definition of person has to be a reasonable one, and, in this case, a child under one year of age is a person without being a passenger. The child is included in the total number of people who must not be aboard the ship to ensure that the number of people on board does not exceed the number of people authorized under the certificate. Even if they are not passengers, these children should be treated the same way as the master and crew of the vessel and counted among the persons on board.

While I am making my comments on the bill, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the legislation clarifies the respective responsibilities of the transport and the fisheries and oceans departments. Clause 35 even provides that either one of the ministers can make recommendations to the governor in council for the making of regulations implementing the bill after it has been passed by both Houses and it has received royal sanction.

The enactment organizes the contents, updates the terminology and streamlines substantive requirements to make the law much clearer and easier to understand.

• (1635)

The enactment amends the Shipping Conferences Exemption Act, 1987 to inject greater competition within shipping conferences, to streamline the administration of the act and to ensure that Canadian legislation covering international liner shipping conferences remains in harmony with that of Canada's major trading partners.

This bill has 14 parts, some under the responsibility of the Department of Transport and others under the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, although three of them are standard in legislation providing for transitional measures or consequential amendments to various bills.

Under the responsibility of the Department of Transport are: part 1, defining the terms and the application of the legislation; part 2, providing for the registration, listing and recording of vessels; part

3, which includes provisions regarding the skills and the hiring conditions of crew members; part 4, providing for the safety of passengers and crew members; part 6, dealing with incidents, accidents and casualties. This part defines the right to salvage, the obligations in case of collisions, and the powers of inquiry into causes of death. Part 9 defines the responsibilities of the department as regards pollution prevention. Finally, part 11 deals with enforcement and various powers of the Minister of Transport.

Under the authority of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans are part 5, which contains provisions relating to navigation services, the creation of vessel traffic zones and the obligations of vessels during search and rescue operations; part 7, which deals with wreck, particularly their ownership and disposal; part 8, which determines the responsibilities of the minister in the area of pollution and provides for the making of regulations on pollution prevention and response; and part 10, which contains provisions relating to pleasure crafts.

As we can see, this bill contains two parts dealing with pollution: part 8, which is under the authority of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and part 9, which is under the authority of the Department of Transport.

Part 8 is entitled "Pollution prevention and response", while part 9 deals only with prevention. Each part begins by giving the definitions which apply in it. Three expressions or words are found in both part 8 and part 9: oil pollution incident, polluted, and discharge.

Surprisingly enough, even if part 8 and part 9 use the same word, namely discharge, each part does not give the same definition of the word. I really wonder why the word discharge is not given the same meaning by both parts of the bill dealing with the same matter. This seems to be, at the very least, an anomaly.

On the face of it, the Bloc Québécois supports the purpose of the bill. This is a bill we want to modernize. It is high time that we did what is necessary to be up to date in the area of shipping. Furthermore, the Bloc Québécois has also given its support to Bill S-2 respecting marine liability.

However, one thing is interesting. When the Minister of Transport introduced his bill on March 1, he was quoted in the press release as saying that the purpose of the bill was to promote economic growth in the shipping industry.

The Bloc Québécois has already often indicated, and uses every opportunity to repeat, that the only way, as far as it is concerned, to increase, promote, enhance and develop economic growth in the shipping industry is to adopt a real federal shipbuilding policy and to take concrete measures to assist the shipbuilding industry.

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• (1640)

It is high time that the government decided to put aside the Minister of Finance's personal interests and take to heart the interests of the people of Quebec and Canada and give us a shipbuilding policy.

The questions I have raised require meaningful answers. I hope the Canadian government will never pass a bill where children under one year of age are excluded.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Order, please. Before we get into questions and comments, 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 Dewdney—Alouette, Ethics Counsellor.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, our reading of the act is that it imposes high standards for Canadian shippers in terms of safety, the environment and the qualifications of people who man and operate the ships.

For clarification, the area we are concerned about is where the act refers to the offshore registration of ships. My reading of that section indicates that we would accept offshore companies if they met or exceeded Canada's very high standards. I think this area needs clarification. Many Canadians feel legislation too often leaves loopholes. Many Canadians feel, for example, that the family trust legislation allowed well to do people to escape taxation.

The concern I have is that there are lots of international shippers registered in countries such as Liberia and the Bahamas. For example, there is a company called Canada Steamship Lines International. I think some of the members on the other side might be familiar with the company. About the only thing Canadian about it is the name and maybe some of the ownership.

The question I am getting at is that we had the beef boycott in Canada, and in protecting the public interest we shot first and checked second. What safeguards does the public have in this act that international shippers, if they should come into our waters, will comply with our standards regarding environment and safety and the qualification of the people who operate the vessels? If they run afoul of those requirements what enforcement remedies do we have? What can we do with a company such as Canada Steamship International if something like that should happen? That is the question on which I would like clarification.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting question, but it ought to be raised in committee. The bill will soon be referred to a committee and we will have to put questions

directly to the officials who will come before the committee and to the government so they can give us some explanation for the extremely important problem raised by my colleague.

We should see to it that Canada's shipping industry register its ships in Canada and that these ships sail proudly under the Canadian flag, at least in Canadian waters. The heritage minister should provide flags to those Canadian shippers who are unable to get them or who get their flags from other countries because they are cheaper. Perhaps we should ask that the government see to it that we truly have our own shipping industry in this country.

• (1645)

If we had a shipbuilding policy, we would not have to be ashamed to think that the finance minister's ships fly the flag of countries other than his.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. I happen to live on the shores of the St. Lawrence River. I hear about many incidents at sea involving ships that are carrying oil or other dangerous substances. Not a month goes by without a major disaster happening, which causes pollution in some part of our planet.

What I fear, as do other people living along the shores of the St. Lawrence River with whom I spoke, is that some day one of those disasters will happen right here. Just imagine an oil slick on the river and the damage it would cause.

Under clause 11 of the bill, the minister can have vessels inspected. Would my colleague agree that, in order to improve safety on the St. Lawrence River, we should have mandatory inspection of vessels coming from the sea, when they enter the St. Lawrence River? Vessels would be automatically inspected to provide the level of security needed to protect the shores of the St. Lawrence River.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Champlain for his question, which gives me an opportunity to get another very important message across.

We realize that the Food Inspection Agency is not working properly because of a shortage of veterinarians. Yesterday morning, at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, we also realized that Fisheries and Oceans Canada is not operating properly because they do not have enough inspectors to inspect the lobster catch, for example, in the bay, in New Brunswick and in Prince Edward Island.

People are very concerned when they see the government buying huge expensive trucks equipped with nice shiny mirrors, but forgetting that fish has to be inspected in water. Fisheries and Ocean has forgotten that.

I can see improvements in this bill, but we have had across the way for the last seven or eight years a mean government trying to save money everywhere it can and making sure that we do not have the means to respect the policies and the legislation it puts forwards.

While this bill is promising, if the legislation is not implemented better than the Food Inspection Agency or inspection scheme at Fisheries and Oceans, which is now using beautiful red and white boats—because we just love red and white in this place—that can be spotted from 150 miles away, it will be as useless as everything else.

[*English*]

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc is a very knowledgeable member who has spoken quite eloquently on this bill. I know she is very concerned about the environment. She has made many interventions in the House on that particular topic.

Could she elaborate on the aspects of Bill C-14 which deal with the environment and pollution? Does she think those are strong enough measures and would she be able to support them?

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I got really worried when I read the part about pollution prevention and response.

I do not understand why we need two different parts within the same bill to deal with this issue and why each part has to be the responsibility of a different minister. When two people share the same hat, the hat is never on the right head when a disaster occurs.

As I said in my speech, we will never know what definition of the word discharge is to apply, since it is not the same in the both parts. This will give rise to some interesting arguments and challenges. Lawyers will say “You know, the word discharge in part 8 does not mean exactly the same thing as it does in part 9. Are you talking about part 8 or part 9?”

I am not sure how good this will be for the environment, but I think it will be very good for Liberal lawyers.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent of the House to rescind the request earlier today for a recorded division on the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and deem the said report adopted.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Order discharged and motion agreed to)

* * *

CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, an act to respecting shipping and navigation and to amend the Shipping Conferences Exemption Act, 1987 and other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I directed some of my inquiries to my hon. colleague from the Bloc, regarding the kind of safeguards, remedies and procedures that we have in place to ensure foreign shipping companies which enter our waters meet our standards. It is one thing to put into a bill or into a piece of legislation that we will allow them in our waters provided they meet or exceed our standards.

However, I would like someone from the government side, who has some knowledge on this matter, to clarify this whole area. What safeguards do we have if we had a real situation, such as Canada Steamship Lines Inc. entering our waters? If they were registered in Liberia and something went wrong, what steps could we take to protect the public interest? I would be very curious to see what the government has to say on that matter. This is an area of this act that is defective.

Let me expand on this topic a bit. Let us say this hypothetical shipping company is registered in Liberia. It has a fleet of 15 ships and staff of 1,500. The shipowner hires employees from the Ukraine to staff the ships and pays them \$2 or \$3 a day, which is much less than our Canadian standards and what my Liberal friends would say would be a compassionate level of remuneration. However, the ships do not comply with our safety standards.

The Canadian safety standards, inspection requirements and so on of ships are very demanding. Our manufacturing requirements for building ships are extremely demanding. If these ships enter our waters, we need to make sure they meet our standards in terms of safety and quality.

We are also concerned with environmental matters. It is very easy for shippers without ethics and tough standards to dump garbage and different things into our waters which could pollute and cause problems. That is a major concern as well.

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• (1655)

I would not be a bit surprised that some of the companies which register in Liberia or the Bahamas do that in order to escape the responsibilities, the liabilities and the high standards which we have in Canada.

I guess another concern is, if they do enter our waters and the ship crashes or sinks because of a lack of proper manufacturing safety standards, or it dumps a whole bunch of toxic substances in the St. Lawrence or the Great Lakes, or their employees bring diseases into the country because of third world type working conditions, what precisely would the act do to protect the Canadian public? What steps can we take against such shippers? Do we send something off like the Italians did concerning the Mafia person in Canada? Do we send something off to Liberia and ask the Liberian authorities to step in and help us out? Do we go to Liberian court and start some sort of court action to try to collect damages from that country? I think these are serious questions.

Members on the government side ought to know these are serious matters and they cannot be dealt with in a trivial manner. The Canadian public safety and interest is too important. This aspect of the bill should be shored up. When it goes to committee I would encourage government members to really zero in on this area and address it because it is very skimpy. The act says "meet or exceed Canadian standards" but I do not see anything in it that says how we are going to ensure that.

Is the Department of Transport going to send people over to Liberia, like it did with the Brazilian beef issue, and check everything out to make sure that it has top insurance standards on its ships, that it has good humane standards for taking care of its employees, that it has collective bargaining rights and tough measures in regard to environmental measures? Is that what the act contemplates? I do not really see that in the act.

A lot of people have the impression that many important and powerful Canadians are evading our laws by simply going offshore. They might preach and talk about Canadian values, high standards and the Liberal way of doing things, but as soon as they have an opportunity for their own self interest they go outside the country. They will circumvent our laws to suit themselves. This is something that should not be overlooked in the act.

It is a good act with a lot of teeth in it to make Canadian owners comply with the law. It is lacking detail as to what we do with international shipping companies that are not registered in Canada but enter our waters. That section in the act is inadequate. We need much better clarification on that point.

There is a whole list of things that this section invites. I would suggest that if international shippers are going to come into our

waters we should require them to register just like Canadian shippers. This, as it is, is too easy a procedure.

Shippers can go to Liberia, or the Bahamas or some other country that does not have the Canadian standards, set up operations, then come into our waters. If they can convince someone in the Department of Transport, we could have the buck passing that we saw in the House this afternoon among the Solicitor General of Canada, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Prime Minister and others. They all said they could not tell so and so or they could not tell this department or that department. In the meantime, the public could be sitting with a disaster on its hands.

• (1700)

Maybe it is like a ship that sinks in the Great Lakes, in the St. Lawrence or off the coast of British Columbia and causes a lot of problems, environmental or otherwise. We would then find out that we really have no way of dealing with the owners and that we do not have any enforcement remedies along the line. I think that is a very serious matter.

I am surprised that a Liberal government, of all governments, would not have identified the need to really have tough measures in place in this area. It is a fairly major omission in the bill. It is very tough on Canadians. It seems to be somewhat slack for international shippers who would want to come into our waters.

I am a new member of parliament and have practised law for 25 years. My attitude, based on 25 years, is that I have been shot as the messenger. Bad laws are passed by governments and I have to be the messenger for them. I have to deliver the bad news to my clients and quite often I am the one who gets blamed for it.

I am in a place today where I thought I would be at the front end of the process. Based on some of the questions of privilege raised in the House today I am not so sure that I really am at the front end of the process. I am wondering if I am not back in Nipawin, Saskatchewan at the back end of the load again.

As a practitioner of law, this is the time to tell the government to get the legislation clear in this very important area and make sure it is tough. It should be tougher on foreign shippers who come in here. Just because they are registered in Liberia or the Bahamas and Canada is written on the shipping line, it should not be a licence to come into our waters and abuse our jurisdiction. We should have very tough shipping laws. That is a major loophole in the legislation and it should be tightened up.

This should not be like the family trust matter in the Income Tax Act. There was some window dressing on that but still the tax experts, with whom I am familiar, said that the door was still wide open for wealthy families to evade and escape the tax responsibilities put into place by the Minister of Finance. We certainly do not

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want to see the same sort of thing happening with shipping in Canadian waters.

We had some major accidents a few years ago, such as the sinking of the *Exxon Valdez* off the coast of Alaska. We saw the environmental damage and disaster that caused. It is important that we have stringent and tough standards on international shippers.

I am not happy about a shipper coming into our country who is paying people who are down and out and in desperate straits. I wonder where the Liberal compassion is on the issue. The shippers hire these employees to staff their ships and pay them \$2 a day. I have no idea what the safety or environmental standards are for people working on those ships. I conjure up visions of shoe manufacturers going to Malaysia to find people who are down and out and then pay them starvation type wages and so on. They then come to Canada and say that they believe in high standards and the values of compassion and fairness for Canadians. I guess that does not apply to people elsewhere.

If they are not Canadians and they can get through the loopholes, why should they not exploit labour, why should they not forget about collective bargaining rights and all the other things that the Liberal government has put into place for Canadians? This is a serious concern.

My reading of the act is that there is only one section that deals with the matter and it simply states that a foreign owned company can enter our waters for shipping if the authorities are satisfied that it meets or exceeds our standards.

• (1705)

Today and over the last few days I heard a lot of buck passing concerning a Mafia individual who is in Canada. Nobody wants to accept the responsibility for him being here. People were saying that they were not in charge of what happens in their departments and that other people were in charge. I hope that does not happen in a Valdez-type situation where there could be a major environmental problem or in a situation where someone is possibly hauling a banned toxic substance. This could be garbage from some other country which could be dumped in the St. Lawrence, on our shores or something along that line.

We should look at our immigration laws and how people look at Canada. They see our country as an easy place to escape their responsibilities and liabilities. We are seen in the world as the country to come to. If people are criminals somewhere else and the authorities are hot on their path, Canada is the country to come to. Our supreme court and our government have sent those signals out. If they can get to Canada, they will probably have three square meals a day and, if they are lucky, they might get out to Mission, B.C. and do some golfing with Colin Thatcher before it is all over, or go to the riding academy.

I think there is a problem with the bill. We see examples in other areas but the government says things are different here. There is only one way to make sure it is different. We must get the bill right the first time. It should have very tough standards in this area. The standards should be detailed and not contain just one clause that is a kind of platitude.

The bill contains very extensive details on the registration requirements but for an international shipper, it is pretty much a blank cheque. It seems to me we are giving the Department of Transport authorities an awful lot of room for discretion but with little direction.

I suppose the minister and the department could get together and have a briefing session to decide what kind of policy they would put in place. We in the opposition could then wait three or four years until one of those ships had a major calamity in our waters. We would again be embarrassed as opposition members because we would not know what had taken place behind closed doors or in starred chambers.

I encourage government members to take a very serious look at this area. I understand why some government members might be a bit intimidated to move into this area, especially ones who sit further back from the front row of the House, but it is important and they should not let the intimidation factor enter the picture. We must do our jobs and make sure that we pass good quality laws. We should not let our personal feelings toward other members enter the discussion.

This subject also raises the issue of foreign type international law questions. I do not know if there are any members here from Prince Edward Island, but authorities found, or thought they found, some sort of disease on one-quarter or 60 acres of land in P.E.I. so they totally killed the potato crop industry in P.E.I. They did this without checking it out and caused terrible harm to the people of P.E.I..

We almost did the same thing to Brazil. The government decided, in the context of a trade fight between Brazil and Bombardier and other matters, that the way to get the message across to the Brazilians was to hit them where it hurt, which was to shut down their beef export industry. The government came up with some sort of bogus allegation and said that in the name of public safety, it was shutting down that industry until it was satisfied that the beef was safe. We then send a bunch of people over there who find out there was really nothing wrong with the beef and the ban is lifted.

• (1710)

I feel we may also have a lot of problems with the shipping arrangement. The bar has been set very low for shippers coming into our country and international shippers who do not meet our standards come in under the bar. A disaster could happen and we would end up checking it out afterward. That is not the way to do

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things. We should make sure that the legislation is tight and that it does not have any loopholes. We have enough loopholes in our laws. We must address this area so it does not become a major problem.

My hon. colleague from the Bloc made some very good comments and I encourage the government to take a look at the concerns he raised. Details will kill us on these sorts of things but this area has no detail. The devil is in the detail and there are no details in this area. It is wide open. To me it is almost like giving a blank cheque to get into our waters.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have followed the hon. member's speech for the last 20 minutes. He opposed everything in the bill but did not propose any concrete solutions to the problems that he saw. I know his job as an opposition MP is to oppose whatever the government proposes, but I wonder if could propose some constructive solutions for the government to look at.

The member mentioned that we have to meet and exceed standards. If he is not happy with the in the way we meet and exceed standards, what would he propose? How much more does he expect the government to do? I wonder if he would comment on those two points.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, being from the prairies, rail transportation is an area that I am much more of an authority on than marine shipping. It seems to me that we should look at the safeguards other jurisdictions have in place to deal with this particular problem. They may have found a new and better way to deal with this sort of problem.

We have committees to look at those things. Hopefully a good transport committee could look at this sort of thing. We could then put down our political caps, quit playing games and look at some good solid proposals.

Why do we not make international shippers comply with our requirements? Why does one section of the legislation allow them to come into Canada under the bar even when they do not meet our standards. Maybe we should look at that.

When a business or a company wants to do business in Canada they must comply with all our requirements. We do not impose a bunch of requirements on Canadians and then allow foreign entities to come in and do business and bypass the requirements that apply to the rest of us. This would be one obvious answer to the question.

I hope my points in this area will be of some help to the government. I would welcome the opportunity to be on the transport committee where we could roll up our sleeves and look at creating a good tight law in this area.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said in his speech that the

bill does not demonstrate the responses. He said that the bill is not tough enough. Let me take him through a couple of passages in the bill.

• (1715)

Let me just take him through a couple of passages in the bill very quickly. I know he is a lawyer and I know the bill is 200 pages long, but in fact, were he to look at section 172, just looking at pollution, he would see that a pollution officer can board any vessel. If he looked at section 176 he would find that a pollution officer can demand to enter the premises on any vessel, can demand that equipment be seized and can demand to make photographs. He will see in section 176, subsection (4), that with a warrant he can arrest people on board. He can demand to come aboard and use force.

The minister can seize the vessel and destroy the vessel. That is section 180. The minister can remove and actually destroy the vessel if it is deemed to be polluting.

Finally, subsection 183(2) it reads:

Every person who—commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$1,000,000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than eighteen months—

That is punishment. Did he not read those sections before he prepared his speech?

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague raised those points. Those are the enforcement provisions which would certainly apply to Canadian owned steamship operations or to other shippers in our waters. There is no doubt about it.

The ambiguity in the legislation is what we do with someone who is not in Canada. The hon. member mentioned the \$1 million fine. If the owner is in Afghanistan and registered in Liberia and causes \$10 million worth of damage in the St. Lawrence River, what will we do? Will we send the Canadian army over to Afghanistan, round this guy up and bring him back just like we are dealing with the Mafia man here? These are not the answers Canadians are looking for.

Seriously, given this gentleman's background and knowledge as a journalist and so on, he ought to know better than to come up with an answer like that. He knows the public wants higher standards and clear laws, not dancing around or looking for technicalities, not lawyers and courts with technicalities to get wealthy people off fines and charges, because they can afford it. The wealthy people, whether it is through family trusts or steamship lines, can hire the army of lawyers. He ought to know that. He has a wealth of experience in the journalistic world and he should know that.

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Mr. Brent St. Denis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has raised a number of questions, as have others. In committee, I think every effort will be made to respond to them.

For the record I would just like to point out that Canada, as a port state, is permitted to board any foreign vessel regardless of the status and currency of its safety certificate and regardless of its flag.

In fact, in 1999, over 1,000 vessels from 86 different countries were inspected. Where there were deficiencies, whether they were with respect to the safety of the workers on those boats or the marine environment, actions were taken. The bottom line is that this legislation goes further in modernizing environmental and safety provisions and will do a better job for all Canadians when it comes to our offshore and Great Lakes waters.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, that is a good answer. It is part of the answer.

Let us say we have the guy from Afghanistan who has his ships registered in Liberia and who brings a ship into Canadian waters. He owns 14 other ships. He has not posted a bond or put anything in place in Canada. Let us say we find his ship in our waters with a toxic substance, maybe nuclear waste, and we know it is going to be dumped in our water because he does not know where else to take it. It is brought into Canadian waters. We seize it and it becomes our problem.

How do we track down this individual who owns these ships and bring him into this country and make him accountable for the damages? That is the real question. I can assure everyone that the wealthy people of the world, whether they are Greek tycoons or a Canadian family heavily involved in shipping, want to use these loopholes. These are the very kinds of problems we get into when a disaster takes place: hunting down these people and finding an effective enforcement remedy to deal with this.

• (1720)

This is something I think we should take a good, long, hard look at. We should not just rubber stamp the act, put it through and hope the system works. In the House today we heard about a number of cases in regard to the immigration department, where people were bound and determined to get into Seattle and caused major damage. They roamed around our country for seven years. There is another guy who, from what I gather, Hollywood could make a movie about. He is a dangerous person and he has been in our country for two years.

I am a member of parliament for Prince Albert trying to get some answers as to how this could come about. All I find is a bunch of buck passing. Quite seriously, it is just buck passing from one department to the other. No one accepts any responsibility.

I do not want a major environmental disaster to happen with an international shipper in our waters and have this sort of episode take place here. Now is the time to make sure we have good laws in place and a system that will get the outputs we want.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from Prince Albert. He of course hails from the area one of our previous right hon. prime ministers, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, and he is obviously upholding the tradition of statesmanship and speaking up for important issues across Canada. I applaud him for that.

Hon. members on the other side are congratulating the member from Prince Albert, and I congratulate them for being so receptive to a new member. That shows they are willing to work with the Alliance, and we in the Alliance appreciate that.

I would like to talk about Bill C-14. There are many parts of the bill that have to do with the protection of our environment. Those are the parts of the bill that caught my attention and I had the opportunity to look through them. The Alliance is, of course, the party that cares about the environment. We in the Alliance care about our environment and we are looking for ways to work with others in the House, with members from other parties and from the government side, and to work together on important issues like the environment.

The environment is of great concern to us. We need to leave our country in a good state for those who are coming behind us, our children and future generations, and I would like to give some recognition to the government for including some issues having to do with the environment in the bill. I think that is a good thing.

We are looking for ways to work together in the House. When a good idea comes forward, even if it is from the government side, we will make mention of it. We would also do the same in relation to other parties and hope that others in this place would work with us in a spirit of co-operation so that we can tackle the important issues of the country. That is exactly what we are doing.

The member from the Liberal side who used to be a Conservative says it makes good sense and I appreciate what he says. Again, I agree with him on that point.

In terms of the shipbuilding industry, we do have word that the government will possibly move forward in helping to re-establish the shipping industry in our nation. We do have some concerns

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about that particular topic and the government's approach to that industry, such as whether it will be working on subsidizing that industry and using taxpayer dollars to support an industry which might have difficulty competing on the world market.

I hear my colleague from the other side once again commending me for my good points and I thank him for that. I truly thank him for that and for working in the new spirit of co-operation which the Alliance has initiated. We in the Alliance truly appreciate it.

We do have some concerns about the way the government might proceed on that particular issue, but we will save that for another day because I do want to make my comments pertinent to Bill C-14, the bill before the House right now.

• (1725)

I see that my comments are sparking great debate, ringing with agreement around the House. At this late hour of debate in the House, it is reassuring to us that government members are so attentive and in agreement with us.

When looking through Bill C-14 I did not see any mention of double hulling of ships. As a member from British Columbia, not too far away from the coast, I think it is an issue that should be explored in committee in regard to the bill, in order to protect our environment and provide protection to our marine coastal areas, which are so important to the economy on the west coast, the east coast and throughout the nation. I would like to see that point perhaps pursued in committee.

There is something in part 8 of the bill in reference to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans which reminds me of an issue in my own riding. There is an area referred to as the Codd Island wetlands, in Pitt Meadows in British Columbia. It is a very important and sensitive ecological area. Some experts are saying that it is one of the last remaining intact wetlands in the lower mainland area of Vancouver.

Right now there is concern that the area might be developed and turned into a cranberry bog. That is a concern to many people in the community. They are working to rally together to see if there might be some other solutions in order to maintain and protect this important ecological wetland. I believe there have been and will be letters to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and to the Minister of the Environment, both of whom are ministers of the crown from British Columbia.

We hope that members of my riding would have the ear of the ministers for their concerns and that a possibility might arise for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of the Environment to work co-operatively with the province, the local

jurisdiction of Pitt Meadows and concerned citizens. We are looking for opportunities to build together to protect that area.

I know I have digressed a little from Bill C-14, but when I saw part 8 of the bill regarding the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, I saw it as a good opportunity to bring up this very important issue of the Codd Island wetlands.

Also in the bill there is a reference in clause 173 to the need to report to parliament every five years in regard to this particular bill. We think reporting to parliament is a good thing.

An hon. member: What about the *Titanic*?

Mr. Grant McNally: The member on the Liberal side who was a Conservative is saying that his former party—or maybe he is saying his party—is going down like the *Titanic*. I am not sure that all members would agree with him on that. Perhaps some would.

The point about reporting to parliament is an important one. We saw in this place today an example of what happens when a minister of the crown does not report to parliament and does not present a piece of legislation first in this place before holding a briefing and giving information about an important piece of legislation, in this case Bill C-15, the justice bill. The minister's department gave information to the media first, excluding members of parliament from attending the briefing, saying that it was an embargoed briefing.

I know that Mr. Speaker will be ruling on the matter, but I think it is worth mentioning again in this place that the government needs to follow the proper procedures and process to restore people's faith in this place and that we are in fact the leaders in terms of what we are doing with legislation and moving forward together.

What happened here today is an example of why it is important to follow process. Unfortunately the Minister of Justice did not do that. We are disappointed with that.

My time is growing short. I will wrap up my comments knowing that I will have more time at another sitting of the House to discuss this important bill.

• (1730)

I thank my Liberal colleagues for their agreement with what I have said today and for their comments and congratulations. We hope to see them working together with us on many other issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 5.30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

AMERICAN NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that Canada does not participate in the research, development, or production of components for use in the proposed American National Missile Defense System.

He said: Mr. Speaker, at the outset I thank the hon. member for Halifax, the national leader of the New Democratic Party, for seconding this motion. I also thank all my colleagues in the House of Commons for the work they have been doing across the country to try to bring to the attention of Canadians, and in particular to our government, the profound importance of Canada finally and urgently taking a strong and clear stand in opposition to the U.S. national missile defence system.

I pay a particular tribute to my colleague, the spokesperson on defence for the New Democratic caucus, the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore. He has worked tirelessly on this issue for many years. His predecessor, Gordon Earle, the former member for Halifax West, also did an outstanding job in pleading with the government to show leadership on the issue. It is an issue literally of life and death not just for Canada but for the planet.

The essential elements of my motion are, first, that the government should speak out strongly in opposition to the proposed national missile defence system of the United States in view of the fact that it represents a very grave threat to international arms control agreements and raises the serious possibility of a new nuclear arms race.

Second, it is very important that Canada refuse all participation in the research, development or production of components for use in the NMD.

Finally, and in many respects just as important, Canada should work with other governments to strengthen and deepen existing arms control agreements toward the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. That must surely be our fundamental goal. It is in that light that we approach the issue of the proposed U.S. national missile defence program.

We all recall an earlier version of the program, the so-called star wars proposal of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Even the

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Conservative government of Brian Mulroney spoke out against that incredibly destructive proposal by President Reagan.

The tragedy today is that we look across at a Liberal government that remains on the fence. It refuses to take a strong and clear stand now in opposition to the proposed national missile defence system. The system clearly threatens the current international framework of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agreements, areas in which Canada has historically shown leadership.

Canada along with 186 other states has signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Canada has formally undertaken, along with those states:

—to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.

That was the commitment made by 187 states less than a year ago in May 2000.

In February of last year United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said that the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda was in a state of deplorable stagnation and that it was difficult to approach the NPT review conference with optimism given the discouraging list of nuclear disarmament measures in suspense, negotiations not initiated and opportunities not taken. He said that a dangerous nuclear arms race looms on the horizon.

• (1735)

There is no question whatsoever that a decision by the United States to proceed with a national missile defence system would dramatically escalate that nuclear arms race. We know that this would be a clear breach of the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty between the United States and Russia.

That treaty is a cornerstone of the international arms control regime. The United States would simply rip up the treaty. President Bush would rip it up and indeed President Bush's vision for star wars goes even further than that proposed by former President Clinton.

There is no doubt that in many respects it is part of an agenda to militarize space itself which, as we can all appreciate, would have a devastating impact again in terms of the nuclear arms race.

There is no doubt as well that deployment of the NMD would provoke other nuclear weapons states to counter it by building more nuclear weapons rather than keeping their NPT promise to eliminate their own nuclear arsenals.

We know the possible impact in terms of China. The Chinese ambassador to the United Nations, Hu Xiadi, warned recently that once the NMD is deployed the treaty on the limitation of anti-ballistic missile systems, the ABM treaty, will be dead.

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To seek complete missile defence capable of protecting all a country's territory is tantamount to seeking unilateral security so as to gain freedom to threaten others. As a result, the threat of nuclear war will loom again and international relations will become turbulent and unstable.

We know as well the potential implications on other countries in the region, for example on India, Pakistan and Taiwan among others. We cannot allow this escalation to take place.

We know as well that the current proposal has already stalled the negotiation of nuclear disarmament agreements in the UN conference on disarmament. That again is a tragedy because we must be moving in the opposite direction for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

That is why we are calling on our government to show leadership, to speak out clearly and forcefully to the United States against the NMD. We would not be the only country to do so. Indeed, a number of European countries have raised very grave concerns about the deployment of the NMD, and indeed the Australian senate just recently passed a motion strongly opposing it.

Countless groups in Canada that support nuclear disarmament, including the Canadian Peace Alliance, the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, les Artistes pour la paix, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, Project Ploughshares, Physicians for Global Survival and many religious groups and others have appealed to our government to show leadership and to finally speak out.

We know as well that there has been a number of threats, some of them not so veiled threats, by our United States allies that we must get on board on this. Indeed, the deputy Canadian commander of the joint U.S.-Canada NORAD scheme told Liberal MPs last year that the longer Canada delays its support the less influence it would have on the system. He said that we must participate. As my colleague the defence critic has pointed out, the U.S. deputy commander of space command threatened that the United States would be under absolutely no obligation to defend Canada unless it joined the missile shield.

The U.S. ambassador to Canada, Gordon Giffin, has warned Canada. He said a refusal by Canada to support the NMD would mark a significant evolution in the historic defence relationship between Canada and the U.S., and that if the defence relationship ends it could affect the fabric of the whole relationship. We as New Democrats say it is time our government rejected those kinds of threats from the United States and stood up for peace and nuclear disarmament.

I want to close by once again appealing to the government to listen to the voices of Canadians, 92% of whom in a recent public opinion survey called on our government to lead in the struggle to abolish all nuclear weapons.

• (1740)

That should be the position we take. We should not in any way participate in NMD itself. I call on members of all parties to support the motion. I appeal to the Alliance which has recently stated that it supports the U.S. national missile defence system. The Leader of the Opposition was in Washington speaking to the vice-president in strong support of NMD, which is very sad.

We are waiting to hear the position of the Conservatives. They say they are not sure exactly where they stand. I look forward to clarification on that position.

We are looking most of all for clarity and leadership from the Government of Canada, from the Minister of National Defence and from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We want them to speak out clearly and say no, no, no to the U.S. national missile defence system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot support this motion, and I would like to explain why.

First of all, and this is a key point, we do not yet know which system the United States will put in place or what the international strategic context will be. How can we make a decision when we were missing such key information?

It is true that the new administration in the United States clearly indicated that it will establish a national missile defence system. The American legislation says that the government will deploy such a system when it is technologically feasible. But the US government was also very clear on the fact that it intends to look at all the options available and consult its NATO allies as well as Russia and China. We need to know more about all this before we can make a decision.

My colleague mentioned the word leadership. This does not mean that we are staying idle. Our government has been having serious discussions with the United States and other countries involved to look at the repercussions of such a system. Our prime minister and President Bush have talked about this issue, and so have the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence and their American counterparts. The prime minister has also discussed this issue with the president of Russia, the president of China, the British prime minister and the French president.

At the Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence, the PJBD, over which I have the honour of presiding, we have been following that issue for several months.

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We want to pursue our dialogue with all of our friends and allies and most particularly, of course, with the United States, in order to be totally aware of the U.S. plans as they develop.

Moreover, we are trying to influence the United States in their decision-making process on that critical issue in order to find a solution that would allow for world strategic stability while strengthening the security of the United States, Canada and our allies.

The United States are trying to develop a missile defence system because they feel the threat to their national security has changed fundamentally because of the proliferation of missile technology in the so-called "high-risk" countries, namely North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

Work on research and development of missile defence has been going on for a long time in the United States, both for the protection of troops in theatres of operations as well as to protect larger areas. Members will recall, for example, that the United States used "Patriot" missiles during the Gulf war to protect Israel, with moderate success.

According to a report from the American Intelligence Services published in 1999 under the direction of the current defence secretary, Mr. Rumsfeld, high risk nations would be able to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles within five or ten years, which is much sooner than expected. That and the missile tests made that same year by North Korea forced Bill Clinton, who was then president, to sign the National Missile Defence Act in July of 1999. Since then research has increased in this sector.

A lot is at stake for allies of the United States and all the countries on this planet.

• (1745)

A national missile defence system would have enormous consequences on world strategic stability, and we fear it could start a new arms race. National missile defence systems are presently not allowed under the 1972 treaty between the United States and Russia dealing with restrictions on ballistic missile defence systems.

This treaty, better known as the ABM treaty, ensures that United States and Russia stay vulnerable as far as their respective nuclear weapons are concerned, to dissuade both countries from using them. The strategic stability ensured by this treaty also led to other measures regarding the control of arms and disarmament. The treaty can be changed, and it has been changed in the past, but, up to now, Russia has objected to any new changes.

Canada shares the concerns of Americans about new threats to international and national security, including those resulting from internal conflict, terrorist attacks, and the proliferation of mass destruction weapons. We will continue discussing with the United States about the best way to counter these threats, through bilateral

or multilateral agreements, involvement in operations promoting peace, diplomacy, or some form of antimissile defence.

Canada is at the forefront of international efforts to stop the proliferation of missiles and missile technology. I am thinking about the missile technology control regime and initiatives promoting a multilateral standard against proliferation, especially principles, commitments, confidence building measures, and incentives that could evolve into a code of conduct.

We wholeheartedly support the resumption of weapons inspections in Iraq by the UN under the UNMOVIC, and we encourage North Korea, with which Canada has recently established diplomatic relations, to abide by the treaty. We also encourage all nations which have not done so, the United States and China included, to sign or ratify the treaty on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons tests. Such multilateral agreements have an essential dampening effect on proliferation.

We are concerned about the impact the proposed national missile defence system would have on strategic stability and the potential arms race it could lead to, which would undermine current efforts toward non-proliferation and arms control.

We are anxious to maintain and reinforce the relationship of co-operation on issues of security between the U.S. and Russia, that led to the ratification of the anti-ballistic missile treaty. We shared our concerns with the U.S. government and urge them to take all the time they need to seriously consider the impact their decision to deploy a national missile defence system would have.

President Bush and his team have clearly stated that they will keep listening to what we have to say. They made themselves very clear on at least two issues: first, they do not intend to go ahead without fully consulting with NATO and their allies; second, the missile defence system that will ultimately be deployed will be used to protect not only the United States, but also their friends and allies. They have also indicated that they will be consulting with Russia and China. We therefore encourage Moscow and Beijing to accept the invitation extended by Washington.

Until the new administration adopts its action plan on a national missile defence system and all these consultations have been carried out, it would be premature to take position on the American initiative.

With respect to participation in research, development and production activities concerning parts that would be used in this defence system, missile defence research activities that Canada is involved in with the United States, estimated at about \$1 million, are primarily aimed at supporting traditional missions carried out by the Canadian forces.

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All antiballistic missile defence systems do not necessarily have an impact on global strategic stability. Such systems are also used to protect troops in operational theatres and are a major component of defence systems in conflict situations.

The 1994 white paper deals explicitly with this matter; it emphasizes the importance of the antiballistic missile treaty and supports research co-operation on missile warning systems and antiballistic missile defence, provided that the costs of this co-operation are efficient and affordable, that this research helps to meet Canadian defence needs and that it builds on missions already carried out by the Canadian forces. The current co-operation between Canada and the United States is aimed at this.

Given the considerations that I have just mentioned in broad terms, the government cannot support Motion No. 86.

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to participate in the debate on the private member's motion brought forward by the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. I know of my colleague's work in the foreign affairs portfolio. We have served together on the committee since 1997. The member is an experienced member of the House and has led many personal crusades, some being very controversial. I have learned to work with him on an issue by issue basis.

In the House hardworking members bring forward private members' bills and motions. I appreciate very much their hard work and the intent behind their bills and motions. The motion today calls on the government to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that Canada does not participate in the research, development, or production of components for use in the proposed American national missile defence system.

It is my understanding that America's missile defence system is still mostly only a part of the imagination or planning of U.S. military strategists. They think they can do something to protect North America from a nuclear weapons attack. They are not yet sure what is possible in this regard, but they have pledged to the world that they would continue in their tradition as defenders of the free world to develop a missile defence system.

My colleague seems to be seeking to shut down all Canadian consultations and research. He would shut down exports to the U.S. of technology, wire, aluminum, pencils or anything else that the Americans might use in their quest to protect North America from nuclear weapon attacks. I have read the motion carefully. We have just heard from the hon. member his intention with respect to the motion, but I am concerned that he is overreacting.

Let us look into the background of the whole issue. During the cold war, effective arms control agreements between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union acted as a deterrent to the Soviet threat to deploy missiles in western Europe. Though it never went beyond the theoretical stage, the American strategic defence initiative, SDI of the 1980s, has been acknowledged as a factor that forced the Soviets to the arms agreement table. Now, 20 years later, the United States is on the verge of deploying the national missile defence system, known as the NMD program.

From what little the U.S. has told the world, its current missile defence system proposal, the NMD, is not as grand in scope as the SDI. It is more easily deployable, tactically as opposed to strategically focused and extremely practical. George W. Bush has made it clear that he endorses the program and plans to proceed with its implementation. Everyone knows that he would like Canada to be part of that implementation.

Let us look at the issue strategically. The application of the NMD is intrinsically tied to North American aerospace defence, NORAD. It was an alliance forged between Canada and the U.S. in 1958 and has been the focal point of Canada's air defence policy ever since. With headquarters in Colorado Springs, NORAD is the most sophisticated air surveillance system on earth and monitors potential airborne threats to Canada and the U.S. It is in constant communication with U.S. air force and Canadian air force units designated as primary NORAD interception units.

Originally tracking stations in Canada along the distant early warning line, the DEW line, provided primary intelligence but were replaced by satellites in the 1980s.

• (1755)

Because NORAD remains charged with defending North America's continental air space the NMD program falls into NORAD's mandate and the alliance is expecting to be formally tasked with administering the program. For Canada not to participate in NMD would be problematic to the joint intelligence, security and military efforts that NORAD accomplishes.

How could Canada be privy to a portion of the NORAD operation and be excluded from NMD activities? The tension inherent in such a relationship could very well cause a serious reappraisal of the NORAD partnership or indeed an end to the defence alliance. This potential consequences would be devastating for Canada.

We cannot protect our airspace, gather the degree and volume of intelligence currently amassed by NORAD, or provide the air force training opportunities currently afforded by membership in NORAD. In the interest of our own defence we should allow the Americans the opportunity to ask us how, if and when they want us

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to participate. Moreover, we should allow them to develop their efforts to the point of a formal proposal before we condemn them.

I will indicate the reasons the Canadian Alliance believes that Canada should support and be an early partner in the NMD. The NMD is a land based system that is easily deployable and relatively simple in design and scope. It is primarily tactical in scope and is not viewed as an absolute defence against a massive missile attack against North America. It is designed to prevent accidents and aggression from rogue states. It is not a grand strategic plan that is aimed at eradicating all missile threats at all times. The NMD will not result in any escalation or renewal of the arms race.

Therefore arguments that it will nullify the anti-ballistic missile treaty are specious since the ABM treaty can be amended at any time. The NMD offers at no cost tremendous security, intelligence and military benefits to Canada. Like our membership in NORAD where club dues are basically waived, participation in the NMD will not have any financial impact upon Canada. Rather it will enhance, not reduce, Canadian security.

The program will proceed with or without Canadian involvement. We would be well advised to participate at the ground level in order to gain the maximum benefits possible. Canadian military leaders are overwhelmingly committed to the plan, including Lieutenant General George MacDonald, the deputy commander of NORAD who sees grave consequences for Canada if we choose not to participate in the program.

For these reasons we will endorse the plan in principle. We continue to encourage the government to participate fully in the NMD and cease its unfortunate habit of alienating our best friend, closest ally and largest trading partner, the United States. Canada could only benefit from this far reaching plan. Canada must see what the NMD system will be once fully developed. If it is as presented, we must support it and give the U.S. the benefit of the doubt while it works out options for missile defence.

In the post-cold war era there is a new, real and growing threat since the world is confronted with a more diverse, less predictable and more risk prone group of states armed with increasingly capable weapons of mass destruction used as tools of terror, blackmail and aggression.

There is always a risk of an accidental or unauthorized launch of an existing ballistic missile. Therefore, we as an ally of the U.S. have a moral imperative to allow the use of all reasonable tools available to deal with this threat. Missile defence will be a necessary element of deterrence and an opportunity for a collective approach to enhancing security for all.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas

for instigating this debate on the space shield. He is a parliamentarian with a lot of experience. He does not hesitate to deal with core issues or often to provoke discussions.

I have to give him the credit for having initiated this debate on the space shield. This is not the first debate he has initiated, but this one is particularly important at the present time. This debate is just a starting point. We will need many more discussions over this issue.

The space shield is not a new issue. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas had no qualms telling me that when he was invited to make a speech in the House of Commons Ronald Reagan quipped that there was a lot of echo in the House of Commons when some heckling came from the NDP benches.

The position the NDP is taking today does not come as a surprise. It is consistent with the position it has sustained for many years.

In those days George Lucas, a great Hollywood producer, was having a big box office hit with his movie *Star Wars*. Ronald Reagan was said to promote a kind of star wars at an astronomically high cost for the time. The cost of developing such a system would probably be just as astronomical today.

What has been done so far? Some testing has been done. In fact two tests, which were far from being conclusive. I think the great American pride was somewhat hurt by these tests because they were far from being conclusive. Finally they were cut short so the Americans could say "It has been a success. We have intercepted a missile". On the contrary, they missed the mark.

Let us look at the geopolitical issues as well as those regarding current treaties. Already international powers such as Russia and China are saying "We are party to a treaty. We often hear about the anti-ballistic missile or the ABM treaty, but we will simply withdraw from this treaty because it is our understanding that the defence system you are putting in place will give you an offensive capability, with us being unable to retaliate".

There are important geopolitical issues to consider. It is the same thing with the non-proliferation treaty or NPT. International powers such as Russia and China say they will withdraw from such treaties, which means we could see a revival of the arms race. I will come back to this later because it is important to understand the impact on various treaties.

With regard to geographical considerations, it is normal that Europeans be against this project given the way it has been designed. By Europeans I mean the European governments. The private sector, and members will see where I am going with this, has a totally different point of view since it is aware of all the potential economic spinoffs this could have.

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As far as the U.S. is concerned, this is an election promise made by its new president, George W. Bush. It is far from being a done deal. The United States Congress and Senate have yet to say they agree with this. Need I remind the House that there is a very small Republican majority in congress and a one seat Republican majority in the senate. The President of the United States may have some plan in mind, but he still has to deal with American democratic and parliamentary entities. As we can see, it is far from being a sure thing.

I have already spoken at length about Russia and China. They are totally against this project. The position of Canada is questionable. The Prime Minister travels to China and says "We will just have to wait and see how things will go".

• (1805)

A few weeks later he meets with President Bush and things start to change. He gets a little mellow and starts opening doors.

The foreign affairs minister says that it is okay as long as there is consultation and that Russia and China agree, which basically means that we are against the project. There are somewhat contradictory indications coming from the government right now.

All that to say that as far as ideology and economy are concerned, this debate will never be over. I remember I was a great pacifist and I had problems when we talked about the cruise missile tests over the Canadian territory. To me, it made no sense at all, but I had been told "Sure, but from an economic point of view if contracts are awarded in your constituency people will not be happy". It is always the same dynamic.

The member who spoke before me referred to ties with NORAD. We must bear in mind that the NORAD agreement provides for the joint defence of the North American territory.

Our economy is so integrated with the American economy and there is such a large scale integration in our North American territorial defence policy with the Americans that it seems to me that it would be very difficult for us to stay out of all this if the President of the United States were to suddenly convince the congress and the senate to go ahead.

There would be a problem for us. However, at the moment, the concept is far from being clear. I mentioned the inconclusive tests earlier, but what concept will the Americans put forward? Everybody is waiting to know.

In English we often talk about the national missile defence program, which is really the American missile defence program, a program designed only for the United States.

The Americans, having noted the hesitation, are now saying that it could be a global anti-missile program. What does that mean? I think Canada being a close neighbour of the United States would certainly be included. What about European countries? Could the concept be expanded so that the system would protect all friendly territories against enemy attacks?

We know nothing about the American concept. Who would be included in a global program? Should Japan, Europe and Canada be included? In a strictly national program, the span would be totally different. The existing concept is one known as balance of terror.

I have a bit of a problem with arguments like "You know, Iraq could launch a missile attack on the United States". If it launched a single missile aimed at the United States, Iraq would be wiped from the face of the earth. I fail to understand how there could be any mistake, with Iraq attacking the most powerful country in the world with a missile. I also have a hard time understanding the explanations given by the Americans.

It is clear the Americans have not totally developed their concept yet. They are sending trial balloons to see how their allies will react. Canada has not stated its position either; it is taking a wait and see approach.

We in the Bloc Québécois would like to see what is coming, what concept the Americans want to introduce, before saying we agree. We do concede, however, as neighbours that from the economic point of view aerospace and aeronautics are established industries in Quebec. Obviously we want to wait and see, and should we decide to support the Americans we will have our say.

At this point, however, I would like to ask the government one thing. Our colleague has initiated the debate, but if decisions are to be made the government would have to commit to coming back to the House of Commons so that there may be a thorough discussion of the matter.

For the moment we can unfortunately not support the position of our colleague from Burnaby—Douglas even if we do concede that he has brought the matter before the House and that the discussion is far from over.

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very controversial subject and something Canada will need to deal with as it goes forth. I appreciate the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas who has always been able to bring controver-

sial issues to the House to ensure that they are discussed. I am sure that is his purpose today.

When I read the motion a thought came to mind. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that Canada does not participate in the research, development, or production of components for use in the proposed American National Missile Defence System.

I thought perhaps it should be rewritten considering how much I disagree with it. I thought it would be more appropriate if it read:

That, in the opinion of this House, we should bury our heads even deeper in the sand, pretend that the real world does not exist and refuse to participate in the future.

We are opposition critics. I respect the member for Burnaby—Douglas and I know he worded the motion in such a way as to create controversy and generate debate, which he has done. I believe that as opposition critics we should put some thought into these issues and make sure we have the information before we blindly criticize. That is the point we are at now. We are still gathering information.

This is law in the U.S. It will happen, but it will only happen as part of a more involved system of defence from foreign missiles, be they rogue missiles or missiles from other countries. The United States has a tri-level plan to prevent missiles from harming its country and this will be only a part of it.

It is not nuclear. It is not spaced based. It is not star wars. It is not a whole lot of things that some people think it is. However we still do not know a lot about it. We are gathering information, and more and more information is becoming available all the time.

Surely we should not say that we will not listen, that we will not look at it, that we will not consider it or that we will not allow our young people and scientists and technical people to participate in it. We cannot blindly say no and rule it out. In that way I believe the motion is wrongly placed. It is not applicable, it is not practical and it is not appropriate.

As I have said, it is law in the U.S. The Americans will proceed with it, but they have not invited Canada to participate. They have sent messages that they would perhaps like us to participate, but they have not invited us to participate at any senior level. It is totally an American initiative.

It will involve a great deal of technology and research, and a lot of the technology and research will bridge over from missile defence to the civilian industry. It would be wrong to rule it out without considering the impact on the civilian aerospace industry, which is huge in Canada and has enjoyed a \$25 billion surplus over the last 10 years.

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To blindly refuse it without any basis in fact, without knowing anything about it, without knowing what the issues are and without even considering the impact on Canada is wrong in the opinion of members the Conservative Party.

Our entire aerospace industry is almost all export driven. It is a key component of our export business and of our entire economy. We cannot allow it to be threatened by a blind decision. To say that we do not want anything to do with it no matter what, that we do not want to listen or participate or hear anything about it, is definitely wrong.

The aerospace industry in Canada employs 60,000 people and those people could be very much a part of it. If it is in our interest we could play a key role in helping to develop the program. Again, if we say we are not interested in even listening or talking about it, the whole program and its benefits to Canada are doomed.

Earlier I said that the national missile defence system is not star wars. It is not a nuclear system. It is not even a spaced based system. It is a smaller, downgraded system from the star wars proposal. It appears very practical at first look and certainly we will be analyzing it as it goes forward.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Where is Brian Mulroney when we need him?

Mr. Bill Casey: Good question. The Russians have something like 3,500 missiles they could launch on us. This system will involve perhaps 100 or 200 when it is fully implemented. It is not possible to consider this part of a nuclear missile system or anything like it. It is a small system that will have a lot of practical use and may also have benefits to Canada as far as economic development goes.

• (1815)

Our position, which we are developing now, although we need to get more information, is that we think Canada could use this opportunity as a bargaining tool to encourage the United States government and the Russians to enter into more strategic arms talks to reduce nuclear arms more than they are reducing them now. We are down to approximately 3,000 to 3,500 missiles per side. Perhaps we could use this opportunity to get them to start anti-ballistic missile talks, START talks, to try to get them to agree to a level of maybe 1,000 or 1,500 as a condition of being involved with this program. We will be presenting that position to the government when we get more information on the exact details of the proposal.

In summary, we are not widely opposed to this. Our minds are open and we want to base our decisions on the facts when they

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become available. When that happens, we will base our decision on facts. In the meantime, we are going to encourage the government to use this as a bargaining tool to try to really do something positive in the missile defence system and the anti-missile defence talks because there is an opportunity now to do that.

Our position is that of having an open mind. I would have to say that we are leaning in favour of it because of the tremendous benefits from technology, from training and from experience. To just say that we are not going to be involved with any of this will turn the brain drain into the brain train.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the debate this evening. I want to congratulate my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas for introducing the motion and launching a very important debate around the sheer madness of Canada being associated in any way, shape or form with the proposed U.S. national missile defence system.

Before I get to the position of the government or, I guess more accurately, the non-position of the government, I want to just say a word or two about what I have heard from the other parties in the debate this evening.

I suppose it is not surprising that we hear from the Alliance the same usual knee-jerk, uncritical embracing of American defence initiatives. According to the Alliance, we want to Americanize our political system, Americanize our economy and certainly Americanize our health care system and our education system. Why would anybody be surprised at the Alliance's commitment to further throw in our lot with American defence initiatives, no matter how mad and irresponsible they really are?

I have to say I was somewhat more disappointed and frankly surprised at what I heard from the Bloc member who essentially said "Actually, I tend to be a bit of a pacifist myself but gee, what can you do? It is going to happen anyway". Besides, said the member, there might be some economic advantages to us if we get in on this madness that has been condemned from every corner of the world.

Again, I am not entirely surprised. Maybe it underscores the basis for some reuniting of the Alliance and Tory interests here. Essentially, we have an uncritical view coming from the Tory Party as well, which I think is disappointing and really an abandonment of what one has from time to time seen of a more enlightened nature from this party on similar issues in the past.

I want to turn now to the government's position or, as I say, non-position. What is that position? Essentially the government claims that it does not yet know enough to take a position. What is it about the government that it is so committed to sitting squarely and firmly on the picket fence on an issue such as this one, which cries out for leadership? The excuse given is that the government

does not really know enough yet or that it does not really know whether the technology is going to work. For the love of God, what does this mean?

• (1820)

Why is it that the German defence minister was absolutely unequivocal in stating that Germany was not prepared to be part of what essentially becomes the dismantling of the international architecture of arms control? That is the implication of going ahead with the national missile defence system. It has been recognized that what will absolutely go up in smoke is the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty. That is the architecture.

I know some have said that it is sort of an old treaty since it is from 1972, but we heard the member for Burnaby—Douglas remind us again that as recently as May 2000, I believe, 187 countries, including, by the way, the U.S. and Russia, all acknowledged that we have to build on that anti-ballistic missile treaty in order to move forward with meaningful disarmament.

What is it that makes it impossible for the government to take a moral stand here when we see, for example, that the prime minister of Italy had no difficulty in saying that he had enough information? He was persuaded on the basis of what we know: that the NMD poses a risk to the indivisibility of NATO. In February, the French president, Jacques Chirac, said very clearly that the NMD cannot fail to relaunch the arms race in the world.

How much more do we need to know than that every major peace group in the world and major research bodies have clearly taken a stand that this is madness? We used to have a tradition in this country. We had a deserved reputation for taking leadership in such matters. What happened to the Pearsonian tradition? What happened such that Canada is willing to cower and to hide out from taking leadership on something that literally threatens to relaunch a major arms race in the world and threatens the future of peace and security worldwide?

I appeal to those members who are sort of playing around with this as if it were star wars. I have to say that one of the difficulties with the image, which was made to stick to the Reagan era but is now out there as a sort of questionable description of what the NMB would mean for the future of the human race, is that we now have a whole generation of young people, and actually I think the whole Canadian population, who actually think that star wars is something that is just in the movies. It has a kind of positive notion about it. There is nothing positive about a proposal of the U.S.A. to relaunch nuclear proliferation and to relaunch a massive arms race, because once the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty goes up in smoke, then we are talking about a free-for-all. We simply have to re-establish Canada as a leader in these matters. The government has congratulated itself, with good reason, for taking some leadership on the issue of landmines.

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Let me make this my final point. Surely if government members will not listen to the pleas of opposition members, major scientists, other leaders and peace activists around the world, would they not be willing to listen to the pleadings of the former minister of international affairs in the government, the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, who now has thrown off the shackles of being part of the madness of this Liberal government? He is prepared to take a stand and say that we must not be part of this madness. I appeal to members to listen to that message.

• (1825)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank all of those who participated in this debate. In particular, of course, I thank my colleague, the leader of the New Democratic Party, the member for Halifax, for her comments.

I must say I was very saddened to note that spokespersons from each of the other parties all spoke out in opposition to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Frankly I was astonished by the position expressed by the spokesperson for the Bloc Québécois. He has said very clearly that the space shield exists and that Quebec wants to profit from contracts arising out of Canada-U.S. co-operation.

What is going on with members of the Bloc Québécois? In the past they were occasionally the voice of progress, but now they are speaking out in support of the space shield because of the profits it will bring? This is truly shameful and unacceptable.

I recall that in the past they also supported France's nuclear testing. I presume that was for the same reason.

[*English*]

It is very interesting to note that two weeks ago today the Minister of Foreign Affairs, speaking from Brussels, said that there was some urgency to the community of nations making their views known with respect to the proposed national missile defence system. He said in an interview from a NATO meeting:

I think the message there is that those of us who feel we should influence what comes out ought to be talking to them now.

He went on to say:

I think they are very much at the stage now of really putting their facts together and deciding what their plans are and what their options are and now is the time for their allies to indicate what their concerns or interests may be.

For heaven's sake, that is exactly what we are appealing to the government to do. It should get off the fence, as the leader of my party said, and make our views known now clearly and unequivocally to our allies that this is unacceptable.

We have heard talk about NORAD and Canada's involvement in NORAD. I sometimes wonder when I hear this talk whether this is

not the desperate pleas of the generals and the arms manufacturers to allow them to continue their jobs.

What is the enemy? Surely to goodness the real enemies that we should be confronting are the enemies of environmental destruction, of poverty, of homelessness and of injustice, not these theoretical enemies that NORAD has created to try to counter. That is why we have said that Canada should be strengthening our position within the United Nations and not working within this absurd and outdated framework.

My colleague referred to the words of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy. I want to refer to the very eloquent words of a member of the House of long standing, the member for Davenport, who spoke out very recently in opposition to the national missile defence and appealed to his own government to take a stand.

He talked about the fact that this so-called rogue state scenario was in fact ludicrous. He said that this absurd hypothesis omitted the fact that none of these states had nuclear weapons nor long range missiles, that these countries were very poor, and that their leaders did not want to provoke retaliation. Moreover, experts agreed that terrorist attacks, weapons stuffed in briefcases or trailer trucks, posed a greater danger to national security than ballistic rockets.

I appeal to the members on the government side to listen to their colleague from Davenport who has pleaded with his government to say no, to take a clear stand now.

Medical students in British Columbia have just launched a campaign called www.bombsaway.ca, appealing to the government to speak out against missile defence. They said the nuclear arms race is one of the greatest threats to global health and security.

New Democrats strongly support the attempts to try to convince the government to say no to NMD and to say yes to the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

I have also been informed that there will be no proceedings on the motion to adjourn the House this evening.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)

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