



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 138 • NUMBER 109 • 2nd SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, June 2, 2003

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 2, 2003

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Churchill has informed me in writing that she was unable to move her motion during the hour reserved for private members' business on Tuesday, June 3.

[*English*]

It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of position in the order of precedence. Accordingly, I am directing the table officers to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence. Private members' hour will thus be cancelled and the House will continue with the business before it prior to private members' hour

[*Translation*]

It being 11:07 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should develop and report annually on a set of social, environmental and economic indicators of the health and well-being of people, communities and ecosystems in Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, surprisingly, I have had indications from a number of members that they wish to speak to the motion, which is good news.

I will briefly go over the main points of the intention of the motion, then take whatever questions members may have and then let other members speak to this important issue. This is not the first time I have introduced this idea, and I have spoken in the House on this issue before.

The motion sets out a framework for the government to develop a set of indicators or measurements, and there is certainly debate around which would be better and more applicable, so that at the end of each year, or some time during a calendar year, we could provide reports to the people of Canada that would provide objective information concerning the economy of the country, the state of the environment and measures that would deal with social well-being.

I realize there have been some concerns expressed, such as health indicators being an encroachment into provincial jurisdiction. However I want to assure members of the House that when I first began this odyssey I naively thought I could sit down with a group of people and develop these indicators. I quickly came to the conclusion, after one particular meeting at which we talked about the spiritual value of a candle flame for an hour, that it was probably better left to people who knew what they were doing.

A couple of people have been of tremendous help. I have to say again that this certainly was not my idea. This idea has been around since Marilyn Waring, a very insightful politician from New Zealand who in the 1970s started talking about the problems associated with how we measure progress.

I want to pay tribute to and thank Mike Nickerson, a gentleman from Merrickville, Ontario, who has written extensively and devoted a great part of his adult life to the issue of sustainability. I also want to thank Ron Colman from Atlantic Canada who developed a genuine progress index that I think goes a long way toward solving what types of things we might go about measuring and how we might go about measuring them.

Canadians can be proud of those people and others in that they have undertaken this issue as almost their life's ambition and have provided us with a tremendous foundation of what we need to do.

As I was looking through the material on this issue, I came across a wonderful document that was produced in the early 1990s called "Energy Efficiency Trends in Canada". It contains over 100 pages and breaks down indicators for energy use. It is fascinating reading. It gives us very clear insight into the fact that although Canada is a large country and, in absolute terms, has an abundance of resources, even if we take into consideration climate and geography, Canadians are energy hogs. We are using far more energy in this country on a per capita basis than could ever be available if the third world even started approaching anything remotely close to our standard of living.

Private Members' Business

If we had known that in the early 1990s, had that been in the public domain and had we had a concerned citizenry, I think it would have closed the loop in terms of governments looking at energy policy and coming up with energy policies taking that into consideration. Ignoring the fact that we have waste streams associated with that, sooner or later we will run out of energy. The costs of running out and the problems associated with that would certainly be minimized if we were to start addressing the problem sooner rather than later.

• (1110)

In terms of the history of this initiative, my own personal involvement is directly tied to Peter Bevan-Baker, a candidate who ran for the Green Party in, I think, every provincial and federal election in my riding for a little over a decade. I would attend these debates initially as a policy advisor to my father who was the candidate and the member, and then myself.

I was always struck with the passion of Mr. Bevan-Baker's arguments. I talked to him after one of the debates and told him that I did not disagree with anything that he had to say in terms of where he thought we needed to go as a country. Where I had the problem, I told him, and I guess this is rooted back into my academic background, which is business, is that we had to get from (a) to (b) in a way that people would accept it and support it.

One of the paradoxes that confronts governments is that some of the decisions they would have to make transcend an election cycle, which means there has to be an informed public that will support some tough decisions over the course of five to ten years. The public must have confidence that the government has taken the steps that will result in the outcomes that are being predicted.

I think a set of tracking indicators would be the first step and the first step only to putting in place a structure where if governments are serious about addressing energy efficiency or energy usage in this country, if they are serious about attacking problems, such as illiteracy and poverty, then we need a way to demonstrate to Canadians that the policies that are being supported by their tax dollars are actually making the situation better instead of worse.

I would argue that one of the problems we have now is that we do not have such a tracking mechanism. What we have is an extreme bias toward economic indicators. I am not saying that those are necessarily bad. What I am saying is that they do not give the total pictures.

The analogy I like to use is that the government is driving a bus full of Canadians and all the Canadians are staring at is this phenomenon. I think anyone who has driven a vehicle would understand that there are a few other things we should be keeping our eye on, such as looking out the window and taking a look at the state of our society, the sustainability of rural communities and the state of the environment. I think at the end of the day, if we were to sit Canadians down, those would be the things that they would say they value.

Unfortunately, in this society we tend to measure what we value and value what we measure. The bias there is toward economics. Certainly interest rates are a wonderful test of the functioning of an

economy, the health of an economy and the confidence that capital markets have in an economy.

Gross domestic product is a measure that is widely used. However we must keep in mind, although I do not want to belabour the point, the GDP makes no distinction between good expenditures and bad expenditures. Investments in education count the very same in a GDP calculation as the costs associated with an automobile accident.

It becomes very clear that although we need economic indicators to influence an input, the decision making that goes into public policy, we certainly do not want to have that be the only thing. I would argue that although they may consider other measures the bias exists. That is what the motion, hopefully, will have the House deal with, that we have to bring some balance.

The flawed assumption in the current state of measurement or how we measure well-being is that we are making an assumption that economic activity and even economic growth directly correlate to improved quality of life and well-being in this country. I would argue to anyone that that assumption is flawed. It is not the case. Growth for the sake of growth, if we are not protecting the environment, energy use patterns, although we may be able to accept economically because of the abundance of resources in this country, over the long term will have a detrimental effect on future generations.

What the motion tries to do is expand the measure of wealth. I am not naive enough to suggest that this is an easy thing to do. I would also argue that Statistics Canada, one of the best data collecting agencies in the world, is around the corner. I think a cursory search of secondary information probably could put together a fairly good set of indicators of information, such as "Energy Efficiency Trends in Canada", a 110 page document that we are already doing. We just need to correlate it, put it together and present it to Canadians.

We must keep in mind what the end game is here. What I hope will happen is that by reconnecting to Canadians, much like the deficit fight, when we reflect on that in a non-partisan way in terms of how a government cuts \$42 billion in spending and then goes up in the polls, I think people were tracking it.

• (1115)

People took an interest in it, understood the importance of it and had a measure to which to hold their government accountable. I do not want to start a debate about the rightness or wrongness of the measures that they took to cut the money, but at the end of the day I think the Canadian population has shown a tremendous capacity to support responsible action in government.

However the key and the first step is to provide objective information and put that in the hands of Canadians. I have faith and trust that Canadians will hold their governments accountable according to the things they value. Although they value the interest rate, they also value minimizing the number of people living in poverty in the country. They value the state of the water and air in our environment, and this measure is a first step to hold governments accountable.

Private Members' Business

If governments find they have to move on environmental issues, for example, we will be unable to improve the state of the environment unless we take some rather drastic steps. We have to look at tax shift. We have to quit taxing things that we want to have happen and not taxing things that we do not want to have happen. We have to look at our tax system and how we can use it in a classical motivation model to encourage the proper behaviours.

Just to give a quick example of how some of these things might work, Germany has legislation called lifetime product stewardship legislation. Essentially under the plan companies that make consumer products, when those products are no longer useful, the companies have to take them back. They are not stuck at the curb for a truck to pick up and dump in a landfill site.

A number of things happen when this is done. We find that German manufacturing now is much less complicated. To the people at home who are perhaps watching this on television, take a minute and look in the back of the television set. Why in God's green earth do we have 17 or 18 different kinds of screws in a television? What we find under regimes where consumer products are manufactured with lifetime product stewardship legislation in place is they simplify, reuse and recycle. Over 30% of the parts in BMW cars are now recycled parts.

At the end of the day it may seem like a rather intrusive move into markets by government but this initiative is supported not only by the David Suzuki Foundation, it is also supported by the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association because they are looking for a set of rules. Nobody benefits if legislation allows people to pollute. The good companies that want to do the right thing are eventually put under price pressure to make changes which are not in the best interest of society.

At the end of the day, pollution pays. We have to address this a different way and there are things that government can do with the tax system. I am convinced we will turn this ship and start aiming it in the right direction but, again, the key is to have the Canadian public on side. The first step to doing that is to provide them with the most objective information about the things they value economically, socially and environmentally.

• (1120)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to talk to the motion of hon. member for Leeds—Grenville. I also would like to acknowledge that just last week I proposed a similar motion on the environment, the quality of life and contaminants. There is a movement in my community that deals with health issues that affect a community and make the quality of life very difficult for people. It also connects them to the economy, the environment and those contaminants.

Surprisingly the government right now is opposing that motion which fits hand and glove with the motion before us now. It is shocking to hear one week later the same arguments. I am glad they are coming from somebody on that side, but what I would like the hon. member to join me in my motion. More important, I ask him to address how he will influence the government to take the necessary measures because our motions are very closely tied.

Mr. Joe Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I certainly will take a very hard look at his motion. Private members' bills on this side are not whipped.

As I said, this initiative was first launched in the House in 1998, so I have been working on it quite a while. There is actually a bill that lays out the framework for how we might do this structurally. However one thing I found was the more specific I got with what I was trying to do, the more push-back there was. That is why I backed off the bill, because it was easy for the baby to go out with the bathwater if somebody saw one little thing.

Essentially, the process which I would like to see unfold here may also address the situation about which the member spoke very passionately in his area. The environment committee is an excellent standing committee in the House in terms of the work that it does under the chairmanship of the member for Davenport. Having spent considerable years on that committee, it could look at what the indicator sets might be. Whether the Auditor General or perhaps the environmental commissioner would be the reporting mechanism, I do not know, but we need to undertake a process in this country where Canadians reflect upon what they value. We are being told they value interest rates and the GDP. The disconnect leading to environmental and health issues in his community is the same disconnect leading to environmental health issues in my community.

Anything we can do in terms of trying to shed some light on the ridiculous notion that somehow if we take care of the economy, everything else will take care of itself, I would welcome. Therefore I would be more than happy to consider this motion.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, to follow up, it is good to hear those comments but I want to read my specific motion, Motion No. 399:

That this House call upon the government to take the necessary measures, including the drafting of legislation, to prevent medical conditions and illnesses caused by exposure to identifiable environmental contaminants.

That would create a trigger to which the government would have to respond, a very beneficial one for the communities to give public confidence. Then the information would be brought back to the House to be debated and analyzed, for a government process.

That specifically is my motion. If the member pushes forward, I would hope that his motion could join my motion because the member is striking a chord. Even the OECD is acknowledging now the environmental degradation, the effects on the economy and how it is unsustainable. To date only the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP are joining me in this fight

Private Members' Business

●(1125)

Mr. Joe Jordan: Mr. Speaker, that is very helpful and the member has identified a very serious issue. What I would say to the member is at the end of the day we will have to judge ourselves on whether we move the agenda forward on that issue. When I was first elected in 1997, one of the frustrations I had was I was up against some pretty strong forces. Sometimes it is conspiracy, sometimes it is just disconnect.

My approach is to put it in the hands of Canadians because I do not think we will find a lot of people willing to go out on a limb around here. The better approach is to identify a set of solid indicators that certainly would address his issue in a more holistic way, and then governments will start to demand that we take action on these things. To me that just seems to be much more of a long term fix than trying to pick the issues off one at a time.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 385 brought forward by the member for Leeds—Grenville today. It reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should develop and report annually on a set of social, environmental and economic indicators of the health and well-being of people, communities and ecosystems in Canada.

As we heard in the previous discourse that this was a broad motion. However it has a relatively simple and straightforward purpose which is to replace gross domestic product as the major indicator of well-being. It would be replaced with something called the genuine progress indicator, otherwise known as GPI.

The proponent is quite wise not to get too detailed in his motion. There is a lot of work to get to where we have an index that will engender wide ranging support. To launch this index without the appropriate structural homework would be a mistake.

The current GDP is definitely a poor way to determine how well human beings are actually doing. Gross domestic product is solely a monetary measurement which does not take into account factors other than the output of a nation's economy.

This genuine progress indicator would take into account many factors, social factors, environmental factors and other indicators. The genuine progress indicator is a measurement which would introduce values other than money into our accounting system.

For example, if money were currently spent in British Columbia, Newfoundland or another jurisdiction for repairing environmental damage from an oil spill or some other environmental catastrophe, this would record as an increase in the gross domestic product. This ignores the environmental damage obviously and focuses only on money. Whereas the genuine progress indicator would also take the environmental damage into account. We could use other examples, social, environmental or other matters as well.

Therefore the genuine progress indicator has some very large positives. What we must recognize, however, is the genuine progress indicator can be, and I am not saying it will be, easily abused and manipulated if the indicators built into it are used to skew the results in a way that is designed not so much to bring a new form of transparency but to make the designers of the system look good.

This is always a concern when we leave this kind of initiative in the hands of government because government will unflinchingly seek to create a form of measurement that is self-serving.

One example I could give is one could suggest that the number of factories located in a certain area would be built into the development of an indicator. This could be taken as an indicator, for example, of how much pollution is in the air, or it could indicate a higher number of jobs or it could be skewed to say a number of other things.

My point is the government or the bureaucracy could use the GPI to justify almost anything it wanted. Therefore that is probably the biggest hurdle and reason why GDP, gross domestic product, continues to be the main basis of comparison because of its predictability and the fact that it can be compared internationally despite its flaws.

●(1130)

We need a set of indicators for GPI to which everyone can agree so that we can get to a comparable and essentially truthful answer rather than a self-serving answer. The key is to develop a set of parameters and indicators that are objective.

A recognized objective measurement that many organizations and countries are beginning to utilize is neither the gross domestic product nor the genuine progress indicator, but something called the gross domestic product purchasing power parity. Rather than genuine GPI, some countries are tending to use GDP purchasing power parity as a more accurate measure of a nation's well-being because it takes into account the standard of living within that country.

This turned out to be a useful comparison this last month when I was in Thailand and India with the trade subcommittee because in a developing country normal measurements of GDP do not tell much about the state of the middle class or the state of how people in the workforce are actually doing.

Nearly all of the most respected international organizations now use GDP purchasing power parity to measure economic progress. This includes the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations economic reports. These groups are utilizing this new measurement. Nearly all reports must take into account the actual cost of living to express a nation's wealth and well-being. This new measurement tends to do that.

I am generally supportive of Motion No. 385. At this point in time it is not developed to the point where I believe it can be implemented usefully. Adoption of this motion, however, would signal our concern with continued reliance on and utilization of the GDP measurement.

Expansion to GDP purchasing power parity would be a positive move. Movement to the genuine progress indicator is also a positive move but needs an international push and international agreement on data input standards. Canadian support for this initiative would be a very positive step.

A fair and objective set of measurements is needed. This is something that needs to be recognized internationally and not something designed for government to make government look good. This past winter, the Canadian Alliance set up a sustainable development work group to look at this very issue. I would like to summarize their findings.

Indicators have been developed to measure progress in achieving sustainable development objectives, including Nova Scotia's genuine progress indicator and the World Bank's genuine savings sustainability indicator. However, quantification and measurement of values based on hundreds of sustainable development variables, such as soil degradation, pollution, forestry and fisheries completion, volunteer activity, natural resources values, et cetera, are extremely complex. We want to adopt sustainable development indicators.

The GPI, genuine progress indicator, is a work in progress and I support that initiative.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Motion No. 385, which says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should develop and report annually on a set of social, environmental and economic indicators of the health and well-being of people, communities and ecosystems in Canada.

I must indicate that we will vote against this motion, which well reflects this government's obsession with wanting to take control of everything and, once again, interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

This motion follows the discussions held during the National Roundtable on the Environment and Economy. In its report, the national roundtable proposed that sustainable development indicators be adopted to ensure that calculations relating to present and future economic development be enhanced with six new measures: changes to the Canadian forest cover, freshwater quality, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, extent of wetlands, as well as educational attainment.

It also wants calculations such as the GDP to be broadened to take human, social and environmental factors into consideration, while ensuring that the quality of environmental information is improved.

This is what Mr. Stuart Smith, co-chair of the Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators Initiative had to say about the six indicators:

You only manage what you measure. Other countries are looking at Canada. The OECD, for instance, and the World Bank are watching with interest—

What Mr. Stuart called:

—ground-breaking work.

He added that it was crucial to keep track of the human and natural capital in assessing our economic performances.

Mr. Smith greatly insisted on the fact that this study was commissioned by the former finance minister and prime minister in waiting and not the environment minister. I will come back to the ties between Mr. Smith and the former finance minister, and members will understand better why Mr. Smith is backing him.

Private Members' Business

The roundtable recommended that the finance minister play a leadership role by agreeing to use the new indicators and helping to set up new priorities in order to expand the system of national accounts. Statistics Canada has committed to producing an annual report on the recommended indicators and, as soon as it gets the resources needed, it will expand the system of national accounts to include all of the assets. As for Environment Canada, it has agreed to implement the Canadian information system on the environment.

What are we to think of this? It is all very well, but the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard has had 10 years to realize that, as far as the economy is concerned, environmental impacts must be taken into account, as well as the human and social capital of the world that surrounds us. Yet it is he who slashed transfer payments to the provinces, among other things.

It is rather odd that this report is coming out now, when the campaign to replace the outgoing Prime Minister is in full swing.

Do members know who this Stuart Smith is? He is the co-chair of the environment and sustainable development indicators committee. At a press conference, he praised the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard. According to a report by Charles Côté in *La Presse*, Mr. Smith is a personal friend of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard and a former leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

That said, hon. members will understand my mistrust of this individual and the fact that we are distancing ourselves from the motion being debated.

• (1140)

We do basically support the recommendations of the round table, as the federal government has neglected to take these indicators into account, which should not be viewed as a novelty. When it comes down to it, it is surprising that it has taken this study to oblige the federal government to make the appropriate calculations for all these items.

There are some points that need to be clarified, however. What kind of consultations will there be with the Government of Quebec and the provinces?

We are told these indicators will make it possible to calculate the true value of the economic capital of Canada, but we must be cautious here. The population of Canada and Quebec lives in a concentrated area along the border with the United States, while huge expanses are virtually empty. We fear the statistics will be misused and will end up letting the federal ministers and their officials see things through rose coloured glasses.

Another interesting example given at the press conference related to carbon sinks, an area we know requires further study. The Bloc Québécois favours reduction of emissions at the source. The effectiveness of these carbon sinks is not yet known. We sincerely hope that calculating forest cover in order to reduce the Kyoto objective is not one of things the aspiring successor to the outgoing Prime Minister and hon. member for LaSalle—Émard has in mind.

Private Members' Business

The concept of a consumption index, such as the “ecological footprint”, could have been chosen, for various reasons; the information collected could be used as the basis to draft legislation as required, and to encourage more accurate targeting by federal government initiatives within its fields of jurisdiction such as fiscal incentives, for example.

Quebec's jurisdiction must be respected, in health, the environment and management of natural resources.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development notes that the Liberal government, under the current Prime Minister and under the former finance minister and member for LaSalle—Émard, has not fulfilled its sustainable development commitments. This is seen in her October 2002 annual report. She says:

The federal government is not investing enough—enough of its human and financial resources; its legislative, regulatory, and economic powers; or its political leadership—to fulfil its sustainable development commitments.

And she continues:

The federal government says it is managing its fiscal deficits to avoid leaving a burden for future generations, but its failure to deal in a timely manner with the environmental legacy of contaminated sites in its own backyard passes on another burden.

She adds:

Our audit findings this year make me more concerned than ever about the environmental, social and economic legacy we are leaving our children—we are burdening them with a growing sustainable development deficit.

In conclusion, while the motion in itself appears worthwhile, we have doubts about the reasons for the continuing lack, 10 years after the Rio conference on sustainable development, of solid economic measures, as presented in the motion.

Since we have no guarantee that reporting on such indicators would not have an impact on Quebec's sovereignty in its fields of jurisdiction, because the government is not prepared to establish these indicators in cooperation with the provinces, and especially with Quebec, we shall vote against this motion.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is my responsibility to enter some remarks for the record on Motion No. 385. As you are aware, Sir, the motion states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should develop and report annually on a set of social, environmental and economic indicators of the health and well-being of people, communities and ecosystems in Canada.

The goal of the motion is to develop a comprehensive set of indicators to evaluate the well-being of Canadians on an economic, social and environmental level. If the motion passes, it will actually encourage the probability for the Standing Committee on Environment to vigorously examine and improve on the wording of the motion itself. As it stands right now, I would say that the language of the motion is somewhat vague, but the idea is there and it needs to be examined. It is a very good and solid first step in bringing forward this system of indicators. I am proud to say on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada that we fully intend to support this motion.

I believe the idea behind the motion is accountability. Oftentimes governments, and in particular from a partisan perspective this Liberal government, have had a history of making promises and commitments that we never see fulfilled. As reference documents, I suggest hon. members peruse red books one and two.

It is interesting to note that in February this year the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Madam Gélinas, appeared before the environment committee and shared the very same idea that the member for Leeds—Grenville is advocating here today. In the commissioner's address, she challenged committee members to pursue the Liberal government to live up to its Johannesburg commitments. She said action was needed from the government and committees should serve to help motivate it.

The summit in Johannesburg, in which I was a participant, produced a plan that contains noble ideas and commitments which indeed need to be followed through with. As hon. members know, the summit was held to discuss and develop a plan for sustainable development. In my view, sustainable development encompasses a wide range of issues, including a state of well-being. Whether we are talking about biodiversity, health, industry, technology, trade or the environment, it all falls under one umbrella of sustainable development. We know that a healthy economy is necessary in a progressive society, but after all, if we cannot drink the water or breathe the air, what is the point?

The summit reaffirmed sustainable development as an central element of the international agenda and gave new impetus to global action to fight poverty and to protect the environment. Governments agreed to and reaffirmed a wide range of concrete commitments and targets for action to achieve more effective implementation of sustainable development objectives.

Canada is already forced to comply with the commitments that were made in Johannesburg. Therefore, it would seem to be a logical progression to establish a set of indicators within Canada to measure sustainable development or overall well-being. The commissioner of the environment herself advocated this approach to the environment committee members. She said that government must establish an action plan for the future based on the commitments made in Johannesburg. Further, she went on to say that this progress must be monitored and tracked.

Those individuals who come from a corporate or business background say that if we cannot measure it, we cannot manage it, and I think that really speaks to the intent of the motion itself. We need to avoid the situations that happened after the Rio convention in 1992, when sustainable development promises were made by the Progressive Conservative Party but not kept by the Liberal government; as hon. members might remember, we were downsized a little bit about a calendar year later. Eleven years later, we do not want to repeat those very same mistakes.

Private Members' Business

•(1150)

Madam Gélinas has recommended that the government produce a report with long term goals and a destination for Canada to move toward in terms of sustainability. The motion being debated today on the floor of the House would effectively push the government in the right direction toward following through with sustainable development commitments that would ensure the well-being of Canadians. It would provide for the definition, development and periodic publication of a set of indicators of the economic, social and environmental well-being of our country, communities and ecosystems.

Through the motion being brought forward, the committee will have an opportunity to continue the work that the commissioner of the environment has outlined and challenged our committee to do. It is extremely important that we contribute to the overall achievement of developing a plan for sustainable development in this country. The environment committee could then in turn receive input from the public through submissions and public hearings to determine the broad societal values of what such indicators should be based upon.

Once again, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada supports this private member's motion. As vice-chair of the environment and sustainable development committee, I must say that I am looking forward to putting my shoulder to the wheel and helping the member for Leeds—Grenville in this worthwhile pursuit he has tabled before the House.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging the good work that the member for Leeds—Grenville, the author of the motion, has put into this issue and, as he indicated to us in his opening remarks today, for quite an extended period of time.

There is no question that the intent of the motion is to get in place and then implement indicators of progress, wealth and well-being that are not, in any significant manner, assessed at this point, so again I congratulate the member for Leeds—Grenville for having brought forward the motion. As my colleague for Windsor West has indicated, he is working to a smaller degree in another area. We hope that all members on the government side will support both of these motions.

However, in that regard, and it gives me great cause for concern, this type of index and the promulgation of these types of indicators is not a new idea. We heard that it came out of Australia and New Zealand in the late 1970s when it was first enunciated in a general way that we assess our wealth and our progress in a holistic fashion. That goes back well over 30 years now.

Canada has looked at this issue repeatedly. More specifically, I would point out that in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the current government was in opposition, their environmental critic, the member for LaSalle—Émard, indicated very clearly that this methodology, these indexes or these indicators, had to be proceeded with and he was in full support. Then, after the Liberals became the government and that same member became the minister of finance, and was until quite recently, he was regularly lobbied by environmental groups and social activists in this country to begin to establish this index or these indicators. Right up until this time, we

do not have it and in fact very little work has been done at the federal level to deal with this issue.

Again, the member for Leeds—Grenville has worked on it and one may only hope that with a change in the administration of the government perhaps that member will become the minister of the environment and be able to implement it at a much faster rate than his predecessors have, if he is allowed to do that by the new prime minister.

There has been a lot of work done on this issue in Nova Scotia. I want to draw the attention of the House to that. Professor Ron Colman has been working on developing this index. In fact, he has been taking what I consider to be very impressive steps to establish what this index would look like and in fact how we would put in place these measurements. He has been receiving some assistance in this work, a lot of assistance from other people in Nova Scotia and some from Statistics Canada in terms of providing some resources and a lot of the data that is necessary to build this index. I have to be careful not to give him all the credit because I am sure he would be the first one to say that it is not all his work, but he has broken down the index into a number of headings.

The first heading is time use. Under this heading, a person would actually determine the economic value of civic and voluntary work and the economic value of unpaid housework and child care, work hours that are not now assessed, and in addition, the value of leisure time.

•(1155)

Next is natural capital, which I have always had the most difficulty in grappling with, because it takes into account esthetic values in some respects. How do we quantify them and assess them? Quite clearly I do not have the ability to do that, but people with perhaps greater creativity can. Under natural capital, Professor Colman talks of the value to the human species of soils and agriculture, forests, the marine environment and fisheries, and non-renewable subsoil assets. Dollar figures can be put on some of them, but for others it is much more difficult. In fact, even moving away from the dollar figures and just trying to quantify the value of that to any given society is going to be difficult. Again, Professor Colman is working on that.

He then goes on to deal with the next heading, which is environmental quality. Again we get into the same issue of the value of certain items to society, not using a dollar figure and not in an economic way, but oftentimes in an esthetic way and even by looking at the beauty of the natural environment. How do we put that into some kind of an index so we will have a clear indication as to whether the quality of the beauty in the natural environment is being augmented by our activities or to some degree being desecrated by it?

Government Orders

Under environmental quality is a number of subheadings. One of the prominent subheadings, which we are all trying to deal with now, is the issue of greenhouse gas emissions. Professor Colman also addresses the issues of sustainable transportation, air quality, water quality and solid waste. One of the indicators he is using is one that has become quite prominent in the environmental movement and that is the analysis of an ecological footprint. I think that is a real test and an indicator that in fact we will be able to use. More research is being done on that. It is becoming clearer how we could use that analysis in this overall index.

Professor Colman then moves on to socio-economics and the issue of how we would use the tax system to re-address issues that at this point in time are warped in many respects. This is one of the issues raised by my colleague from Leeds—Grenville. Oil and gas and the nuclear industry are subsidized to a very significant degree in this country, but we do not do likewise for wind and solar power, sources of energy that of course have much less impact, if any, on the natural environment. Under socio-economics, we deal with a number of traditional issues found in the GDP.

Finally, he deals with social capital. Under this subheading are health care, educational attainment, the costs of crime and the human freedom index. Here we would be bringing in within our society those social activists who have looked at these issues and see the benefits to quality of life by enhancing health care and education and by reducing crime and violence, and there is the whole issue of our civil liberties and civil rights. This would benefit all members of society

Members can see, then, that the province of Nova Scotia has gone a very long way toward establishing this index and these indicators of social progress that would measure human progress much better than the use of the gross domestic product index does now.

In conclusion, I will say that the real tragedy here is that this issue has been worked on for a number of years now, and numbers of people in this country have worked on other indexes of a similar nature. The real issue is why we as a country and as a government in 2003 are now looking at these indicators and saying they sound like a good idea when what we really should be saying is that all the research has been done, we have the indicators, here is the index and now let us implement it.

● (1200)

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The question is on the motion. 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 yea.

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.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Wednesday, June 4, at the beginning of private members' business.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been consultation and agreement among House leaders for the following the motion, which I would like to introduce, about a bill with minor technical corrections that I think the House would be disposed to deal with at the present moment. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice, immediately after the adoption of this order, the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons shall introduce and propose first reading of a bill entitled "An act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act and the Parliament of Canada Act", which shall be disposed of as follows:

The House shall proceed immediately to the second reading stage of the said bill, during which, no member shall speak for more than 10 minutes; and

After not more than one hour of debate, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the bill shall be deemed to have been read a second time on division, deemed referred to a committee of the whole and reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage on division, and deemed read a third time on division.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to accept the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-39, an act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act and the Parliament of Canada Act.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): When shall the bill be read the second time?

Some hon. members: Now.

Government Orders

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

—Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39 presents various remedial amendments proposed by parliamentarians.

The bill rectifies the provision by which additional allowances were provided to chairs and vice-chairs of standing committees but not of special committees. This error occurred when the bill was adopted just over one year ago.

The second measure concerns a process called rounding off. Generally, the salary of parliamentarians is rounded off to the nearest hundred dollars to facilitate salary administration by the House of Commons and the staff of the Treasury Board.

In 2001, when amendments were made, the salary of ministers was excluded inadvertently from this formula. The bill therefore remedies this error, dealing not in fractions, as it were, but rounding off. Accountants and others in this House will understand the need for this measure.

[*English*]

The bill would also provide greater certainty for calculating the disability allowance for parliamentarians who unfortunately must resign because of a disability. Since I have been here I remember only one case which occurred a little less than a year ago.

The current provisions unfortunately, and again this is inadvertent, do not specify the salaries for the calculation. As a result additional salaries on top of the sessional allowance might not be covered in the calculation of the disability allowance should there be such a case. There is no such case before us, so it makes the debate easier at this point. However, people in the administration of the program have advised us that it is necessary to clarify that.

The chief actuary has additionally commented in his 2002 annual report that the accrual rate provision for the parliamentary pension plan for service after 2001 should be clarified again for greater certainty. The bill would clarify the application of the accrual provisions for post-2001 service. There would be no changes to pension policies at all. There are no policy issues at all in the bill. They are merely technical corrections.

In summary then, the bill would make several technical corrections and does not in any way affect existing policies. I want the House to be assured of that. The bill has been prepared in consultation with other House leaders and I thank them for their support. It has been prepared together with officials of the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board and I believe House of Commons administration as well in order to clarify the actual functioning of the legislation.

I trust that members from all sides will give support to the measure as quickly as possible.

• (1210)

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few brief statements on this bill. I would like to reiterate what I said way back when the rules were changed so that

committee chairs and vice-chairs received additional compensation. As we know, this was not done until just a couple years ago.

I objected to that and I do so again. Indeed, chairs of committees work hard and perhaps there could be some additional compensation for them, but vice-chairs should not be receiving additional compensation as in the current agreement that we have for compensation for members of Parliament.

The reason is simple. Generally, when one works harder, one should get more money. When one works less hard, one should get less money, or at least the same. There are a number of duties which we have as members of Parliament, which we accept as part of the job, and being a vice-chair of a committee is one of those.

I had the privilege of being the vice-chair of the finance committee for a while and frankly, I did nothing to earn that money. I attended the committee regularly, as I would have whether I was the vice-chair or not. I was there every time that committee met. There were a couple of times when I sat in the chair. To be honest, I did not work as hard when I was in the chair as I did when I was getting ready for the opening question. As a member of the official opposition in the committee I always had to pay close attention to what the witnesses were saying and to prepare for that opening question. Very often other members of the committee would carry on with the thread that I started. That was hard work. But I did not do that because I was the vice-chair of the committee. When I sat in the chair, all I did was determine who would speak next and I was happy to do that.

I would simply reiterate that even though this is in that bill, I object to the fact that there is additional compensation for vice-chairs of committees.

I want to make a comment about this rounding up, rounding down, or rounding off. I am an amateur mathematician and I always took exception to that. To take a number and say it works out to \$5,998 and then round it down to \$5,900 does not make any sense. I have seen actual cases where that has happened. This necessity to round down to the nearest \$100 and call that a device that is necessary for administration is absurd on two points. First, what about calculators and electronic computers? This was done way back when everything was done by hand, and sure there was some merit to working in multiples of \$100 but that is no longer the case. Second, the rounding is done down and not to the nearest, which is mathematically indefensible.

Lastly, and I find this very ironic, the rounding to the nearest \$100 is done on an annual basis. When one divides a number that is a multiple of 100 by 12, one gets a fraction to the nearest fraction of a penny in many cases. One still has to compute to the nearest penny on the monthly salary cheque. The defence of this rounding down for administrative purposes is totally specious. It is just an absurd thing.

I am opposed to that and we ought to do better. I will challenge the House leader in future revisions of the compensation for members of Parliament. He should correct some of these anomalies and do a better job at it.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my party, it is my pleasure to announce that we will support the bill for the following reasons.

First, we have carefully reviewed each of the points submitted by the government House leader. For the most part, this is a technical bill. The chief actuary, who did the necessary checks in terms of the pension plan, observed and set out in a report that the legislation as drafted by parliamentarians could be open to interpretation. I think it is good practice and our most pressing duty to ensure that legislation is clear and does not leave any room for interpretation requiring additional legislation for clarification. There must not be any room for interpretation when we are talking about something as serious for everyone as pension plans.

Second, the disability allowance has been referred to. When a member is unable to continue working because of a disability, as in any other field, he or she is entitled to some financial compensation. To avoid past problems, when things had to be clarified, let us say that this legislation will allow everyone to understand the same thing, that all parliamentarians' salaries are calculated for compensation purposes, if needed. This is perfectly normal and appropriate.

As for rounding off ministers' salaries to the nearest \$100, the legislation does allow rounding off of parliamentarians' salaries to simplify the calculation of benefits. It is not a question of whether computers can do the calculations or not, we can always calculate to the 22nd decimal. That is not the issue.

The problem is that the act allows for all parliamentarians' salaries to be rounded off to the nearest \$100, and no one is going to go hungry over that. It is a detail, except that there was an oversight in the act with respect to ministers. When an act is passed and there is an oversight, it seems to me the right thing to do to amend it. There is not a single minister who, at the end of his or her four-year term, will have made more than \$250 or \$300 because of it, probably not even that much. So, it is not a question of money, it is a question of treating everyone equally and doing the right thing. If we cannot understand that, then something is wrong.

In the end, the only measure that will lead to additional costs is the remuneration for chairs and vice-chairs of special committees. I will simply say that everywhere, in all sectors of the economy, in businesses that are held up as examples of sound management and even in the Government of Ontario and the Government of Quebec, supplementary remuneration is paid to those who are given responsibilities.

Directors of companies, which do not throw money down the drain, are given compensation for carrying out their duties. The chair receives a very generous compensation on top of the standard compensation, but that is not the case for chairs of special committees.

Parliamentarians do not receive astronomical salaries when they take on special duties; it is a compensation. People are paid for these additional responsibilities. It is the status and the new responsibilities that are compensated, not the work. I know people who work 90 hours a week, and they are not necessarily the highest paid people. These people do not get paid by the hour. I simply wanted to point

out that the responsibility is recognized. I think that this is right and treats people fairly. Once again, we are not talking about huge amounts of money.

For these reasons, we will support this bill. This bill seems to us to be of a rather technical nature, one that is needed for sound management.

● (1215)

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is important for members to know that the legislation does not say rounded off. It says rounded down and that is an important difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The point is well taken. I am sure that someone out there is listening.

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings. Pursuant to order made earlier today, the bill is deemed to have been read a second time on division, deemed referred to a committee of the whole and reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage on division and deemed read a third time on division.

(Bill read a second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read a third time and passed.)

* * *

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from May 28, 2003 consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak briefly to this important bill. This bill basically reflects the government's obvious commitment to modernizing the legislation governing its public service, how one becomes a public servant and how our managers can staff positions in the public service. The current staffing process is so complex and outdated that it was imperative that we modernize our way of doing things. That is what this bill all about.

It is the culmination of a very comprehensive consultation process, of many efforts and of the resolve of the Secretary to the Treasury Board in particular. I would be remiss not to take this opportunity to speak to the bill.

During the negotiations and discussions that led to this bill and to some 40 amendments being approved in committee, there were many opportunities for everyone to express their views. Union representatives appeared before the committee after participating in many consultations conducted by the Treasury Board before the bill was even drafted. There have also been several commission of inquiry.

Government Orders

All this to say that the bill before us at third reading is the result of a collective effort, a serious effort to modernize the machinery of government and the public service.

A number of things have been said, and I wanted to take this opportunity to read into the record a letter dated May 14, 2003, from the President of the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada. I wanted to read it because it sums up pretty well the association's position, and also in light of criticism voiced recently through the media by the Public Service Alliance.

I am going to read this letter, which is addressed to me:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX), I am writing to follow up on our recent appearance before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates with regard to Bill C-25, the Public Service Modernization Act. APEX is the national association of federal government executives and is dedicated to advancing management excellence and professionalism within the public service.

APEX supports Bill C-25 and is concerned with recent public statements by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), in which the integrity and professionalism of public service managers and executives were impugned. I refer to media interviews following the Alliance's recent meetings in Montreal and to the front-page article "PSAC goes on attack against reform bill" in the May 4 edition of the *Ottawa Citizen*. The Alliance says it believes that Bill C-25, the Public Service Modernization Act, will allow managers to "rig" competitions and to hire whom they want and whom they know.

APEX has advocated human resource management reform for several years, and we were pleased in mid-2001 to be asked by the Task Force on Modernizing Human Resources Management to conduct a series of consultations with public servants across the country. The Association met with close to 850 public servants—executives, managers and young public servants—from coast to coast to coast. Its observations from those sessions were submitted to the task force in early October 2001 and participants, unionized or not, expressed a strong desire to have access to a significantly simpler, faster and more responsive staffing system, one which is backed up by clear accountability measures. In the absence of a greatly reformed system, the public service will have difficulty replacing the significant numbers of retirement age public servants who will leave in the next few years, developing employees with a broad range of experience and competing with other organizations on the open market for bright people with the right mix of skills. APEX's own position paper, which is based on wide-ranging consultations with executives over several years, was published shortly thereafter. (This is available on the Association's Web site at www.apex.gc.ca.)

• (1225)

Executives' interest in the reform proposed by C-25 is not based on a desire to run roughshod over the public interest and the legitimate aspirations of public servants who want to work in interesting jobs, in healthy, productive work environments. The charge that managers are keen to subvert prescribed processes in order to indulge in a spot of patronage is insulting. What managers want is to be able to hire, with as little delay as possible, someone who is qualified to do the work. Given their extensive experience, it is natural that managers will sometimes hire people whose work they already know and value. Managers at all levels are assessed on how well they serve the public interest, including how they hire, so it makes sense for them to ensure the process they use is fair and transparent. But "fair and transparent" shouldn't mean "slow and cumbersome".

It is useful to consider how well hiring managers are respecting the rules now. According to the Public Service Commission's annual report for fiscal year 2001-02, 102,557 hiring and staffing activities were carried out. Of those, roughly 70,000 were appealable. Just 1,432 of these cases were in fact appealed—and of those, only about 8% were allowed. We agree there are occasional problems, but the bottom line is that they are caught and corrected.

The strengthened oversight mechanisms proposed in Bill C-25, which includes a new, independent tribunal, will continue to catch mistakes, just more quickly. APEX believes the draft legislation provides for more than adequate recourse, including third party reviews and a number of other checks and balances to ensure fairness in the staffing process. In fact, we believe that employee rights under the new legislation will be protected and enhanced. We have endorsed the strengthening of the Public Service Commission's audit and oversight role.

The association also strongly supports changes to promote greater union-management collaboration, in line with the report of the Fryer committee. Executives and managers are keen to work with their union colleagues to build a more collegial environment. In that context, the association applauds the provisions in the legislation, which require each DM to create a labour-management committee within his or her agency. This will result in better communication among executives, managers and unions at all levels and ensure that our labour relations become more collaborative and less confrontational.

APEX believes that the time has come to modernize the public service's human resources management regime since a generation of public servants has come and gone under the present legislative framework. What we need are laws and regulations that reflect today's values, management style and employee expectations.

Our conversations with executives, managers and unionized employees across the country revealed their strong desire to improve the dialogue between management and unions—at the shop level, in the regions and in work units. Based on the mandate given by the hon. Lucienne Robillard to the task force, the new legislation takes an important step in that direction.

Yours truly,

Robert Edmond, President

As I was saying, this is from the president of APEX, the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada.

I thought that it was important to read this letter and that it be on the public record because it establishes certain facts that we need to take into account when examining this bill.

I myself have had the opportunity to speak with several members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and APEX and most support this bill. I cannot say that there is nothing they would like to change, some amendments they would like to see, but by and large, in terms of the big picture, most people feel that this bill is an important step towards modernizing the legislation governing the public service.

• (1230)

Most of this legislation goes back 30, 35, or 40 years.

In closing, I move:

That the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I find the motion in order.

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-25, an act to modernize the federal public service.

This bill will revamp the 35-year-old legislation and its rather obsolete provisions. It is the result of over thirty reports and studies on the need to renew the management of recruiting and staffing procedures in the public service.

These reports and studies all came to the same conclusion, that a change in culture is needed in the public service. After examining the many reports recommending a change in culture in the federal public service, the President of the Treasury Board took a stand and set the goals she wanted to reach, based on her own perception of the situation.

Government Orders

In order to deal with the persistent personnel reductions within the public service and the increasing competitiveness of the private labour market, the President of the Treasury Board has come up with the following objectives: the inclusion of the merit principle; the implementation of a more flexible staffing system; the enhancement of labour-management relations; and the integration of a development and learning framework for the public service.

The government also intends to address demographic problems within the public service. The government believes that, with this bill, it will be able to resolve the deficiencies relating to representativeness and the aging of the public service. We must add to this the shortage of those with the right job skills. The government has identified this as a critical issue.

Finally, the bill aims to improve the public's perception. Due to the bad reputation of the public service, it would seem that few people are interested in pursuing a career there, so recruitment has been difficult. This last point, in particular, must be addressed by a change in culture.

This is a lengthy, and particularly ambitious bill. It would amend technical aspects related to public service administration, as well as the entire approach to the public service's vision.

I would first like to say that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to this bill, since no amendments were put forward, especially with respect to protecting public servants who expose dubious, immoral or fraudulent practices or policies, but also with regard to the active promotion of linguistic duality. No significant amendments were made with regard to the contentious notion of merit.

During our work in committee, we put forward no fewer than 120 amendments that were rejected by the government members. When this bill was announced, it raised many hopes. In its current form, the bill is unfortunately very disappointing, contrary to what the government member has just said; there is great disappointment.

I am thinking here about the public servants who blow the whistle on abuse. They deserve protection, and they had hoped that the proposed modernization would provide it, but the Public Service of Canada is hardly rushing to their aid.

The minister should have provided federal public servants with mechanisms so they could raise problematic issues, without fear of reprisals. This is the position expressed by the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels, before the parliamentary committee. He admitted that his former office could not protect the anonymity of individuals all the way through to the end of the investigation.

The government must stop procrastinating when it comes to implementing provisions to protect public servants who want to blow the whistle on scams, waste and misconduct.

●(1235)

To this end, in addition to the investigative power of the Office of the Auditor General, the minister must offer protection to the informer, who out of good faith and with evidence, is relieving his conscience and fulfilling his duty to serve the state, because he feels he cannot live in silence and go along with the lie that has become systemic.

The government can say it is walking on eggshells on this issue, but the prudence it claims to be using should not prevent it from taking action. Sooner or later, such rules will have to be adopted.

This government has often been mired in scandals that have called its management abilities into question. We are entitled to wonder about the fate of a public servant who decided to denounce the attitude of his bosses.

Take for example the sponsorship scandal that continues to embarrass the Liberal government. Would the informer have been believed? What lengths would they have gone to, to undermine his credibility? Would he have been transferred, demoted or fired?

This clearly illustrates why public servants who denounce abuse should be protected against harassment. Modernization, as proposed, does not provide for such protection.

Moreover, a survey commissioned by the government and conducted in December 2002 showed that 21% of public servants say they fear being victims of harassment and discrimination.

There is no improvement on the horizon, since this bill essentially grants more power to senior officials for managing their employees. They will have more latitude for firing public servants.

This was denounced by the vice-president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, Michelle Demers, during a radio interview on Radio-Canada. The second largest union of public servants is worried about the increased powers given to departmental managers under the reform. Ms. Demers said:

It is as though the employer had all the latitude to fire employees it finds unsuitable and employees were on probation, because there is nothing to protect them from being fired.

In addition, the institute fears that the new rules will allow managers to set hiring criteria, which leaves room for abuse of power.

The vice-president of the union added:

It is leeway that would ultimately allow the employer to choose whomever he wants for position x. This would open the door to abuse and bureaucratic patronage.

The same note was sounded by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, whose President appeared before the committee to express his reservations and request amendments to the bill. According to Steve Hindle, Bill C-25 is not only a ominous threat to the merit principle as it affects hiring, but the changes proposed by the minister would have the effect of placing the employees on permanent probation. Mr. Hindle said that the flexibility provided to Deputy Ministers under the new provisions, could "increase the incidence of bureaucratic patronage".

I shall quote his exact words:

Section 30 grants wide discretion to senior management to abuse the merit principle. Once the basic qualifications are set, the deputy head has the legislated authority under subsection (2)(b) to use his or her discretion to narrow down the choice of candidates to one individual. In short, if the deputy head were intent on hiring his brother-in-law and as long as his brother-in-law possessed the basic qualifications, there is ample opportunity to construct additional criteria specific to one candidate to conceal what otherwise would be a deviation from merit and an abuse of authority.

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● (1240)

People watching this debate might be surprised to learn that at present, some 40% of all appointments are made without competition. I think it is completely justified to wonder how high that percentage might rise once this bill is passed.

What the representatives of public servants came to tell the minister—and she remained generally inflexible—was that they wanted the new regime proposed in the bill to create a structure that would make it possible for all parties to establish a positive working environment in which employees could have satisfying careers.

The largest federal government union, The Public Service Alliance of Canada, PSAC, believes Bill C-25, the Public Service Modernization Act, is not likely to help the Government reach its goal of more constructive, cooperative labour-management relations in support of a healthy, productive workplace, and may well have the opposite effect.

The union expressed its views clearly in a press release on March 26, 2003. The President, Nycole Turmel, said:

The PSAC fears that the new PSEA has the potential to usher in a new era of patronage, favouritism and a lack of accountability that is inconsistent with the Government's stated objectives.

Reservations expressed by the Alliance are similar to the ones of the Bloc Québécois and, with the 120 amendments that we proposed in committee, we tried to convince the government, but we were unsuccessful. These reservations were related to the exclusion of staffing and classification from collective bargaining, the dilution of the merit principle, as well as the provisions on essential services and picket lines.

What workers are concerned about is that, with this new legislation, directors will now only have to examine the application of a single candidate meeting the minimum requirements of a position. Moreover, Bill C-25 limits appointment challenges to cases of abuse of power and cases relating to the language of choice of the applicant.

Another significant effect of the bill concerns the right to strike. The right to strike is threatened, because the definition of essential services is too broad. The bill gives the employer the exclusive power to determine the level of essential services required during a strike. Employees do not agree with this, as they said once again in response to the bill, and I quote:

If the government is serious about wanting to modernize the public service, the first changes must be made by the employer. It is counterproductive to present the union with a bill that is already in its final form. We would have appreciated a really consultative approach, where we could have talked about the problems and tried to find mutually agreeable solutions.

Once those directly concerned, that is the public servants, expressed their disappointment with this bill, we in the Bloc Québécois learned to our chagrin that most of our recommendations were set aside when Bill C-25 was drafted, and all but one of our 120 amendments rejected.

I attended several of the committee meetings and discussions in order to present amendments for my colleague, the public service critic for our party.

● (1245)

The officials who turned down our amendments, which had been proposed by the Alliance and by public servants, never provided any clarification or justification for doing so.

It is regrettable to include public servants in an act that is close to being final, without having consulted them. They are the ones who will have to live with it, once again. There is no modernization, and the bill does not help employees to carry out their duties, nor does it provide a suitable framework. Instead, it is the administrators who are being protected. This is legislation that was designed for administrators, for public service managers.

Understandably, therefore, we are opposed to this bill, since no changes have been made to it, particularly in connection with the protection of public servants who report dubious, immoral or fraudulent practices, and also in connection with the active promotion of linguistic duality. In addition, there has been no significant change relating to the controversial merit principle.

Our concerns about merit stem from the fact that essential qualifications only are required, which creates some ambiguity as far as the level is concerned. The word essential might indicate minimal competency, not optimal, thus creating concern about possible favouritism.

Our concern about the current whistleblowing policy is that it does not have force of law and could be changed without anybody knowing about it. Its scope is too limited to meet in any real way the objective, which is to build trust in deputy heads, so that employees can disclose fraudulent actions they come across.

Under the bill, remedies are few in that only abuse of power and the denial of the right to be assessed in the official language of one's choice are covered. Abuse of power is very difficult to prove. That is why we believe it is essential that the scope of the remedies available to employees be expanded, so that they can take any abuse or breach of law to an administrative tribunal or to the courts.

With respect to harassment, we asked that Bill C-25 be amended to reflect changes already made to the Act respecting Labour Standards in Quebec. We wanted to address psychological harassment in particular, which affects more than 20% of the Canadian public service.

The commissioner's recommendations focused mainly on incorporating the concept of linguistic duality to ensure representativeness and making enforcement mandatory when it comes to training and litigation.

We thought that codetermination would greatly help promote merit as a selection criterion and reduce the risk of cronyism in the selection process. Our amendments asking for a codetermination mechanism have all been rejected at committee.

Government Orders

I will remind hon. members once again that we are opposed to this bill. We put forward 120 amendments. I would say that the Bloc Québécois did what it had to do to ensure that the officials went back to the drawing board and that the minister, who was totally inflexible, reconsidered this bill. We would like her to reject the bill, go back to the drawing board and start over. This is not legislation for those who work in the public service, but legislation for those who wield power.

* * *

● (1250)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties, as well as with the member for Leeds—Grenville, concerning the recorded division scheduled for next Wednesday on Motion No. 385.

I believe you would find consent, Mr. Speaker, for the following:

That the recorded division scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2003 on Motion No. 385 be taken on Tuesday, June 3, 2003 at 3 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed; and of the previous question.

Mr. Robert Lancôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we heard the member for Ottawa—Vanier tell us that the unions supported this bill. I would like to ask my colleague from Drummond what she thinks of what the member for Ottawa—Vanier may have suggested here.

He read a letter that was sent to him by APEX, the association representing executives, those who wield power, the deputy ministers and all those who gravitate around the centres of power. He said, among other things, that the unions were in favour of this bill.

On that subject, I can tell the House that I sit on the government operations committee which has put forward over 120 amendments. Many of these amendments—and I would even say the vast majority of them—dealt with security for workers, not for senior executives.

Unfortunately, it may be the only letter from an association that he has read. If we turn to the Alliance or the CSN, we even heard evidence from one of the experts that was mandated by the present government to look into this whole issue of public service modernization. Mr. Fryer produced a report that was used as a basis

for many of the amendments that we put forward. Indeed, we relied on this report that goes back to 1998.

So, in view of the statement made by the hon. member, I would like to hear the comments of the hon. member for Drummond. The preamble to the bill talks of new and better labour-management relations, while all the witnesses and nearly all the union representatives—the unions representing the public service workers, not those representing the managers and senior bureaucrats—came to tell us that this bill should not be thrown out or set aside, but that the 120 amendments we proposed ought to be accepted, at least. It is clear that when the government saw that astronomical number of amendments, it said, “Hey, this does not make any sense. It amounts to taking the bill and throwing it out”.

Between you and me, if the unions or their negotiating agents had truly been consulted, these public servants would have been able to take an active part in drafting this bill. They were shoved aside and then the government had the nerve to write in the preamble that this bill is going to improve labour-management relations. I would like to hear my hon. colleague's comments on this aspect.

● (1255)

Ms. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Châteauguay for his comment.

Incidentally, I congratulate him on his fine work in committee and on the amendments he presented. He became the advocate of the public service workers by presenting 120 amendments, which have been ridiculed and rejected by the officials without a clear explanation. This is an enormous amount of work, but Bloc members are willing to do this kind of work because we are here to look after the interests of the people, of Quebeckers and of federal public servants.

I am in total agreement with my colleague's comment, and all the more so because the purpose of this bill is to improve the image of the public service. Because of its bad image, it was necessary to raise the level of interest for a career in the public service. It is obvious that we have a hard time recruiting for the public service the people who have all the required skills. They would rather work for private companies instead of the Canadian public service, because of its shortcomings.

There are many instances of abuse of power and harassment. Public service managers have a very bad reputation. Everyone thought that this bill could improve the situation and the quality of life of public servants. This is not currently the case.

As my hon. colleague was saying, this bill must be reviewed from start to finish. With regard to its substance, its objectives were commendable but, in reality, what we got on paper does not fulfill the initial objectives.

So why did we not adopt the amendments presented? These amendments were the result of meetings with public servants and the unions. The amendments were proposed by these front line workers who spend every day working in the public service; it is part of their daily life. At work, they have seen deficiencies, and they had hoped that this bill would resolve them for the most part.

Government Orders

The Liberal member read us a letter from senior managers; I cannot remember what the association is called—

An hon. member: APEX.

Ms. Pauline Picard: It is APEX.

He is trying to distract us with a letter that he thought he alone received. I think that all the committee members got a copy. It is not new to anyone. He told us that, yes, there are perhaps some deficiencies in the bill, that most public servants will be very happy to live with this bill, which will likely be passed.

At this stage, the government side will vote in favour of the bill. Once again, the thoughts of workers and their quality of life are being ignored. This government will once again demonstrate its power over the taxpayer and its own employees. It is telling them, "You can be abused, you can be harassed and things are great as they are".

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question of my colleague from Drummond.

When she was examining the issue, how could she have thought that these public servants were interested in being part of a public service where employers will make the decisions, and not the Public Service Commission, as was done before?

The Commission still has this power, but it can now delegate the staffing, the recruiting function. It may tell its managers, its deputy ministers: "You choose someone". Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. The manager may simply look at the essential qualifications to choose the best candidate. I would like to hear my colleague from Drummond on this.

• (1300)

Ms. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, as I did earlier, I would like to quote the union's vice-president in response to my colleague's question. She says:

It is leeway that would ultimately allow the employer to choose whomever he wants for position x. This would open the door to abuse and bureaucratic patronage.

The same note was sounded by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, whose President appeared before the committee to express his reservations and request amendments to the bill. According to Steve Hindle, Bill C-25 is not only a ominous threat to the merit principle as it affects hiring, but the changes proposed by the minister would have the effect of placing the employees on permanent probation.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to Bill C-25.

A few days ago representatives of the Yukon Branch of the Public Service Alliance of Canada came to visit me. I would like to use my time today to put on the record some of the reservations brought forward by them.

Before I start though, I just want to emphasize a point I made earlier in this debate. I am very supportive of the President of the Treasury Board's effort to try to improve the representative now of the public service, especially employment in Ottawa, so that it is available to and filled by people from across this nation, therefore

representative of the people from all distant sides of the nation. The public service will make decisions and implementations that would be sensitive to the various regions of the country.

I want to just go on the record with the eight concerns the local branch of PSAC.

The first item is removal the relative merit, replacing it with allowing the hiring of only people with essential qualifications. For a government that prides itself in bureaucracy based on merit, the union is concerned that this will reduce the ability to select the most meritorious person on a list. This could lead to more favouritism, although there could be abuse already in the present system that might exacerbate the situation, and could have the same effect on government downsizing as people leave the government.

The second point is a strike vote would be valid for only two months. I think this is a particular northern concern. First, two months may not allow time for the alternative dispute mechanisms to solve the problem. Of course I think we would all like it solved in a way other than a strike. However in the north, especially in the high Arctic and in Old Crow, it takes a longer time to get mail and communications through, and two months may not be enough time. A longer period would be more helpful.

The third point is the employer would have the exclusive right to determine the level and frequency of service during a strike.

The fourth concern is the union feels the proposed legislation would give the employer control over the designation process, making it more difficult for people on the picket line to be aware of who is designated. Now someone can be convicted of a summary offence by unknowingly preventing a designated worker from entering the premises. This could lead to an inadvertent conviction.

The fifth point relates to the fact that any employee can question a vote based on an irregularity. However an irregularity is not defined in the act. Therefore the union feels this could lead to abuse.

The sixth point is a new point and that is the fiscal position of the government needs to be taken into consideration during the negotiations. The union feels it is not obvious why this needs to be included in legislation.

The seventh point concerns a reintroduction of controls over the involvement of federal servants in elections. This would limit the involvement of federal civil servants in the political process. The union is worried that this clause, along with others, would have a spinoff effect on our local public service union in the Yukon government, which often mirrors federal legislation.

At one time there were extensive controls on involvement of federal public servants and this was struck down in the Supreme Court in the case of Barnhart et al, I believe, as unconstitutional. The union is concerned that by putting this back in, it could lead to another challenge, another loss and excessive taxpayer money spent on the case.

Government Orders

●(1305)

The union felt that some of these eight points and other points in its detailed submissions did not evolve from the Fryer and Quail studies on reforms.

I reviewed the legislation myself again and the detailed submission it made, sometime after midnight last night. There were two points it did not discuss with me which I would like to bring up at this time.

One is it said that it was in favour of legislation that was more mirrored on the Canada Labour Code specifically, and that this was quite different. The other point was related to the fact that essential workers could have to report to duty in off-hours or work overtime during a strike. What if a person is a single parent? What about people who might be caregivers and have other responsibilities?

I would like to thank the House for allowing me to put these concerns on the record.

I have subsequently had discussions with those involved in working intensively on this new act because I wanted to get replies to these concerns. I said that I really needed results on these concerns. I would like to provide feedback and more details on these 11 issues which I brought up.

First, the major one I think for a lot of people is the relative merit issue. I am told that merit was not defined in the old act so one of the new improvements in the proposed new act is it is now defined. I think everyone agrees, the unions and everyone else involved, that there have to be improvements to the act. What those are is what is under debate. In the old system there were a number of people stuck in appeals. As someone said a few minutes ago, there will be a large changeover in the public service soon and the act has to be efficient.

In some cases I have been told there is even more protection in the proposed new act for employees who think someone may not be the most meritorious, or should not get the job, or who has been abused. First, a new tribunal will deal with situations like that. This has never been in place before. Employees will have access to this. If they think they were not properly treated, they can appeal to the tribunal for abuse of authority, which includes two areas, bad faith or personal favouritism. This would help eliminate the concern of favouritism or nepotism, which I mentioned earlier. They also can appeal on skewing of qualifications or bureaucratic patronage. This would also apply to layoff discrimination. Therefore, in some ways, there are more protections against abuse of the system which were not there before. This new system will be there for some people who might be concerned about that abuse.

This is also new. The public service can audit the setting of qualifications. In either the old or the new system the setting of qualifications could be a back door to achieving abuse. Now the public service commission has the ability to audit those to remove that level of abuse. The public service commission also has broader authorities of inquiries.

There is a new informal mechanism to find out exactly why an employee may not have been hired before he or she would go into the formal steps, and the employer must provide that. This makes things faster and less bureaucratic.

The second item is the two month limit on the strike vote. I am not satisfied that this could not have been changed. I would have been happier to have had the time period extended. Once again, it is regionally sensitive in the north. We could use more time. I would have liked to have that changed. I understand that provision is in the Canada Labour Code. The union brief which I read mentioned that it was in favour of legislation more like the Canada Labour Code. I am assuming that if it is in the Canada Labour Code and it is working well, that is the argument why is not being extended. However personally I would like it extended if possible for the north.

●(1310)

The third item is the employer's exclusive right to determine the level and frequency of service. There are some new provisions in this part of the bill that are beneficial for unions. They can start conciliation while the labour board settles disputes about what essential services are. That could not happen before, and it will speed up the process.

There is also a potential advantage to unions in this clause with regard to the setting of levels of service. This also could not be done before. The employer could reduce the level of essential services and therefore allow more employees to partake in the strike. I have been told that under the present system even if 1% of individuals are considered essential, then those individuals would be excluded from striking. This new system might change that and once again free up more employees to take part in the strike.

The fourth item is related to employer control over the designation process which makes it more difficult for people on the picket line to be aware of who has been designated essential.

There are certain things both in the old act and the new act that are still negotiated such as what are essential services, how many and which positions. These still go through the same process as before. The fear was there would be challenges such as someone being stopped on the picket line who had been defined as an essential service employee.

I have been told by the people who worked on the bill that there are a lot of safeguards against that. It happens very seldom, if ever. Because of the safeguards, an individual would need leave from the labour relations board to lodge such a complaint. The complaint would obviously have to be reasonable or that neutral board would not allow the charge to proceed. The prosecutor would have to be convinced. One person I talked to said that this type of charge proceeded successfully once and it led to a \$1 fine. It is virtually never used and certainly not abused because of the safeguards in place.

Government Orders

The fifth point is anyone can abuse the system by challenging a vote because of an irregularity and thus causing an investigation into a vote. Irregularity is not defined in the new act. This challenge could only be made within 10 days. It could be dismissed summarily by the labour relations board. If the charge is considered trivial or unwarranted and does not make any sense, it can be dismissed. Even if it is warranted, it could be dismissed if it did not make a difference. If the vote had gone ahead, the claim could be dismissed if the problem did not affect the vote.

The sixth point is a suggestion that the fiscal position of the government must be taken into consideration. Is that not obvious? Would that not obviously be included in negotiations? The point made to me was that it obviously had not been taken into consideration all the time in the past. In the 1990s an 18% increase was given. This works both ways however. It could be a definite advantage to employees and unions in that if the government is in a good fiscal position, it would be hard to argue against increases in wages and benefits that are due. This apparently was one of the suggestions that came from the Fryer report.

● (1315)

The seventh point has to do with controls on federal public servants being involved in the electoral process and the fact that they were limited before they were challenged. By putting that back in, it will lead to a challenge. However it is not the identical situation. What has been put in is actually related to the outcome and recommendations from a 1991 court case by Osborne, I believe, which, although it did not allow the blanket elimination of federal civil servants, it had control over it. However, because the system at the time had blanket provisions, that was not allowed. They think that under certain circumstances federal civil servants should be limited. Their point was that people with different jobs and different responsibilities could not be treated all the same in this situation.

Some people have different responsibilities, different profiles and there is a different public perception of the work they do. Of course no one wants partisan influence in the public service, so different situations have different ramifications.

The new proposals would allow people to be involved in the federal election process, unless it impairs or it is perceived to impair one's ability to fulfil one's duties impartially. That requires a review of the nature of the activity one wishes to participate in, the nature of the duties people have and the level and visibility of the position. As everyone is aware, conflict of interest is both a real and a perceived conflict of interest.

The last point I discussed with the union had to do with the fact that management would now automatically be excluded in this proposal. Previously they were automatically in the union unless the labour board exempted them. In the new and old act, executives were always excluded. In the new act the employer still has the burden to approve that non-obvious managers should be excluded. The employees only have to have the burden for the obvious ones, such as EXs, personnel staff and collective bargaining staff who are normally excluded. If employees want one of those not to be excluded, they would have to make that case.

In extension to the points that related to where all these changes came from and were discussed, although they were not all from the

Fryer and Quail reports, there were, as I think earlier speakers mentioned, extensive discussions and development of this with various public service unions and others. The differences in relation to the Canada Labour Code relate to essential services and public services as opposed to what would be expected in private business or commercial services by Canadians.

Finally, in relation to the point about forcing someone with other responsibilities, such as a single parent or a caregiver of an elderly or infirm person, to go to work in their off hours, this would only apply to people on call out or standby in their regular positions. It would not apply to people who had accepted jobs on the grounds that they would never be called out and now all of a sudden are being forced to. It would only apply to those people where this was part of the position that they were involved in.

I was happy to receive all those points. I will be bringing them forward to the union. I will be watching to make sure the negative outcomes that some people feel might evolve do not evolve from these mechanisms and that we take what action needs to occur if they do.

● (1320)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the disappointing aspects of the bill is that whistleblowing has not been identified in it. This would have given workers the confidence they needed to bring forth situations in a way that would ensure their protection in the workforce and move forward on many of the sensitive issues that often complicate an area and a person's career.

A quick example that we have had in Ontario, for instance, is MFP, where a number of municipal employees have had to come forward to resolve a very complicated financing arrangement that has led to literally hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money being put at risk.

Could the hon. member comment on that aspect of it? Does he believe the bill would be better with a whistleblowing component added to it? Would that be an important issue for public servants to make sure they could bring forth injustices happening at their workplaces and be protected from any repercussions from management or other people?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very important point. It was not a point I discussed with our unions but I do think it is an important point.

Unfortunately, I was not privy to most of the debate on this or the debate in committee but I certainly would have no problem if that important aspect were discussed further to see what could be achieved.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Yukon a question. His government wanted to improve the staffing process because there was a problem with it. They were supposed to bring in some improvements. However, we have gone from a very complicated recruitment and staffing process to what appears at least to be a very partisan one.

The commission will be able to delegate its powers to managers, according to whom the bill will speed up the process by allowing them to select a single candidate, using lower criteria, instead of hiring the best candidate possible.

As a member of the government, how can you say that the public service will not become a very partisan environment? I ask the question because I would like to know why, besides giving managers these extreme powers, the bill limits the recourses. Managers will enjoy new powers and those who want to appeal their decisions will only have two recourses available, nothing else. First, the candidate will be entitled to an interview in the language of his or her choice. Just between you and me, that leaves the candidate with only one recourse. Every time a candidate will ask for an interview in French or in English, it will be granted. So, there will only be one major recourse left.

There is only one other option left. Let us talk about abuses of authority. You know as well as I do that abuse of authority is one of the toughest things to prove in court, whether it is before an administrative tribunal or a court of law. Imagine an employee having to ask his or her colleague to testify and also to demonstrate what has gone wrong.

What is worse, as I said at the beginning of my speech, is that they have the option of selecting a single candidate. How will applicants from within or outside the public service be able to contest and prove abuse of power in hiring or recruiting when only one candidate is selected? How are members of this House, or people they know or people from their riding supposed to participate in this process or obtain a promotion, if they are already public servants, when they are not even part of the hiring or recruitment process?

Managers have made their choice, and that is why they lowered the criteria. They are no longer obligated to look for the best candidate. All they have to do is ensure that the candidate has the minimum required skills. Then they can determine whether the candidate gets the job. Between you and me, they have the power to select a single candidate.

Now they are saying, "We, as senior officials of the public service, will act in good faith. We do not want to be partisan". For 10 or 20 years people have been saying that the public service climate is increasingly partisan and, when reports are tabled in the House, that a new culture needs to be created in the public service. That is most definitely what you are in the process of doing.

This government is in the process of doing the opposite of what it says. The public service should not be partisan, but everything is being done to make it even more partisan, and public servants or employees can no longer do anything about it.

What does the member think of his government? If I still have time, I have another question.

● (1325)

[English]

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, the member has outlined in greater detail the concern I outlined in my first point. I have the same concern but not as much for partisan politics. I have not heard that complaint but maybe he has. When there is favouritism or nepotism the system may be open for abuse.

I will explain again the reasons that I think there is actually more protection now from that occurring under the new system. However, because this is one of the major points in the act, it has to be watched very closely to see if this is a better system.

The one thing I did not address was the point he made about there being more hiring by managers instead of the Public Service Commission and whether that is bad and could lead to more abuse. I believe that may have come from a problem in the public service. If we tell people they can have some staff but that someone else will hire them, how do we know the person will fit in with our needs? If we tell someone running an electrician's shop or a plumber's shop that some greater body, which is distanced from the employer, will hire their employees, does that lead to an effective working relationship and getting the right person to work in the situation?

I do not have a problem with employment choices being moved from some central agency to the department and the employer involved, but we must make sure it is protected from the abuse in any location by putting in the type of protection I mentioned.

Before I get into those protections, we need to give some recognition to public service employees and managers, for whom I have a great deal of respect. They are great servants of this nation. However the fact is they want the best person for the job. When we pick people with the essential qualifications it will be the other determinants that make them the best employees for the job. In all cases, unless there is a bad manager, the best people will be chosen because everyone wants the best people to work for them. They all want to get their jobs done better and they want to do a better job for Canadians.

A new point that was put forward to solve the problem of the potential for abuse was the tribunal, which I am hopeful will have the respect of both sides. A person who thinks they were better qualified or should have been hired would be able to challenge the process under the charges of abuse of authority, bad faith, personal favouritism, skewing of qualifications or bureaucratic patronage. The new public service may audit the set of qualifications. I would be happy to hear what other safeguards the member would like that could be put in to help prevent any abuse.

Government Orders

• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak this afternoon on Bill C-25. I will reread its title, if I may. It is an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, a very substantial bill of 282 pages, the short title of which is the Public Service Modernization Act.

I am all the more pleased to speak because, as the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, I am the Bloc Québécois member whose riding is closest to the National Capital Region. The borders of my riding are contiguous to the edge of the NCR's territory, so a number of people from the riding work or have worked for the federal government or are still under contract to it. In fact, in recent years, the federal government has developed a new employment strategy that makes greater use of contract workers. These people also lived through the problems that occurred in the early 1990s.

You will understand that the public service was looking forward to this bill. In fact, in the early 1990s, there were some major cuts to the federal public service, to such an extent that a special committee had to be struck in the Outaouais region to look at how the economy of this region and a portion of Basses-Laurentides could cope with the major job losses of the time.

A committee was struck and a report—the Beaudry report—was produced. The chair of the committee that produced it, Marcel Beaudry, is now better known as the Chairperson of the NCC. It is obvious that not everyone was a loser as a result of the discussions and debates of the early 1990s. At least one person got a job out of it and is now the Chairperson of the National Capital Commission.

What did the Beaudry report ask for? Naturally, it recommended that the number of public servants in the Outaouais region be stabilized because the drain had to be stopped, but it also said that a way be found to facilitate economic diversification in the Outaouais and part of the Lower Laurentians. That is how the first economic diversification society was created, established and developed. The Society for the Economic Diversification of the Outaouais was the forerunner of all economic diversification societies created afterwards in Quebec, and adopted by the Quebec government.

That is the reality. At the beginning of the 1990s, the federal government caused a serious crisis with the drastic cut in the number of jobs. The federal government took part in the creation of the Beaudry committee. Then, naturally, there was the Beaudry report. Afterwards, Mr. Beaudry became the Chairperson of the National Capital Commission. Of course, the goal was to diversify the economy, but it was twofold; new niches were to be found in order to reduce dependency on the federal public service, and also to ensure the stability of the public service. One of the tasks was to review all the laws in order to guarantee job protection. That was the goal.

However, those drastic cuts occurred in the early 1990s. We are in 2003 and it is only now, 10 years later, that this massive 282-page bill, the Public Service Modernization Act, is being introduced to amend four important acts. I can understand the public servants. I had to work with them and the union stewards at the beginning of the

1990s, when we tried to prevent the drastic, massive and sometimes brutal cuts of the federal government.

I understand the unions who want to fight today so that, once the bill is passed, they never have to relive past experiences. I have some reservations. However, I do want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Châteauguay, who worked hard and moved 120 amendments, in cooperation with the central labour bodies.

• (1335)

Basically, for everyone but the Liberals, the role of committee members is to strive for an agreement. In this case, we are talking about legislation to modernize the public service. We would have hoped for an agreement that is acceptable to and accepted by both the employer and the employees.

Today, we have a bizarre situation where there is a bill before the House which, with the exception of APEX, the association representing the managers to whom this bill is giving more powers, all the unions oppose.

Ten years ago, the Outaouais and certainly the Ottawa area, and eastern Ontario, experienced a major crisis because of drastic cuts. One of the recommendations at the time was to amend the legislation to protect employees. Parliament came up with Bill C-25, which has been denounced by every labour union except the one representing managers, the bosses, those who, with this bill, will be able to make personal choices and, of course, make their own policy, which is often the Liberal Party's policy.

I am saying this very candidly. I am not in the same league as my hon. colleague from Châteauguay who sits on the committee, where he reviewed each and every clause of the bill. He considered the bill clause by clause, naturally, and proposed amendments where amendments were considered necessary and desirable by the employees, the public servants, and their union representatives as well as the Bloc Québécois.

I will not dissect this bill clause by clause, nor will I indicate which clause I am quoting. In response to the remarks made in this House by members of the ruling Liberal Party, however, I will simply read the bill's summary. In theory, it should contain the substance, the very essence of the bill. Let me read the summary found at the very beginning of the bill:

Part 1 enacts the Public Service Labour Relations Act to provide for a labour relations regime in the public service which is based on greater cooperation and consultation between the employer and bargaining agents, notably by requiring labour-management consultation committees—

When we read this bill, this summary, this description of part 1, we are entitled to think that all the employees should agree. That is what the purpose of the act should be. Yet, the labour unions have denounced part 1, among other things.

Government Orders

In the summary, we are told that we should establish, and I quote:
—a labour relations regime in the public service which is based on greater cooperation and consultation—

All the labour associations, except for APEX, are against this bill. What a good start that is. What a way to start a summary, to start a discussion on this bill in the House.

Right off the bat, in Part I, there is a big difference; employers and employees do not agree. However, Part I says that there should be a regime “based on greater cooperation and consultation”. Maybe we should continue this cooperation and consultation. Because, at this very moment, the employees and union representatives are not satisfied with the bill now before us.

The summary goes on to say:

Part 2 amends the Financial Administration Act to put direct responsibility for certain aspects of human resources management in the hands of deputy heads, subject to policies and directives of the Treasury Board.

Having read Part 2 of the summary, I can understand why senior managers and public servants are satisfied. They have just been told in no uncertain terms:

Part 2 amends the Financial Administration Act to put direct responsibility for certain aspects of human resources management in the hands of deputy heads.

Of course, they would have more power in terms of human resources, more latitude for political patronage. That is what my colleague from Châteauguay explained earlier. But the employees, and hopefully the employers as well, wanted something totally different. But no, we come up with legislation that gives more powers and responsibilities to deputy heads for human resources management.

Later, I will explain to you what those increased powers are, in terms of the merit principle and the use of the word “essential” to rig the criteria so that they get the person they want for the job.

● (1340)

So, they are being given more latitude. Obviously, some powers are being taken away from employees to appeal decisions made by administrators. That is the purpose.

That is what was described earlier. That is what was happening in the early 1990s when the public service was downsized. There were a lot of discussions because there was patronage. Ten years later, everyone is expecting a bill that will eliminate patronage. But no, quite the opposite, the summary of the bill, on page 1, describes it quite plainly:

Part 2 amends the Financial Administration Act to put direct responsibility for certain aspects of human resources management in the hands of deputy heads, subject to policies and directives—

It even specifies that:

New deputy head responsibilities include determining learning and developmental requirements, providing awards and setting standards of discipline.

Unbelievable. In the summary, it says that:

New deputy head responsibilities include determining learning and developmental requirements—

They will decide for themselves how staff will be trained.

—providing awards and setting standards of discipline

I can see why employees and union representatives are confronting APEX, the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada. They want to prevent everything they feared could happen, and which will happen if this bill goes through. The government is in the process of creating a network of public administrators who will have direct control over employees under their jurisdiction. That is the antithesis of what the public service and the employees wanted.

Obviously, there are very important reasons why the Bloc Québécois is against this bill, and my colleague, the member for Châteauguay, explained them. I would like to read the position because it is clear, “The Bloc Québécois is opposed to this bill, since no amendments were put forward, especially with respect to protecting public servants who expose dubious, immoral or fraudulent practices or policies, but also with regard to the active promotion of linguistic duality. No significant amendments were made with regard to the contentious notion of merit”.

Let me explain. First, on the matter of dubious, immoral or fraudulent policies, we need to keep in mind that the sponsorships scandal, the inevitable result of Liberal party management, gave rise to some very important recommendations, one of which was to allow public employees to blow the whistle.

Of course the acts mentioned in Bill C-25 were not modernized, for instance, the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the Public Service Employment Act, the Financial Administration Act, and the Canadian Center for Management Development Act. We would have expected that under the bill those who lend a helping hand, namely those who are willing to report any unethical, questionable or fraudulent situation would have been afforded some protection with regard to the information given so that they would not suffer the consequences.

Believe it or not, in spite of the amendments moved by my colleague, Liberal members refused to include in the bill protection for those who might give information or report their colleagues' questionable, unethical and fraudulent practices. This of course is how the Liberals speak from both sides of their mouth. They are very proud of their whistle blower program. But when employees ask that whistle blowers be protected, the only bill introduced in the House in this respect does not do it.

We are talking about modernizing the public service. We have been waiting 10 years for this bill, since drastic cuts have affected the public service mainly in the Outaouais area and in eastern Ontario. Every current and future public servant had been waiting for this act to be significantly modernized.

● (1345)

We tried to clarify the bill so that employees would feel comfortable reporting questionable, fraudulent and unethical practices or policies on the part of the government—any government of course since the Liberals will not be in power for ever—but the government refused the amendments proposed by my colleague with the support of union representatives. This is one of the reasons why the Bloc Québécois will vote against the bill.

Government Orders

The second main reason concerns of course the active promotion of linguistic duality. In this respect, I must again remind the House that the Official Languages Commissioner, Dr. Dyane Adam, made very important recommendations asking that the bill make direct reference to the Official Languages Act with regard to anything that has to do with official languages. That was the objective.

All the more so since part 1 provides for ways, namely with reference to official languages, for staffing, qualifications, and so on. We can also read the following in the summary:

Part 4 amends the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act, which becomes the Canada School of Public Service Act. The School becomes responsible for learning and development activities for employees in the public service.

As you can see, a way to train staff is being devised. We want to ensure, with the official languages commissioner, Dr. Dyane Adam, among others, that the Official Languages Act is enforced.

Believe it or not, despite repeated calls and amendments moved by my colleague, Liberal members refused to approve what the Commissioner of Official Languages was asking for and what amendments were requested with regard to official languages. I think this is dreadful, because being the Bloc Québécois member whose riding is closest to the National Capital Region, I have the good fortune to be told what is going on in the public service. A taxpayer told me that he had been invited to participate in a training session with everyone in his unit. It was very important training that was supposed to be given during the weekend. A place, which I will not name, had been booked. It was very important training, especially as it was supposed to be given in both official languages. Believe it or not, when the staff arrived, the training documents they received were in English only. Despite the concern expressed by the taxpayer, he was simply told that there had not been enough time to translate the documents and that explanations would be translated simultaneously. That is how things were done. This is what we have to deal with.

I am quite happy that this bill announces the Canada School of Public Service. However, I am less happy that this school will not have to fully comply with the Official Languages Act, as my colleague, the member for Châteauguay, wanted to ensure by making specific reference to the act. That is what we have to deal with.

The Liberals always manage to talk out of both sides of their mouth. They support linguistic duality and official languages, but when it comes time to put it in writing in a bill, and make reference to the Official Languages Act, to require that it be complied with, the Liberals vote against it. They vote against amendments and say, as they have in many other committees, that “the Official Languages Act is part of all legislation. It must be complied with”.

Why is the government not referring to this, particularly when it talks about the Canada School of Public Service, which should provide documentation in both languages to all public servants in bilingual positions? It must never be forgotten that, in Quebec, more than 50% of positions offered in the federal public service are bilingual. This is the reality while in British Columbia hardly 10% of positions offered must be bilingual. This is what the French minority in Quebec has to go through. When it wants to become part of the public service and have some opportunities, it must be bilingual, because more than 50% of positions offered in the federal public

service in Quebec—I am not speaking about those offered elsewhere, but those offered in Quebec—must be bilingual. So, unilingual francophones are once again under attack by the federal government.

• (1350)

In the House, we tried to have the Official Languages Act applied in this bill, on the recommendation of the commissioner of official languages. My colleague from Châteauguay did not propose amendments just for the sake of it. He asked questions to the commissioner of official languages, Dr. Adam, as a witness, who proposed some changes, who proposed that amendments be added. All these amendments, all these changes, all these proposals were rejected by the Liberal members.

I will conclude by telling you about the last finding, the last major point to which the Bloc Québécois is opposed, that is the contentious concept of merit. A whole part of this bill would allow senior officials to staff positions on the basis of merit. My colleague from Châteauguay had the chance to explain to you what the relevant clauses might mean. I will read the section of the Public Service Employment Act—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time is up. The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, at this late hour the Bloc members are certainly talking negatively about the bill and some of its aspects. However, I would ask the member to comment on three specific areas where the committee worked cooperatively to improve it: first, the merit principle; second, the area of whistleblower legislation and recognizing the concept in law; and third, the issue of political rights, the constitutional right of a public employee to be involved in elections.

I would like the hon. member to comment on that. The clause by clause study in committee is not always negative. We do not always get what we want, but in those three areas the committee was constructive.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I will just read the comments of the Public Service Alliance of Canada in its submission on this bill. It said:

The preamble states that Canada will continue to benefit from a public service where appointments to positions are based on merit, that the principle of merit will be independently safeguarded, and those exercising staffing authority will be accountable to the Public Service Commission, an independent tribunal and Parliament.

That is what the alliance wished and said in its submission.

Here is what the alliance had to say:

Part 3 of Bill C-25, in its current form, represents a wholesale retreat from a public service defined by the appointment of the best-qualified individuals. Bill C-25 delivers on its promise of increased flexibility for management, but contains very little protection for employees or the principle of merit.

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This was the Public Service Alliance of Canada condemning the fact that the principle of merit was a matter of choice for officials and protected the employees less and less.

•(1355)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the member for Châteauguay for the work that he did in committee on this bill. It was important for us to have his input on a broad range of issues which helped to improve the bill.

My question for the member has to do with the whole question of merit. One of the provisions in the bill is that, notwithstanding any other qualifications, people who are on leave of absence or who have been laid off would be given preference over other parties. In other words, it is almost an override.

Would the member agree that there are circumstances in which employees who had been laid off or who were on leave for some particular reason would have an opportunity to be considered for those positions even though they may not be the best available person?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the issue of merit. At the outset, my hon. colleague recognized the merit of my colleague from Châteauguay, who attended the committee hearings and expressed his views. He even said he was proud of his involvement in this issue.

The only problem I have is that my colleague brought forward more than 120 amendments and, despite all his hard work, which was well received by the Liberal members, only one of his amendments was adopted. That is what we have to deal with. True, the points raised by my hon. colleague for Châteauguay were relevant. They were based on the negative comments made by public servants on Bill C-25, which, as stated in the summary, was supposed to be—

based on greater cooperation and consultation—

That is not what happened. My colleague opposite asked me a question about merit with regard to some types of employees, and I have the good fortune of sitting close to the venerable member for Châteauguay. He whispered to me that he had put forward some amendments that would have dealt with what the Liberal member is asking for, but his proposals were rejected by the Liberal members of the committee.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

YOUTH SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend congratulations to Catherine Colodey of Bannockburn Road and Jackie Sharkey of Kingston, Prince Edward Island. Catherine and Jackie are both seniors at Bluefield High School and recently participated in the annual Canada-wide Science Fair, an exhibition and competition that occurs annually in a selected city

during the month of May each year. This year's fair was held in Calgary from May 10 to May 18.

The Youth Science Foundation is the parent body for this event and oversees the establishment of regional and local fairs across Canada, where the best projects are selected to compete at the national level.

This year, Catherine and Jackie's project took home the gold medal for their project on whether the location of bovine hair whorls had any bearing on temperament. In addition to their medals, Catherine and Jackie each received \$1,500 in cash as well as scholarships to the University of Western Ontario and the University of Saskatchewan. They also received two special awards: the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Award and the Statistical Society of Canada Award.

On behalf of everyone in the House, I would like to congratulate both Catherine and Jackie on their outstanding achievements and wish them all the best in the future.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadians experiences mental illness at some point in their lives. The cost to family and society is enormous.

Bipolar disease results in manic-depressive swings, and people in the depressive phase of the illness are at high risk of suicide. Recently, a natural health product was developed in Alberta that has brought hope to thousands of sufferers. Researchers at the University of Calgary, led by Dr. Bonnie Kaplan, have documented the phenomenal results. The findings have been published in peer-reviewed psychiatric journals and repeated by Harvard researcher Dr. Charles Popper.

Unbelievably, Health Canada has ordered the study stopped and is withholding product at the border because of an antiquated clause in the Food and Drugs Act that prevents claims about natural health products.

I was in Edmonton last week to meet with concerned citizens who feel their personal health and security are threatened by these actions of Health Canada. The minister and her department are being sued for obstructing the well-being of people affected by the seizure of their nutritional products.

Why does the minister defend antiquated and unscientific clauses in the Food and Drugs Act that obstruct freedom of choice in personal health care?

•(1400)

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it is Environment Week, I would like to thank and congratulate everyone who collaborated, directly or indirectly, in making it possible for the Printing Services of the House of Commons to become the first printer in the federal public sector to receive Environment Canada's EcoLogo certification.

The first report printed with this certification was *La Diplomatie parlementaire*, for the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

The program's criteria include emission reduction, waste reduction and resource conservation.

For example, the use of alcohol on the presses was eliminated, the quantity of wastewater reduced, a silver particle recovery system installed, and oil-based inks replaced by vegetable inks.

Before I finish, I would also like to thank the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Minister of the Environment, who made this project possible.

We can all be very proud of the results. Bravo to all of you who have spared no effort to ensure healthy environmental management.

* * *

LABORATOIRE TÉLÉBEC MOBILITÉ

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has announced funding of \$1,531,100 to the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue for its Télébec Mobilité underground communications research laboratory.

This new establishment will carry out its activities in the CANMET experimental mine in Val d'Or.

This project was made possible through Canada Economic Development for the Regions of Quebec, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the CANMET experimental mine, and private partners such as Télébec Mobilité, Bell Canada, Nortel Mobility, Soredem and the UQAT foundation.

The goal of UQAT's research is to perfect a multipurpose underground communication system in order to provide security for mine workers in Quebec, Canada and the world.

* * *

[English]

ACHIEVEMENTS IN AVIATION

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations to a fellow Yukoner, Doug Makkonen. A long time helicopter pilot, Doug was recently named "Best in the World" for mountain flying by the Helicopter Association International and has been awarded the Robert E. Trimble Memorial Award.

Doug Makkonen's peers consider him to be the finest mountain pilot in the industry. This award is truly a testament to his amazing career. Doug Makkonen's outstanding service over the last 30 years

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and accumulation of over 18,000 hours of flight time stand to his training ability, judgment and high safety standards. This truly is an incredible accomplishment.

He is currently involved in a glacier coring research project on the upper plateau of Canada's tallest mountain, Mount Logan, and has flown approximately 100 flights onto and off the Logan plateau.

I wish to extend congratulations to Doug. May he continue to fly high.

* * *

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on June 2, 1953, the young Princess Elizabeth was crowned Queen Elizabeth II.

At her coronation, she said the event was "not a symbol of a power and a splendour that are gone, but a declaration of our hopes for the future".

Indeed, since her Majesty's accession to the Throne, Canada's accomplishments have been as varied and numerous as they are historic: the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the patriation of the Canadian Constitution and the creation of Nunavut.

As our Head of State throughout these years, and on these occasions, she has unfailingly typified continuity, stability and integrity.

Today, at the unveiling of her official portrait commemorating the 50th year of her reign, Queen Elizabeth II remains a symbol of continuity, stability and tradition in a world that is under a barrage of constant change.

* * *

JUNO BEACH CENTRE

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, June 6, 2003, marks the 59th anniversary of the Canadian participation in the liberation of Europe.

On June 6, 1944, under the code name Juno, Canadian troops advanced on the shores of Normandy, France despite heavy resistance and accomplished their intended goal. On June 6, the Juno Beach Centre will open to the public on the same beach where Canadians came ashore 59 years earlier.

Celebrations will occur at over 25 locations across Canada so veterans may take part in what has been the dream of many, particularly Mr. Garth Webb, the president of the Juno Beach Centre.

Canadians have shown their gratitude by donating generously to this project. The Government of Canada can be proud of the sponsorship it provided with the help of all parties in the House.

I wish to extend congratulations to the Juno Beach Centre and to our veterans.

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•(1405)

[*Translation*]

ROSE DRUMMOND

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past five years, the Rose Drummond company has enjoyed tremendous growth and now produces 70% of the cultivated roses in Quebec.

Rose Drummond has developed a number of other plant breeds over the years, such as the gerbera, the alstroemeria, the tropical lily and other green plants.

The leading hothouse strawberry producer in North America, Rose Drummond now offers ten varieties of strawberries from March to December, to the great joy of Quebec chefs and their clients. Seven tonnes of these pesticide-free strawberries are picked there. Not only do they have an intoxicating flavour, but they are clean because they never touch the ground.

The large greenhouse complex in Drummondville receives 250,000 visitors each year and is preparing to introduce in June organic cultivated roses that have not been sprayed with chemical pesticides. This is the only project of its kind in Quebec.

I would like to applaud Diane and Jean-Denis Lampron for their determination, professionalism and warm welcome. I invite you, Mr. Speaker, and all Canadians to stop in at Rose Drummond.

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[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT WEEK

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for more than 30 years the first week of June has been designated Canadian Environment Week. Running from June 1 to June 7, Environment Week celebrates achievements in the protection of our land, water, air and wildlife. The theme for this year's Environment Week, "Taking Action for Our Environment", speaks to the importance of individual action.

It has been a remarkable year for our environment. The wildlife that is so much a part of who we are as Canadians has new protection thanks to the Species at Risk Act. We have ratified the Kyoto protocol and started to implement our plan to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that lead to climate change. We were an influential force at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. This was capped off with a federal budget that will invest \$3 billion in environmental initiatives, the single biggest Government of Canada commitment to the environment in our history.

I urge all Canadians to do their part this week and every week as we work together to sustain Canada's natural environment.

* * *

MEMBER FOR PICTOU—ANTIGONISH— GUYSBOROUGH

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, who won the Progressive Conservative Party leadership this past weekend in Toronto. As is always the case,

he must share his best wishes with his loyal family and campaign workers, who no doubt spent innumerable hours championing their candidate and cheering him on to victory.

I would also like to congratulate candidate Jim Prentice for his campaign and for the way he conducted himself on the convention floor. His second place finish, helped along by possibly the best policy advocate of the campaign, the member for Kings—Hants, grabbed much of the momentum at the convention, and his message of reconciliation and moving forward together resonated not only with Tory delegates but also with voters wishing for a single slate of conservative-minded candidates in the next election.

Canadian voters now need to know what course the new Progressive Conservative leader will chart in the days and weeks to come. Conservative-minded Canadians will be watching closely as he makes critically important decisions on both strategy and policy.

The official opposition wishes him well as he begins his duties as the leader of the Progressive Conservatives, but urges him to be careful: As Adam and Eve found out, bad things can happen in an orchard.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GENEVIÈVE BROWN

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the annual appreciation night that began in 1998 allows the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de l'Outaouais to honour the person of the year in a special way.

On March 26, Geneviève Brown was named Person of the Year 2002. Ms. Brown is the co-owner and general manager of the Mont-Cascades golf club in Cantley, Quebec.

[*English*]

Ms. Brown is an active and committed businesswoman. In addition to managing the golf club, she plays a role in the activities of Dominion Essential Oils, a worldwide exporter of essential oils, and she is a devoted mother.

[*Translation*]

She is involved in various associations such as the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de l'Outaouais, the Association touristique de l'Outaouais, the Fondation du CHVO and the National Golf Course Owners Association, to name just a few.

[*English*]

Congratulations to Ms. Geneviève Brown, the person of the year 2002.

[Translation]

FÉDÉRATION DES FEMMES DU QUÉBEC

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Michèle Asselin for being elected president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec yesterday.

Quebeckers already know Michèle Asselin through her long-standing involvement as the coordinator of Regroupement des centres de femmes du Québec. A team player, Michèle Asselin is taking over from Viviane Barbot, whom we would like to commend and thank for the countless hours she contributed as president.

The federation works for equality, fairness, dignity and social justice for women in all areas. It promotes and defends the interests and rights of women through its efforts in advocating for women, promoting cooperation among stakeholders and lobbying. The federation takes part in the public debate in Quebec on a regular basis to share its position with governments and the public, and to defend against threats to social progress that has been made.

My colleagues from the Bloc Québécois join with me in paying tribute to the new president and assure her of our full support.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the hon. member for Kelowna in recognizing the anniversary of the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

To mark this great occasion, Her Majesty returned to Westminster Abbey today to attend a special ceremony. The ceremony both celebrated the first 50 years of Her Majesty's reign and focused on the seriousness of the responsibilities she has to lead and serve the Commonwealth.

This morning on Parliament Hill, our House leader unveiled the new official Canadian portrait of Her Majesty at exactly the moment of the coronation. I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Her Majesty on the first 50 great years of her reign. God save the Queen.

* * *

MEMBER FOR PICTOU—ANTIGONISH— GUYSBOROUGH

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party sits in the House today with a new leader at the helm, the member of Parliament for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

With our leader comes a new Conservative course to provide confident and effective leadership for all Canadians, leadership of a type that has not come from this arrogant government nor from the listless regional parties, leadership that will not come from the Liberal crown prince, the hon. member for Canada Steamship Lines. In fact, the member for LaSalle—Émard has expressed concern that his Liberal opponents should be worried about a resurging Conservative enemy and not him.

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Canadians know that a Progressive Conservative government will set policy and resolve issues without insulting or alienating our provinces or our closest allies. They know we will do this with the best interests of Canada at heart.

The Progressive Conservatives are ready to turn up the heat. If the Liberals cannot take it, it is time to leave the kitchen.

* * *

MEMBER FOR PICTOU—ANTIGONISH— GUYSBOROUGH

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Jack Layton, our caucus and the 85,000 members of the New Democratic Party, I wish to congratulate the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough on his leadership victory this week-end.

I had the pleasure of being an observer at the convention and can attest that it was an exciting ride. I am sure the new leader has been finding the ride just as exciting over the last 36 hours.

Though the NDP and Tories may disagree on much—and then again maybe not, I guess we will see on that—we are both national parties and we both have a proud tradition of building institutions that serve Canadians. Together with the new leaders of the Alliance and the Liberals and the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, I hope we can present Canadians with an invigorating debate in the next election.

The NDP caucus wishes to sincerely congratulate the new Conservative leader and wishes him well.

* * *

DISABILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, about one in eight Canadians lives with a disability, but very many of them enjoy healthy, independent lives. Some from within the community are more visible in our lives, like those in wheelchairs or the visually impaired. Many conditions, such as epilepsy and those relating to mental illness, are not.

For that reason, I am very pleased to recognize this week as Disability Awareness Week. The theme for this year is “Active Living...Good for Life”. This encourages all Canadians, regardless of age or disability, to remain active in pursuit of the most fulfilling life possible.

Although proclaimed as Disability Awareness Week, the most important feature of the life of the disabled is not their handicap. First, Canadians must recognize members of the disability community as their fellow citizens, and the disability as just simply another challenge to be overcome. This is the true spirit of Disability Awareness Week.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICE**

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as the public service modernization act works its way through Parliament, it must be noted that the Canadian Alliance values the professional public service and our nation will continue to benefit from public administration based on political non-partisanship and the merit principle, where these values are respected and independently safeguarded.

We affirm the transparent accountability of service delivery and accountability to Parliament through ministerial responsibility. We recognize the need for public administration that strives for excellence, which is able to serve with integrity and efficiency in the official language of need where numbers warrant.

We are committed to a public service that is characterized by fair employment practices, facilitative management-labour dialogue, personnel development, and recourse systems structured to amicably resolve conflict.

Protection of the public interest is paramount and effective management-labour relations are a cornerstone of sound human resource management.

Free collective bargaining is the preferred method to establish terms and conditions of employment.

Politicians should not play politics with the lives of public employees. Together we can build a better Canada.

* * *

• (1415)

ERNEST ALVIA “SMOKEY” SMITH

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 23 in his hometown of Vancouver, British Columbia, Ernest Alvia “Smokey” Smith received a Minister of Veterans Affairs commendation.

In citing Mr. Smith's achievements, the minister stated that Smokey has become an invaluable and enormously effective remembrance ambassador. He has represented veterans with distinction during many overseas pilgrimages and in countless commemorative ceremonies across this country.

Smokey Smith is the last Canadian Victoria Cross recipient alive today. A selfless individual, over the years, Smokey has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to ensuring that Canadians, and especially Canadian youth, forever remember the service and sacrifice of his comrades.

We are thankful for Smokey Smith. We can think of no finer individual worthy of this recognition by the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the mad cow outbreak has had a devastating effect on a national industry

in Canada, losing millions of dollars. Many of the provinces are frustrated by the lack of federal leadership from our Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has reportedly met with President Bush twice in the last few days. Could the Deputy Prime Minister tell us whether or not he has finally remembered to bring up the issue of mad cow?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this point I think both heads of government are dealing with the issue in the appropriate way, which is that there are extensive discussions and consultations going on between the two levels of government.

The presence here and assistance of U.S. representatives has been helpful in planning the ongoing process. I think we will be awaiting the continued development of the response based on science until the appropriate intervention point arises.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, from that answer I would say the Prime Minister has not said a single word about mad cow to the President of the United States.

Four hundred workers in my riding at Cargill have just been laid off. The government seems to believe that they can just be abandoned.

My question is specific. Will the government suggest the two week waiting period for employment insurance be relaxed for those people who lose their jobs due to this serious problem with BSE?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member ventures down a path which could cause some very great difficulties. I think the distinction between enabling people to voluntarily go into quarantine in circumstances which arose in the context of the SARS outbreak is quite different from people who are experiencing layoffs due to business conditions.

I would urge the member to think of the implications of eliminating the two week waiting period for all Canadians, because in fact, there is no reason to distinguish at that point among anyone or any reason for layoff.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, an outbreak is an outbreak.

Thousands of animals are ready for market and there just now is no market. While the industry is on hold, thousands of workers are losing their jobs. The government could easily remove the two week EI waiting period.

The Liberal government was quick to act when the city of Toronto was affected by an outbreak, and rightly so. Why is the government refusing to act when rural Canada has an outbreak?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member wants to score some political points, but I really do urge him to note the distinctions between those people, and there are many of them—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Shame on you. Wake up, John, this is a whole industry we are talking about.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order. It is time for the Chair to score some political points and get some silence in the chamber. We cannot hear the Deputy Prime Minister's answer because there is so much yelling on every side. I am not a judge of political points but we will want to be able to hear the answer and see if it is in order.

Hon. John Manley: Mr. Speaker, at some point we have to be responsible. The inability of the hon. member to distinguish between people who we are urging to voluntarily go into quarantine and those who are laid off as a result of conditions that arise in an industry, if he is asking for a waiver of the waiting period in the conditions in which he is describing, then he should be urging it for those in the tourism sector for example, who have also faced layoffs as a result of the SARS outbreak. If we start that—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Crowfoot.

* * *

AIR INDIA

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the disclosure of documents detailing the 15 year criminal investigation into the Air India bombing suggests that CSIS knew about the bombing of Air India flight 182 before it occurred but failed to report it to the RCMP.

Will the Solicitor General immediately initiate a full public inquiry to ensure that there was full disclosure on the part of CSIS?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting Canada and Canadians from acts of terrorism has been a primary mandate of CSIS since its inception in 1984. To suggest that CSIS, for any reason, would pull back from an ongoing counterterrorism investigation and jeopardize the lives of Canadians and others is absolutely absurd.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP claims that CSIS erased wire taps, that it destroyed files to cover up the fact that it knew about the plot of the bombing of Air India flight 182. Allegations are surfacing that a CSIS agent may have been involved in the conspiracy to blow up flight 182.

The Solicitor General is the minister who is in charge. He is the minister in charge of this department. When will he initiate an inquiry to either prove or dispel the allegations against CSIS?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have never seen anyone or any party in the history of Parliament that could get hung up on allegations, rumours and innuendo like that party over there can.

The fact of the matter is this has been the longest, most costly investigation in Canadian history. My interest and Canadians' interest is to see that it is carried out to its conclusion through the courts. I will not in any way potentially jeopardize the case by making comments that might be misconstrued. I am therefore not commenting on this case.

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, ten days or so ago, Canada submitted a counter-offer to the United States in the softwood lumber dispute. Although there were plenty of rumours, the Minister for International Trade, who has always called for a total return to free trade, has not yet indicated what that Canadian proposal contained.

Can the minister assure us that Canada will not conclude any agreement that will voluntarily limit its exports, as was the case in 1996?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the opportunity afforded me by the leader of the Bloc Québécois to clarify our government's position on softwood lumber, which has always been an unconditional preference for total free trade in the U.S. market.

This, we feel, is of great importance to Canadian producers, and we absolutely want to see the same rules of free trade apply to softwood lumber that apply to the rest of the Canadian economy.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, since the beginning of the softwood lumber crisis, some fifty businesses have been affected and 9,000 workers have lost their jobs.

Does the minister realize that the softwood lumber industry is a victim of the financial strangulation strategy of the United States, which intends to drag out the process so that Canada cannot hold out until the end?

It is high time, now that victory is at hand, for the government to help the companies and the workers to hold out until the end, and not to give in, even with an interim agreement, as it did in 1996. That would be going back to square one.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any potential interim agreement that we might contemplate at this time would not be at all like the one signed in 1996. If it were, we would inevitably find ourselves five years down the road not knowing where we were headed.

We have negotiated forestry policy interpretation bulletins with the Government of the United States. The Government of Quebec has made a remarkable contribution as well. I hope these bulletins will make it possible for the provinces to be able to put in place forestry programs and systems, recognized by the U.S. Trade Department, that will give them full access to free trade in the U.S. market.

• (1425)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, considering that the American strategy in the softwood lumber issue is to drag things out further and slowly kill off the Canadian industry, the Minister for International Trade has no choice but to recommend to his government that it strengthen the position of the Canadian lumber industry.

Oral Questions

How is it that nothing is being done to implement phase two of the aid package announced by the government in October, when loan guarantees to the industry are perfectly legal and represent the solution for supporting the Canadian industry?

[English]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, and I have replied to his question many times, we have a \$110 million package to help communities to adjust. We also have money for R and D. One of the other key areas is to look for new markets. This is an area that we have been focusing on, to make sure that we diversify our trade in this area.

Turning to the hon. member's question in terms of the industry, the best thing we can do is to have a resolution to this problem for the industry. In the meantime we need to move, if we do not get our resolution, to provide further support. We are monitoring the situation closely to see what we can do if we do not get—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is because of remarks like those that the lumber industry and communities are feeling abandoned by the federal government. In spite of the repetitive speech by the Minister of Human Resources Development praising the effectiveness of the employment insurance plan, it is clear that the plan is too restrictive to provide adequate support to the workers affected by the softwood lumber crisis.

With a surplus of \$45 billion in the EI fund, how can the Minister of Human Resources Development be insensitive to the needs of workers and refuse to eliminate the EI waiting period for the victims of the softwood lumber crisis?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we recognized that there may be some significant impact on this trade dispute in the industry and amongst the workers. That is why we announced a \$246 million program recognizing the potential impact there.

I want to convey to the hon. member that the employment insurance system is there and will be responsive to the needs of those workers who find themselves laid off. In addition, we are working at the community level through the agencies to build increasing opportunities in the communities that may be affected.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): That will be short-lived, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the chair of the Alberta softwood lumber trade council has called the government's latest softwood lumber proposal to the United States a slap in the face to the industry. He says it ignored Alberta in favour of the input of a few CEOs who just happened to donate to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Why was the input of the broader interests of the lumber industry in western Canada ignored, while the input of a few select corporate donors becomes the official position of the Government of Canada? Will the government immediately withdraw this insulting proposal?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the new leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. I am pleased that he still has some interest in free trade after the deal he made on the weekend, and I thank him for it.

Atlantic Canada has been exempted from the countervailing duty and there is nothing in the proposal that went to the Americans last week that would in any way put this exemption into jeopardy. However, Atlantic Canada is suffering because of the anti-dumping duty which we are also trying to get rid of.

M. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, of course we like free trade. We invented it, unlike the minister opposite.

[Translation]

The Minister for International Trade is ignoring the representatives of the softwood lumber industry but listening to the handful of CEOs who donated in excess of \$30,000 to the Liberal Party. This proposal is jeopardizing our market share, our economic interests and the future of our fellow citizens.

Will the minister commit immediately to have the Government of Canada withdraw its latest proposal?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party used to be interested in free trade. My problem is that he is no longer interested, or less interested. That is our problem today.

As far as the softwood lumber issue is concerned, I can say that, for the past 20 years, the Atlantic region has been exempt from countervailing duties. This is an exemption we negotiated and it is something we are not interested in giving up. We also want the Atlantic provinces to be exempt from antidumping duties.

* * *

[English]

TRADE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

With some of the most expensive prescriptions in the world, with chemical companies that are overturning bans on toxic chemicals, and with public services like medicare on the negotiating table, does the minister agree that free trade is Brian Mulroney's crown jewel, or is it a millstone around the neck of Canadian sovereignty and Canadian democracy?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the revival of this issue in that corner of the House. It is interesting to see the left-wing party coming to the rescue of the new Conservative Party by questioning Mr. Mulroney's legacy in the House, however, what can I do?

Oral Questions

Free trade with the United States has allowed this country to create 600,000 jobs last year in Canada. It has helped us eliminate the deficits we had and contribute to the surpluses that we are having. We will continue, on this side of the House, to improve on—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister might want to be a tad careful because when the Tories dumped Mr. Orchard, he might be coming after his party and his membership.

The WTO and the FTAA hearings are both coming up. We have seen how chapter 11 has overturned the Liberal's own stated policies. Surely the minister should know what Canadians already know, that we want out of NAFTA and out of any future deals.

Will the minister stand up and protect Canadian sovereignty and refuse to sign any new deals?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a long time our government has accompanied every trade agreement that we have signed with Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico with labour and environment agreements.

We believe that, as a government, we should be promoting the benefits of the environment and labour, but we should ensure that the benefits of trade continue to benefit this nation.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is beyond dispute that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service destroyed tape recordings of intercepted telephone conversations of prime suspects in the 1985 Air India bombing case.

Why would CSIS, a government agency, destroy the very tapes crucial to the investigation? The question is compelling and it demands an answer. Will the Solicitor General order the public inquiry that the Prime Minister demanded when he was the opposition leader?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the destruction of the tapes, it has long been known that the tapes are usually destroyed within 30 days. This was a long running court case. On the specifics of this case, as I said earlier, I will not comment because the case is before the courts.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Air India bombing left over 300 people dead, most of them Canadians. The families of these victims deserve to know if there was a cover up within our government. As opposition leader the Prime Minister promised a public inquiry into this bombing. He and the Solicitor General must deliver on that promise.

Will he commit today to uncover the cover up and ensure that the truth comes out about the worst mass murder in Canada's history?

• (1435)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. There is no cover up and this Solicitor General will not play politics with the issue, as I am seeing from that side of the House. I will not jeopardize this court case by getting into those kinds of tactics and commenting on the case while it is before the courts.

[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): The softwood lumber crisis continues to hit our regions very hard, and unfortunately the list is growing longer every day: 300 workers in Témiscamingue; 210 in the Beauce; 250 in the Gaspé; 300 in the Mauricie; 450 in Chibougamau; and 450 in Laterrière, in the Saguenay.

I ask the Liberal government whether the figures I have just listed—and which are only a part of the picture—are not enough to justify putting an emergency assistance plan into place to help these regions? What else does the government need?

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Americans decided to levy those taxes, we took concrete measures to help the industry. Some \$110 million has been spent on economic diversification in these communities.

Announcements have already been made in this regard. For example, in the riding of the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois who asked the question, 50 projects were submitted, of which 17 were accepted, for a total of \$1.2 million. Investments of \$5 million will be created. Many other projects are being studied. We will be making other announcements shortly, in order to support our communities.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these regions and these people want to keep working in softwood lumber. They want to be able to earn a living in the lumber industry.

At the GDS mill, 250 jobs have been lost; at Gérard Crête, 300 jobs; at Tembec, 300 jobs; at Coop Laterrière, 450 jobs; at Cedrico, 250 jobs; and at Bowater, 350 jobs.

Do you think that these people want to be retrained for new careers? What they want is to keep the operations going with guaranteed loans. That is what they need.

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just as the hon. member, we too would want all these workers to be working in their jobs in the sawmills and other areas of the softwood lumber industry. That is why resolving the softwood lumber deal is the number one priority for the government.

The Minister for International Trade has done a tremendous job to make this a top priority for us to resolve because that is the way we will deal with it. Meanwhile, we have introduced a number of programs. Whether it be training, developing new markets, or the community adjustment of \$110 million, we will continue those programs.

However, we want to monitor—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE**

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it has been 13 days since a single cow was detected with BSE. The Canadian economy has taken a \$390 million hit so far. The tests on all the depopulated cattle will be completed this week. So far, all the tests have come back negative without another case of BSE.

My question is for the minister of agriculture. Has the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food received a commitment from U.S. Agriculture Secretary Veneman that once the tests are completed that the border will be opened immediately?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of discussions with the U.S. secretary of agriculture. Like us, the Americans are waiting for the results of the final tests. Hopefully they will continue to be negative. We have no reason to believe that they will not.

I can assure the hon. member that we have already talked about the types of steps and how quickly we can open the border. However, first of all, we need to have the science so that we can demonstrate that not only to the United States but to everyone else in the world. We look forward to getting that very soon.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is heartening that at least this minister remembers conversations he had with the U.S. unlike the Prime Minister.

If an immediate full opening of the border does not occur by the first of next week, this BSE issue will become a full blown national economic crisis. One option available could be a partial reopening of the border to Canadian boxed beef from animals less than two years of age.

Is the minister negotiating a partial reopening of the U.S. border to this beef?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, based on the comments I made in the previous answer to the hon. member, yes, we are.

We are having discussions about the possibility of opening the border for such things as veal, which is young beef, and for young animals both carcass and live. However we need the science before we can do that. Again, we hope that the science continues to show what appears to be the case so far which is that this was one isolated animal that did not get into the food chain.

* * *

• (1440)

[Translation]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1995, the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, then Minister of Finance, implemented an additional tax of 1.5¢ per litre of gasoline to fight the deficit. However, this tax has not been needed for several years now, but it is still being maintained by the federal government.

How can the taxpayers not feel wronged by a government that acts in such a way and keeps a tax that is no longer needed?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has been discussed many times. Taxes have been reduced by \$100 billion since last year. We have cut personal and corporate income taxes, as well as payroll taxes. So, the hon. member should recognize that, with this \$100 billion amount, all taxes have been cut.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, rather than looking for ways to spend surplus funds, should the government not give this money back to drivers who, thanks to its actions, have paid nearly \$1 billion over the past five years?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that drivers also receive employment income and they paid lower taxes on that income. They are also employed by corporations that paid less income tax. Cuts of \$100 billion are quite substantial.

[English]

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the former Liberal finance minister and leadership frontrunner is again trying to steal Canadian Alliance policy. Recently he said that he would dedicate a portion of gas taxes into roads to assist in road building and to help municipalities. However, if the former finance minister really believed in dedicating gas taxes to roads he would have done this in any one of his nine budgets. He did not. He failed to do it and he cannot be trusted on this issue.

Why will the current finance minister not walk his predecessor's talk and stop this gas tax rip-off?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I read very carefully what my predecessor said, and I agree with him. More recently, he has made some suggestion that he might want to vacate a tax field. There were quite a few qualifications around what he said. As I followed very carefully his script over nine years, I think he had it right. I do not think dedicated taxes work all that well in most areas.

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AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we all know the former Liberal finance minister has a penchant for flip-flops, and I thank the minister for pointing that out.

Eight air carriers have died on this Liberal government's watch and Air Canada just barely avoided filing for bankruptcy this past weekend. Air Canada employees took it on the chin.

What I want to know is whether the Liberal government understands the problems of the air industry and will receive the wake-up call that it has now received? Will the Liberal government admit that its air policies have failed? Will it lower and eliminate taxes on flying to get more people flying and to give Air Canada and the airline industry a hope for the future? Will it do it?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member were fair he would recognize that there are challenges in the air industry in many countries, and that they are not strictly a matter of this tax or that tax. We certainly are continuing to look very carefully at the challenges. I have met personally as Minister of Finance with representatives of the sector to try to understand the nature of the challenges they are facing.

We will of course observe very closely the work out under CCAA of Air Canada to determine the impact of that process on the provision of air services within the country, and take the decisions accordingly.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the course of the weekend, Nobel Prize laureate and world renowned democracy activist, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was re-arrested by the military regime in Burma. Just as troubling are reports that over 70 pro-democracy activists were killed by supporters of the military regime. As well, some 19 of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's colleagues in the National League for Democracy have been detained and the party headquarters closed down across the country.

My question is for the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific. What is Canada's response to this shameful and regrettable situation?

• (1445)

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled. Aung San Suu Kyi is a world hero. Burma's ruling generals have now taken that country's painfully slow democratization process ten steps backwards.

Canada calls on the Burmese officials to release Aung San Suu Kyi, her colleagues from the NLD and all political prisoners in Burma immediately.

Canada maintains strict measures against Burma. In light of these actions we will now redouble our efforts to restore democracy to Burma.

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LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Atlantic Canada should not pay duty on softwood lumber, yet the government's most recent proposal to the Americans surrenders that exemption.

Why and how could the government sell Atlantic Canadians down the river?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe I can inform the member that Atlantic Canada is paying 8.43% dumping duty at this moment. It has been exempted from countervailing duties at 19%. As far as that is concerned, it is an exemption that this government has fought for. We received it from the United States. We intend to remain loyal to it.

Any proposal that went down to the United States last week does not put that exemption in jeopardy. We want to resolve the anti-dumping case of Atlantic Canada as we will resolve the rest of the cases for the rest of the country.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, the four Atlantic premiers have signed a letter to the Prime Minister expressing outrage about the federal government's proposed sell out of the Atlantic Canadian softwood lumber industry. In that letter, the premiers say, and I quote:

We therefore expect the Government of Canada to take immediate action to remedy this unfortunate error.

Will the minister retract this ridiculous offer and end his attack on the Atlantic Canadian lumber industry?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for the good momentum he had over the weekend during the leadership convention. It was a great job.

I can reassure Atlantic Canada and the House that we advocated for this exemption that Atlantic Canada has obtained in the past. We have been working on it for 20 years. We obtained it from the United States. However now we want to free Atlantic Canada from the anti-dumping duties that it has been subjected to for the past year. It is imperative to eliminate all duties, anti-dumping and countervailing, that we have been subjected to by the Americans.

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PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new study shows that the drug testing funded by the pharmaceutical industry is four times more likely to show results favouring the sponsor's product than publicly funded research.

The government has a pattern of getting rid of responsibilities so it can pass the blame on to others. We have seen the disasters that self-regulation and monitoring have caused when it comes to food inspections, water safety and rail inspections. Drug testing needs to be safe, impartial and above reproach.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister explain why his government is letting the biggest profit making industry in Canada regulate its own products at the expense of Canadian patients and taxpayers?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really have some difficulty understanding what the hon. member is talking about because we have one of the most rigorous drug approval processes in the world. In fact, I think it is fair to say that this country is noted for the premium that it puts on the protection of Canadians' safety.

I also want to inform the hon. member that as part of our smart regulation initiative we are in the process of reviewing the timeliness of drug approvals. However I want to underscore for everyone that our first priority is always the health and safety of Canadians before any product is allowed on the market.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development has said that she would not do away with the two-week waiting period for the employees of small businesses that have been affected by SARS or mad cow disease.

In addition, the workers at the Horne smelter in northern Quebec cannot access EI either, because according to the Minister of Human Resources Development, production needs to be 85%, and the employer cannot attain that level as a result of the strike.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Will she stop hiding behind the 85% production rule and give EI to the workers laid off by this employer?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is making reference to a specific case, I would be glad to look into it in detail. Indeed, when it comes to ensuring that there is employment insurance, it is there as an insurance program. It has to be clear that people have been employed and then are laid off.

If he would like to bring the details forward, I would be pleased to look at them.

* * *

● (1450)

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last week the health minister said that the SARS screening measures were still being ramped up at the airports. We are now headed into a possible third wave of the SARS outbreak in the Toronto area.

Is the health minister saying today that she is interviewing all outgoing passengers at the Pearson airport?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I am saying and have said is that we make a risk assessment on a daily basis as to what measures are required.

We have ramped up our screening measures and we are working with airlines. Some, I will be quite honest, have been more co-operative than others in terms of ensuring that at check-in passengers leaving Pearson airport for international destinations are aware based on information provided to them of the symptoms of SARS. They are being asked to inform themselves of those symptoms and at check-in are being asked whether they have made themselves aware of that information and have answered all the questions in the negative.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on March 27 the WHO recommended a face to face interview of outgoing passengers. Singapore implemented aggressive screening and quarantine measures and the WHO, this last Saturday, actually deemed it as SARS free. Vietnam, a poor country by most countries' standards, brought about those tough screenings and it was declared SARS free three weeks ago.

Why are the screening procedures left to the discretion of the airlines in Canada when they should be applied across the board?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is up to the discretion of the airlines but we are working very closely with the airlines and the two international airports.

I take very strong exception to the hon. member's question if in fact he is suggesting that the WHO has designated various countries as SARS free because of their screening measures. They have been designated SARS free because in fact SARS has been controlled and contained. Unfortunately, in Toronto, with the designation of a second cluster, that has set back local public health officials' efforts, but—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Matapédia—Matane.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the shrimp industry is vital to several communities in eastern Quebec. To help the fishers in Newfoundland, the government decided to increase by a third the fishing quotas in the Atlantic, which will definitely lower market prices.

How does the government reconcile this quota increase after acknowledging a weak market last year and its willingness to make this fishery more stable by refusing to broaden access to the resource?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the quotas are established based on the state of the resource. We know that the resource is in very good shape and that it could withstand an increase to the level we have set. Last year, we were asked to consider waiting a year. We agreed and we waited.

I cannot refuse to increase quotas when we know that communities depend on them. We will leave it up to entrepreneurs to fish and sell shrimp.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans realize that with the increase in shrimp quotas, he is creating the same situation as with crab and cod? Is that good management?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that the shrimp fishery is in very good shape. We know we can increase the quotas to the level we increased them to. We know we could go beyond those levels.

We continue to seek scientific advice and we will increase our scientific knowledge through a joint program with the industry. We are going to do this very carefully to ensure sustainability for the future.

Oral Questions

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, for years National Defence officials have cautioned against an overcommitment of our armed forces personnel. Despite this, while overseas the Prime Minister has once more mused about yet another commitment in the Middle East.

Yesterday, Canada's newly appointed army commander, Lieutenant-General Hillier, urged the government to consider reducing the number of foreign missions.

Why does the Prime Minister not understand that our armed forces are already at the breaking point?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the importance of the Middle East situation and given Canada's long historical role in the Middle East going back to Lester Pearson, I think Canadians would be expecting that were an historic peace agreement to be arrived at Canada would be there, and that indeed is what the Prime Minister said.

At the same time, there are stresses and strains in the military. It is the job of the government, any government, to reconcile the aims of government with resource constraints, and that is what we shall do.

• (1455)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the armed forces, on the other hand, are expecting support from the government. Lieutenant-General Hillier also said:

Any commander who would stand up here and say we didn't need more soldiers should be tarred and feathered and rode out of town on a rail...

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the defence minister, happy trails. With ever increasing commitments by his government and the Prime Minister, why will the Minister of National Defence not recognize Canada's armed forces desperately need to be increased?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the recognition of the needs of the armed forces that caused the government in the last budget to increase the base budget by \$800 million per year, the largest increase since at least 10 years.

Moreover, due to a very successful recruitment campaign, in the latest year total numbers in the Canadian Forces have gone up 10,000. The budget has increased substantially. The numbers are increasing substantially. We are on that track.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC MAJOR JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. On May 28, a mere six days before the annual draft for the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, which will take place this week at Val-d'Or from June 4 to 7, Gilles Pelletier, the Director General of the Sponsorship Program, refused a contribution of \$15,000 for the event. It will involve organizations from Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and various American states, Maine in particular.

For this provincial, national and international event, will the minister review the decision of her officials, who waited until only six days were left to announce—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December the Minister of Public Works and Government Services announced a new sponsorship program for this year, which many of us have heard about, with tighter criteria, more accountability and transparency.

While assessing these applications under this new program, some difficult decisions have to be made. The decision not to fund this application was one such decision. However I would like to remind my colleague that the Government of Canada does sponsor major junior hockey across the country including Les Foreurs de Val-d'Or.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last week the first of many charter challenges was launched against the gun registry.

Courts will not begin to hear these challenges until the fall. However the government has imposed an arbitrary registration deadline of June 30. Courts may rule that the registry violates the charter.

Will the government extend the registration deadline until a court decision has been reached?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government on this side of the House has argued a number of times that we are trying to work with gun owners to have them understand that the intent of the system is not to penalize hunters and legitimate gun owners. The intent of the system is to make our streets safer.

Specifically in answer to the member's question, no, the deadline will not be extended.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the final deadline for registration is less than a month away. Almost 300,000 gun owners have not yet registered and over 300,000 gun owners have yet to re-register their handguns. The government has received letters of intent of registration from only a fraction of these.

What is the government planning to do with half a million gun owners who are non-compliant come July 1?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the intention of the government, myself as Solicitor General and the Canadian Firearms Centre is to not leave the impression that we will extend the deadline because we do not intend to do so.

Routine Proceedings

I would advise that the system is working much more efficiently than it was sometime ago. Internet registrations are working well. The 1-800 number is working well. I would encourage all gun owners to get on the system and get registered.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Liberal supporters of the member for LaSalle—Émard are doing everything they can on the issue of St. Lawrence pilots to curry favour with shipowners before the former Minister of Finance, himself a shipowner, comes to power.

Will the government promise that under no circumstances will it jeopardize safety and the environment on the St. Lawrence and that it will maintain marine pilotage for all St. Lawrence shipowners, without exception, whether the future Prime Minister likes it or not?

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite knows full well that this issue is under consideration, not only by the Standing Committee on Transport, of which he is a member, but also by the department. Right now we know that there would be no danger to the environment in the St. Lawrence.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Recently the Secretary of State visited Bulgaria and Turkey, accompanied by a large Canadian business delegation, to meet with government officials and support Canadian business in exploring and developing commercial opportunities.

Will the minister please share with the House his views of the outcome of the visit?

Hon. Gar Knutson (Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague for his question and for accompanying me to Bulgaria and Turkey. I led a Canadian business delegation of 19 companies, including General Motors, Electro-Motive, of London, Ontario.

Several important contracts between Turkish businesses and Canadian companies have made considerable progress, including sales of some 65 locomotives and several hydro turbines, creating many jobs in Canada.

I am confident that as a result of this successful mission many business deals will continue to be forged between Canada and these countries.

CSIS

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Canadians were already concerned about CSIS and civil liberties. Now they are concerned about cover-ups. It turns out that CSIS may have known in advance of the Air India tragedy and destroyed critical evidence.

What steps is the Solicitor General taking to ensure proper civilian oversight of Canada's secret police?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already responded to this question in the House a couple of times, but I would refer the hon. member to the 1991 SIRC report.

The Security Intelligence Review Committee did an exhaustive review of all the information prior to and following the 1985 Air India bombing. Its report is on the record; it is available to the hon. member. It completely found that there was no truth to the matters that the member is raising.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Mark Wartman, Minister of Highways and Transportation of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table, in both official languages, a number of order in council appointments made recently by the government.

* * *

● (1505)

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker I move that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans presented on Tuesday, May 27, 2003 be concurred in.

It is a pleasure to debate the report as tabled by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Routine Proceedings

During the last year and a half, members of the House, some more than others perhaps, have spent a lot of time learning about the fishing industry in this country, particularly the problems we were experiencing on the Atlantic coast.

Many members from all parties stood in the House to support the efforts of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and the people in Atlantic Canada, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador, to try to get some control over the area outside our 200 mile limit known as the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap, to protect our resource from the pillaging by foreign countries. Because of the emphasis that has been placed on that topic, because of the concern and the interest that has been created in the fishery, others across the country have realized that they also must get involved in protecting our resources.

A lot of people do not realize that right in the heart of our country, in Ontario, is one of the greatest fisheries anywhere. Thousands of people make their living in relation to the fishery in the Great Lakes and the economic benefits to the country are tremendous. However, as with the fishery on the east coast, and I would add as with the fishery on the west coast, we have seen complete and utter neglect by the present government in maintaining, protecting and enhancing that fishery.

The biggest problem in the Great Lakes and the seaway is what is referred to as an invasive species, or unwelcome visitors. In recent years we have seen develop, in the Great Lakes in particular, species which are foreign to our waters, species which are having a devastating effect on the resource in that area. I will mention a few of them and will talk about how this came about, where they came from, how they got there and more specifically, what we can do about the problem.

Over the last few months the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has had visits from several people who have a tremendous concern about what is happening in the Great Lakes. One of the individuals who visited our committee spoke not only with knowledge of the Great Lakes, not only with knowledge of invasive species, not only with knowledge of what is being done in the Great Lakes by invasive species, but also with tremendous knowledge of the parliamentary system, how it works, how it can work and more specifically, how it should work to prevent this major catastrophe which is happening right in the middle of Ontario. That individual is a gentleman by the name of Mr. Herb Gray. If there is anyone in the country who understands politics, it is Mr. Gray. If there is anyone who understands the government's ability to address this serious situation, it is Mr. Gray.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that to my left and to your right, in the government ranks, a number of members, some of whom are here presently, brought their concerns to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

The committee has worked exceptionally well. The committee has presented to the honourable House a number of reports. For all intents and purposes, I could say that all of them were unanimous, with the odd disagreement here and there on a couple of occasions.

● (1510)

Because of the interest that has been generated, or maybe regenerated, in the fishery, the members representing Ontario have raised the issue of invasive species. They have brought in the agencies in the area that are extremely concerned and that have been working so hard to make this an issue.

It does not matter how much talking we do behind the scenes. It does not matter how many town hall meetings we have. It does not matter how often we tell each other how important the problem is. If we do not address the problem openly, nothing will ever be done.

The members from Ontario stood in the House and supported us in Atlantic Canada when we raised our own problems. They supported us in relation to how we have to protect our resource. Therefore, they in turn deserve to be supported by us. It is with pleasure today that we stand to get this issue on the floor of the House of Commons.

The agencies that are directly involved in this issue have major concerns. I am sure when the members from Ontario speak to this issue they will get into they specifics. They will let us know who is really involved, what devastation has been caused in the area and what can be done about it.

In order to get the government and people in general interested in such a topic, the place to raise the issue, to discuss it, to debate it, and hopefully to make recommendations to address the problem is right here.

Our main aim today, besides introducing the topic, is to give those more directly involved—and I speak particularly of the Ontario members—a chance to get it on the public record, to bring to the public's attention and more fully to the government's attention this extremely serious problem.

I will address just two or three of the invasive species that are causing major problems in the lakes. One might ask what we can do. If we do not try to stop them before they spread too far, it will be extremely difficult to do anything.

One of the major concerns which the agencies and Mr. Gray have is that the funding to deal with these invasive species is being threatened by government. The budget of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans over the last few years has been cut year after year after year. This means it has fewer dollars to handle growing problems and challenges in the country.

The Coast Guard is falling apart. The whole fleet and the infrastructure have to be strengthened tremendously. We were told by people within the small crafts and harbours division that 21% of their facilities are unsafe to use and that it would take \$400 million to bring their facilities even up to par.

Fisheries scientists and scientists generally from one end of the country to the other will tell us that the scientific branch has been cut so much that we no longer have the ability to understand what is happening in our oceans or to come up with suggestions to deal with the challenges, or to determine what the quotas are in the oceans.

Routine Proceedings

A while ago the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced his quotas for this year in relation to several stocks. Many people, particularly in Atlantic Canada, were extremely concerned. They said that the minister was basing his decision not on scientific facts, because he did not have them, nor on the advice from the FRCC, an independent council set up by the minister to advise him. He did not listen to the advice that came from that council nor certainly from those involved in the fishery directly.

● (1515)

That puts into perspective the situation in which the department finds itself. To correct all of these major concerns, the answer is an influx of funding to restore the money that has been whittled away from that major department over the years.

There is such a crying need for funding and so many hands are being held out for it. The people specifically in the area of the Great Lakes in Ontario are extremely concerned. If the budget to address the invasive species is not increased and more specifically if it is decreased, they will not be able to contain the species that are playing havoc with the localized stocks in those areas.

One of the three most invasive species which causes more damage than the others is the Asian carp. These fish perhaps were introduced by someone bringing them into the country and letting them go into the Great Lakes. They have rapidly multiplied and are destroying many of our local stocks.

Zebra mussels are very small, minuscule, the size of one's fingernail and multiply tremendously. They congregate around practically anything, especially water pipes, whether they are intakes or outlets, in the Great Lakes. They clog the pipes and cause all kinds of trouble. As well, when mixed with other invasive species, they produce toxins that have a detrimental effect on the local habitat.

Another major concern in relation to invasive species is the sea lamprey. It is an eel-like fish and has a suction mouth which sucks the life out of other fish. Fishermen in the Great Lakes are finding sea lamprey stuck to the fish in their catch these days. The sea lamprey suck the life out of the fish. They are multiplying tremendously. The ability to address that problem is being hamstrung by the government's not providing the necessary funding.

These are extremely serious problems. Unless the government decides that it is going to look at a major renewable resource, then we are in trouble.

On the weekend our party had a tremendous convention, as the House knows. There were more people involved and more excitement than we have ever seen in the country in relation to electing a new leader. I do not think anyone doubts the fact that we made a great choice.

During the last 24 hours or so we have been hearing about deals that were done. We understand that one of the candidates who joined said that he wanted certain concerns addressed. Everyone thinks we sold the shop to get a deal.

There was one concern the hon. gentleman talked about, and there was an example today when we talked about the softwood lumber agreement. He said that within the free trade agreement there are certain provisions that are not the best that could be achieved for

Canada and that we should make sure that we get only what is best for this nation. Who could argue with that? He also said that we should be paying more attention to the environment. I am talking about invasive species and what is going on in the Great Lakes, what is going on in the Fraser River, and what is going on in Atlantic Canada. These are environmental concerns.

He also wanted more emphasis placed on agriculture. Why? Because he is from the west. He is a farmer and that is what he should look for. If I had been the person making the deal, I would have asked that more attention be paid to the fisheries.

● (1520)

I do not have to ask it, because I think if we check *Hansard* over the past year or year and a half in the House since our Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans really went to work on national issues, we will find that the fishery and fishing issues have been discussed more than they ever have been in the history of this great House of Commons.

Not only have they been discussed, people have become educated as to what is happening to this great renewable resource. They understand the effect this is having on the people in Canada who work in the fishing industry directly and, might I say, indirectly. We think about the harvesters who catch the fish and we think about the processors who process the product, but what about all the truckers, the storekeepers, the packaging companies and the companies that make ice? I can go on and on. The fishing industry creates so much employment in this country from coast to coast, but people forget that it is only fish. Fish was always at the lowest end of our totem pole, but it is no longer there and anyone who thinks it is should go to the supermarket and try to buy some. We realize that it has become a very valuable product.

However, it is a resource that has created tremendous employment in the past, is creating good employment, although less than previously, and has the ability to create even more, because if we protect what we have and if we enhance it, there are several species that multiply tremendously. But we must protect our resource.

On the east coast we must protect our resource from predators. We must protect our resource from those who want to abuse their rights to catch it. We must protect our resource from foreign countries that go above and beyond quotas that have been set for them.

On the Fraser River and elsewhere in British Columbia, off the British Columbia coast and in the north, we must make sure that rules and regulations are enforced so that proper harvesting and processing methods are put in place to make sure we get the proper value for every dollar.

My good friend and supporter from Quebec, the member of our Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, is here. People in Quebec fully appreciate the value of the fishing industry, but it is no good if government does not impose proper rules and regulations and give resources to the people who work for them. Let me pay tribute to the many solid, hard-working civil servants who work for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. With meagre resources, they try to do their jobs. If they had the proper resources, we could make sure the resource is protected and enhanced and not only maintain the status quo or watch a resource be whittled away.

Routine Proceedings

This is exactly what is needed in relation to the Great Lakes. People might ask why someone from Atlantic Canada is talking about the Great Lakes fishery and the need to protect the resource. The fishery in this country is a common resource for all Canadians. It affects all of us. We have to stand by each other. It is no good if a Newfoundlander is standing up and complaining about the resource and what is happening if people from the other parts of the country, from British Columbia, Alberta, through the Prairies, central Canada and our colleagues on the east coast, do not understand and support what we are talking about. And they have done it.

We have had three special debates, I believe, on the east coast fishery in which members from every party, regardless of political stripe, from every part of the country regardless of geography or whether they live by the water or do not, were people who understand what is happening to our resource and stood to support us in what we did. Today it is our turn to support a crying need to address invasive species in the Great Lakes.

We have to make sure the boats that dump the bilge water and have introduced through that bilge water the invasive species into the Great Lakes are properly controlled and monitored so that it does not happen anymore. We can address, I think quite adequately, the prevention aspect of seeing any waters being dumped further. The problem is that we already have these species. What do we do about it?

• (1525)

One of the things we can do get the people from Ontario to do what we have done: create the awareness so that they have the support of us here in the House and so the government supports them. I look forward to my colleagues, those from Ontario in particular, bringing their issue here to the floor so we can continue to address this major issue. If we can correct it and get government involved, we can solve the problem of the invasive species in the Great Lakes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague on the motion he has brought to our attention this afternoon.

Contrary to what is generally believed and to what the public knows, the invasive species are a real disaster. My colleague spoke essentially about the Great Lakes, but the problem is also present in the St. Lawrence seaway and in the freshwater portion of the St. Lawrence River. Except in the salt water portion of the river, the problem is exactly the same as in the Great Lakes.

Also, contrary to what people believe on the Atlantic or Pacific coasts, we also have invasive species on our coasts that are destroying our resources, particularly oysters, mussels and other species. My colleague did not talk much about it, but we also have the green crab.

The report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans on invasive species is a unanimous report. In my opinion, the contents of this report should be completely implemented. It deals once again with the mismanagement of the fisheries over the years.

I would like my colleague to comment on the recommendations in this report. I would like him to give a general overview, so that

people can understand the work the committee has done and the policy it would like the government to implement.

[*English*]

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, let me thank my hon. friend, and as I mentioned earlier, I would be remiss if I did not say that on our committee we have a very cohesive group of individuals who fully understand each other and have supported each other tremendously in their concerns.

We have had people from Ontario come before us, people particularly concerned with wildlife in the area. We heard several groups. We heard from environmentalists, sports fraternities, people like Mr. Gray, as I mentioned, people who have been through the mill and who see a disaster in the offing if this concern is not addressed.

What they are basically telling the government is, first, fund the agencies that are creating this awareness and developing mechanisms to address dealing with these invasive species. They are saying, "Let us perhaps implement some of the ideas we have come up with". The Canadian government has worked on rules and regulations to deal with dumping of bilge water in the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes. However, to date there are no teeth. The United States took the very same ideas raised by our government and implemented them. So the United States has stringent regulations about dumping, but yet our own government is very hesitant.

The major concern is the ability to be able to address these species. It can only be done by a concerted effort. That means organization and funding for the agencies to go after some of these species. If these species were worth anything, we could institute an open fishery and we would have no problem. Somebody said the best way for government to destroy a resource is to set a quota, because we know what happens then. However, for a lot of these species it does not pay for the fishermen to go out and fish, so it has to be controlled with government help and government action.

The government knows what to do because it has been told what to do. The problem we are having is its own members. I hope some of them will get up and basically lay it on the line in regard to what their constituents are really asking for. Then we can get the government to respond to their concerns and to ours and address this serious problem.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow my colleague from St. John's West, who, if memory serves me well, sits with me on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

In the last few months, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans produced a unanimous report on invasive species. For the benefit of those who are listening, I will explain what an invasive species is. It is a species that is foreign to our waters, that is imported into our waters and, over the years, takes the place of our indigenous species.

Routine Proceedings

Why does that happen? How is it that our waters have, over the years, become invaded by such species, to the point where the fisheries in the Great Lakes, among other places, are threatened, and where it is costing the industry billions of dollars? And the problem is not restricted to the Great Lakes because, as I explained earlier, the invasive species in question start appearing at the point where salt water becomes fresh water, since they cannot survive in salt water, which does not mean that there are no invasive species in salt water.

Where do these species come from? The evidence that we have heard indicates that the main problem comes from ballast water from ships that come into our waters and go up the St. Lawrence River and the St. Lawrence Seaway to reach the Great Lakes. That is the main reason for the presence of these so-called invasive species in our waters.

My hon. colleague was talking about species that people may know a little less well, but let us just talk about the zebra mussel. It is very well known in our waters, even here in Quebec. It is gradually invading all our territory and all our waters, and can go anywhere there is fresh water, even right up to Lake Champlain and in all our waterways. This mussel attacks our indigenous species. For example, it can invade an entire area because it is not a large mussel. It can attach itself to other kinds of mussels—the native ones which are much larger—or to other kinds of molluscs, and gradually suffocate them. The other aspect is that zebra mussels are highly toxic. When birds eat this kind of mussel, they take in a lot of very toxic elements; all the toxic elements that the mussels have filtered out of the water are released back into the environment. So, it is perhaps the most well-known invasive species.

There is another harmful factor associated with zebra mussels, and that is their invasion of municipal drinking-water conduits. They invade the cooling conduits of factories, and it costs billions of dollars to clean the conduits out and restore them to normal use. When the systems for cooling the motors of boats and large ships are involved, it can be a very serious problem. The mussels invade the conduits, attach themselves to the walls and may cause serious problems. They are perhaps the most well-known invasive species in Quebec.

We could also talk about lampreys. The lamprey is a very special kind of fish that attaches itself to other fish and sucks out all their blood. The lamprey has almost destroyed fishing in the Great Lakes. The fight against it has cost billions of dollars and is not over. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada's investment, through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans over the years, has not been enough.

Thus, we do not have the tools to effectively control these invasive species, except perhaps for the lamprey, where we had a program that worked well, thanks to the commitment of volunteers and various organizations. But right now we do not have sufficient resources and scientific knowledge to control invasive species. First, as the committee recommended, the regulations for the various provinces involved and for Quebec should be consolidated. A common goal is needed if we are to control these species.

• (1535)

I remind the House that responsibility for the protection of the resource falls squarely under the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans. When we do not control invasive species, we do not protect our native resource, which is very important for the industry.

Thus, consolidated regulations would be necessary. Before I go further, perhaps I should specify that we are currently using the American regulations on invasive species. Ships must report to Saint-Lambert, in Quebec. The American regulations apply.

Canada was supposed to pass regulations within 10 years and this has not been done yet. Of course, we are asking the government to speed up the process, to come to an agreement with the provinces, with Quebec and with the Americans, to have the same regulations is so far as possible.

Another invasive species mentioned by my hon. colleague is the green crab. People may not know the green crab, but it is currently destroying all mussels and shellfish on the Atlantic coast and it has also invaded the Pacific coast. If I am not mistaken, this species originated from the Barents Sea. Over time, it has invaded our territory and it will destroy our resource, unless we find a way to fight it successfully and, as my hon. colleague said, refuse to grant quotas. From the moment the government grants quotas, we can see that after a while, we start destroying the resource ourselves.

I think that the way fisheries have been managed here in Canada for the past 50 years, it is easy to see that by granting quotas, by managing as we have, we are destroying the resource. This is a resource that could be used even though it has less value.

It seems very important to me that we raise public awareness of invasive species. People should read the report tabled last week by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. This report sets out the directions to combat invasive species.

One very important point raised in the recommendations contained in the committee's report on aquatic invasive species is that the government should not try to tackle this problem on its own. I think that public awareness is very important.

I mentioned aquatic species but I could also talk about terrestrial species. I could talk, for instance, about the algae that have invaded our waterways—all the way from the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain for example—depriving our waters of oxygen and making them less and less hospitable to the native species normally found in these waters. I could talk about the pollution affecting these waterways, which makes certain species proliferate where they did not use to.

In a nutshell, there is a serious problem and the government must not try to solve it on its own. It is absolutely necessary that volunteer groups and community groups be involved in the process with the federal, provincial or Quebec government, as the case may be, as required or appropriate.

Routine Proceedings

Another committee recommendation stresses the importance of educating the public about invasive species. Earlier I spoke about how invasive species enter our waterways. I spoke about ballast water. I reminded the House that we do not even have our own regulations, that we apply American regulations. It is the U.S. that applies the regulations in question in Saint-Lambert, Quebec. They are the ones who carry out the inspections and so on because they are really quite affected by this. Ships travelling up the St. Lawrence along the U.S. border also affect the American fishery.

I would like to come back to what I was saying earlier. It is very important for community groups to be involved and to obtain the funds required for public awareness campaigns.

As I mentioned, we feel that ballast water is the main cause of the problem, but fishers and hunters also contribute to it. Fishers can transplant so-called invasive species in our waters, by using them as bait.

• (1540)

Once these species have become established, they adapt more and more and end up choking out our own native resources.

My colleague also spoke about another invasive species that almost destroyed the entire Great Lakes fishery. It is the infamous Asian carp. People do not seem to know about the Asian carp. It is a huge fish that eats just about everything in its way on the bottom and destroys all of the habitat where native fish spawn and reproduce. In Ontario, it has been a veritable catastrophe.

Contrary to what people believe, there are no prohibitions right now on importing this type of fish that can invade our waters and completely destroy our native resource into Canada. What the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is asking for is that these fish not be imported live into Canada in order to prevent our waters from being polluted by these species.

We also have another problem at this time. Some species are gradually working their way towards our waters from the United States. There are measures we can take, there are methods to prevent these invasive species from one day reaching the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence all the way down to Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, where the salt water and fresh water meet.

Furthermore, it is known that, given the current low water levels in the Great Lakes, sea water is flowing upriver toward Quebec, which will cause a very significant change in the ecology of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, thereby causing major changes to the resource. So, governments must recognize this situation and protect our fish.

The other point I want to stress is our significant ignorance about aquatic ecosystems, because we have not invested sufficiently in knowledge and fundamental research with respect to our ecosystems. It is absurd that, in 2003, we have allowed our waters to be invaded by species such as the Asian carp, the lamprey, the zebra mussel and the European green crab, without taking any measures.

Although we knew that these species were invading our territory, we did not take the time nor invest the money needed to try to understand, adapt and ensure that we could effectively fight the arrival of these species. Perhaps it is not obvious, but currently, billions of dollars are lost each year in terms of the resource and the

fishery, because these species have been allowed to invade our waters.

This is comparable to the forestry with the eastern spruce budworm epidemic, among other things, because it was very visible. Given that it was very visible, a great deal of money was invested to control this insect that was destroying our forests. I could give some examples, such as the British Columbia pine that experienced a similar problem or the problem in New Brunswick last year. Since it was very visible and the forestry is very profitable, the governments decided to invest a great deal to control the eastern spruce budworm.

If we compare forestry to fisheries, I think that more money was lost by allowing invasive species to enter our waters than was lost with the eastern spruce budworm and other insects that attacked our forests. There is a sort of unawareness in the federal government when it comes to fish and fishing.

This has been going on for 50 years now. It is not only the current government, it has been every federal government that has not invested enough in the fishery. Not enough has been invested in terms of knowledge and research. For ten years now there have been serious cuts in research budgets. Funding has only started to increase again in the last year or so.

• (1545)

The absolute minimum is to have the necessary knowledge to control invasive species and better manage our ecosystems and our planet.

When we talk about the Kyoto protocol, we could talk about ecosystems. And as for invasive species, we could talk about their role in changing our ecosystems and the danger they represent. They are a danger not only to fish, as I mentioned earlier.

When we talk about the zebra mussel, we know it is a filter and it is very toxic. When found in huge quantities in our waters and eaten by animals, it becomes part of our ecosystems. In the end, we humans will suffer the consequences, because toxins gradually move up the food chain so that one day they will reach us and we will have to pay the price of not investing enough in research and knowledge.

Routine Proceedings

In conclusion, my colleague for St. John's West made a request earlier regarding the report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I will remind the House that the report is unanimous. It is not the first unanimous report by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I find this one very important. Like my colleague, I would like the House to adopt this report and see that it is implemented in full.

Moreover, I would like us to go even further than the report. We heard a lot of witnesses in committee. We heard from people from all over the place: the Great Lakes, Quebec, the east coast, the west coast, and so on. They all said the same thing, namely that we are not investing enough and that we are constantly threatened by invasive species because right now we do not have the means to control them effectively or to effectively prevent them from entering our waters.

As my colleague mentioned earlier, steps must be taken and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is recommending measures. I would like the House of Commons as a whole to endorse them to make them more effective. We might want to add a few more measures and, eventually, develop the necessary tools to deal with this kind of problem.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Matapédia—Matane for his speech and for having raised an issue about which I probably should have known. I do some boating and I have always wondered why we bother putting anodes on our boats and why we always end up with some of these small shellfish we do not know much about. I am sure it has something to do with these invasive species.

I would like the hon. member to tell us why we end up with invasive species like these when we boat on private lakes. How do they make their way into a lake that cannot be accessed by the river or some other way? I believe such species can be found in several lakes in Quebec. In my case, every time we use our boats, we find small shellfish stuck on the anodes. I always wonder how they managed to find their way into our lakes.

I would also like the hon. member to tell us if there is a solution to this problem in the Richelieu River and the Great Lakes. I happen to know several people who boat over there and I realize that the problem they are facing is much more serious than the one we have on private lakes? Are there solutions to this problem? How do we get rid of these small shellfish and what do we call them? Can anything be done to solve the problem?

•(1550)

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Mr. Speaker, my colleague just referred to something very important. As far as public awareness is concerned, he just addressed one of the elements that we would like to see put into practice. He was asking me how I could have that problem while on the lake in my canoe or in my boat. Let us say that it is a bigger boat. I do not know much about boats, but let us say that I am not rowing, at least.

It is very simple. People go from one lake to another. What they do not know is that once they have been on a contaminated lake with their boat, eggs are stuck underneath the boat. The boat should be completely cleaned and washed before being put into a new body of water, to eliminate potential contamination.

This is a very important element in terms of prevention. Can people imagine what that means when they take their boat out of the water? In terms of prevention, it is really important. If they take your boat out of the water to bring it to another body of water, it absolutely has to be cleaned. But did somebody ever tell them that they had to do it? Probably not.

This is where the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans blames the current government. The government is responsible for protecting the resource. Thus, it has the responsibility of informing citizens on the measures that must be taken to avoid spreading the contamination from one body of water to another. This is not being done at this time. The committee has asked for this. Voluntary community organizations have also asked that the government supports them in their public awareness and information campaigns. This is very important.

Of course, when one does not know about this issue, one cannot think that this can have such a major impact on bodies of water in Quebec and across the country. One cannot imagine that we are unconsciously destroying our resources.

We can talk about the zebra mussel. I talked about this earlier. This is the main species that invades our waters. It is virtually indestructible, because it reproduces extremely fast. I could show you a picture of a shopping cart that was put in the Great Lakes for a few months. When it was taken out, zebra mussels had covered the whole cart. It had become almost invisible; it was almost a sculpture. This gives an idea of the ability of this creature to invade our waters.

This is currently happening in the St. Lawrence River, at Montreal, and in the bodies of water wherever there is a connection with the St. Lawrence and the drainage basins.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the following question. Does he think that the federal government is doing a good job of protecting our resources, our fish resources in particular?

•(1555)

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Mr. Speaker, that is a loaded question, I believe. You will understand that I have no intention of saying that the government is protecting our resource well, when I have been saying the opposite for the past 20 minutes, and am firmly convinced of it.

We need only look at what went on this spring with the fisheries, with the cod fisheries. Let us look at what is happening elsewhere in the world, in order to see how our successive governments, and the federal government, which, I would remind hon. members, has complete and total responsibility for managing the resource, has in fact managed it.

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The resource has been managed in such a way that nowadays we cannot even fish for cod in the Atlantic, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off Newfoundland. Let us see what is happening elsewhere in the world. Let us take Iceland as an example. In Iceland, since the late 1970s, they have managed the resource in such a way that now, in the waters of Iceland—a tiny country—they can catch from 212,000 to 250,000 tonnes of cod per year.

Last year, we caught only 6,000 tonnes. Now we are no longer fishing, because there is a moratorium on cod. The resource has been badly managed. Foreign vessels were allowed to pillage the waters off Newfoundland, the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, and over the years in the Gulf of St. Lawrence as well. For solely political gain, huge foreign vessels have been allowed to drag the sea floor and totally destroy the resource.

The current government is not the only one responsible. This has been going on for 50 years. Quebec has been demanding to manage the resource ever since 1994. Newfoundland is now calling for co-management, and rightly so. If we allow the present government to continue to manage the resource, whether shrimp, crab or other resources, there will be no fishery left within 10 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped to be speaking on Bill C-25, but as one of the members has raised a motion to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to do with aquatic invasive species, uninvited guests, I took a copy of the report and had an opportunity to read a few of the areas.

The work the members have done on this report is excellent. In fact in one particular area, and that is with regard to zebra mussel control, it is a matter which I know quite a bit about because my daughter is in a masters program right now and is doing her thesis on zebra mussels in Lake Erie. She has done a lot of diving and is now analyzing her samples in the lab trying to look for some of the solutions.

If we were to take a copy of the current *Maclean's* magazine, we would see one of the beaches on Lake Erie that is totally covered with zebra mussels. It really dramatizes the significant problem that we have with unwanted species, or what the report calls, uninvited guests, what it means to other aquatic life and what it means to the peaceful and enjoyable use of our resources. Of course these so-called uninvited guests do in fact migrate by a number of means. It is a very serious problem.

I know the fisheries committee must have had a very important set of reviews and hearings on issues such as zebra mussels, sea lampreys and other aquatic species that are invasive species in our waterways.

I want to go back to the zebra mussels simply because I think it is probably worth giving a few more details. I note in the report that the zebra mussels are described as small molluscs about the size of a fingernail, and originally from the Black and Caspian Seas area. They spread through eastern Europe in the 18th century and in the mid-1980s in Lake St. Clair. They are believed to have been introduced by ballast water discharged from an ocean going vessel. That is important to understand. Obviously we need to have the kinds of rules and safeguards to ensure that we protect ourselves

from the migration, naturally or by other means, of some of these invasive species into our systems because of the disruptive effect it has on the balance of the environment and the aquatic environment in Canada.

As well, these species, like the zebra mussel, are carried by boat traffic and normal flows of water, and the mussel has spread rapidly through the Great Lakes and beyond. This is one of the reasons why my daughter is undertaking this research on zebra mussels. It is very important that we find out, not only the damaging effect they have but what effect they have had on other species within not only the aquatic life but also the plant life as well. These are very critical issues.

The committee dealt with a number of issues. I note that it went right back to reports from the 1995 on the biodiversity convention, such as the Canadian biodiversity strategy released by Environment Canada. There were a number of government commitments in there and I thought it would be useful to advise members of the House of them if they have not had an opportunity to look at this. I know the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is on the committee and probably will want to speak as well.

However issues such as developing and implementing effective means to identifying and monitoring alien organisms obviously makes some sense. Determining priorities for allocating resources for the control of harmful alien organisms based on their impact on native biodiversity and economic resources and implementing effective control, or where possible, eradication measures, obviously is a very important aspect where there are negative impacts identified. Also important is identifying and eliminating common sources of unintentional introductions.

● (1600)

When we consider the number of ships that we have in the Great Lakes or the St. Lawrence from all around the world, ballast water can in fact contain alien species. Canadians would like to know what efforts we are taking to ensure that we are protecting our natural resources, the Great Lakes and other waterways.

A further recommendation in that biodiversity strategy was the development of national and international databases that would support the identification in anticipation of the introduction of potentially harmful alien organisms in order to develop and control prevention measures. That is an important aspect. That work has to be done because these things not only can happen, they have happened.

That is why we asked for our best and brightest to work on the science to find out how we can prevent or at least mitigate substantial damage.

Another recommendation was that we should ensure that there is adequate legislation and enforcement to control introductions or escapes of harmful alien organisms, and to improve preventive mechanisms such as screening standards and risk assessment procedures. This follows the other recommendations.

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One of the other important areas was the recommendation to enhance public education and awareness of impacts of harmful alien organisms, and the steps that can be taken to prevent their introduction. It is like a lot of things in this world. Public education is probably the common element in the resolution of most problems, whether we are talking about child poverty, domestic violence or family breakdown. If we have a problem to deal with, public education is a very important aspect of it because we all have a role to play. There is the Kyoto commitment.

How do Canadians participate, for instance, in ensuring that we meet our targets in terms of greenhouse emission reductions? The House will know that business and industry had a tremendous amount to say about Kyoto and its impact on their businesses. This morning I had a visit from the cement industry who wanted to talk about how we could still pursue our Kyoto objectives but not in a way which would create substantial impacts on business and industry. The aspect of public education and awareness not only on the impacts but on what we can do to have an impact is extremely important.

The committee had a large number of recommendations and I do not intend to go through them. The committee concluded that, while very well intentioned, the federal initiative presented at the hearings came too late. That is unfortunate. It also felt that it was focused on processes and purposes rather than on immediate actions.

It is important to raise with the House the work that committees do along with the aspect that we have not brought forward an action plan. We may agree with principles and concepts. The fisheries committee has done a service to Parliament by raising the concern that we have not pushed forward with action plans on this urgent matter.

The committee favours an approach in which immediate actions will be taken in four specific areas. First, is the adoption of balanced water management regulation and development of treatment standards. Second, is the inclusion of species of Asian carp in schedule II of the regulations. This is another aspect, other than the zebra mussels, which they call an uninvited guest or invasive species. Third, is the prohibition of the sale and trade of Asian carp under section 43 of the Fisheries Act. Fourth, is the contribution to the full extent of our commitment to the budget of the sea lamprey control program.

I know that this is good news to the member for Huron—Bruce who has been a champion in this place for a number of years with regard to the sea lamprey problem. I recall when he actually brought to Parliament a large tank with sea lamprey so that members could see what they looked like. They are a very unusual species.

• (1605)

The fisheries committee has brought all of these issues to the attention of the House. With regard to the impact, the House will find that the issues that the committee has raised are the kinds of issues that we would fully expect from a committee. I am not sure whether it is just a matter of getting concurrence in a report, or whether we should also take note that committee reports should never just sit there without a prompt response from ministers and ministries, and other parties in the government.

This is an important process we have gone through. I thank the member for raising the concurrence motion for the House to consider. I move:

That the House proceed to orders of the day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

Before the taking of the vote:

• (1640)

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have observed that though the whips have taken their seats there have been a number of members who have come in. Is that rule of the House now being suspended?

• (1650)

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

(Division No. 174)

YEAS

Members

Alcock	Allard
Assad	Augustine
Barnes (London West)	Bélanger
Bennett	Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bradshaw	Bryden
Caccia	Caplan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cuzner
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dromisky
Drouin	Easter
Eggleton	Finlay
Fry	Godfrey
Goodale	Harb
Harvey	Jennings
Jordan	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	LeBlanc
Longfield	Macklin
Mahoney	Maloney
Marcel	Marleau
McCallum	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan
Mitchell	Murphy
Nault	Neville
O'Reilly	Owen
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Patry	Pettigrew

Pillitteri
Price
Regan
Saada
Scott
Simard
St. Denis
Szabo
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Vanclief
Wood— 83

Pratt
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Savoy
Sgro
St-Julien
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Ur
Wilfert

NAYS

Members

Abлонczy
Bailey
Benoit
Bourgeois
Brisson
Cardin
Chatters
Comartin
Epp
Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Grewal
Guimond
Hearn
Hilstrom
Johnston
Lalonde
Loubier
Marceau
McDonough
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Picard (Drummond)
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Schmidt
Solberg
Strahl
Williams— 59

Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Borotsik
Breitkreuz
Burton
Casson
Clark
Davies
Forseth
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grey
Hanger
Hill (MacLeod)
Hinton
Keddy (South Shore)
Lanctôt
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Roy
Schellenberger
Skelton
Sorenson
Toews

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
[*Translation*]

Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised at tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Windsor West, Border Security; the hon. member for South Shore, Taxation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to debate Bill C-25, a bill to modernize the employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial

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Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, we had an opportunity to review the bill which was forwarded to us by the House. It has been 40 years since these acts have been looked at and amended. I think a good question for members to pose would be why it has taken so long, particularly since there are so many substantive amendments that are considered in the bill.

In addition, a special task force was formed to research and make recommendations with regard to the changes in the bill, and to make other proposals which would deal with the structure of the bill.

I want to talk briefly about the structure and the way in which Bill C-25 was put together because it caused substantial concern at committee stage.

Clause 2 of the bill states “ The Public Service Labour Relations Act is enacted as follows”. Bill C-25 is a bill that has within it two other bills which currently exist. Part 1 attempts to enact the Public Service Labour Relations Act, which already exists. We also find amendments at the end of the bill which in fact would repeal the existing act. We will find similarly in another clause a rewrite of the Public Service Employment Act. Again the existing Public Service Employment Act is repealed.

We also have consequential amendments to other acts, the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act. This is the first time I have come across a bill that is structured in this fashion. If we look for instance at clause 2, clause 2 in itself is actually an entire bill. It is an entire bill with each of the clauses that we would find in a bill on a stand-alone basis, and similarly for clause 11 in the bill on the rewrite of the Public Service Employment Act.

When the committee did its work we considered about 120 amendments put forward by the opposition. We worked through a number of other amendments from the government one at a time. It took a great deal of time.

Since the task force had been formulated and it was making recommendations to the Privy Council Office with regard to how we were going to proceed on this, a number of questions were raised for outside experts to comment on. One of the questions had to do with the hierarchy that was contemplated for the public service.

There are three elements within this whole regime of the public service: the Treasury Board, the Public Service Commission and the public service itself. One of the areas we discussed had to do with why they decided to have a hybrid responsibility for the Public Service Commission, where it had auditing responsibilities, i.e. management responsibilities, in addition to having those representing the employees and, as with the other unions, representing the best interests of employees and protecting their interests vis-à-vis the laws of the land.

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● (1655)

Questions were asked. I do not want to get into the details but there was a point at which information and copies of letters for which we had asked in order to better understand why certain decisions were taken to structure the bill, Bill C-25, in a fashion that put two other bills entirely within Bill C-25, were denied to the committee.

The response we received was that they were privileged documents that the committee could not see. I think this was one of the first opportunities that a committee had basically challenged the privacy, the confidentiality or the protection of documents. As a result, I put forward the motion in committee to suspend our clause by clause proceedings so we could pursue the acquisition of documents that we thought were relevant to our consideration of Bill C-25.

I am pleased to say that it did not take very long for the Privy Council Office to provide us with a complete binder of documents. I read all the documents that were received. Unless one is a management consultant, a labour relations consultant, an employee consultant and every other kind of expert we can imagine in terms of expertise related to the public service, it is a very difficult to appreciate the insights that these people were giving to the government with regard to how to structure the bill.

However I am glad we were able to get those documents because it helped me to understand that the experts had some concern about having a hybrid role for the Public Service Commission. They felt that since the legislation related to the public service, which had not been dealt with for some 40 years, that the culture had been so deeply rooted, so deeply embedded in the system that it would be extremely difficult for us to get exactly to where we wanted to be over the long term in the best interest of the structure for the benefit of the public service.

Ultimately, the recommendations and some of the documents that I read were basically saying that this was as far as we could push it. I think this was the first time that I realized there was some concern about how the public service would receive the changes to the legislation.

The issues were: could the public servants take it? Would they take the change? Would they accept it? Would they embrace it? Would it be able to cause a paradigm shift or a cultural shift? Would it be able to break the very deep roots of the way the system had been operating?

We know there were situations within the hiring practices of the public service that it was easier to hire people on a part time or on a contract basis than it was on a full time basis. It was shorter. It could in fact get people quicker.

I guess the bottom line was that we needed a human body to be in that role, to do that job and to make sure all the responsibilities were discharged very quickly. This was endemic of the kind of problems that it had incurred over the period within the public service, this culture of how it operated, and I think the word "cynicism" was used, and there were questions.

I asked questions about whether the public service would accept the kinds of changes that were being asked, changes to concepts such as merit and whistleblowers, political involvement. Everyone knows that public service involvement in the political process at various levels is an issue that has been dealt with in the bill and it has been controversial over the years. I think there are now guidelines which people will understand.

As a consequence I am very comfortable with the steps that have been taken. I concluded and I think the committee members concluded that carrying the public service modernization process at least to this extent, this step forward, was all that we should do at this time and that every intent is that we will continue to look for ways to improve the administration of the public service and the relationship between the employer and the employees, and to further clarify the role of the Public Service Commission.

● (1700)

I should say as well that the committee was very interested in working with members of the Public Service Commission, who were very active and well represented at the hearings. They provided input to the committee and they addressed a number of concerns they had. It was very clear that the issues being raised were tremendously complex and broad because we were dealing not only with the modernization of certain aspects, but with the modernization of two existing acts and consequential amendments to others.

The bill is not an easy bill to deal with. Therefore part of my intervention today is to suggest to the House and to the leaderships of the parties that bills in this form do not do Parliament a good service. They are too complex and too detailed to ask parliamentarians to get into. It is like an omnibus bill. It deals with far too many things: labour relations, the Employment Act, amendments to the Financial Administration Act and to a number of other acts.

When we get into that level of detail and go through the various processes that we go through, with the limitations that parliamentarians have to study this information, it becomes very problematic for members of Parliament to discharge their responsibilities as committee members simply because there is not enough time allotted to the process and questioning of witnesses to examine all the areas relevant to the bill. It is clear to me that this, if I did not know better, was an attempt to make absolutely sure that we could not get into it in the detail that we should have.

The bill should have been at least two, if not three, separate bills. However I do understand that there is a sense of urgency, that we want a bill to go forward very quickly because it has been a long time. However if it has taken 40 years to get around to modernizing the public service legislation and two years for a task force, that clearly reflects how long it takes to do the job properly.

I am concerned about the process, the form of the bill and the fact that two bills are buried in it. Members should grab the bill and look through it. If they are told to look at clause 19, they should be very careful because clause 19 appears three times.

*Government Orders***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have consulted with all House leaders and I think there would be unanimous consent for the following, which is a request that was made of me by some opposition House leaders, one of them directly and another in an indirect way, supported by the two others.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, no report stage amendment to Bill C-7, of which notice is given on June 2, 2003, shall be ruled out of order on account of insufficient notice.

In other words, it would permit report stage amendments to Bill C-7 to be tabled today and to be in order providing, of course, that they are in order. Otherwise, it is the decision of the Speaker.

• (1705)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed; and of the motion that the question we now put.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, let me conclude on this point. The difficulty is that if we incorporate a rewrite of an existing bill or existing act of Parliament, an existing law of the country, into a proposed bill, changes are being made from the existing legislation to what is in Bill C-25 which are not evident on their face unless we get supplementary binders.

I would like to quote from one of these binders, which shows the proposed text with regard to the oath or affirmation of office. It gives the proposed text, the current wording, and the explanation. This particular change would eliminate “so help me God” from the oath of office for public servants. I wanted to change that and in fact at committee stage I got it changed to get it back in. The explanation states that it had been removed to reflect the diversity of the Canadian public and respect for different religious beliefs.

We can imagine what it is like when we have to go through three binders of this. With all the work we have to do, it becomes very problematic. This is not a good model to follow in terms of legislation. I would ask Parliament and I would ask the House leaders and the government House leader to ensure that when bills come to this place we are not faced with a situation where parliamentarians cannot do an adequate job on the legislation. We cannot do our job when we are faced with pressure to get bills through but not given the time.

I have mentioned the oath. Let me say that not only was I disturbed that the oath eliminated reference to “so help me God”, but also disturbed that it eliminated reference to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

People have different views on the monarchy, but today is the 50th anniversary of the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, today we have a new coin coming out with the new image of the Queen on it, and today we are debating a bill that eliminates reference to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The last time I looked, Mr. Speaker, this was the Parliament of Canada, based on the parliamentary model of Britain, Parliament being the Queen through her representative the Governor General, together with the Senate, and together with the House of Commons. That is Parliament. How is it that a bill could eliminate reference to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II without our having a debate in this place? We wanted to have a debate here. The Queen has been to Canada 22 times since she became Queen. That alone tells me that Queen Elizabeth II loves Canada, and from the reaction of Canadians when she comes here, it is clear that Canadians love Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

If we are going to change oaths, we have to change them in a transparent way. There was an attempt to move a motion before debate to have the bill sent back to committee so that it could reconsider eliminating the reference to Her Majesty in the legislation. However, there is now a motion before us that the question be now put. That prohibits anybody else from putting a motion to the House.

However, I am aware of at least three different items in the legislation that have to be repaired. Clauses 118 and 119 are inconsistent and have to be repaired. There is one clause in which the reference to “so help me God” has still not been reinstated because of a technicality at committee, which should be remedied. I think the House should have an opportunity to debate whether or not references to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II should be eliminated, rather than after only four speakers at third reading being pre-empted from making a motion to that effect.

I really believe that omnibus bills are not very helpful to parliamentarians. They allow us to get through the back door what we cannot get through the front door. If Canadians and parliamentarians at large knew that the references to God and to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II were being summarily taken out of the oaths of office, given what we did with a private member's bill recently and the Citizenship Act, why is it that Parliament cannot debate here in the House what our oath should be in Canada? Where are our values?

• (1710)

Let me refer to today's *Ottawa Citizen*, in which I was absolutely amazed and delighted to see an editorial that stated:

Her Majesty is the embodiment of an institutional order that allows us to be the kind of nation that we are.

It went on to state that “the Crown represents order and justice...as an institution that transcends politics”. In short, the Crown is the “guardian of law and liberty”.

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I believe that we should have an opportunity to discuss this in an open and transparent way and therefore I would propose a motion. I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of Parliament to withdraw the motion now before the House and to recommit the bill back to committee to reconsider the elimination of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II from the oath of office.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since early this morning, I have been working on the substance of the bill. Now that the hon. member for Mississauga South has spoken, I want to take this opportunity to mention that, several times, he was wise enough to support—as did I—certain events during the appearance of some witnesses.

However, a 282-page bill is being shoved down our throats, completely amending two acts and making consequential amendments to other acts. During clause by clause consideration in committee, we looked at the opposition's amendments and some of the government's amendments. But it must be said that entire acts were changed and the committee was unable to debate or obtain the necessary explanations from witnesses, be it the minister, the deputy minister or the parliamentary secretary, about many of the amendments made.

At the time—and I had the support of the member for Mississauga South—we asked for explanations. In our opinion, something incredible happened; I would even say that this might create a precedent. The committee was not able to consider all the clauses and all the amendments in this 282-page bill.

The problem is as follows. There was an amendment, and the House asked that this bill be considered, even if the form is not only unusual but dangerous. This bill is a compilation of various acts, and we were not even able to consider the substance of changes to all these acts. The changes and amendments proposed by the opposition were considered, but not all the changes to the legislation were considered.

This is an extremely important point. I know that my hon. colleague on the government side agreed with me that this bill should have been split. It should have been considered properly. But there was a refusal to look at the real amendments in each of the bills.

Mr. Speaker, you are indicating that you are not granting me enough time to ask a question. I believe I have 10 minutes.

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In fact, 10 minutes are allocated for questions and comments. However, the hon. member who has just completed his speech must be given some time to reply to your questions and comments. At this point, you have taken 3 minutes and 40 seconds.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: Mr. Speaker, we are given 10 minutes for what is called comments. I can take the whole 10 minutes to make comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Not necessarily, it is a question of cooperation, because the member who made the speech

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: See, not necessarily, Mr. Speaker, but it could be done. I will take the two minutes left and he can have the other five minutes. Because it is very important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry, but I do not think so. If there is some time left after the hon. member for Mississauga South has replied, I will recognize you again.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member uses a couple of words that I think probably capsule one of my key points when he says that the form of the bill is a dangerous form. I do not believe this type of approach to important legislation should ever be used, because it undermines the comfort level, the confidence level that parliamentarians can have when they are overwhelmed by three, four and five bills being dealt with at the same time, even though they may have some overlap.

We have inquired about this. It has happened before in a smaller case, but to have such a substantive piece of legislation come forward like this, I can only presume it is on the recommendation of the experts and the Privy Council. However, we are talking about the rights, the privileges and the duties of parliamentarians and I think we have to be very careful not to establish a precedent, by using this kind of dangerous form of bill, of having it become the norm.

I do not know how long I will be here as a member of Parliament, and I would like to be here longer, but while I am here I want at least the opportunity to fight the battles. I do not want to be here and not have had the opportunity at least to engage in debate and at least to fight for what I believe in. I do not want to be pre-empted. I have been pre-empted by a motion to put the question. I have been pre-empted by a bill that has a form which I do not believe is helpful to Parliament. Notwithstanding that I agree with many parts or most of the bill, I am not sure whether I have seen or appreciated all of the nuances of the changes being proposed, just simply because I did not have the opportunity to question the witnesses as fully as I would have liked and I did not have the opportunity to listen to other members of the committee question the witnesses as much as they should have. I needed time, and time was taken away simply by the form of the bill.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take my colleague from the Liberals back to the issue of the oath. I look at the composition of Canada now and I must admit I am having some difficulty, if I understand him, with his position that the oath should be comprised of swearing allegiance both to God, and I assume he is referring to a Christian God, and to the Queen of England and of Canada, when we have so many in our population who do not have those types of relations with either the Queen, in terms of historical association, or Christianity.

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I think of my experience in the courtroom, where we have over the last several decades become much more flexible on administering the oath for witnesses in that setting. We always have at least the Christian Bible, the Torah, the Koran and other religious documents on which people can swear an oath in the religion with which they are affiliated. In addition to that, we have an oath or an affirmation that can be made for those people who do not believe in a god at all.

I am asking my colleague, if we had a flexible oath would he be comfortable with that?

• (1720)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I think the member has made the case as to why there should be a debate in this place on the relevance and importance of the monarchy and of God or other deities in this place.

The oath of allegiance provides a practical context to carrying out one's duties. It reminds the office holder that the authority of his or her office derives from the Queen. The oath of office covers how the incumbent should carry out his or her duties. It makes no claim on their commitment to a social order of which they are about to become a governing part. The oath of allegiance is therefore intended to remind us of how the Crown is the linchpin in holding us together in its public manifestations.

The member is saying to me that if we do not have 100% consensus in the country, we must eliminate the value that we have. We have in our national anthem "God keep our land, glorious and free". Let us take "God" out of the national anthem. Why not? That is what the member is arguing.

Policy by its very nature is discriminatory, but not in a negative context. We can discriminate affirmatively to show what we value. What is this country about? That is the issue and that is why we should have this debate. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians said that they wanted to retain the monarchy. We cannot ignore that. I do not believe we should eliminate everything in which there is not 100% consensus. If we do that, if we go down that treacherous road, we will have to get down to the lowest common denominator between all Canadians, and the best I can determine, that lowest common denominator is a single human cell.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Before resuming debate, I want to draw the attention of the hon. member for Châteauguay and quote, for his information and satisfaction, an excerpt from page 506 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, also called the Marleau-Montpetit:

During the 10-minutes period for questions and comments following most speeches, Members may direct questions to the Member who has just completed his or her speech, or may make brief comments on that speech.

To make things clear—

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: We have to be brief.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Members have to be brief, and we will not start arguing about what brief means.

The hon. member for Mercier.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that it is a pleasure to speak in the debate on this bill. I should

qualify this immediately by saying that it is an extremely mixed pleasure.

For someone who was involved with the labour movement as long as I was, it is sad to see that this supposedly comprehensive review of the public service, which has an important role to play in delivering services to the public everywhere in Quebec and Canada, was not seen as an opportunity to bring people closer together and find new ways of working better together by avoiding unnecessary conflict and building on the experience, qualifications, goodwill and knowledge base of the labour movement or workers, as the case may be.

I have not had the chance to examine this bill as much as I would have liked to. I congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Châteauguay, who sits on the committee. I take this opportunity to say that he has done a thorough job and provided us with notes that I have read carefully. I have also looked at certain parts of the bill.

On that basis, I regret to say that the government and the minister seem to have missed a great opportunity. Let us review the highlights of this odd bill. This is a bill dealing with the Public Service Employment Act as it concerns the definition of employment and so on, and at the same time a number of provisions that should normally be part of the Canada Labour Code.

I know that, in committee, opposition members and some members from the party across the way would have wanted to use this bill to replace the special legislation, the separate code applicable to public service employees by having these employees come under the Canada Labour Code. So, the bill deals with the public service legislation, with the Canada Labour Code and also with a series of provisions that are not included but could be, to deal with harassment, and psychological harassment in particular.

If I were to qualify the bill before us—and my hon. colleague will certainly have something to add in this respect—I would say that its primary purpose is the renewal of the commission, which plays an extremely important role, one which must transcend all political parties and must not be influenced by partisanship or any provision to be submitted to the government, any government.

In fact, there are many loopholes in the powers conferred to the commission and in its obligations with regard to employment. This means that if we want to put the commission above partisanship, since it can delegate its powers and we do not have the same assurances for those to whom the powers are delegated, there could be a problem with staffing, which the government also proposes to modernize, because the concept of merit is being given a new meaning.

• (1725)

When I read all the provisions dealing with merit, I thought that the whole thing made no sense. Provisions should not make it relatively certain that the people hired are indeed hired on the basis of merit. On the contrary, many questions arise as to the possibility that all kinds of other considerations will play a role in determining whether a person will be hired or not. I am sorry, but that will give merit an even lesser role in the process.

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I must say those involved in the union movement—and also all those sensible people outside the union movement—have always been extremely skeptical about this notion of appointment on the basis of merit. Some people are very enthusiastic and will say that, yes, merit is good. The problem is how is merit defined. Who defines merit? How can it be ascertained that a person was appointed on the basis of merit?

These are difficult questions. I must read a few provisions contained in this bill. Reading them is always better than commenting them. They speak for themselves. First, concerning intent, the bill says that appointments:

—by the Commission shall be made on the basis of merit and must be free from political influence.

However, I have said that the commission can delegate these mandates. But what are the conditions set by the bill to determine that an appointment was made on the basis of merit? It says:

(a) The Commission is satisfied that the person to be appointed meets the essential qualifications for the work to be performed, as established by the deputy head, including official language proficiency;

We are therefore talking about the basic qualifications.

(b) The Commission has regard to (i) any additional qualifications that the deputy head may consider to be an asset for the work to be performed, or for the organization, currently or in the future,

Note the words “for the organization”, which could mean for the administrators. It is not a very precise term.

I will digress for a moment to read what the Auditor General's report says on classification and evaluation. She must be pulling out her hair when she reads the bill. If they have not succeeded in defining a universal classification system in 12 years—they abandoned it after spending a lot of money on the project—how do you think that they will be able to come up with a classification system in which two employees could be clearly qualified and classified in this way? I do not understand.

Second, there are all the other qualifications that could be good. Speaking Spanish for example could also be an asset. The bill also deals with:

any current or future operational requirements of the organization that may be identified by the deputy head,

How do people know when they are hiring someone that this will meet current or future operational requirements?

(iii) any current or future needs of the organization that may be identified by the deputy head.

The commission has to take that into account. But paragraph 4 is the nail in the coffin of a procedure which is already quite flawed:

(4) the Commission is not required to consider more than one person in order for an appointment to be made on the basis of merit.

What does this mean? It means that under this procedure, even if the clause starts by saying “Appointments are made on the basis of merit”, the conditions set to be able to say they are based on merit fly in the face of that idea. It is a shame, because not only will that discredit the merit principle, but it will make it even more difficult to match qualifications, since, even if the essential requirements are the same, the elements that may be taken into account will vary, and the job description might have to be modified.

● (1730)

As we know, 30% of job reclassifications to a higher level was done that way under a system which can only be described as an elephant. That does not mean it is not nice and gentle, but that it is difficult to handle. On this point, I will stop here.

Is it possible to lodge a complaint? Yes it is, but only one person has that power. If it is possible to pick only one single person, how can those who believe they have been wronged complain? It is complicated.

There is a problem with the merit system. This bill should adequately protect people who blow the whistle regarding procedures or decisions that are illegal, look like corruption or do not belong in the public service. Whistleblowers should be protected by the bill before us today. It is not a 20-year old bill, but a modern-day reform.

However, with the way that the government protects those who themselves want to protect the public by reporting abuse in the workplace, public servants may very well not support whistleblowing, because they might not be protected. I will not go into the details. I could also read some documents on this, but this is a great cause for concern.

The bill also reviews the provisions on the code. I repeat, in committee, I do not know how many attended, but they tried to ensure that public servants would be subject to the Canada Labour Code. This is a long-standing demand, which is obvious. It is all the more obvious because we know that, in modern labour relations, we try to negotiate, to come to an agreement, to see the needs of both parties to avoid confrontation.

Whether in the private or the public sector, confrontation is always a loss, not only of productivity and services, but also a loss in the ability of management and employees to work better together. This translates into a major loss of productivity, not only a temporary one—which happens at the time of a conflict—but a permanent one. This happens when daily labour relations are not managed to ensure that they are respectful. And respect goes both ways.

When I read about how essential services are to be determined, that, too, made my hair stand on end. I shall read from the bill:

The employer has the exclusive right to determine the level at which an essential service is to be provided to the public, or a segment of the public—

The employer has the exclusive right to determine that. That means the employer can say the level is 100%. Some provisions might even suggest it could be 125%. I continue:

—at any time, including the extent to which and the frequency with which the service is to be provided. Nothing in this Division is to be construed as limiting that right.

That is what is called an absolute right. When we look at how the Conseil des services essentiels in Quebec operates, we may sometimes think it takes a little time.

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• (1735)

But, in general, it gives all parties the feeling that it is fair and equitable, that service to the public is being preserved, while the right of workers to apply pressure to get a settlement is also respected. I remind the House that all attempts to remove the right to strike, in this or any other country, have always ended in failure, because no worker can be forced to work; that would be slavery.

This provision makes it extremely difficult, in my opinion—and I can hardly wait to see it in action, because this will be a first, I believe—to reach agreements during bargaining. My experience tells me that, instead of helping the bargaining process, this will make it more difficult. The discussion, then, is between the union and its agent and the employer and its agent, to determine which and how many people will deliver the service, but with no discussion at all about the level of service. Thus, I do not see where this is leading, except to much bigger problems.

This legislation does not include serious provisions to address the recommendations made in a series of reports and studies on what is called co-determination, or seeking common ground.

Instead of implementing mechanisms—as my colleague from Châteauguay proposed—in a number of provisions such as those relating to pensions, for instance, both parties could seek common ground. There are many other provisions under which we can implement mechanisms for seeking modern ways to work together during collective bargaining or during the term of a contract, especially for employees or administrators in a public service that has a responsibility to all Canadians.

Before I run out of time, I would like to say that it is odd that this legislation—this is what I found amusing—is called An Act to modernize employment—we saw this with merit—and labour relations—we saw that it is the government that defines the level of essential services.

As for the other provisions related to harassment, especially psychological harassment, there is almost nothing in this bill. In terms of the French language, Dyane Adam told the committee that in British Columbia only 5% of positions require bilingualism. That means that 95% of unilingual anglophones can be hired as public servants while in Quebec, 50% of positions are bilingual. In other words, it is much easier for a unilingual anglophone to be hired in the public service than for a unilingual francophone in Quebec.

The committee members wanted us to reintroduce into the legislation provisions from the Official Languages Act. Unfortunately, this was defeated. If we were to grade this legislation we would give it an “E”.

• (1740)

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin by congratulating my colleague from Mercier for giving such an excellent speech. She was well placed to do so, given her abilities and her background.

My questions relating to the bill are, like hers, concerned with the merit principle and the issue of whistle-blowing. The matter of merit struck me—I realize we need to be brief and I shall try to do this quickly—as extremely dangerous, and I see a link with the whistle-

blowing aspect. I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with me and whether my interpretation is correct.

Let us imagine a person who reports a behaviour, an attitude or an action in his or her sector of the public service. If he or she aspires to a higher position at some later date, I think there will be problems. This is where merit enters in. How is the concept of merit determined? How will it be applied?

It must be kept in mind that the federal public service was created during the second world war and still has a near-military management mentality. This makes things extremely difficult. My riding contains a very large Government of Canada office. I regularly receive complaints from public servants who work there, because of the management system, and in particular the abuse of part-time workers. They get called in for four hours and then sent home, or called in on a weekend and then sent home. This makes things very difficult, particularly for people with families.

When there is talk of modernizing the public service, would it not have been necessary to include measures relating to the family?

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, this is a provision that would indeed have been very interesting. However, I must tell my colleague that the bill has nothing at all of the sort to offer. Instead of having a modern bill, we have instead something that is more authoritarian than anything else. This is an authoritarian vision that borders on encouraging conflict. That is what is sad. It is hard to understand.

It is all the harder to understand when we take into account the report of the Auditor General. All she talks about is classification. And classification in such a large public service is extremely important, because classification is how employees sense whether they are being treated fairly or unfairly, in relation to each other.

With the introduction of the merit principle, it becomes more difficult to satisfy people. The bill contains absolutely no provisions that take family constraints into consideration. That is too bad, because as an employer, the public service has certain responsibilities, such as providing excellent service, obviously, but also of setting an example when it comes to providing good working conditions for employees.

I see that the Minister of Human Resources Development is on the other side and I would like to draw her attention to employee training. We have seen that in her department, there are employees required to apply legislation who do not understand it, which has caused a great deal of problems for the public.

• (1745)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think that some of the Liberal members and I have a few problems with the oath or affirmation. I will read the affirmation contained in the bill. It reads as follows:

I, (the name of the person), do swear (or solemnly affirm) that I will faithfully, truly and impartially, to the best of my judgment, skill and ability, execute and perform the office of—

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Then the job description follows.

I would like to know what the member thinks, whether or not she has a problem, since she comes from the province of Quebec, with this oath or affirmation.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I must say I did not dwell on this clause, which says that public servants are committed to give honest services. I do not remember, but I think it is okay.

But one thing I am absolutely sure of about the bill is that it is already enough that the queen be defined as the employer without us having to swear an oath of allegiance to her. I believe this is going too far, all the more so since an oath like the one you have read seems quite appropriate for a country like Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on the issue we talked about of a whistle-blower.

The reprinted bill clearly outlines on page 8 under consultation committees and co-development that issues may include, among other things:

(b) the disclosure of information concerning wrongdoing in the public service and the protection from reprisal of employees who disclose such information.

There is a further recognition of the whistle-blowing principle on page 108 in clause 11.1(1). It states that in its exercise of its human resources management responsibilities under subparagraph 7(1)(e), that the Treasury Board may and it lists a whole bunch of things, but subparagraph (h) states generally that it shall have a whistle-blower policy.

There is a recognition that the former internal memo is now going to be recognized in law. It goes a long way in providing a climate of encouraging employees to report if they find such wrongdoing. I am wondering if the member has increased confidence in the bill because of it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague for reminding me of that. But you know, action speaks louder than words, and this holds true for many motions adopted in this House.

For a bill to adequately protect whistle blowers, it must contain a number of rules. I am glad you had these clauses added. But their effectiveness remains to be seen.

● (1750)

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. They say that we need to recruit and that there is a lack of competent employees. What message are we sending to those who want to become public servants, if it is known that managers will now decide who gets promoted? They will determine how things are done and employees will have reduced access to remedies.

Furthermore, a Bloc Québécois amendment was rejected, although it proposed something as simple as giving out information on the concept of merit, in other words explaining the essential skills required for a job, whenever positions are advertised. We asked that this information be given to the public, the unions and all public service employees. That amendment was rejected.

What does my colleague from Mercier think about this?

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, this is becoming quite a cause for concern. If we do not know who will be aware of job openings or the qualifications required, the independence of the staffing officer becomes even more questionable. I have read what will be required and it depends entirely on the person who establishes the requirements.

Consideration will be given to all relevant skills, including for future operations. This means that anyone knowing what changes will be made in any given unit would have an advantage over the others. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the possibility of saying that the job is for someone who has one brown eye and one blue eye and curly black hair.

[*English*]

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud member of the Parliament of Canada, a constitutional monarchy, with the Queen of Canada as the head of state. Today is the 50th anniversary of the coronation of our Queen.

It gave me no pleasure to vote against Bill C-25 last week, the proposed public service modernization act. I did so for one reason only and it was because the oath of allegiance to our monarch has been removed. I find the continuing erosion of our constitutional monarchy, the finest form of governance on the face of the earth, completely unacceptable.

I would like to remind the President of the Treasury Board that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has declared that the proposed oath of citizenship in Bill C-18 will retain a pledge of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. In fact, it would read:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

I am in no way opposed to the idea of reforming the public service. I am opposed to the chipping away at the basis of our institutional framework. It is a slippery slope and I fear that, after one little chip here and one little chip there, in 20 or 50 years the bedrock of the Canadian system will be gone and we will pretend not to know how it happened.

The constitutional monarchy is part of our Constitution, history and heritage. I remind all members that the head of state of Canada is the Queen of Canada. When public servants swear their oath to the Queen, our head of state, they are swearing it to Canada. The oath does not involve the Queen in her personal capacity but rather as the symbol of our country, our Constitution and our traditions. Some might argue that the monarchy is no longer relevant, but I fail to see how it could not be relevant. As members of Parliament, we take the oath, which reads:

I [full name of member] do swear, That I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Without taking the oath, we cannot even take our place in the House.

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Public servants hold positions of public trust. By taking an oath, they are pledging to conduct themselves in the best interests of the country. It reminds the person taking the oath of the serious obligations and responsibilities that he or she is assuming. Not for a minute am I suggesting that Canada has some kind of backward colonial mentality. I would argue that the oath of allegiance to Her Majesty serves a useful function in three ways.

First, it reaffirms to the public servant that responsibility and accountability are vertical concepts. The authority of a public servant derives from the Queen. There is a vertical chain of command that must be respected in the form of advice that makes its way up through the ranks to Her Majesty or representative, and in the form of orders and instructions that must be executed that make their way down through the ranks. Public servants are ultimately accountable to the Crown, not just the public, the minister or their manager.

Second, the oath of office is an important initiation ceremony. Just as we ask new citizens to take the oath, we ask those who wish to join our legal and administrative institutions to make a personal commitment by taking the oath. Third, by removing the oath of allegiance the basic framework of our system of government is undermined. Only last year the Department of Canadian Heritage, through the golden jubilee celebrations, played a terrific role in filling the gaps in our knowledge and appreciation of our distinct constitutional heritage.

• (1755)

Allow me to remind the House what the Minister of Canadian Heritage said when she launched the federal golden jubilee initiatives. She said:

Fifty years after her accession to the throne, Elizabeth II remains a symbol of continuity, stability and tradition in a world that is under a barrage of constant change. Canadians of my generation have known only a single sovereign, faithful and loyal to our people.

The Queen and the heritage she gives to us is not just a part of our past but part of our common future. As a mature country, we do not need to break our ties with the past. The oath of allegiance fulfills an important function. We should take this opportunity to send this back to the committee so it can be reconsidered for the sake of consistency with the member's oath and with other government bills, like Bill C-18, which expressly mentions Her Majesty in the oath. It is unfortunate that that will not happen now.

The *Ottawa Citizen* is against dropping the oath of allegiance. An editorial on February 17 stated:

The monarchy is symbolic of the continuity of Canada's constitutional government, and the Queen is our head of state. It's not too much to ask that those who choose to serve the public be reminded of that by having to swear allegiance to Her Majesty.

Let me remind my Alliance colleagues across the floor what the member for St. Albert said:

At the same time, if our public servants are not required to swear to the head of state that they would execute their office to the best of their ability, then what are we as a country?

I would also like to remind the members of the fourth party in the House what their leader, who was then the member for Calgary Centre, wrote to a concerned Canadian, "I can assure you that I and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada remain firm in our support of the Canadian constitutional structure and our support for

the monarchy. The Queen, and indeed the entire monarchy, represent an important foundation of Canadian tradition and heritage, and have contributed to our country's formation and development in countless ways".

I expect then that they would be concerned with the dropping of the oath of allegiance from Bill C-25 and would support returning it to committee for further consideration.

In these politically fractious times it is important that our civil service remain beyond the fray, always providing Parliament with the non-partisan professionalism that is renown around the world. As my friend from the NDP, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, said:

[The Queen] symbolizes for many the merits of a constitutional monarchy in which the head of state...is separate and apart from the ongoing political struggles of the day.

It is a significant reminder to us in the House that politicians will come and go, but Parliament and the public service will remain. Swearing the oath of allegiance is an important reminder to our civil service. It is a symbol of the requirement for serving to the utmost of their abilities in the best interests of Canada.

There is talk about adopting principles to provide a framework for the public service. There were amendments to make the values upon which human resource management is based more explicit. Amendments to commit to transparency, linguistic duality, and the strengthening of the merit principle are all good things, but in modernizing the public service let us not throw away things that actually work, like the oath to our head of state.

As the public service moves from a rules based system to a value based system, it is important to have an organizational culture that articulates and lives the principles that are the basis of its everyday work. At the same time, the oath is an important symbol of initiation into that culture, and a personal and moral obligation to work to the best of one's ability.

• (1800)

The House does not have the opportunity to act and take responsibility for the legislation proposed by the government because of the motion now on the floor by the member for Ottawa—Vanier.

I thank God there is the other place where amendments may be made in sober second thought and I pray that never again will we find our constitutional monarchy diminished or otherwise altered without full national debate. Let this mischief be now ended.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is the member saying that because we live under a constitutional monarchy, whether people like it or not, that there is some incongruity between the fact that we as members of Parliament take an oath to the Queen while employees working in the government do not take an oath? What are the advantages of a constitutional monarchy over having the Governor General perform the roles that the Queen plays?

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Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, to begin to remove the oath to the head of state is simply exacerbating an inconsistency. There is an inconsistency if we leave an oath in one area and we take an oath out of another area. To suggest that it would enhance things somehow if we were to do away with the Queen and substitute a head of state in Canada would be denying the history with which we have grown.

It is an accident that our monarch is a British monarch. It could have easily been a French or Spanish monarch. It might have been at one time. It happens to be an accident of history, a very fortunate act of history in many ways because of the way the parliamentary process has evolved under the British system. We are privileged to have that, but it is a sign of maturity for us to continue to acknowledge it.

• (1805)

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three questions for the member for Halton. First, why were there no amendments about this matter introduced in committee or even in the House at report stage? There were ample opportunities for that to happen, yet it does not seem to have happened and one wonders why?

Second, I have been advised that in Great Britain public servants do not swear allegiance to the monarch but to the duly constituted government of Great Britain. I am also advised that in Australia, a Commonwealth country which had a referendum supporting the monarchy, public servants also do not swear allegiance to the monarch. If that information is not correct I would like to know. However, if it is correct, why should we have it if it is not the case in Great Britain?

Third, is the member aware that the President of the Treasury Board has indicated that the code would allow an employee to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen. Therefore, it would be a matter of choice. If an employee wishes to swear allegiance to the Queen, he or she would be able to do so. What is wrong with that openness and way of doing business? I would like the member for Halton to answer those questions.

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, first, I do not believe that Canada is an optional country. Why should we have an option as to whether we swear allegiance or not?

Second, we are an independent country. We are not a conforming country, so why suggest that just because Britain does its thing and Australia does its thing that we should conform? Is that what we are here for? Are we conformists or are we an independent country prepared to take our own place in the world?

Why were there no amendments? I can only suggest that contact was made with the President of the Treasury Board when many of us were heavily involved in other committees, as the hon. member knows. I will bear responsibility for the fact that it escaped my attention but not without full contact on a continuing basis with the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am looking on page 135 of the new version of the bill. In part 4 under employment, it says:

I...swear (or solemnly affirm) that I will faithfully and honestly fulfil the duties that devolve on me by reason of my employment in the public service of Canada and that I will not, without due authority, disclose or make known any matter that comes

to my knowledge by reason of such employment. (Add, in the case where an oath is taken, "So help me God" (or name of deity).)

That is optional.

The issue here is that this is an oath of honesty, of diligence in work, not to take a bribe or improperly disclose information. I think the member is mistaken. I think he is confusing and transferring the oath from citizenship, which has absolutely nothing to do with being a public servant, into being a public employee. They are not parallel at all. It has nothing to do with the Queen for being a public service.

Then he talked about the MPs' oath at the political level in Parliament here, and again that is not relevant to being a public employee. In fact I would like for him to cite to me where previously the Queen was ever involved in such a matter. Just because it says "oath", those are oaths for different matters at different issues, and it is not related to being a public servant. I just do not think that his complaint is valid.

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. friend will know that the public service, up until now, as well as members of Parliament have sworn allegiance to the head of state. They absolutely do. We swear allegiance to our head of state, which happens to be the Queen of Canada; likewise the public service.

If the member would look at the bills that were combined to make this new bill, he would see the oath to Her Majesty is missing.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a comment to my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party.

At present, public servants do have to pledge allegiance to Canada. The fact that this is an oath of confidentiality causes a lot of problems, in particular as far as denouncing wrongdoing and harassment are concerned.

I do not know if the member is aware of that, but in every case of harassment being investigated internally by Treasury Board, people hesitate to speak out because of the fear to lose their job.

I wonder if the member opposite knows that and if he has a substitute to this famous oath.

[English]

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am indeed aware of it. I am not aware that an oath to the head of state in any way interferes with that process. I do not know how it does because the oath to a head of state is an oath to a head of state. What it does is acknowledge certain responsibilities in the heart and mind of the individual, and gives us all a focus on the governance of our country.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to read from the House of Lords *Hansard*, when Lord Laird on January 3, 2003, asked Her Majesty's government:

Whether any new appointees to the Civil Service in any part of the United Kingdom are required to take an oath of allegiance; if so, which parts of the Civil Service require this...

The minister for the cabinet office and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Lord Macdonald of Tradeston replied:

Government Orders

Under the terms of the Civil Service Code, members of the Home Civil Service owe their loyalty to the administration in which they serve.

No civil servant in the UK is required to take an oath of allegiance.

I also note there is no oath of citizenship in the United Kingdom to the Queen or anyone else. Why should Canadians be more monarchist than the British?

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, I get back to an answer I gave a couple of questions ago. Are we conformists or are we individuals? Are we a free country, able to make our own decisions or are we required to conform?

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting some days to come into the House, to sit and listen to some of the debate and to see from where people are coming.

The public service sector really does not care if they swear allegiance to the Queen, themselves, their mothers or their fathers. What they care about is ensuring that government leaves it up to the people to be hired in the proper form, in the proper manner and that friends, neighbours and political interference is gone so the public service can do the job they are required to do, and that is to serve the people of this country and make it is easier for them to get the job done. For one reason or another, we forget about that and we worry about to whom we will swear allegiance.

As parliamentarians we swear to the Queen because that is our job and we do it. The public service should swear to the people for whom they will do the work, and that is the taxpayers. Who cares if they swear an allegiance to other people.

I was not going to say that but I thought it was interesting to hear the debate.

By the government's own admission, over the past few decades the public service has remained structurally and functionally a top-down organization. It is somewhat stiff in its functioning, a lumbering giant that actually requires a department to go through a maze of several months of paperwork and meetings to hire an ordinary person.

If we were to get rid of the red tape, if we were to make it easier to get people into vacant jobs, we would not hear the outcry from the general public. People say that they cannot get any answers, or they cannot get a job done or there are delays. Every time there is a delay in the public service of getting an answer or getting the job done, it costs business people and ordinary citizens money.

Bill C-25 would provide for more flexibility in staffing and in managing people. Managers with certain limits would have more power over hiring and who they hire, just like in the real world. Applicants who felt they had been short-changed in the staff process would be given access to redress at a public service staffing tribunal.

The key should be that employers get the best qualified people to do the job, regardless of where they come from geographically. The key is we must get people in the public service who can do the job. If we limit it to certain areas and friends or friends of friends, it normally does not work. Any businessman or businesswoman will tell us that hiring friends or friends of friends normally does not work. If we had hired people because of their qualifications, we would not have had half the problems we now have.

The bill also stresses the need for a cooperative approach to labour management relations. The intent is to make employees part and parcel of the process of running the workplace. Nobody really knows how to do the job like those who do it every day. If the intent of the bill follows through, we should have a happier federal workplace.

When employees are happy campers, they do better jobs. If they come to work every day and are under pressure, they will not perform to full expectations, and the only people who lose are the employers. If staff members and employees are involved in decision making, we will have a happier staff.

The bill provides for an overhaul and consolidation of the staff training and development process of the federal public service.

Many of the changes are long overdue with regard to improvements to the nation's public service. If carried out properly, they could lead to a much happier, less strike prone and more productive public service.

I can just reflect back to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Right now we have two airport strikes on the go. If these airports had employees under the federal government's control, I would suggest there may not be strikes today. We got rid of some of our public servants because we got rid of our airports. If the airports had come under the umbrella of the federal government employees, I firmly believe there could have been an easier settlement, and we would not have the travelling public held at ransom because of these strikes.

● (1815)

If we are going to allow individuals and special interest groups to take over our airports then we should make sure we keep our employee base intact so they can provide the services the general public requires rather than contracting the services out to a new group. That could result in one strike after another and it could last a long period of time. It would be like what we are seeing in Newfoundland and Labrador right now. I am glad to hear that things may be working out but it has taken a long time.

Many public servants are about to retire. We have been told that 7,000 new people are needed every year just to keep pace with retirements. The hiring process can lumber on for months and we often see the best and brightest applicants being scooped up by the private sector. As I stated earlier, we must make the hiring process easier and get rid of the red tape so we do not lose some of our brightest to the private sector. People have a great future with the federal and provincial governments. We have to make it easier on the federal scene to make sure that application access and individual rights are easily looked at so the best possible person is hired regardless of geographics.

It is also important that managers have a greater say in the hiring process, after all, the people being hired are people they will have to work with every day. One of the things I would add to that is the importance of their justifying why they hired a person so that the fear and threat that they will hire a friend will be eliminated. Hiring has to be done on qualifications. If it is done on qualifications, then I firmly believe production in the workplace will be greater.

Government Orders

This extra power on the part of managers has been met with a strong grievance procedure. Managers must be required to account for their hiring decisions. Hiring people because of political pressure is forbidden. Hiring friends who do not meet the basic qualifications is not allowed. This is where we get ourselves in trouble. This is where we do not get the best bang for our buck. This is where we run into major problems later on down the road when we find out that the best qualified person was not the one hired or the person hired was not qualified in the first place.

The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has done a tremendous job asking questions and bringing up many concerns regarding the federal public service, the job situation and the hiring practices. Every time he raises the issue it seems like some people take it as a joke. It is a very serious thing when a line is drawn in the geographics of Canada where people can only apply for jobs in certain areas. As far as I am concerned this is discriminatory. This is Canada, and it should not be like that. If someone lives in Nova Scotia, it is discrimination if they cannot apply for a job in Quebec, Alberta, Newfoundland or the reverse. As long as someone fulfills the maximum qualifications for a job they should be the person with the utmost opportunity to get the job. If people are hired with minimum qualifications, they are getting in through the back door. If we are looking for a high standard we should stay with a high standard so people who are the most qualified will be hired.

I am sure the minister is aware that people in Atlantic Canada are faced with federal job advertisements that require applicants to be from certain geographical areas. In Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, a job opening in St. John's might be restricted to applicants from the Avalon Peninsula. People living in Gander or Labrador City could not apply. Many jobs in central Canada are only offered to applicants within restrictive geographical areas.

Shortly after being elected I had a phone call from a lady friend who said that she had applied for a job within the federal government but that she was outside the geographical area. She could not understand that and I told her that I could not understand it either. I thought that when someone lived in Canada they could apply anywhere in Canada if a job came up with the federal government. If they are the most qualified person then they should get the job. However it did not happen. Like everything else, we learn by some of these hidden rules.

● (1820)

In the January 30, 2001 Speech from the Throne, the government committed to needed reforms in the Public Service of Canada to attract and develop the talent needed to serve Canadians into the 21st century. It is now 2003, two years after that statement was made in the throne speech. What happened to the commitment over the last two years? Why, all of a sudden, is it being done now? It should have been done by now. A lot of opportunities have been missed for our young people. We have missed an opportunity to have great service, an even better service for Canada. I do not know what happened, but unfortunately the commitment to modernize the public service took a holiday as did the commitment to end child poverty.

In February the President of the Treasury Board said that the bill ensures the capacity of the public service to provide the best service

to Canadians today and into the future. This is where the government has it wrong again. Bills do not ensure top quality service; people do; hard workers do; people who are proud to serve their country in any capacity.

Bills tabled in Parliament with the accompanying fanfare do not ensure anything. It is the people we hire who do. It all goes back to the employees. It all goes back to whom we hire and how they fit into the system. The only way they can fit into the system is if we hire the people who are qualified for the job.

Canadians will get top-notch service from the public service once the government does the same. Treating Canadians with respect and truly serving them begins with the government, not with a bill. Once the government gets its act in place, the public service will follow suit.

There are a lot of public servants in the federal government who provide an amazing service way beyond the call of duty, but the problem on a lot of occasions is the bureaucracy. When I speak to people all across the country, they tell me the only problem they have is trying to get the bureaucrats to understand the way things should be done. Employees do the work in a certain way because they have been instructed that is the way it is done.

As I said a few minutes ago, if we are to do the job right for the federal public servants, we have to make sure that we hire the right people. If we are serious about modernizing the act, let us modernize it for the future. We should get rid of all the red tape. We should open it up to all of Canada. We should forget to whom people will swear allegiance.

We should be making sure that confidentiality is important. We should make sure that people's business is not known out in the street. It is also important that if public servants find out about problems in the government, they have the right to tell politicians, so that we can make it a better place for everyone. If there are things going on that should not be going on, it adds stress to the federal government's purse.

It also adds stress for MPs because we get calls on certain things and we know there are problems, but we cannot fix them because people are afraid to come forward. When people are afraid to come forward, it is total craziness in the workplace and people get stressed out. Then people go on sick leave. They are not content because they sometimes know there are things going on that should not be going on.

Time is short and there is a lot that could be said, but I just wanted to stress some things I have observed while listening to the debate.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. My hon. colleague has just presented a long argument in favour of hiring according to competency. He seems to suggest that this new legislation could lead to the use of discriminatory hiring practices.

Adjournment Debate

I would like to hear from him on hiring and employment equity as far as women, the disabled, aboriginals and visible minorities are concerned. I would like him to say a few words on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Rex Barnes: Mr. Speaker, when a job becomes vacant it is open to everyone. It is very important that we look at people of different races and different cultures. It depends on what they are hired for. If they are hired for different sectors of the country, then it makes sense.

When people are hired to work up north, it is important that they relate to the people's needs. People should be hired from the area where the needs are the greatest and where people are looking to be hired. It does not make any difference if the person is male or female, Japanese or some other culture. It is important to hire from the culture when a person of that culture is required but it is also important to get the best qualified person for the job.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls will have eight minutes remaining when the debate resumes on Bill C-25.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to follow up on a question that I asked with regard to the border security in Windsor, Ontario.

Specifically the question related to the fact that municipalities have had to pay the price when border security has been raised. When the United States goes on orange alert, which happened during the war with Iraq and it still is happening today, traffic backs up. When the traffic backs up, the municipal governments have to pay for the policing resources during that situation. It goes back to their knowing when the resources are required.

After the September 11 situation rigs in my community were idle for 24 hours or more. In this type of situation local governments need support. When international affairs affect local governments, it is up to this institution to provide some degree of support.

What seems to be compounding problems recently is that in the border announcement the federal government had an opportunity to increase the access point for those emergencies. The barge and truck ferry system is an area where the government could get something off the ground right now. It is actually precleared before going over to the Detroit side and even got a grant under the homeland security act but it was not even noted by the minister. Why? Because the Liberal government does not provide funds. Everyone else who had some type of support or connection got money but it did not.

It is a resource that has been heavily used by the community. It was used by the big three. It was used by other manufacturers during

the time of 9/11. At a time when there is a crisis on the streets, my question focused on the fact that municipal governments are not getting the proper support to deal with the situation. I would like to hear the government's response.

Why do the municipalities have to foot the bill when the United States goes on an orange alert? It backs up the traffic in the city of Windsor which has to put policemen on the streets. The government fails to recognize that the U.S. is saying those trucks are a risk to the security of its nation. If they are a risk to the security of the United States, what is the government doing about that risk which is sitting on city streets next to homes and businesses?

Where is the RCMP to investigate that? When will the government provide the confidence that people need to know they are being protected? Is it a risk for the Americans? If that is not the case, the government needs to advocate to move those trucks. If it is a risk, then why do we not have the same type of support on our city streets?

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to respond to the hon. member's question. I am also pleased to applaud him for his interest in the urban issue and our municipalities and in helping us to move the urban agenda along. I certainly know that his interest is very sincere. It is very difficult for ministers and members of Parliament in particular whose ridings are close to the border. They are concerned, as we all are, that we continue to move the goods and people back and forth.

We have to appreciate that since 9/11 there have been a lot of issues. All parts of the border have to make sure that they are secure for everyone. We have to reassure people during this heightened sense of global concern that we are keeping our borders safe and we are working together.

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is balancing the need, which is not an easy thing to do, to increase security measures to protect Canadians and to ensure the free movement of legitimate travellers and trade. Security and the free flow of goods and travellers is the top priority for the government. I know the hon. member shares the same concern.

In talking about what money goes into ensuring the safety in and around border areas in his community in particular, there was \$7.7 billion in security related initiatives in the 2001 budget alone. There has been \$433 million allocated to CCRA as part of a five year security package to improve security measures. It has invested significant funds in technology, additional staff at airports and seaports and automated systems to support our front line staff.

Once we know that the travellers pose no threat to public security, we enable them to move quickly and easily.

Adjournment Debate

There has been a variety of programs introduced in the last two to three years, such as Canpass-Air, which helps our vehicles and our trucks get preclearance, Nexus-Air and Nexus for individuals who go back and forth across the border. They get a preclearance card that is valid for five years. There is complete clearance with that card. When crossing the border the person simply shows the Nexus card which indicates that the person has been cleared and can cross the border.

People can call 1-800-O-Canada and ask what the waiting time is at any of our border crossings in Canada. People will be informed exactly what needs to be done and whether the wait is an hour or half an hour.

There was a recent announcement of \$300 million by the Prime Minister. This recognized the importance of the Windsor gateway and making sure that we are taking care of the movement of goods and people.

We need to continue working on those issues together. I know the hon. member for Windsor West recognize more than anyone else just how much we need to continue cooperation to overcome those challenges at the border crossings.

The Government of Canada's share of the investment income recently was another \$600 million for the border infrastructure fund in budget 2001.

The initiatives announced last week are significant. I think the member would agree with us that as a result of a successful collaboration among all of us, we are moving forward to ensure that we are helping the municipalities. We are making sure that it is a joint effort. The federal, provincial and municipal governments are coming to the table and identifying those priorities.

• (1835)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary still has not addressed the issue of \$7.7 billion, as claimed by the government, going to border security.

The city of Windsor has to pay for putting police on the streets because the government will not provide assistance. The U.S. is saying that our goods and services, and also its own, because the drivers are Americans and Canadians, are considered a security risk to the United States.

For that reason Church Road has become a parking lot. Trucks are sitting in front of the businesses and homes and the government has not paid a single cent to the municipality to pick up the safety costs. The government has not done anything to address the issue of the U.S. saying that they are security risks. The U.S. says that those people and the goods in their trucks are a danger to the U.S. We let them sit on our streets and in front of our businesses and homes and that is not being addressed. It is shameful and it has to end.

Ms. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, that is absolute rubbish. All of us are working together to ensure the security and safety of Canadians.

We are making sure that those trucks are safe and clear and that they can get fast passage across the border. Similarly, we expect the U.S. to make sure that trucks coming into our country are not putting our Canadians in danger.

The federal government continues to work together with the municipalities and the provinces to move this issue forward.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue a question that I asked back on April 2, 2003. Just so the viewers out there understand exactly what that question was and to remind the parliamentary secretary, since no one ever answered the question, the question was:

Mr. Speaker, the 1994 budget boasted about taking measures to prevent Canadian based companies from using foreign owned affiliates to avoid paying Canadian taxes.

This is a very serious issue. The question continued:

These measures did not affect Barbados. The Auditor General estimates that Canadian direct investment in Barbados has swollen from \$628 million in 1998 to \$22.3 billion in 2001. She estimates this loophole has cost Canadian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

My question directly to the Minister of Finance was, "Who decided to keep Barbados open when it closed down Liberia?", which was another foreign tax dive, so to speak.

The issue is simple. In 1994 the Department of Finance introduced a regulation that would close the Barbados tax loophole in the Income Tax Act. In the final draft, the member for LaSalle—Émard, the minister of finance at the time, added a clause that kept that loophole open. This allowed his company and others to move several companies to Barbados, avoiding hundreds of millions of dollars in Canadian tax.

The facts are simple. We had the finance minister at the time, the member for LaSalle—Émard, creating a tax loophole that allowed a gain for his own company that he moved to Barbados, knowing full well that he had just closed down the loophole in Liberia, knowing full well that the one in Barbados was left open, the whole time having a trust that was supposed to be at arm's length.

It gets worse. This regulation from the Department of Finance was introduced as a regulation in February 1994, which should have closed this loophole, closed Liberia, closed Barbados and closed other places around the world. When the minister of finance was speaking to Parliament and to the issue of the loophole, he said:

Certain Canadian corporations are not paying an appropriate level of tax...we are taking measures to prevent companies from using foreign affiliates to avoid paying Canadian taxes which are otherwise due. We are taking other decisive measures to close loopholes in the current corporate tax system.

This is unbelievable hypocrisy for a minister of the Crown, knowing full well that he had deliberately from his department created a loophole that he could take advantage of. It is a very difficult situation for a minister of the Crown to be in.

That was in the budget speech in 1995. Here is the reality. He then went on, having already amended the regulation in 1994 previous to the speech, to create a special exemption for foreign owned shell companies, so that is saying one thing and doing another. I really think the Canadian public deserves an answer.

Adjournment Debate

● (1840)

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say to my hon. colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect, that I am somewhat disappointed. The issue that I know the member really wants to talk is the issue of taxes and multinational companies, but it disturbs me that the hon. member is more than suggesting that the former minister of finance deliberately created a tax loophole in 1995. This allegation by the member is unwarranted, of course. It is an attack on a very honourable parliamentarian. I would suggest to the hon. member that if in fact he believes that what he says is true and he believes these allegations have any substance, then he should take them outside this chamber and make them out there, where he will be outside parliamentary immunity. To me, to suggest that there was a deliberate action taken by the former minister of finance of course is outrageous.

But I would like to talk about the issue which I know the member really wants to talk about, I am sure, and that is the issue dealing with taxes.

First of all, with regard to Liberia it was taken off the list because no formal treaty was ever consummated with Liberia, so Liberia never signed on, it was never ratified and that is why Liberia was off the list. I want to point that out to the hon. member to start with.

I also want to point out that the issue of tax policy obviously makes a key contribution to business success. As members know, it has been part of Canada's tax policy not to subject to double taxation earnings of Canadian corporations and their subsidiaries in foreign countries. We do that in different ways, I would point out, by not subjecting to Canadian taxes the incentives, the active business earnings that a Canadian company's foreign subsidiaries earn in a country with which Canada has a tax treaty.

The member asked, and the question I think comes down to this: Why did the government revise certain aspects of these rules several years ago? Was the exemption left in place for a particular kind of subsidiary resident in Barbados that does not pay a substantial tax rate? The answer has several elements.

First, it is not clear that abruptly curtailing the exemption would have benefited Canada. In a world of tax planning opportunities, there is no assurance that corporate groups would not simply move their corporate functions performed by Barbados to another jurisdiction where similar results could be obtained. In that case, the corporations would not pay any more Canadian tax. Indeed, forcing businesses out of Barbados actually could be counter-productive. Why is that? Because as a tax treaty partner, Barbados gives Canada tax information and assistance, more than any other jurisdiction does. That is important, and I certainly will continue to elaborate on that after the member responds.

● (1845)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Either inside the House or outside the House, and I have a couple of questions, Mr. Speaker. The questions are fairly simple.

The Department of Finance introduced regulation 5907(11.2) in February 1994, which supposedly would close the loophole for foreign tax breaks. This was said after the same minister already had amended that regulation in June 1994. It was amended to create a special exemption only for foreign owned shell companies, keeping the loophole open for those foreign owned shell companies.

So I have three questions. If the minister at the time knew the advantages that his amendment would create for his own company, how is it not a conflict of interest? If he wanted to close the loophole, he had nearly 10 years as finance minister to close it, yet it is still there. How much in Canadian taxes were saved that benefited him directly?

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, first of all, as I said last week to one of his colleagues in the Conservative Party, if in fact he believes that the allegations and the charges which the member is saying this evening are true, then he should say that outside the House. The member says that in fact he has no problem standing outside the House. I invite him to do so.

I think those kinds of allegations against an hon. member, against an outstanding parliamentarian and an outstanding finance minister, should in fact be made outside the House. If the Conservative Party wants to go on with this type of mud-slinging, let it do so. If the member wants to talk about taxes, that is a different story.

I think it is important when we talk about Barbados that we say the tax treaty which formed the basis for this exemption on Barbados has been in place since 1980, even before this government. The choice was quite clear. To leave the long-standing exemption for income from these Barbados corporations was entirely reasonable. Does that mean we are standing still? Of course we are always reviewing these things. I explained to the member why he was wrong on Liberia. I have explained some on Barbados tonight. No doubt the Tories will come back to the House again this week or even next week with the same question, and they are going to get the same answer.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:47 p.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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