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Monday, February 6, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 6, 1995

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

SAINT-HENRI—WESTMOUNT

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely, Mr. Berger, member for the electoral district of Saint-Henri—Westmount, by resignation on December 28, 1994.

[*English*]

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed on Wednesday, December 28, 1994 my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, prior to the Christmas recess I made some unacceptable comments on a decision that the Speaker made, which I appreciate in the traditions of Parliament were inappropriate. I suggested some motives which was also inappropriate. This morning I wish to apologize for any problems that those remarks might have caused you, Mr. Speaker, and withdraw those remarks.

The Speaker: I accept, of course, the explanation of the hon. member for Kamloops.

I remind all hon. colleagues that any reflection on the decisions of the Chair cause problems for us as a House of Commons. I encourage hon. members to be very careful in any remarks they make either inside the House or outside.

(1105)

After all I am a servant of the House and I am a servant of each and every one of you as members of Parliament. As such, any words said that could in any way detract not so much from me

but from the Chair itself, and the institution, are not acceptable to the House.

I do thank the hon. member for Kamloops for his words. I accept them and I consider the matter to be closed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADIAN POTATO MARKETING ACT

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, NDP) moved that Bill C-266, an act respecting the orderly marketing of potatoes, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proposing a private member's bill today that would have the effect of creating a national marketing agency for potatoes.

As I go through the reasons for the bill members will see that probably there are simpler ways of dealing with this problem. However because Parliament in the past 20 years has been loath to adopt a simpler way and has forced the dealing of national agencies commodity by commodity, I am following that process.

During the course of my remarks I will point out a simpler way. First let us recall that marketing boards are a relatively new method of dealing with the bargaining power vis-à-vis sellers and buyers. It dates back to the 1930s when New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom brought in marketing board legislation. Canada followed shortly thereafter with its first major marketing board, the wheat marketing board, introduced by a Conservative government in 1935.

The wheat board still exists. It has only undergone a few minor amendments and changes in the intervening years. Numerous provincial boards and agencies exist across the country with only a handful of agencies operating on a national basis. Chicken, turkey, eggs, hatching eggs and dairy products join wheat and barley, and western wheat and barley at that, as products marketed by national marketing agencies.

I argue this is a very slow progress. Agricultural producers are being forced to adopt very ancient means as private individuals in what has become a huge international market. Buyers have control in dozens of countries, being the principal buyers, and

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the bargaining power between the buyers and sellers is not even close to equal.

Even though some people might argue that the new information technology permits people on farms to link into the latest marketing information. Information alone does not provide those farmers with the ultimate marketing power that they require, namely, to be able to fill a whole shipload of a product and to provide hundreds of boxcar loads of the product to a particular purchaser in the required time, of the required volumes and grades necessary. Only an agency acting on behalf of all of the producers can hope to perform that function.

The fact that information is a little faster now than it was in the 1930s does not address the real problem of marketing, which is the ability to put together large amounts of product to fit the needs of the very large corporate buyers that are buying internationally these days.

(1110)

In the 1970s Parliament had an opportunity to put a bill before the country that would permit the various provincial marketing boards. These have to be put together on a provincial basis because, as members know, agriculture production is under the aegis of the provinces in our Constitution.

It is only when the product is marketed across borders that the federal sphere is infringed on and federal rights are taken into account. Therefore provincial marketing boards that wish to market product that is handled by a marketing board in another province have to apply to the federal jurisdiction for the power to go beyond their borders.

This is usually granted relatively simply. However it does not take away the problem that exists for all commodities not already under a national plan of competing one province against the other.

I was involved in the early 1970s in putting together a marketing board for hogs in the province of Saskatchewan. It was at about the same time that similar boards were put together in Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. They each followed the example of Ontario a few years previous to that.

We had worked very hard to come together as those four western provinces to offer hogs to foreign and domestic buyers over one desk. We had political agreement. We had agreement from the farmers involved. Yet when the final signatures were required on all the multitude of agreements that this required, the heads of each of the boards found it very difficult to put their signatures to paper because that would have seen the demise of at least three of the positions. We do not need four presidents in order to run one regional marketing board. It fell down at that level.

We need some federal guidelines and federal guidance if we are going to be able to achieve the coming together that is required if producers of the various commodities are going to be efficient and useful in meeting the market trends that are out there right now.

The marketing board concept is really not much different for those who are interested in history of marketing than the power the state gave four and five hundred years ago to corporations. It is a power that over time has been granted to corporations simply on application.

Even up to 30 or 40 years ago to strike a new corporation, the provisional board of directors had to come to the House of Commons and the Senate in order for that corporation to be set in motion and to be created. That has not been the case for many decades.

Yet in order for farmers to form an organization that would have similar powers in the marketplace, this ancient institution still requires that a special bill be prepared and that special requirements be made. We still have to be very cognizant of the federal-provincial powers. We have to go through the process of proposing, as I am, a shell of an agency that would be able to function nationally that the provincial agencies can link into.

Passing this legislation would not instantly create a national marketing agency. It would only be an effective national agency when the provincial marketing boards decide to avail themselves of the powers that are there in the federal act which would be passed.

(1115)

This slow, cumbersome process could have been sped up if in the early 1970s when the farm products marketing councils were established, and the national farm products marketing act which brought those agencies into effect had permitted the usage of national legislation for all farm products. However, there was some agitation on the part of mainly Alberta cattlemen concerning rights to establish an agency that would include management of supply, which is only a normal thing for any marketing agency.

Ask General Motors, Ford or Beatrice Foods. Any of the big players always have a good handle on their supplies. They are manufacturing the product. They make certain they do not manufacture or process more than they have sales for. They make certain they are able to manage the product so it arrives at the customer's door on the day the customer wants it; not later, not sooner, right on time. This is the kind of service the marketing boards have performed and can perform for producers who are part of a marketing agency.

The problem with the provincial agencies is that they often are not large enough to meet the kind of bargaining conditions of the corporations they deal with. Most of the processors and handlers of potatoes are huge international conglomerates. They have access to markets all over the world. When dealing with a

little potato board from Prince Edward Island or Manitoba the farmers very quickly find that they do not have very much clout when it comes to dictating terms of price and terms and conditions of how many potatoes will be produced, how they will be produced and what price the processor will pay for them. The people who are handling fresh potatoes to supermarket also have extremely large bargaining clout in that there are very few supermarket chains across North America that the producers must face on a day to day basis.

The marketing agency can provide the management of the product to the final destination on time and at the most beneficial price to the producer rather than always at the behest of the various buyers who can very quickly take advantage of a day when individual producers through their own unco-ordinated activities may be offering—usually they are offering—far more product on any given day than the system needs. Therefore they are always accepting a much less than optimal price because they are presenting for sale far more product than they are able to sell and deliver. As far as the buyer is concerned that surplus of product is always available to them. They take advantage of that, keeping the price lower than it would otherwise be.

Management of supply is more possible under marketing boards. I would note that we have other ways of managing supply. Notable and somewhat ironic, given their long opposition to any legislation that would permit supply management for all general farm products including beef, are the official cattlemen associations based in Alberta and to a certain extent in southwestern Saskatchewan. They have always argued that they are free marketers, that they do not want to have anything to do with supply management. It is ironic and somewhat instructive to note that they are probably one industry that has been very effective at controlling supplies into North America, particularly the Canada–U.S. markets. They have managed by other means to put political pressure where it matters and have limited on a consistent basis the amount of imports, whether from Ireland and the European economic community or whether from New Zealand and Australia. By setting quotas on those imports they are indulging in supply management.

(1120)

The advantages of the seller versus the buyer are being eschewed by cattle producers in most areas right now. For some time there was a very effective marketing agency in Saskatchewan that was strictly voluntary where producers could market through the beef marketing commission and that gained quite a lot of acceptance and approval. However, for political reasons that was struck down by the government of Grant Devine a few years ago. Farmers are now back in the business of negotiating their own prices each day. They find, when they compare notes,

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that they are not being treated equitably for the same day's market.

I found when I began drafting this legislation that the simplest answer would have been to amend the Natural Products Marketing Act so that we pull out the sections the cattlemen insisted on being in there in the early 1970s which would have had the effect of permitting all fruits, vegetables, tobacco, farm products, honey, meats, cereals and oilseeds. Every farm product would have been the simplest solution but I was told that this would somehow impinge upon the royal prerogative because a small section of that act permits the government to finance such new agencies. Private members do not have the privilege of establishing a law or adding to a law that would perhaps cost the government some money out of the consolidated revenue fund.

I have had to resort to setting up what is, I admit, a shell agency that has no funds. It would simply exist and be funded by producers as the provincial agencies decide to become part of a national agency and use this as a forum or beginning again a debate as to whether producers of potatoes would have some benefit by using a national marketing agency.

This has been a program that many producers have engaged in several times in the last couple of decades. In the early 1970s there was a determined effort to put together a national marketing agency for potatoes. The legislation was being worked upon. The plan was being worked upon. A very detailed proposal was put forward. Somehow it fell apart. Twice since that time similar efforts have gone forward, only to be stopped at the political level.

I wish the new group of parliamentarians in the House now—almost 200 people who have never been here before—would again think about the issue, look at the possibilities here and bring agricultural marketing into the 20th if not the 21st century and bring us up to date with the corporate sector which for more than 500 years has had the ability to simply go to government and get immediate acceptance for its application to allow many people to come together under one agency and take advantage of all of the benefits that such a coming together reaps.

By persisting on keeping the old National Products Marketing Act which was flawed from the beginning on the books would be something like going back in time and saying corporations can be established but only to gather and market furs, because in Canada the Hudson Bay Company was one of the first corporations to function on our soil even though the idea of a corporation had existed in Europe some time before.

(1125)

It is time for us to be brought up to date to permit our farmers to use all of the tools that their competitors and their opponents in the market have. I would urge members of Parliament to

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consider giving that right to farmers to form national agencies for all products, but specifically here today for potatoes.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to make some comments on Bill C-266 before the House this morning, presented by the member for Mackenzie.

The comments I will make are as a result of a discussion with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food on the matter of this bill and also as a former potato grower myself for a few years.

Bill C-266 is a well intentioned proposal to promote the orderly marketing of potatoes in Canada. I do not believe this bill is needed or wanted by the industry. The potato industry is one that has made great strides over the last few years. It is developing workable processes to resolve major issues at a national level and to take control of its own future.

Last fall I had the opportunity to speak to the potato growers of Alberta at their annual meeting. I can assure this House that at the meeting and in a small discussion with the executive of the potato growers of Alberta there was no one in the general meeting or the executive of that very vibrant organization who even mentioned supply management as a goal of their industry.

This is not to say that the idea had never come before the industry previously. Twice in the past number of years the potato industry has examined it and the possibility of federal legislation during the 1980s and earlier in the 1970s. On both occasions it was unable to come to a workable consensus within the industry.

This bill would create a Canadian potato marketing commission that would act, quoting from the bill, as the sole agent for all imported potatoes and all potatoes produced in Canada. This commission would also have extensive powers including the buying, storing and selling potatoes.

When the potato industry was seeking national agencies in the past its major objectives were to stabilize prices and to remove surplus so that it could continue to market its product in an organized fashion; in other words, to maintain traditional markets at traditional prices. It did not want an agency that would control its marketing.

Through all the troubles in recent years the industry has strengthened its infrastructure nationally with the formation of the potato committee executive of the Canadian horticultural council in 1992. That committee has begun dealing directly with issues affecting the industry in Canada. The committee has taken on a big responsibility.

I am confident that the industry and the provincial government representatives on the potato committee executive will continue to deal successfully with future problems and they will mature even further in their decision making. This maturing process will lead to a further strengthening of the potato industry at a national level and the development of sound, strategic directions for the industry to follow in its production and marketing endeavours.

Bill C-266 would restrict production and marketing of potatoes to producers holding permit books and would prescribe delivery points and quotas.

Potatoes are a very perishable product. They have to be marketed in a timely and efficient manner to meet good delivery standards. The responsibility for good shipping and handling conditions must remain as much as possible between the producer and the receiver.

In recent years the industry has had to deal with many issues and some of them have not been pleasant to deal with. There have been overproduction, low prices, drought, PVY-n, late blight and various other issues which have seriously affected the marketing of potatoes both within Canada and in our export markets. Despite these difficulties potato production in Canada keeps reaching new peaks with records being set in various parts of the country every year. Across Canada this industry is becoming more and more aggressive, strengthening existing markets and developing new ones with strong returns to producers. Our potato industry today is very healthy. It will continue to be healthy as it competes effectively in open markets around the world.

(1130)

In addition our government is a promoter of free trade. A quota system for the marketing of potatoes would only erect more barriers to trade in Canada and with our trading partners.

I just want to remind everyone again that the potato industry in Canada is making great strides in increasing production, increasing revenues and expanding its markets worldwide. The industry has developed an infrastructure that meets its needs at the provincial and national levels and is becoming even more aggressive in finding its own solutions to its own concerns.

The industry, I repeat, has shown no visible support for the proposal contained in Bill C-266. Until the industry identifies the need for further national legislation to accomplish its goals I see no reason to proceed any further with Bill C-266.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat intrigued by Bill C-266, the bill before the House today.

This is the first time we have an opportunity to deal with the agricultural sector as it affects potato producers. The purpose of

this bill, introduced by the hon. member for Mackenzie, is to ensure the orderly marketing of potatoes, having due regard to the interests of producers as well as consumers.

At first, I thought a bill that introduced changes in the marketing system as it affects producers and consumers was entirely justified. Since I am not an expert, however, I decided to get in touch with a number of agencies and potato producers to find out what they had to say. In fact, I met a dozen potato producers in Quebec and several in New Brunswick, who were astonished that a federal member would bother to call them and even go to see them to find out what they wanted, and who thanked me for taking the trouble.

I wanted to make sure this bill faithfully reflected the needs of this particular sector. People actively involved in this agricultural sector were quick to explain that the changes proposed in Bill C-266 did not suit them at all.

Before deciding how to change existing procedures, we must understand the forces at work in the current potato marketing system. Apparently, there are no national regulations on potato prices. This means that the market is controlled by interprovincial marketing decisions. In other words, the provinces are self regulating.

At this point, perhaps I may recall that four years ago in New Brunswick, the fall harvest was exceptionally abundant. To maintain potato prices, the provincial and federal governments and the New Brunswick association of potato producers agreed to destroy several tonnes to keep prices as high as possible, since the crop was well in excess of demand.

This approach makes it difficult to set up a system under which all provinces would have to conform to the same standards.

(1135)

The idea of setting up a national mechanism is not new. In the early 1980s, the provinces were consulted about the possibility of setting up a mechanism of this sort. From the consultations, it was obvious that the positions of certain regions were totally irreconcilable.

The western market, for example, is import based. It is the complete opposite of the eastern market, which is largely export driven. Furthermore, it appears that many provinces have a potato producers association of their own. Since regional objectives may vary, the roles of these associations may be diametrically opposed.

Let us take a look at the Fédération des producteurs de pommes de terre du Québec by way of example. It is a labour organization and has both a political and a marketing focus. The Manitoba association, on the other hand, is concerned strictly with marketing.

Quebec potato producers have had a dual scheme since 1979. It covers advertising campaigns as well as the control of potato quality. Moreover, as many producers have their own packing companies, they look after selling their products themselves.

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They have created a customized marketing system for themselves. What more could you want, Mr. Speaker?

As I see it, the provincial producers are already well organized. They develop their own markets and their own way of operating. I do not see any point in centralizing and messing up a system that works the way the people using it like it. As I said earlier, I met with several of them and they recommended that I not support Bill C-266 tabled by the hon. member for Mackenzie.

Furthermore, a working group was created in 1990—as was mentioned earlier—to evaluate the various options for implementing a potato marketing system, to evaluate, for instance, the advisability of establishing a Canadian potato board or to examine the possibility of setting up a supply management system or other options. The group had to interrupt its work in 1990 and never produced a final report. And even if they had concluded their work in some way, their findings would no doubt have been overtaken by market developments.

In view of free trade, previous studies would perhaps be less relevant today. GATT and NAFTA have changed the rules of the game. Were it indeed advisable to create a national system as proposed in the bill, one would first have to consider all the new aspects of today's market.

If my information is correct, this is not the first time a measure such as Bill C-266 has been presented in the House. The aim of the member proposing this bill, namely to assist potato producers, is most admirable. Bill C-266 shows a desire to bring together producers and consumers. Research in this area could be financed, for example, by deductions from producers, as is the case for wheat and barley under Bill C-50 regarding the Canadian Wheat Board, which the House of Commons passed before the holidays.

(1140)

There is, however, a major difference between these two sectors. Grain producers themselves asked to be able to make this kind of contribution. In my opinion, there is no need to respond to needs that potato producers have not expressed. Let us look at it this way: western grain, barley and wheat producers had asked the House of Commons to pass this kind of bill; potato producers did not and have no desire to do so.

Besides, it may seem advantageous to promote a product by pooling all available resources. However, if the objectives of the parties are irreconcilable, as is the case with the provinces, pretending to cover all bases by trying to put producers and consumers into the same mold can only throw a wrench into the works.

In closing, I would simply like to inform the hon. member for MacKenzie that, unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois will not support his bill since all the farm producers, all the potato producers from Quebec who were consulted do not see the need for it and unanimously asked us to oppose the bill, which the Bloc Québécois will do.

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[English]

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak this morning on Bill C-266 sponsored by the member for Mackenzie.

I must tell the member for Mackenzie that this bill is really an untimely gesture in the history of the potato industry. Usually there is a demand for this type of legislation from producers or from the provinces. In this case I do not detect any support for a bill of this sort from producers, from provincial governments, or from departments of agriculture. It has been some time since there has been any kind of demand for an orderly marketing system for potatoes.

I remember back in the 1980s during an election campaign there was a move by the producers in Prince Edward Island and eastern Canada to set up an orderly marketing system. At that time there were some difficulties for a number of years in marketing potatoes for a fair price or for marketing potatoes for any price.

An effort was made by Parliament to initiate discussions that might lead to an orderly marketing system for potatoes. That effort died rather quickly. The demand for potatoes and the marketing problem they were experiencing in the late 1970s disappeared and the enthusiasm the producers had for an eastern potato marketing board waned pretty quickly. Basically the effort went nowhere.

In the early 1990s I am told, although I did not realize this until we looked into the background material for the bill, an effort was made nationally for an orderly marketing of potatoes. It also died because of lack of support.

Why is the bill being brought forward at this moment when the marketing of potatoes has never been better? The demand for potatoes has never been better and the prices paid to producers have rarely been higher. If we had twice as many potatoes in Prince Edward Island as we do now, we would be able to sell them all.

There is demand from Europe. We are getting calls from countries that until this year probably never knew Prince Edward Island existed. They are phoning our exporters looking for potatoes.

(1145)

This is an unusual year for that kind of demand. Even without the drought or whatever affected the potato crop in Europe, the demand for the processing of potatoes is growing steadily year after year. The demand for table potatoes and for P.E.I. seed potatoes has rebounded from the PVY-n crisis.

The industry is in a very healthy position. There is no guarantee it will always be in a healthy position but if there are any free market farmers in Canada, the eastern Canadian potato producers have to be in that group. They have very rarely had to rely on government for any kind of stabilization or bailouts for their industry. They grew their own potatoes. They marketed their own potatoes. They exported their own potatoes and developed their own markets in South America and overseas in Algeria and the Middle East. They have been doing a tremendous job. They do not really see how government could assist them in any way in the selling of their crop.

In the whole situation mentioned earlier by a Bloc member with respect to free trade, GATT, NAFTA and so on, the potato industry is probably more ready for these efforts in bringing down trade barriers than any other commodity group in this country. It is that those in the potato industry have never been in favour of trade barriers. They have always had to rely on a free trade spirit in order to market their crop.

Even with that, since 1980, the last time there was a demand for this type of legislation, the number of acres of potatoes grown has come close to doubling. That is in the last 15 years. They have not only been able to market those potatoes; on a yearly basis, they have been able to increase their production and to sell everything they have had.

The only experience they have had with government has been as a result of the PVY-n crisis and it was thought they would not be able to market their potatoes in 1991 and 1992. The government assisted the growers in destroying thousands and thousands of pounds of potatoes for a certain price in order to relieve the market of potatoes in storage.

What happened a few months later was that there was a demand for the potatoes that were destroyed. They would have received a lot more money out in the marketplace than they did out of government. Any time the government has been associated with the market it tends to distort it. It is better left to the market system, especially these days. It is a free market commodity and has been doing quite well.

I am sorry I cannot lend any support to my colleague from the NDP for this bill. Basically there is no support from either the potato producers or the governments in eastern Canada.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on this private members' Bill C-266, an act respecting the orderly marketing of potatoes.

My speech has four main points. First, I will explain what this bill is about very briefly. Second, I will explain why this bill has failed in the past and will not be supported again in this House as we have seen from the speeches so far, in particular from the governing party. Third, I will outline the Reform Party's

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position on supply management and supply managed products. Finally, I will put forward some viable alternatives to government involvement through new supply managed industries.

The stated purpose of this bill is to ensure the orderly marketing of potatoes having due regard to the interests of producers as well as to consumers. It would establish a corporate body to be known as the Canadian potato marketing commission.

The commission would be composed of five to nine members who would not receive pay from government. The commission would operate in a somewhat similar fashion to that of the Canadian Wheat Board. It would act as a sole marketing agent for all imported potatoes and for potatoes produced in Canada.

(1150)

The commission, using a permit book system as the wheat board does, would pay producers to sell potatoes to the board. What we would have is a single desk buyer as we have with the Canadian Wheat Board.

Payments made to the consolidated revenue fund to offset any expenses the commission may have must be approved by Parliament. I was encouraged to see at least in the proposal there was the recognition that when we come to an expenditure of taxpayers' money in order to have proper accountability it should have approval by Parliament and not just by governor in council, the cabinet or the minister. That is what this bill is about.

This bill has been attempted before and has failed. The member for Mackenzie has attempted to pass the same bill. Bill C-246, an act respecting the orderly marketing of potatoes, received first reading on May 30, 1989. Bill C-252, an act respecting the orderly marketing of potatoes, received first reading June 19, 1991. Now here we go again with Bill C-266, an act respecting the orderly marketing of potatoes. I wonder if this member is trying to make an argument in favour of term limits for politicians so that we get new ideas into this House, ideas that change with the changing market conditions.

The fact this is the third time in six years the same member has put forward the same bill certainly indicates one thing: he holds an ideology; he sticks to his ideology regardless of whether or not producers agree with that ideology. Hon. members opposite have presented an overview of the state of the potato marketing industry and the general lack of support on the part of farmers and processors for this type of a bill.

An attempt was also made in 1980 to establish a potato marketing agency for eastern Canada. Public hearings were held, reports were submitted and the idea failed. The national potato agency task force presented its report for a program for the marketing of potatoes in Canada to the minister of agricul-

ture and the chairman of the National Farm Products Marketing Council on November 17, 1986 but nothing came of it.

In February 1988 the National Farm Products Marketing Council submitted a report on the inquiry into the merits of establishing a national marketing agency for potatoes. On April 28, 1988 Judge Teitelbaum of the Federal Court of Canada trial division at the request of a group of potato processors issued an order quashing the report. The conclusions and recommendations contained in the report were never implemented.

In the past there was never enough collective enthusiasm to implement a potato marketing agency. In the present it is not an idea whose time has come. In fact it is clearly an idea whose time has gone.

With the passage of the Uruguay round of GATT, the free trade agreement and NAFTA, the existing government co-ordinated marketing agencies have come under fire. In recent news stories we have heard some of the results of Canada putting tariff levels at the rate they are in other supply managed industries. There is a lot of pressure particularly from our largest trading partner, the United States, to have a rapid reduction in the tariff protection in the present supply managed industries. I am surprised the hon. member is proposing to put in place a new supply managed industry board under this type of situation.

On January 28 the Canadian Wheat Board was under fire because it requires end user certificates on imported American wheat. The Americans' response is to impose end user certificates on Canadian wheat entering the United States. If this threat were to become a reality the result would indeed cause a large problem for Canadian grain farmers who do ship Canadian grain into the United States. It would cause an increase in paperwork and another level of regulation which is totally unwanted and not needed by farmers.

(1155)

The United States has also served notice that it plans to challenge Canada's new import duties on dairy and poultry products. I mentioned this a few minutes ago. The levels set under GATT according to the United States really go against the spirit and the terms of NAFTA. That is the argument the United States has been using. Again, the mood just is not there on the part of the United States and certainly on the part of Canadian potato farmers for a new supply managed industry, especially when that industry is potatoes.

In terms of the disputes with the United States, who ends up being hurt by these disputes? It is not the bureaucrats who are hurt; it keeps them employed. It is not the politicians who are hurt; it gives them the spotlight and keeps their names in the news for a little longer. In the end it is the farmers who lose from these disputes. We want to do nothing that will encourage trading disputes.

Government Orders

I believe that having this bill which is being proposed today in *Hansard* could be considered an anachronism, an error in time.

My wife and I went to see “Richard III” last Friday night in Edmonton and as you know, Shakespeare is famous for the anachronisms in his plays, but there is a new anachronism in this play. “Richard III” came out on stage crippled up in a wheelchair, which of course is a new anachronism that was built in by the writers of this version of “Richard III”.

This piece of legislation is very much like using a wheelchair in a play that took place hundreds of years before wheelchairs existed, electric wheelchairs in particular. I believe it is totally out of place.

I want to talk a little bit about Reform’s position on supply management in general. Reform believes that farmers should definitely have the right to work together collectively. They should have the right to strengthen any part of their industry or their business they feel can be strengthened by this co-operative work.

For example, I believe there is a very strong future for co-operatives in agriculture. I also believe we will see farmers with other business people in small communities in particular forming new co-operatives as a mechanism to work together for the common advantage of the farmers and the processors involved. I encourage this type of activity. I believe there is a future for various other types of joint ventures but not for new supply managed industries.

The greatest service this government can provide to producers who are in the supply managed industry right now is to be honest and open with the farmers. We know the world is moving more and more to an open and free marketplace. Knowing that, the greatest service government can provide for farmers is to say: “We are moving to a system of more competition. We know it is going to be more difficult even for present supply managed industries to compete, but at least we are acknowledging it and we want to help in any way we can without interfering in the move to an open market system”.

Clearly, this bill is totally out of place and I am very pleased to see the support from the members opposite.

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the subject of Bill C-266.

As the House knows the government recently concluded a comprehensive negotiation on a new GATT agreement which will create a new trade regime under the World Trade Organization. As a member of the GATT and the World Trade Organization, as well as being a signatory to the North American Free Trade Agreement, Canada has created for itself many new and expanding opportunities and with those, certain international trade obligations.

Bill C-266 as it is written suggests that a commission would, as the sole marketing agent, control all imports and all exports of potatoes. Under NAFTA and the MTN Canada has agreed not—let me stress not—to introduce any prohibitions or restrictions on the importation or exportation of goods.

(1200)

If Canada were to change its current policies and thereby affect current and future access to our market, Canada would be modifying benefits that our trading partners would expect to accrue under the provisions of the trade agreements. This could be subject to challenge by our trading partners.

The Canadian potato and processing industries are major exporters and have significant interests in free trade and open markets. I realize the potato industry has been faced with many issues in recent years that have affected the marketing of potatoes both domestically and internationally. However, I do believe the issues would best be addressed in a manner that does not have negative implications on trade or violates our trade obligations.

For that reason I am not prepared to support Bill C-266 and I am sure that although the member opposite has real concern for that industry he can understand that in changing times we have to deal with the realities and that we are in a new trading pattern and these items will be dealt with in an open and free trade market.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members’ Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96, the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION ACT

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration) moved that Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I extend a warm word of welcome to all my colleagues as we resume this very important session of Canada’s Parliament.

As we said in the immigration plan last November 1, the focus in immigration policy must be nation building and people and not criminals and their despicable deeds. It is time to get back to what we do best, building a nation that is strong and free.

However, the actions of a small criminal element that has infiltrated our immigration system have occupied our time and the public’s attention for far too long. The actions of a few have

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hurt the reputations of many. Logically we must respond to the few so that we may protect the many and uphold our laws. Bill C-44 accomplishes that twin goal.

There can be no equating the words criminal and immigrant. Immigrants helped build this country and are the men and women who have made history and the men and women who will help us build Canada's tomorrows. Criminals are only the riff-raff of society who are not even a footnote in the history of our proud immigration tradition.

Members on all sides of this House are to be congratulated on the speedy work in getting this legislation, Bill C-44, before the House of Commons at third reading. A special thanks to my very able parliamentary secretary, the member of Parliament for Halifax, as well to the committee members of my caucus who went well beyond the normal working days on this important piece of legislation.

The bill comes back with a number of amendments that will clarify timeframes, technical points and a transition period. This is very much a case in point of how this government first listens and then acts. Quite simply, the amendments to the immigration act that we are dealing with today in Bill C-44 will move us a significantly long way toward restoring integrity to our system.

(1205)

The bill is an enforcement tool set. It allows us to fix some worn equipment without shutting down all the machinery.

[*Translation*]

I know there are those who would use criminal behaviour by a few as an excuse for draconian law. For those people, we have not gone far enough. To them I simply say, this government was not elected to shake a chainmail fist or wield a big stick.

[*English*]

Then there are those who say that we have gone too far, that we have reacted too strongly against the actions of just a few wrongdoers. To those Canadians let me say that although the criminal element that has intruded into the immigration process is tiny, it is at the very same time very destructive.

As a result the government has struck a middle course between those extremes. A balanced, realistic middle course is often the wisest course, for it takes us away from the rocks of extremism and reaction while steering us clear of the dead waters of those who would do nothing.

This legislation is a central component of our ten-year immigration strategy. It is not the most important part, but it is one of the two underpinnings that will make it successful. Fair access and the rule of law are the two principles embodied in our plan which was tabled on the floor of the House of Commons last November 1.

Those who abuse our nation's hospitalities and laws will not be given the privilege of access. It is simple: play by the rules or face the consequences. Canadians do not want any more queue jumping, any abusing of the system or any manipulating of the system. Most certainly we on the government side will strive to prevent criminals from taking the places of both legitimate refugees and legitimate immigrants to Canada.

The tools being provided here through Bill C-44 will allow law enforcement officials to get the job done. While I am on the subject of tools and law enforcement, let me pay tribute to the special police, RCMP and immigration task force that was recently established. It is making steady progress at removing foreign criminals from our midst. While the task force does not have any direct linkages with the legislation before us today, it is very much part and parcel of our resolve to restore integrity to the immigration and refugee process. That task force was also a response to our citizens' demands and needs and that task force is very much getting the job done. My government colleagues and I are very appreciative for those professional efforts.

[*Translation*]

I want to say in a straightforward, non-partisan way, that past governments, and that is governments in the plural, simply let too many people in the door without proper legislation in place to stop criminals.

[*English*]

Let me recap quickly for our colleagues in the House today the main points in this legislation.

First, serious criminals deemed to be a danger to the public will not be allowed to claim refugee status as a means to delaying their removal from Canada. For instance, we will not tolerate any longer those cases that we have read about in our newspapers or watched on our television sets in which a convicted murderer serving time in Kingston penitentiary now is able to compel the Immigration and Refugee Board to travel to that penitentiary to listen to an obviously unworthy refugee claim.

Second, appeals against removal orders by persons convicted of series crimes will be decided by the minister or the minister's designate and not by the immigration appeal division.

[*Translation*]

Third, senior immigration officers will be allowed to terminate refugee hearings because of criminality.

[*English*]

Another common sense application is if once the refugee process has started and subsequent to that starting information comes to the fore that the individual has committed a serious offence, we will now be able to stop that refugee hearing, move

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it into an immigration inquiry hearing and proceed with the evidence provided before that tribunal.

(1210)

If the information we receive is validated, that individual will be subject to deportation rather than any refugee hearing. Again, it is a practical response to some of the cases that over the last number of years have certainly caused much public attention and some public grief.

Four, this legislation will also give immigration officers the authority to seize identity documents from international mail if it is clear they are meant to be used to circumvent immigration and other Canadian requirements. As well, senior immigration officials will also be able to turn formerly deported people away from our borders if those individuals are attempting to come back to Canada without proper permission. This will now be done without having to go through the inquiry procedure that at present is mandated on those officials.

[*Translation*]

Fifth, it will ensure that persons with summary convictions, whether obtained inside Canada or abroad, would be inadmissible.

[*English*]

Furthermore, thanks to the co-operative spirit shown in this House by members opposite in allowing me to propose a new amendment at report stage, this legislation will prevent the release on day parole and unescorted temporary absences of inmates who face deportation following the completion of their sentences.

It is our firm belief that because these foreign criminals are not going to be reintegrated into Canadian society, there is no need to let them work slowly back into our Canadian communities. Once again, this is a common sense practical step forward. For this I would also like to thank for their co-operation Canada's Solicitor General and Canada's Minister of Justice.

Bill C-44 will also allow us to stop the processing of citizenship while that same person is undergoing an immigration inquiry. Once again, this is a practical step forward in which the right and the left hands will work in conjunction with each other as opposed to being in a vacuum apart from each other.

As I mentioned earlier, this government is prone to listen before it acts. As a result of our listening to the committee work, there are also a number of changes before the House today. Some involve the transition while others are designed to prevent costly and time consuming court challenges based on the scope of authority the bill gives to senior immigration officials.

Of a more substantive nature is the definition of what constitutes a serious crime. We propose to remove the right of appeal to the immigration refugee board on all grounds—I underline all grounds—for individuals certified to be a danger to the public. This means that those who have committed a crime involving violence, weapons, sexual assault or drug offences that are punishable with a sentence of 10 years or more will no longer be able to tie up our system.

They would retain their right to seek judicial review in the federal court. Of course humanitarian issues would be considered by the minister or the minister's designate when a decision has been rendered.

Persons not considered such a danger would retain their right of appeal on all grounds, including the humanitarian grounds, to the immigration appeal division.

[*Translation*]

This is good legislation and it will go a long way to removing the stigma that a few wrongdoers have placed on all immigrants. There is no welcome mat in this country for thugs and evildoers. They can stay right where they are.

[*English*]

We know that Canadians are a tolerant and compassionate people. These are some of the values that have allowed us to build the kind of society we are, distinguishing us from other countries and societies.

(1215)

The public frustration and exacerbation expressed from time to time are very much aimed at those who have twisted the rules or those who have broken covenants with Canada. Accordingly Bill C-44 targets those people.

The problems we faced required the legislative action we are taking today. Let me be very clear: the porch light is on and the welcome mat is out for those who are genuine refugees, those who are escaping brutality and torture in their countries, individuals who are not only seeking out Canada as some would have us believe but seeking out other countries of the world. They are seeking no more or no less than the things we have in abundance in Canada. The porch light is on and the welcome mat is out for those who want to help us create jobs and continue to build this great nation.

Let us get on with it, for there is much nation building to be done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend my best wishes for the New Year to all my colleagues in this House.

Today, we are going back to work after a seven-week break. Before speaking to Bill C-44, I would like to salute and congratulate my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, the leader of the Bloc Quebecois and Leader of

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the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, Lucien Bouchard. Thanks to his courage and determination he was able to survive a terrible disease and win a very tough fight for his life. He will soon be back in this House and in the political arena. I wish to say to him how happy and proud of him we are. Quebec needs Mr. Bouchard.

I rise to participate in the debate at third reading on Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act. This bill was introduced and read the first time in the House of Commons on June 17, 1994. It passed second reading on September 27 and was then referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The committee tabled its report after hearing many individuals and organizations interested in this bill. Bill C-44 was debated at report stage in this House on December 12, 1994.

According to its authors, the bill has the following objectives: prevent a person convicted of a crime punishable by a term of imprisonment of 10 years or more in Canada or abroad from claiming refugee status; give immigration officers the authority to seize documents sent by international mail that could be used for fraudulent purposes; remove from the Immigration Appeal Division appeals based on grounds of equity, when the minister believes the appellant to be a danger to the public—from what I just heard, he will use this power very often—; take away from a person affected by this the right to appeal, on the grounds that they represent a security risk.

As I have said time and again, we in the Bloc Québécois say that the state and the government have the right and the duty to protect Canada and Quebec against criminals whatever their origins.

(1220)

We agree that entry should be denied to immigrants and refugee claimants who have committed major crimes against persons in their country of origin and decide to flee to Canada, given our reputation as host country. While recognizing that there are problems with the criminal activity of refugees and immigrants, we suggest that the government already has all the legal and administrative means to deal with this situation.

For example, under the present legislation, Bill C-86, the minister has the power to have war criminals and anyone who has perpetrated a crime against humanity removed. But the government is taking no action against criminals in this category. Several Nazis still live in Canada. Léon Mugesera, said to be a Rwandan criminal by his own community, has not yet been expelled, in spite of the questions I have put to the minister in this House.

The law presently states that persons convicted of an offence outside of Canada are inadmissible to the refugee claim determination system when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the offence of which they have been convicted may constitute an offence punishable under a Canadian Act of Parliament by a maximum term of imprisonment of ten years or more and when the Minister of Immigration is satisfied that they might be a threat to public safety in Canada.

This is good enough for me, but I must point out that the Canadian Council for Refugees wants this clause that I just read to be deleted. Needless to say, they object to it being expanded to include permanent residents.

This bill is an excessive and disproportionate response to the two murders committed in Toronto in the spring of 1994 by foreign nationals. It was produced hastily, without any prior consultations, in spite of the fact that the minister promised when he took office that national consultations on the immigration policy would be held, at a cost of over \$1 million.

Even the counsels and groups who work with immigrants and refugees were surprised. This bill is this Liberal government's response to the drastic and reactionary positions endorsed by the Reform Party. This bill, and several statements made by the minister, reflect a shift to the right by the Liberal Party of Canada.

It is very unfortunate that the government rejected every amendment moved by the opposition. The Liberal majority had already rejected the Bloc Québécois proposals during the clause study of the bill. Moreover, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration took, at the report stage, the same inflexible stance as his Liberal colleagues in the legislative committee, rejecting over 20 amendments I personally moved on behalf of the Bloc Québécois as well as those put forth by my colleague from Laval East.

One of our amendments, for example, was designed to exclude from the application of the new legislation landed immigrants who have resided in Canada for ten years or more, as is currently the case in Australia and several other countries. Some of these people have no emotional ties with their country of origin. As it stands, there are people who have been living in this country for over 40 years who could now be removed. The minister and the Liberal majority have rejected this perfectly valid amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois.

(1225)

Many organizations testified before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, including: the Canadian council for refugees, which is a very well-respected organization in that sector; the national immigration law section of the Canadian bar association; the Canada employment and immigration union; the United Nations high commissioner for refugees; the Canadian section of Amnesty International; the national action

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committee on the status of women; the Canadian labour congress—incidentally, I congratulate CLC officials for the quality of their submission as well as for their very supportive position regarding immigrants and refugees; the inter-church committee for refugees; the Quebec association of immigration lawyers; the Canadian ethnocultural council; the immigration and refugee board; the customs and excise union, etc.

None of these organizations supported the bill. The overwhelming majority of them strongly opposed this legislation. Some even made suggestions to help the House ensure that this bill is better designed, and that it is fair and efficient. Some asked for the outright withdrawal of that legislation because it is unfair and it violates commitments made by Canada regarding political asylum.

To that effect, allow me, Mr. Speaker, to quote from an article written by Nantha Kumar, which appeared in a Montreal publication called *Hour*, on December 15, 1994. The author alludes to a war said to be fought against refugees within the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

[*English*]

The war is being fought on two fronts. Abroad, plain clothed immigration officers sit at major international airports, intercepting people they suspect are heading for Canada to apply for refugee status. At home, a propaganda war is being waged against claimants in order to convince Canadians that a more hard line approach is needed.

Montreal immigration lawyer, Richard Kurland, says that he has discovered “a department within the immigration department”. Kurland says the communication strategy is clearly intended to sell the Canadian public on an enforcement oriented immigration policy. For example, when a government sponsored report by Professor James Hathaway criticized the fairness and legality of some practices at the Immigration and Refugee Board, it failed to make the front pages of most newspapers.

What instead made headlines the day the Hathaway report was released was the first of a series of immigration abuse stories. “The anti-immigrant and anti-refugee stories at the time were extraordinary”, adds Kurland.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, says Kurland, “is not only under serious political pressure from the Reform Party. He is also under siege by the department within the department”.

[*Translation*]

We, Bloc Québécois members, deplore this regrettable swing to the right by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Such a move, which signals a dangerous shift towards intolerance, is made so as to manipulate public opinion and make Canadians forget that the vast majority of them, including myself, have come here in successive waves of immigrants, since the discovery and founding of this country.

I agree that something must be done regarding criminals in Canada, including those who are not Canadian citizens and who are seeking refugee status. However, any measure must comply with the Charter, as well as with the international conventions to which Canada is a party. I should also add that the minister and all of us agree that the overwhelming majority of immigrants are honest and law-abiding people.

(1230)

The question therefore arises whether we really need legislation to deal with this very small minority. After all, the government already has a whole arsenal of laws, regulations and resources to deal with the small number of criminal immigrants.

At the very least, this bill raises some very serious constitutional questions. For instance, since its decision in the Singh case in 1985, the Supreme Court has determined that everyone in Canada, not just every citizen or every permanent resident but everyone in Canada, is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. According to the Supreme Court, an inquiry is necessary in situations that are not clear.

The Supreme Court also says that the potential cost of conducting an inquiry on certain refugees does not constitute reasonable grounds for restricting that right, even if the government says it would be too expensive. According to the Supreme Court, this would not justify depriving someone of the right to an inquiry.

We are very critical of Bill C-44. The powers of senior immigration officers, which are already very extensive, have been considerably expanded with respect to the exclusion of claimants of refugee status at the Canadian border or at points of entry. The bill gives these senior immigration officers the authority to issue a warrant for the arrest of a person who fails to appear. Such warrants may be issued in the case of any person with respect to whom a decision is to be made or an examination or inquiry is to be held. The warrant may be served by the police in order to force the person concerned to appear.

I am very concerned about the excessive authority vested in senior immigration officers. In any democratic society, judges, and not mere public servants, are authorized to issue arrest warrants.

Regarding the right to appeal on compassionate grounds, the original wording of the bill was amended to read that the minister must issue a statement that a person constitutes a danger to the public, before he loses his right to appeal, and the minister has said he intends to make frequent use of this authority.

The term “danger to the public” is very ambiguous. No definition is given, which opens the way to arbitrary decisions and abuse. Who will make the very crucial decision to state that someone is a danger to the public? The minister, public servants, the RCMP or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service? On what grounds? Will they go through thousands of files with a fine tooth comb to find out whether someone constitutes a

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danger to the public in Canada? The decisions will be secret. This is contrary to the practice in our judiciary system, where hearings are public. Those are just a few of our concerns.

There is another aspect I would like to discuss. The bill does not weigh the seriousness of the crime and the danger to the host country, in this case Canada, as provided under the Geneva Convention on refugees. According to many authors and legal experts, if a person is threatened, on political grounds, with certain death, life imprisonment or serious abuse if he returns to his country of origin, he should be granted refugee status even if he is guilty of a serious crime.

(1235)

The seizure of international mail by immigration officers just mentioned by the minister constitutes another very dangerous provision in a democratic society.

The Refugee Convention distinguishes between crimes of common law and those of a political nature, a distinction completely absent from Bill C-44.

According to the manual of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, consideration must first be given to the nature of and reason for the crime, in other words whether it was committed for truly political reasons or whether the motive was monetary or purely personal.

Neither does the bill make a distinction between prosecution and persecution. According to the manual of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, a person guilty of a common law offence who is liable to an extreme penalty may be in a situation that is tantamount to persecution as defined by the Geneva Convention. In certain countries, prosecution may be a means of persecuting someone, and the law may be applied in a discriminatory manner.

The bill refers to a person convicted of an offence that, if committed in Canada, would carry a term of imprisonment of ten years or more. It mentions the maximum sentence for the offence, not the sentence actually handed down. As you know, the circumstances of a crime may vary from one extreme to another, justifying a maximum or minimum sentence accordingly.

It should be pointed out that, in general, Canada's Criminal Code does not specify minimum sentences for offences. Thus, an individual convicted of an offence for which a term of imprisonment of ten years or more may be imposed might not be sentenced to jail or even fined. He might simply be put on probation or given a suspended sentence.

Among the most important briefs submitted to the legislative committee, I would like to cite the very comprehensive document and testimony of the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees. This organization is concerned that certain classes of refugees will be found inadmissible at a point of entry or elsewhere in Canada, and that they will be deported without an impartial examination of their need for protection. This organization, which includes about ten Canadian churches, is therefore asking that refugee claimants be allowed to present arguments against their deportation before an impartial and independent tribunal.

They object to legitimate refugees claiming refugee status at the border being turned around without even considering their need for protection. The right of asylum is entrenched not only in the Geneva Convention but also in the Charter of the Organization of American States, as well as several other international instruments.

Notwithstanding the excellent presentations from such organizations and individuals, who are very knowledgeable on the subject, the government is rigidly standing its ground, except for making a few minor changes.

On the other hand, section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that no one may be deprived of the right to liberty and security, except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice. Section one of the Charter says that these rights may be subject only to reasonable and demonstrably justified limits.

It should be pointed out that Bill C-44 is a very technical, difficult, complex and sensitive bill.

(1240)

The Liberal government is showing a blatant lack of sensitivity towards immigrants and refugees who are victims of persecution. In so doing, the Liberal government goes back on promises made in its red book.

Today, the minister stated the same inflexible position as he did at first and second reading. He paid no attention to the opinion of the opposition.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration already had the means, as I said earlier, to deny criminals entry into Canada and to send them back to their country of origin. Several administrative measures like the ones mentioned earlier by the minister have been taken to do so. The minister created working groups made up of immigration, RCMP and local police officers in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver in order to arrest and deport criminals in the process of obtaining immigrant or refugee status.

This House is also considering Bill C-37, an act to amend the Young Offenders Act and the Criminal Code. This bill also deals

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with young people who do not have Canadian citizenship and have been convicted of criminal offences.

Finally, a memorandum of agreement was signed by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and Correctional Services Canada in order to make deporting foreign criminals faster and easier. Hundreds of people have been tracked down and deported from Canada. RCMP officers and others have been posted in Canadian embassies and at major airports abroad in order to prevent criminals from entering Canada.

In November 1993, the recently appointed minister stated that he wanted to reduce political influence in refugee matters. He told *La Presse* that he wanted a system with as little political involvement as possible. Yet, this bill contradicts what he said in 1993. He wants to politicize even more the immigration and refugee determination process. He will issue statements to the effect that someone constitutes a danger to the public and will also stop appeals. This bill raises questions on the independence of the IRB and all administrative tribunals.

He also said that he wanted to introduce a more progressive approach and move away from Tory positions. Indeed, the minister's approach differs from that of the Conservatives. However, it is not because his refugee policies are more progressive, but because they are more reactionary and harsher than were those of the Conservatives. A Liberal minister is actually doing something the Conservatives never dared to do.

When the minister took over his portfolio, he immediately separated the immigration component from the department of public security, a measure which we welcomed at the time. However, Bill C-44 now links immigration to crime. Once again, the minister, like his government, does exactly the opposite of what he preached during the election campaign.

This bill gives the impression that all criminals in Canada are immigrants and refugees, which is utterly false and unfair. In fact, the crime rate among new Canadians is lower than that for those born in Canada. It should also be pointed out that, in recent years, the crime rate has been on the decline in Canada, which is of course a good thing.

Let me say a word on the issue of patronage at the IRB. In 1994, the government appointed, or renewed, the mandate of over 100 IRB members, including 65 new ones.

(1245)

The IRB was created in 1988 by an act of Parliament. Although the board is a quasi-judicial tribunal, it has been used, since the beginning, as a patronage instrument.

The board is the largest administrative tribunal in the country; it is made up of 210 members appointed by the governor in council, as well as 40 adjudicators, who are public servants.

Since the beginning of the 35th Parliament, the Bloc Québécois has been asking that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration fulfill its mandate and review the appointments of IRB members. It must be understood that, while the IRB is subject to the power of review of tribunals, it is also subject to the administrative control of Parliament.

Since January 1994, the committee's Liberal majority only once allowed a review of a dozen or so appointments. Although very little time was allowed for this exercise—just one morning—we could see to what extent the Liberals had reproduced the same kind of patronage system established by the former Conservative government.

Take the following appointments made by the present government. These are Liberals and friends of the party, appointed as members of the IRB with an annual salary of \$75,000: Auguste Choquette, former Liberal member for Lotbinière, Quebec, from 1963 to 1968, who was even temporarily disbarred by the Barreau du Québec; Joan Kouri, former Liberal candidate in Brome—Missisquoi, Quebec, in 1993 and former president of the Liberal Women's Federation; Philomen Wright, supporter of the hon. member for York West and current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and member of the York West Liberal Riding Association in Ontario, a friend of the minister; Elke Homs, former assistant to various Liberal MPPs in Ontario; Sherry Wiebe, director of research for the Manitoba Liberal Caucus; Inderjit Bal, appointed in 1994, who had to resign following a review and revelations before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and who sought the Liberal nomination in the riding of Bramalae—Gore—Malton, Ontario, in 1993 and organized the campaign of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration; Ravi Naqvi, who unsuccessfully sought the Liberal nomination in Mississauga West, Ontario; Patricia Davey, wife of a former aid to Pierre Elliott Trudeau; Ethel Teitelbaum, executive assistant to the former Liberal Minister of Finance, Donald MacDonald.

Some of these board members had no previous knowledge or experience of refugee problems, as we realized during meetings of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship. The case of Mr. Michael Schelew, former deputy chairperson of the board, appointed by the present minister, goes well beyond the most fundamental limits of decency.

Because of internal wrangling within the board between Liberal and Conservative factions, Mr. Schelew was suspended and a legal inquiry was ordered by the minister. Pressured to resign, he agreed to do so only the day the inquiry was to start

and after he was promised more than \$100,000 of public money, although he had not completed even one year on the job.

The minister never really explained what happened in this rather embarrassing case for the government. It bought the silence of this deputy chairperson of the board with a substantial amount of money, while cutting payments to the unemployed, welfare recipients and the neediest in our society.

(1250)

Worse, with this outlandish settlement, the minister prevented the judge from looking into the board's mismanagement. The Bloc Quebecois has asked for, and will continue to demand, a public inquiry into the operations of the IRB which, at the very least, is going through a serious crisis. The Bloc Quebecois will continue to denounce patronage appointments by the minister and his government. We will demand a review of all future appointments by the committee. It is high time that the minister put into practice the recommendations contained in Professor Hathaway's report, that he personally commissioned.

I ask the minister and his government, instead of blindly and stubbornly defending Bill C-44, to try to counter the rise of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment in Canada. We must promote better understanding among Canadians, regardless of their origin.

On many occasions, in this House, I have decried the climate of hostility towards newcomers which is spreading across this country. I also reminded members that we have to meet our international humanitarian obligations and provide a safe haven for victims of political, religious or social persecution.

Unfortunately, immigrants, and especially refugees, are increasingly being used as scapegoats for the social and economic problems Canada is facing. In this context, Bill C-44 only serves to reinforce prejudices linking crime to immigration.

As an immigrant, and the official opposition critic for immigration and citizenship for over a year, I have noticed that Canada is becoming increasingly less generous and welcoming with refugees, in spite of the commitment made by the Liberal government in the red book to develop a humanitarian refugee policy and to admit a fair share of them.

I will point out that Canada is only taking in less than 0.25 per cent of persecuted and displaced people throughout the world. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 100 million of these people. Therefore, I ask the minister and his government to promote a more humane and more generous attitude toward newcomers, especially refugees, instead of defending Bill C-44 which is so full of injustices and will lead to abuses.

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In this international year of tolerance, the government should organize an awareness campaign highlighting the contributions of immigrants to Canadian society and the benefits of immigration.

For these reasons, I will vote against the bill.

[English]

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, here we are again back to debating a bill which there really need not be much debate on. Bill C-44 was a poor piece of legislation several months ago when we began debate and it remains a bad piece of legislation today.

When this bill was introduced we examined it carefully and came to the conclusion that it, not unlike the party and the minister who proposed it, was all talk and no action, big on words, short on effect.

Bill C-44 is snake oil. It is being marketed as a cure all, a fix to the national mess that we call immigration policy.

Last year people died because of poor enforcement of the immigration policy. People who did not deserve to be residents of Canada remained residents of Canada. People who should never have been allowed to enter this country were allowed to enter.

The Immigration and Refugee Board laughed in the collective face of Canadians and ignored the needs of thousands of suffering refugees around the world by jacking up inland acceptance rates, granting hearings to even the most outrageous claims, overturning the deportation orders of dangerous, violent repeat offenders and suckering taxpayers out of a billion dollars or more all in the name of their brand of compassion.

(1255)

In response to these and many other outrages that were splashed across the front pages of papers across the country and which rightly angered Canadians who felt that our immigration system was out of control, the minister responded by saying: "No problem. Don't look at the planes that crash, most of them don't". He said we need to pay more attention to the planes that land, the success stories, and ignore the rest.

We and millions of Canadians did not ignore the planes that crashed. Every time one of the minister's metaphorical planes crashed, every time the Immigration and Refugee Board screwed up, every time the immigration enforcement fell down on the job and every time the court system was abused by queue jumpers it hurt Canadians, it hurt immigrants across the country and it hurt the tens of thousands of genuine refugees who are overseas and need our help but cannot get it because we have left it up to the Immigration and Refugee Board to award scarce places to those who manage to show up, get a legal aid attorney to plead their case and push the right politically correct buttons of the IRB.

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Sometimes when the minister's metaphorical planes crash it costs Canadians outrageous amounts of money but sometimes it costs people their lives.

Suddenly things got a little too hot for the minister of immigration. He suddenly realized that he had to do something, anything, and he had to do it fast. He thought he needed to table something, needed to make it look as though he really made a change or had taken charge and was really cleaning up his act. He and his legislative assistants got together and hurriedly drafted Bill C-44.

Here it is, they told us, the panacea, the cure for the immigration problems. With C-44 they assured us they were getting tough and would not tolerate abuses in immigration. This would stop the tragedies that occurred last year and are just waiting, mark my words, to happen again.

Bill C-44 is an impressive looking document. It is pages and pages of thick legal text adding this to the Immigration Act. It strikes out some parts, redefines some things and reiterates others.

Bill C-44 is really a whole lot of nothing at all. Is it a cure all for immigration woes?—not even close. Does it tackle the serious problems of morale and under staffing in the immigration department, especially in the area of enforcement?—no, it does not. Does it take away the incentive or the means for lawyers and advocates to endlessly tie up the IRB and our courts with appeal after appeal?—no way.

Does it restore accountability to the immigration decision making process, a lack of accountability that has allowed the immigration minister to slither away from foul ups by saying: "What can I do, it is an independent board", or allowing the IRB to say it is accountable only to the courts?—not even close. Does it secure the front door, our ports of entry?—no.

Does it get to the root of virtually all the problems in immigration today, the problems of numbers, too many to be properly handled by the department under any circumstances with the degree of care and precision that would allow for careful and thorough screening of all applicants?—no, it does not.

Here is what C-44 does. It provides an easy out for the minister and the government who are utterly incapable of making real choices, exercising real leadership and taking action, who instead are always looking for the easy way out, the appearance of action, much ado about nothing, sound and fury signifying nothing. Bill C-44 is exactly that. It is a great deal of legislative sound and fury which signifies absolutely nothing to the average law-abiding Canadian who wants a sane immigration policy and to immigrants who just want to start a new life, obey the law and enjoy their new home.

(1300)

The minister of immigration has often spoken of his lofty ideals for immigration. He has often presented to Canadians and this House his vision of what immigration should do for Canada and what Canada should do for immigrants.

The minister has tried to argue that high immigration levels, the IRB and other elements of Canada's immigration policy are good for Canada because they enhance Canada's economy. He said that immigrants put into the economy more than they take out. We do not argue that. He has argued that immigration is a Canadian legacy, that immigration built Canada, it continues to build Canada and should build Canada in the future. That is obvious. That is the Reform Party's position on these points, just as it is the Liberals' position, the Bloc's position and also the NDP's position. It is even the position of the previous government.

The minister of immigration is taking no high road when he talks about the history of immigration and the need for that continued tradition. However there is a huge difference in talking about the past, talking about broad universally shared ideals and putting those ideals and values into practice.

That is where this government and my party part company. We both agree that immigration is a vital part of the Canadian heritage. We both agree that immigrants are an asset to the economy.

It is time to get beyond the "we are for immigration but you are not" rhetoric. We are all for immigration. The Reform Party and the Liberal Party are for continued immigration. Frankly, we in the Reform Party think we speak for the Canadian people when we say that enough is enough of the name calling and mud slinging that surrounds the immigration debate. That is the sort of rhetoric the government likes to employ when discussing immigration.

As offensive as that sort of rhetoric is, the rhetoric contained in Bill C-44 is even more offensive. It is most offensive because it looks like legislation that could help. Only insiders, people who are intimately familiar with the workings of immigration in Canada, would know why this bill is of little value and why it is unnecessary.

As I said before, there is no disagreement over the value of immigration to Canada. The Reform Party says that Canada could do better when it comes to immigration policy. The Reform Party says that there are real solid immediate changes that could be made to Canada's immigration policy that would benefit not only Canadians but immigrants as well.

When the government thinks that the status quo, a status quo created by the former Conservative government, is the way to go with ultra high levels, levels that are more than twice as high as those in any other country on earth, astronomical levels in this day and age, levels that are simply too high for our immigration department to handle, is it any wonder that large numbers of

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undesirables are slipping through? Is it any wonder that large numbers of deportable people are evading arrest, given these astronomical numbers?

One way we can make a huge dent immediately in stopping large numbers of undesirables from entering the country and one way we can reduce the incredible number of deportable immigrants is simply to bring the total number of immigrants down to a reasonable sustainable level.

This minister and this government—and I dare them to stand up and say differently—have not established quotas on the number of immigrants entering the country. They have not reduced the numbers. They are simply taking credit for a lower number of applicants in some categories. It is smoke and mirrors.

Bill C-44 is the same sort of smoke and mirrors, the same sort of cynical politics. Take credit for something that is not real seems to be the motto of this government and this immigration minister.

Bill C-44 is not real. It too is smoke and mirrors. It too is a shell game. It too is cynical politics. This minister has tried to fool the people of Canada into thinking that something is happening when nothing is happening.

Let us go through this piece of legislation to see what it purports to do, why it does not do what it purports to do and why all members of this Parliament, those who want to report to their constituents with good consciences, will vote against this bill.

As a side bar, I know that not all members have had a chance to read this bill. Reading all bills is simply not possible for a member of Parliament. That is why I urge members to listen carefully as I go through the major clauses of Bill C-44 so that they will know why voting for this bill serves neither the interests of their communities nor the country as a whole.

(1305)

The first major thing this bill purports to do is to empower customs officers to seize identity documents that are fraudulent and sent through the mail. That is fantastic. I would love it if all fraudulent documents sent through the mail could be stopped and seized. Such a measure if implemented would take the heart out of the illegal immigrant industry and let me assure members that there is an industry out there.

The minister has included that clause to give the Canadian people the impression he intends to stop the flow of illegal documents, or at least curb it. What could be wrong with that? I will tell you. Mansel Legacy, the head of the Customs Excise Union, says that this measure is utterly unenforceable. He appeared before the standing committee.

Throughout the whole country there are only a handful of officers with the power and the job description to actually open and seize these documents. Further, law restricts officers from opening mail that is under 50 grams. Put a visa or an identity card in an envelope and weigh it and you will come up with the same thing I did. It weighs less than 50 grams. Even if someone were dumb enough to enclose a pound of fake passports in a single envelope there are only a handful of officers who would be able to seize them.

The minister wants to give the impression he is taking care of a serious problem in customs and immigration policy. In fact he is just introducing a clause that is a lot of talk but is utterly unenforceable. That is the first piece of evidence that this bill was introduced to do nothing more than pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians.

Another part of the bill that has been trumpeted by the minister as a serious get tough measure has been the limiting of immigration procedures for serious criminals. Bill C-44 promises to limit the appeals of serious criminals to the Immigration and Refugee Board. That is the board the minister so often defends which has developed a reputation for sending into the streets serious violent criminals and non-residents who have gone on to kill innocent Canadians. As he puts it, it is a great Canadian institution. I beg to differ.

On first sight it is a good move. That was certainly my first reaction until I heard from the various lawyers and others who appeared before us at the standing committee. I am no legal expert and obviously the minister is not either. It is important for both of us to turn to the advice of lawyers when a bill is discussed in the standing committee.

When the lawyers appeared before the standing committee they said that this bill would not stop criminal immigrants from making appeals, it would not even slow them down. Bill C-44 does not stop serious convicted criminals from making appeals; it only stops them from making one kind of appeal. Bill C-44 would stop the IRB from hearing appeals based on humanitarian and compassionate considerations only but it would still permit them to hear appeals on matters of fact and law.

The lawyers who handle immigration and refugee cases and have the knowledge and a vested interest here have told us that C-44 will do nothing more than make them change their paperwork a little. Instead of making an appeal on compassionate grounds, they will make an appeal on fact and law. The bottom line is that criminal immigrants stay in the country. They stay, we pay.

This measure, the second major part of the bill, will not work but it does sound good. It sounds good and it appeases the majority of Canadians who want tougher immigration laws without actually changing anything important. No vested interest will be offended. As such I have to give this government

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credit for its savvy. I have to give it credit for being able to write a bill that sounds like so much while delivering so little. It is a bill that appeases the majority without offending the ever so important minority who have the ear of the minister.

The third major part of this bill would make someone inadmissible for a claim before the IRB if it is discovered they have been convicted of a major crime in or outside Canada. That is great. Superb, as a matter of fact. That is exactly what the Reform Party has been demanding all along. Let us look a little closer at what Bill C-44 would really do.

(1310)

Experts appearing before the committee have told us that Bill C-44 would have the perverse effect for example of allowing people who are caught with illegal guns in the trunks of their cars to remain in Canada while those who write bad cheques will no longer be able to stay or to make that claim. If you ask me, neither of these people deserve to be heard before the Immigration and Refugee Board. Clearly this bill uses an arbitrary measure of criminality to determine who is bad and who is not.

There is something much more insidious about this section of the bill. For those who want to do their homework before voting on this bill, and I encourage all my hon. colleagues to do just that, this section of the bill is absolutely unnecessary. It is unnecessary because the minister through his representatives already has the power to stop refugee hearings for people who would constitute a danger to Canada.

I have a list of individuals or at least one individual here for whom the minister has already signed an order to remove him from the country. He has done so. He can intervene at any time. The minister would have an opportunity to intervene in any of those claims that would constitute a violation of the Immigration Act.

The minister already has the power and it has been legislated again into Bill C-44. The minister can already intervene and make ineligible for a refugee hearing people whose presence in Canada would constitute a danger to the public interest.

Bill C-44 is not necessary legally. It is only necessary politically. It is necessary because the minister of immigration does not have the political will. He does not have the guts to intervene personally to stop refugee hearings for people who do not deserve status in Canada.

He says that he cannot intervene. That is simply not true. The minister just does not want to intervene and that is a fact. He could have intervened on Mendoza or Inthavong. Rather than sticking his neck out and possibly offending the special interests, the minister is passing the buck to the IRB. Believe me, the IRB is the last group of people with whom we want to entrust the safety of Canadians. Bill C-44 is just a way for the minister to pass the buck.

As another side bar, compare Bill C-44 with the Reform Party's refugee determination proposals. In those proposals there is a recurring theme. That theme is that the minister should use the power already available to him under the Immigration Act to toughen up on refugee determination and stop dangerous and undeserving people from making claims. We have the guts to do it. I think the majority of government backbenchers would have the guts, but this minister does not. Think about that before raising your hand in favour of this bill.

The final major clause of Bill C-44 deals with people applying for citizenship who are convicted of serious crimes or who are guilty of serious crimes outside Canada. The bill would temporarily halt the processing of applications for citizenship for those who have been found to have criminal backgrounds. That ignores a very serious question, a question that we have posed to this minister again and again over the past year. When exactly are the backgrounds checked and how thoroughly? According to the minister all backgrounds are checked.

I do not need to tell you about the multiple and frequent cases of people who have been allowed into Canada. They have been given status and then because of tips or information on the side have been found to be serious criminals, even war criminals.

Our immigration department is simply not able to thoroughly and adequately check the backgrounds of the quarter of a million immigrants Canada accepts each year. It is just not possible given the numbers. In order to stop a citizenship application a background has to be discovered but we have neither the ability nor the manpower to do it. It will not work.

Even assuming the best case scenario in terms of Bill C-44 if it is implemented and is used effectively, what then? Many more deportation orders would be issued. Good news you say. Wrong. Perversely and as a direct result of the inaction of the current immigration minister and the previous immigration ministers, it is bad news. It is bad news because of the sheer number of deportation warrants that are currently on the books.

(1315)

Estimates, and that is all the immigration department has been kind enough to give us, suggest that there are up to 40,000 deportation warrants outstanding and unaccountable.

We have heard that in the city of Toronto there could be as many as 25,000 people who have deportation orders against them. Are they being rounded up? No. Are those numbers being substantially reduced? No. Can they be substantially reduced? Not given the priorities of this minister. The priorities of this minister are keeping the levels at the highest ever for Canada and the world, stressing family class immigration over independent immigration, keeping our inland acceptance rate of self-proclaimed refugees up to 50 times higher than other refugee accepting nations at a cost of over a billion dollars per year to the Canadian taxpayer. These priorities have not allowed the

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direction of attention and resources toward immigration enforcement.

I told the House there are up to 25,000 outstanding deportation warrants in Toronto. To round these people up and escort them out of the country is a group of only 30 people with few tools, virtually no self-protection equipment and morale that is lower than that of any other group of public servants I have ever come across.

Even if Bill C-44 adds a few more people to the deportation rolls, it will not mean more people actually leaving Canada. Even dangerous criminals will still be able to appeal their deportation orders endlessly in the courts and to the IRB, all at the taxpayers' expense and probably with some success.

Just a few weeks ago a suspected war criminal from Rwanda was apprehended in Montreal after having successfully made it through Canada's almost non-existent screening process. He was allowed permanent resident status in Canada. This is a person who is accused of playing an instrumental role in whipping up the racial hatred that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands and of ethnic cleansing of a sort not seen since World War II. Has he been deported? No. Is he in a holding cell? No. Is he in prison? No. He is on the streets, released by an adjudicator on a \$5,000 bond.

Had Bill C-44 already been passed would it have prevented this sort of outrage? No, it would not have. It does not address it at all.

Over the recess a foreign criminal by the name of Inthevong who had been convicted of assault, various minor crimes and playing a role in a murder, was scheduled for deportation. He was brought before one of the minister's appointees at the IRB and was set loose on Canadian streets.

Like most Canadians I take the stupidity of the Immigration and Refugee Board for granted. Adding insult to injury in this case is the fact that the minister for immigration, the representative of the people of Canada, had the power to intervene and chose not to do it. The minister openly said that he would not intervene in this case to reverse the decision of the Immigration and Refugee Board. I find that inexcusable.

Could Bill C-44 have stopped Inthevong's release? No, but the minister could have. The problem is not a lack of legislation. The Immigration Act gives the minister of immigration a broad and unique range of powers already. However all the ministerial power in the world will not do any good when the minister does not have the guts to use it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I would like to take a moment to ask members to be a little more aware of the

selection of words that can be used at times on issues that are sensitive and controversial but nonetheless very important.

I return the floor to the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

(1320)

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, legislation like Bill C-44 can even have the effect of giving the minister and the government an out, an excuse. Canadians have been asking of the minister: "Why are you not doing anything?", to which he can cynically answer if Bill C-44 passes, "I am".

Bill C-44 is an excuse. It is an out. It is a cheap substitute. This minister does not have the intestinal fortitude to do what has to be done.

The rationale behind Bill C-44 is contradictory. With Bill C-44 the minister says that the problem of criminals abusing our immigration system will be addressed. He says that Bill C-44 will allow for easier deportation. However, just a few short months ago the minister announced the creation of a task force of immigration officers and RCMP that would be charged with seeking out hundreds, if not thousands, of dangerous criminals that are in Canada illegally.

The minister has been remarkably silent about the success of the task force. He has not stood up in the House to trumpet the success of the initiative, an initiative that I said right from the start would not work.

It has not worked. Why? Because the task force is the clean-up crew for a mess that has been building for over two decades. The task force is trying to push undesirables out the back door at the same time as the front door has been left wide open, hanging by a hinge, rusting and squeaking in the wind. Also because once inside this great home that we call Canada undesirables are given the run of the place, hiding in the closets of the courts, ducking into the dark passageway of the IRB, making them untouchable, hidden by the very policy and regulation that the government has maintained from the previous government.

That is the crux of the issue. That is why the Reform Party is opposing the bill. We are not opposing it out of spite. We are not opposing it because we do not want an initiative of this minister to pass. We are opposing it because we have more than enough bills already. We have a massive series of laws on the books that were ostensibly designed to protect Canadians, to make immigration work for both Canadians and immigrants. They have not.

The House has passed a maze of laws that do nothing but allow those who have bad intentions and good legal counsel to make a mockery of Canada, to make us an international laughing stock. Every time one of the new immigration laws was passed a

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minister stood before the Canadian people and said: "See, I am doing something", when in fact he or she was doing nothing but avoiding real action.

That is what is going on here. That is what the current minister of immigration is doing. That is what the government has done in so many areas. An overwhelming deficit and high taxation threaten to relegate this once great country to third world status. The response to this crisis is that the government wants to raise taxes and to make some non-offensive cuts to government spending. Then it says: "We are doing something", when in fact things are getting worse.

Crime threatens the security of our neighbourhoods and the tranquillity that Canadians have long taken for granted and considered their birthright. The government says: "Let us pass a gun control law. See, we are doing something", when in fact nothing is being done about the real problem.

We have an immigration system that is out of control. The government gives us Bill C-44 and says: "See, we are doing something", when in fact it is doing nothing at all. It is all smoke and mirrors and more of the same. It is cynical politics designed to fool the Canadian people into thinking that something is being done.

There is something that can be done. There is a way to clean up our immigration mess. The Reform Party has led the way and has put itself on the line. We have taken the high road by offering real solutions.

The IRB is a large part of the immigration problem. We have offered a solution. Disband the IRB. Subsume its functions under the minister. Take more refugees from abroad. Tighten up our inland process so that it is more in line with the determination systems of other countries and is not driven by special interests. We have offered 13 proposals which, if enacted, would make the refugee system work better for both Canadians and refugees. It is a win-win situation.

(1325)

We have told the minister to exercise his powers to stop those that abuse the system by making appeal after appeal and to stop refugee hearings that are manifestly unfounded. We have told the government to cut the total number of immigrants to levels that are internally proportionate, numbers that the immigration department can handle, numbers that would still make Canada the world leader in immigration. We have told the government to increase the percentage of immigrants who come from the independent category.

C.D. Howe, as reported in the *Globe and Mail*, agrees with this proposal. Raising the number of independent immigrants would have the effect of making immigration a net positive for Canada. It would cut the \$700 million bill for family reunification and cut the number of people who would come to Canada unchecked with questionable backgrounds.

The minister claimed to have done this but anyone able to read a column of numbers knows that he was not on the mark. The numbers of family class immigrants under the minister's most recent targets actually goes up, not down. Smoke and mirrors, more of the same.

We have offered real solutions, not bogus solutions like Bill C-44. We have said that the government and the immigration minister must be accountable. He must do more than just introduce faulty legislation that gives the impression of action without addressing any of the real problems or resulting in real benefit. We have offered solutions and they have been ignored by the government.

I urge my hon. colleagues, through you, Mr. Speaker, to vote no on this bill. Members, like the people of Canada, may have been talked into believing that the bill will solve some of the problems plaguing immigration policy today. I am here to tell them, with all sincerity and with partisanship aside, that it will not. I am here to tell them that the bill is just an excuse for inaction. It is an excuse for a minister who does not want to exercise the power already available to him, a minister who wants to pass the buck.

For those on both sides of the House who want to represent their constituents, who are truly concerned about making a difference, making government work and making government accountable, I urge members to read the bill and discuss it with people in the know from either side of the ideology fence. Once they have had their concerns validated from their own trusted resources I urge them to do the right thing and vote no on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Following the minister's intervention and that of the two critics, members during the next five hours will be allowed up to a maximum of 20-minute interventions subject to a 10-minute question or comment period.

Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with honour that I rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-44.

Leaving my prepared text for a minute, I want to say that many of the concerns brought forward by the Reform Party relating to enforcement and the resources in the department are also shared by the minister, all Canadians and myself. We live in difficult fiscal times and budget constraints are a reality for many departments. I know that probably the finance minister was listening with real interest when people said that we should spend more money in the immigration department. The minister of immigration would probably support that.

Let me begin by talking a little about my riding. I come from an area where immigration is an important issue but certainly not one of the main issues. My riding is on the north shore of Lake Erie. It has been settled by wave after wave of immigration, like many parts of this country have been. Originally it was settled by people from Britain, primarily by Scots. More re-

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cently it was settled by the Dutch community in the 1950s. We have recently had Portuguese immigrants.

We have a long tradition of recognizing the importance of immigration to this country and to our communities. Everybody is concerned about making sure that Canada has the right type of immigrants, that we are the ones who are doing the selecting and not others selecting us. We want to have an appropriate system in place. If a criminal comes to this country and commits a crime, we want to have certain mechanisms in place. If they are a danger to Canadians this mechanism will allow us to get them out fairly quickly, with reasonable recognition that they have legal rights. We want to kick out the right people, not the wrong people.

(1330)

That is why we want to put in place a proper process. I stand in support of Bill C-44 because I believe it does that. I am sure members will think, after listening to my speech and the speech of my colleague who spoke before me, that one of us could not have been listening at the immigration committee or one of us is patently wrong. I will try to point that out as I go along.

The key aspect I like about the bill is that it will remove the right to appeal to the immigration appeal division of the refugee board when the minister has made a determination that the person is a danger to Canadian society and has committed a crime with a maximum sentence of more than 10 years.

To understand why that is important we need to understand the process now. Let us say my colleague is a landed immigrant who commits an assault or a series of assaults. He does his time in jail. Then he comes out and the department says that it wants to kick him out. He can appeal to the immigration and appeal division and ask to stay in Canada simply on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Whether or not we agree with that the system as it stands now has a three-year wait. That is inexcusable. We have a process in place that says we want him out of the country because we think he is dangerous and the criminal can say that on humanitarian and compassionate grounds he wants to stay. We should have a mechanism in place that at least decides that question fairly quickly. A three-year wait is just unacceptable.

Another thing that concerns me about the immigration and appeal division doing its work is the people on the board who determine whether someone is a refugee. We would want people that would give applicants the benefit of the doubt. They should be fairly liberal in their views and have a good understanding of circumstances in other countries. I am not sure whether the same person should be putting the mechanism in place, controlling the mechanism and deciding whether to deport somebody.

I do not think anyone wants to deport someone. It is difficult to do and one has to be fairly tough minded to do it. I am not sure we want the same sort of character making judgments about who is a refugee. We want to be more liberal in our determination of refugees and fairly tough minded in our determination of who should be deported.

The criteria determining when someone will lose their right to appeal is fairly straightforward. First there is the 10-year rule, which means if a person commits a crime he has to be sentenced up to a maximum of 10 years. That mechanism will ensure we are not using this rule or law for trivial matters. Simple things like shoplifting or writing a cheque under \$1,000 will not get someone kicked out of the country. That is appropriate. More serious crimes such as rape, assault and murder will get someone kicked out of the country.

Another rule being applied is that the minister must make a determination that the person is a danger to the country. While some offences, oddly enough like writing a cheque for more than \$1,000, make one eligible for up to 10 years in jail, I do not think any of us would say: "We want to deport you for that". Maybe some of my colleagues across the way would say that the person should be deported for that.

Clearly the law is saying that one has to be a dangerous criminal, a danger to Canadian society, someone who we think will perhaps assault, rape or murder again. Those are the people we want to kick out of the country.

Some very difficult questions arise. I know the minister does not have an answer and Canadians will have to determine the answer. Let us say we have someone who comes here when they are six years old. Their parents, for whatever reasons, do not apply to make them Canadian citizens; they forget or whatever. These persons go through life not realizing they are not Canadian citizens. If they commit a serious crime at 25 years of age, do we kick them out, even though other persons in the same circumstances simply because their parents went through the process of making them Canadian citizens when they were seven, eight, or nine years of age did not get kicked out? They might have committed the same crime.

Say someone comes here at six months of age. They are from an Asian country or any country dissimilar to ours. Are we going to take people who have virtually lived here all their lives, except for maybe the first six months, and deport them simply because they have not become Canadian citizens?

(1335)

Many people in Canada would say that was their tough luck and if they have committed crimes they should be put out. I am not sure it is that simple. That is something we have to work out, because there is no provision in law that if people come to this country before a certain age they will be able to stay here. The definition is clearly that if one is a Canadian citizen one stays

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and if one is not a Canadian citizen and is a danger to Canadian society one has to go.

We have touched on the issue of criminality. I noted the Chair asked us to use language that was sensitive. When we talk about immigrants and criminals we risk getting into the trap of taking an identifiable group, foreigners by definition, and blaming them for things they ought not to be blamed for. There are many cases in history where people in a community have whipped up resentment against an identifiable group of outsiders, often-times foreigners, to support a particular political ideology. When we touch on the issue of immigration and criminals we risk getting into that game.

By way of a backdrop, I want to point out that the overwhelming majority of immigrants and refugees are decent, hard working and law-abiding people. They appeal to Canada for protection because they need our help. Others come to contribute to Canada's economic progress while others seek to be reunited with their families.

However there are exceptions. In recent months there have been a few highly publicized cases of criminals claiming to be refugees, and refugee claimants and immigrants breaking our laws while in Canada. It needs to be understood that these are the exceptions.

If we look at Canadian jails and survey whether the people in our jails were born in Canada or elsewhere, we discover that the immigrant population in our jails is lower than the general population as a whole. Statistics show that immigrants who come to the country are hard working. Oftentimes they are more hard working than the general population as a whole and commit fewer crimes. That does not mean there is not the odd exception, and this bill is about dealing with the odd exception. The government takes these exceptions seriously. The government is taking a number of steps to ensure the system is not open to abuse and that Canadian society is protected.

My friend across the way indicated in his remarks that the minister could kick someone out whenever he wants. The member has his facts wrong. I know the heckles are about to start. Let us say a landed immigrant or a permanent resident—and these words can be used interchangeably—commits a crime and does a sentence. Let us say the person is a danger to society. The government can bring about a process fairly quickly to have him deported. However the person can ask to have it stayed and appeal to immigration and Refugee Board on humanitarian grounds. Such persons can say: "I am sorry. I throw myself on the mercy of the country". Maybe the person has a wife or children here; maybe he has a job and circumstances have changed. He can bring forth all sorts of arguments. Unfortunately, as I said, that is a three-year delay. In law, the minister does not have the right to interfere in that process. That right to

appeal is in the Immigration Act and is in law and the minister must follow the law.

My colleague across the way has said that the rules in place now will do the trick. Unfortunately he is wrong. They will not do the trick, but Bill C-44 will take a step forward in terms of helping to deport landed immigrants who should be deported.

The government has proposed changes to the immigration law that will help prevent immigration fraud and abuse by criminals. Among the most important amendments are changes that prohibit people convicted of serious crimes from claiming refugee status. It also has to be determined that they are dangerous. This applies whether the crime took place in Canada or anywhere else.

It will remove from the immigration and refugee board the power to allow serious criminals to be in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and to give the minister or his delegates sole authority to do so. This means we can move fairly quickly.

My colleague across the way has suggested that they will still be able to appeal. He has that part right. They will still be able to appeal to the federal court on issues of law, not on issues of fact and law. They will be able to appeal to the federal court, but if they took some time to examine the federal court process they would find they need to have leave to appeal to the federal court. It is not a right. Instead of taking three years, which is the case under the current system, that process will take about 30 days. They may say that three years or 30 days makes no difference, but most Canadians will say that a faster process is a better process.

(1340)

Had they asked that question at the immigration committee they would have found that this is a much quicker process. If they do not believe me, I encourage them to check it out.

Because it is done by appeal the federal court can deal with it by leave. The federal court can deal with it very promptly. They will not be able to appeal on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Appealing on law is a very technical appeal. It is not something that is easily done. It is not something that can be done summarily or just on a whim. It has to be based on clear legal arguments.

It is different from an appeal on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. I might ask my colleagues across the way to appreciate the substance of the difference, to appreciate that it is an important difference, and to give the government credit for changing the process from three years to 30 days.

How serious is the problem? It is very serious. Right now the government estimates there is probably about 1,200 people whom it would like to deport and not give the right of appeal to the immigration and refugee board on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Six hundred of those people are in jail.

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Many people in my community want to see the government get the bill through quickly and bring about a process by which these people will be deported because they are a danger to Canadian society.

What else is the act going to do? As my colleagues have mentioned, it is going to give immigration officers the power to seize identity documents from the international mail that might be used by impostors for fraudulent and improper purposes. My colleagues have made the argument that the staff is under-resourced. Yes, it is. The police department can say it is under-resourced, that it does not have enough police to do the job. Does that mean that the law itself is bad? Does that mean giving them the power to do it is bad?

If the Reform Party wants to make an argument to spend more money on our immigration department, it should make it to the finance committee. It will be part of the budget considerations, and away we go; it may actually see something happen.

The act will make sure a person can have only one refugee claim process at a time. This makes common sense. Someone wanting to abuse the system can put in a refugee claim in Vancouver and perhaps open a file in Toronto or wherever. Also the act will make sure that any application for citizenship is put on hold until all immigration investigations or proceedings are completed.

I come to another point mentioned by my colleague. A citizenship and immigration—RCMP task force has been established in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to co-ordinate and ensure the removal of people with serious criminal convictions who have evaded removal orders. Local police will assist the task force to which 20 RCMP officers have been assigned: 12 in Toronto and 4 each in Montreal and Vancouver.

Again they can make the argument that it is not enough. They come up with a figure of 25,000 removal orders in Toronto. Let us say my friend sitting beside me is a landed immigrant whom we want to kick out and he says: "Fine, I will leave". We do not have a mechanism in place or we do not have controls at our border watching the people leave. It may well be that he leaves, but unless he tells us that he has left we do not know whether he has.

To suggest that because there are 25,000 removal orders none of these people have left simply on their own recognizance is really playing with the facts. It is trying to whip up hysteria in Toronto that there is a massive underground of illegal immigrants and dangerous criminals when the truth of it is not anywhere close to that. There is a problem. Let us deal with the

problem but let us not inflame it with numbers like 25,000. It is ridiculous.

(1345)

I come back to my point that 12 RCMP officers are not enough. If we give them good law to work with let us see how they do and we can come back in a year's time and take a look.

In addition, the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs is examining the question of how immigration should respond to young offenders who are not Canadians citizens convicted of a serious crime. That is a tough one. We are going to kick someone out who is 12 or 13 years old. Maybe their parents have not done anything, are permanent residents, landed and are not Canadian citizens yet. What are we going to do to a 13-year-old who commits a serious crime of assault? I do not know. I do not know that the minister knows. I do not know that any of us in this Chamber really knows. At some point we are going to have to try to exercise the wisdom of Solomon.

The government believes that immigration is a benefit to Canada and that Canada should maintain its international reputation for assisting refugees and welcoming immigrants. However, the government also believes that a good immigration program must promptly manage to protect Canadians. The government is committed to move as quickly as possible to make these changes to ensure the integrity of the Canadian immigration and refugee system.

In closing, I would point out to Canadians that I think there is real substance in this bill. Taking away the right to appeal on humanitarian and compassionate grounds in some very specific circumstances I think is the right thing to do where someone is clearly a danger to Canadian society.

When we talk to the immigrant communities they are tired of being tarnished with the brush of being what some people in the political spectrum want. They know when immigrants commit crimes that good, hard working new Canadians are often the ones who bear the penalty the most. They are the ones who want to make sure that hard working decent immigrants or new Canadians are the ones who want fairly tough criteria for deporting people and that serious criminals are actually deported promptly without much delay. If the Reform Party would actually look at the substance of the bill and do its homework it too would support the bill.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in the member's comments regarding the front end concerns about the Immigration Act enforcement. It appears the member never availed himself of the opportunity of going to a border crossing for instance and watching the process of refugee claimants coming in from the United States. They

Government Orders

come in with no documents. They have no means of identification and no support systems per se to assist immigration officers in determining who they really are.

I am wondering if the member really understands the importance of determining who these applicants really are who come through because there is no identification, because it is an unknown quantity. What does the hon. member have to say about that when it comes to this background check that he alludes to and that the minister should not have the power to remove someone if they are determined to be a danger to society?

Could the member please describe to me how he would get around this aspect once the individual is here and has gone through his claim and his appeals when there is no means of really determining who the individual is?

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to my colleague's question but let me say this. The guts of what this bill is about—

Mr. Mayfield: You cannot use that word here.

Mr. Knutson: The pith and substance. I do not want to be too high falutin because as my colleagues have said they are not legal experts. I use the vernacular instead of using a term that might have been used in the Supreme Court of Canada.

The pith and substance of what this bill is about is really taking an appeal process that has been dragged out to three years to non-lawyers, non-judges, the Immigration and Refugee Board, an appeal process on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and saying in some very narrow circumstances where someone has committed a serious crime that will get them more than 10 years in jail maximum sentence and they are considered a danger to society, taking that appeal process and reducing it to virtually 30 days, narrowing the terms where they can only appeal to the federal court. That is the pith and substance of this bill and that is what the Reform Party should be supporting.

(1350)

My colleague is absolutely right. I have never been to a border crossing and looked at the refugee determining process and what happens when someone shows up without documents. My view is that we should hold them in detention and should not let them go until we know who they are. I would certainly be happy to sit down with my colleague and look at the Immigration Act and look at the system that is in place and try to work something out that is reasonable. I agree, we should not be letting just anyone in. If they do not have documentation or cannot prove who they are then we should be concerned about that.

However, to re-emphasize my point, that is not what this bill is about. This bill is about people who apply on humanitarian and compassionate grounds to the refugee board and Canadians

do not want to give them the right to do that. They have said: "You are a danger to Canadian society and we want you gone from our land".

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, I have an outline here from an individual who was removed from the country after the minister issued a security certificate to have him removed. The power is already there for the minister to do something about it.

In Calgary alone six foreign criminals have been deported. Their backgrounds include cocaine dealers, pimps, weapons charges, assault, you name it. The power is there to remove already. The minister is not exercising his powers to remove.

I would like the hon. member's comments with regard to section 46 of the act where it states we can remove. Why are we going through this?

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, we disagree on that one fact. The member is saying that the appeal to the refugee board does not stay that proceeding and I say it does. However, I will get a reference and send it to him.

Clearly this act takes power away from the refugee board and puts it in the minister's office. If he was not responsible before, Canadians can now look to him and say that he is the one they are relying on to deport dangerous criminals who are not Canadian citizens. That law will narrowly focus it on the minister and on the government and they can take responsibility for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the hon. member why the current law is not being implemented in its entirety. Why does the minister not use all the legal and administrative means at his disposal? Does the current law not allow us to deport war criminals, Nazis or people who have violated human rights elsewhere?

Why is the minister not taking such action now and why does he need a new law? Why does he not make more effective use of the officials, local police and RCMP officers on the working groups he has created in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver? Why does he not make more of an effort to motivate officials who are very disappointed?

As a result of the cutbacks and office closures at the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, morale is very low. People are likely to face even more staff cuts in the upcoming budget. It has been said that 100 jobs will be cut at the IRB alone, where there are not many jobs to start with. Why not motivate staff, why not use all the available means and eliminate the need for a piece of legislation as drastic as Bill C-44?

[English]

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, in another form that is the same question the Reform Party is asking. It is saying the minister has the power and that he should just use the current act.

(1355)

I would like to point out that under the current act, under the current law, if somebody is convicted of a crime after they have served their time in jail they can apply to the Immigration and Refugee Board on humanitarian, compassionate grounds to defeat their deportation from this country. That process now takes three years. There is a three-year delay. Under this new law the process will probably be reduced to about thirty days. There are about 1,200 people the ministry or the department has, at least on first glance, determined could be dangerous criminals we want removed. This bill will do it.

With regard to the issue of the immigration department being understaffed and needing more resources, I will not dispute that with anyone. I will not dispute it with my colleague. I will not dispute it with the Reform Party. I am not responsible for that decision. I would suggest that you make your argument to the finance department or to the finance minister. I am sure the minister of immigration, if he were here, would be quite happy to be getting extra resources for his department.

The last issue is that he used the word draconian. I do not think the measures are draconian at all. First of all, the person has to commit a crime that will get them a maximum of ten years in jail. That raises one threshold. The second threshold or test that they have to meet is they have to be considered a danger to society. Clearly we are not going to be throwing out the person who simply steals a television that is worth more than \$1,000. Clearly we want to go after the people who are committing assaults or murders or rapes or a whole bunch of other types of crimes for which Canadians have no appetite to have these people kept in our country.

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, a concern that is on the minds of many Canadians is the fact that when we do have violent criminals under deportation orders they are never removed because of a lack of being able to obtain a travel document. From this member I would like an explanation as to why or how Bill C-44 is going to address this concern.

I have a list of probably a dozen very violent criminals, some of whom have been convicted of murder, who are walking our streets because travel documents cannot be obtained to get rid of them. I want this member to explain to me how Bill C-44 is going to deal with that.

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I acknowledge that it is a legitimate concern and that the hon. member has raised a legitimate point. The short answer is that I do not know. That is not what the guts of the bill are about. It is not about sorting out the technicalities of travel documents.

Let us say we have someone who came over when they were six years old. They grew up here. They are not a Canadian

citizen. Then they commit a very serious crime. The country we are going to send them back to does not want them back. It considers them to be Canadians and is not going to give us the travel documents to send them back. We have a policy in this country of simply not putting someone on an airplane, sending them off to somewhere and simply leaving them there. Then we get into a game. We send them there, they send them back, we send them there. Who knows where the person disappears to. We cannot kick someone out of the country if we are going to make them stateless.

There is a mechanism that we have to follow. There is a process. If the country on the other side does not co-operate, I agree it is a problem. I do not have the answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nunez: Mr. Speaker, about the expression “danger to the public in Canada”, the minister will be able to prevent an appeal by saying that the person constitutes a danger to the public in Canada. This is very ambiguous and subjective. Who will decide who constitutes a danger to the public in Canada? Will it be the minister, his officials, the RCMP, CSIS? Who? This is a very dangerous concept, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague's point. It is something we have to be very concerned about. I would remind him though that it is not the only threshold; it is not the only test. The first thing the person must have done to get into the problem is to have committed a crime where they would have received a maximum of 10 years in jail or more. Then the department would make its finding that they are a danger to Canadian society.

I appreciate the member's worries and concerns and we will have to watch the system as it develops.

The Speaker: It being 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the month of February marks the occasion of Black History Month. It offers an opportunity to acknowledge the important role played by black Canadians and African Canadians in the development of this great nation.

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In my riding of Annapolis Valley—Hants the Black Education Committee of Kings County and the Windsor Plains Recreation and Development Committee promote and organize meaningful events all year round.

Special events to mark Black History Month include a career expo and a black history day. I believe that events such as Black History Month promote a greater awareness of our proud multi-heritage background. This in turn fosters stronger relationships within Canada.

I wish to congratulate those groups in my riding and indeed across Canada who have worked so hard to make Black History Month a success. Their efforts have truly made Canada a better place.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we strongly denounce the action of Liberal MPs and of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who took advantage of a meeting with the Chairman of the CBC to discuss coverage of the referendum campaign.

The Liberal members displayed, to say the least, a lack of subtlety by linking the financing of the French network of the CBC to a pro-federalist referendum coverage. In fact, this is unjustifiable interference in the network's affairs. We wonder whether the Liberals are implementing the directives of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs who, back in April 1977, said this in an interview: "I do not want the network to adopt a neutral stance in presenting both sides of the issue. When the referendum comes, the employees must unequivocally be pro-Canada in their coverage".

This is obviously a case of déjà vu.

* * *

[English]

WORLD JUNIOR HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today on this first day back to Parliament to pass on some congratulations that are now long overdue to a wonderful group of young Canadians. They made all of us very proud over the holidays.

Shortly after Christmas my riding of Red Deer hosted the world junior hockey championships which the Canadian juniors not only won but were the first team in history to do so undefeated. This team did not have any one star who stood apart from the rest; they all pulled together and got the job done.

With the championship won, our junior players shared the pride of having won gold for Canada. Players from all across our country, east to west, including Quebec juniors like Alexandre

Daigle and Eric Dazé, stood out as a unified team that took the world on and won.

Our world juniors have shown all Canadians what we can accomplish when we work together. There are no special stars needed, just hardworking team players. Nothing can stop Canadians who pull together and our world juniors proved it.

* * *

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, recently the minister of heritage announced plans to introduce legislation that will amend the Copyright Act.

In his announcement the minister mentioned there would be reforms that would include some neighbouring rights for producers and performers for the use of their creations. The neighbouring rights amendments will have a negative impact on the private radio broadcasting industry which could result in the closing of radio stations and job losses.

A government study has been released by the Department of Canadian Heritage which mentions that higher copyright payments will seriously hurt most and put some radio stations out of business. If this government study is correct, I ask the minister why he continues to implement such legislation.

This Liberal government continues to renege on its election promise of creating jobs. All this government has done since its inception is eliminated this country's permanent infrastructure of long term jobs and replaced it with short term infrastructure jobs.

(1405)

I urge the minister to reconsider tabling such legislation that will have a devastating impact on private radio broadcasters.

* * *

12 MILE CREEK AND MARTINDALE POND

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years residents of St. Catharines have questioned the environmental status of 12 Mile Creek and Martindale Pond.

On January 27 the efforts of three levels of government and the private sector came together in a detailed five volume report on Martindale Pond, home of the Royal Canadian Henley Rowing Regatta.

Congratulations and thanks go to Environment Canada and Public Works for supporting this important environmental study. Thanks also to the province, the city of St. Catharines and to the Canadian Henley Rowing Corporation which were the federal government's partners.

This project shows what can be achieved when governments and the private sector work together to meet local environmental needs.

S. O. 31

As a result of this excellent work, St. Catharines has been chosen as the Canadian bid for the 1999 World Rowing Championships.

We are “pulling together to bring the world back to Niagara” for class A rowing.

* * *

UNITED STATES ENTRANCE FEE

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today President Clinton introduced a budget measure that would in effect charge each and every Canadian \$1.50 U.S. or \$3.00 per car to enter the U.S.

The U.S. administration will seize Canadian dollars and use them to beef up security at the U.S.–Mexico border. Essentially, it looks to me as though the U.S. government wants to tax Canadians to solve its security problems at the Mexico border.

These measures are a violation of our agreements which allow the free movement of goods and people across our borders. This is an illegitimate tax grab by the U.S. government and an insult to Canadians who respect reciprocal cross-border freedom for Canadians and our American neighbours.

This is a further irritant to the already strained Canada–U.S. relations. It should therefore be struck down by Congress and taken off the U.S. budgetary table.

* * *

DRUNKENNESS DEFENCE

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is real concern in the riding of Leeds—Grenville as I know there is across the nation about the recent court decision to allow extreme drunkenness as a defence against serious crime.

Residents from all walks of life are continuing to raise concern over what appears to be a serious loophole in our legal system. They are asking the justice minister to begin immediately to make the necessary revisions in law to prevent what appears to be a serious miscarriage of justice.

Constituents who have contacted me in this regard did so in the form of a petition but unfortunately it was lacking in proper form. Therefore, I am using this procedure as an alternate way of expressing their concern to the justice minister.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ–BIRKENAU

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 18, the whole world remembered the horrors of the Second World War. That day marked the fiftieth anniversary of

the liberation of the survivors of the Auschwitz–Birkenau concentration camp.

It cannot be too emphatically stated that this concentration camp was used by the Nazis to exterminate over a million prisoners, more than 90 per cent of whom were Jews. We want to remind this House that these tragic events are an important part of our history, and we hope that such atrocities will never occur again.

The Bloc Québécois wishes to take this opportunity to declare our solidarity with the families of these victims, and particularly to the Jewish people who suffered so much during that tragic episode in the history of mankind.

* * *

[English]

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we live in a tolerant and compassionate society. It is so compassionate that Denis Lortie could steal an automatic weapon from the army, terrorize a provincial legislature, murder three strangers, wound several others and end up back on the streets in 10 years.

There are however limits to compassion. Under the justice minister’s gun control proposals a farmer who neglects or refuses to register his single shot .22 could be sentenced to a year behind bars for inconveniencing the bureaucracy.

The inmates really have taken over the asylum.

* * *

(1410)

UNITED STATES ENTRANCE FEE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the Prime Minister’s attention to the President of the United States who in a desperate effort to raise funds has decided to impose \$1.50 U.S. head tax on all Canadians visiting the United States. He is also planning to ask for \$3 U.S. for every vehicle crossing to the United States.

This flies against the tradition of an open border between Canada and the United States. It flies in the face of the free trade agreement signed by the United States.

When the Prime Minister meets with Bill Clinton later this month he should say: “Take this off the budgetary table. Canadians simply will not tolerate this poke in the eye with a sharp stick by the President of the United States”.

* * *

THE LATE JEFFREY SECTER

Mr. Barry Campbell (St. Paul’s, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of Jeffrey Sectar, a constituent of mine who was murdered last month in the Dominican Republic.

S. O. 31

Jeffrey was a remarkable man who gave of himself for the betterment of the larger community at every turn. He was founder of the charity, Friday's Child. He was an active volunteer at Bloorview Children's Hospital taking disabled children on trips and to events. He was involved with the B'nai Brith as well, acting as the chair of its community volunteer services and vice-president of the Toronto Freedom Lodge.

Jeffrey touched many people's lives and will be sorely missed. He was an example to all Canadians. I am sure all members of this House will want to join me in sending our condolences to his family and friends in both Calgary and Toronto.

* * *

PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in 1920 the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada was founded as an organization to protect the interests of the professional public servants affected by a complete government reorganization which was going on at that time.

Today as the institute celebrates its 75th anniversary, members are still fortunate to have the support of their institute as our government goes through yet another period of major change.

PIPS members are the biologists who help protect our wild-life. They are the commerce officers who study Canada's economic development. They are the veterinarians who ensure that Canadians get wholesome meat products on our tables. They are the engineers and architects who make sure that our roads, bridges and air terminals are safe.

As elected representatives it is important for us to recognize and appreciate the excellent work these federal public service employees do to make Canada a better place to live in and to congratulate PIPS on its 75 years of dedicated service to its members and to Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

BROME—MISSISQUOI

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next Monday, February 13, the voters in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi will choose their next member of Parliament.

In the information pamphlet that he has had printed and distributed for his campaign, the Bloc candidate for Brome—Missisquoi says, and I quote: "The Bloc Quebecois must keep its status as the official opposition in order to hold on to real power in Ottawa. Right now, there is only one seat between the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party. If we lose Brome—Missisquoi, we could lose our power in Ottawa".

By linking his possible defeat to the loss of his party's status as the official opposition in the House of Commons, the Bloc candidate is not presenting the facts accurately. Even if the Liberal Party of Canada wins the two by-elections now under way in Quebec, and I am sure they will, that will in no way change the Bloc's status as the official opposition.

Only by electing the Liberal candidate on February 13 will the voters of Brome—Missisquoi finally acquire real power in Ottawa.

* * *

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today marked the beginning of the regional consultations on Quebec sovereignty.

The Bloc Quebecois is proud to be associated with this highly democratic exercise in which all Quebecers, whatever their origin, their language or their political affiliation, will have the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and obtain information about the draft bill on Quebec sovereignty.

The discussions that will take place throughout Quebec, and that will include both the elderly and young Quebecers, will enrich the democratic debate on the sovereignty question and extend it to all groups and levels of Quebec society.

It is in this context of exchange that we applaud the courageous and pragmatic decision of the Greek, Italian and Jewish communities to take part in the process. They deserve our utmost respect and admiration.

* * *

[English]

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on January 6 Melanie Carpenter was working alone at a tanning salon in a busy mall in Surrey, B.C. In the middle of the afternoon it now appears likely that Fernand Auger entered the business and kidnapped her. Driving near the town of Yale, Auger pulled into an access road near the Fraser River where he sexually assaulted Melanie. Then with her hands tied behind her back he cowardly and brutally stabbed her to death.

(1415)

Auger solved one problem by killing himself, but many questions remain unanswered. He was a convicted sex offender who the Correctional Service of Canada deemed to be a high risk offender. However, despite this prognosis the law required that Auger be released.

Why do we have a law that requires the authorities to release offenders that they know are likely to re-offend? Offenders who are likely to kill a Melanie Carpenter or a Pamela Cameron.

Over the past four months two young Surrey women have been murdered, two deaths that were preventable. We must act now before there is another.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month. Canadians across this great country are coming together to celebrate the rich and spirited heritage of black people.

Blacks have been contributing to Canadian society from as early as 1603 when Samuel de Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence with his interpreter Matthieu Dacosta, a black man from the Azores who had already established links with the aboriginal people and knew their languages and customs.

Black soldiers helped defend Upper Canada against invading Americans in the war of 1812. The first Canadian sailor to receive the Victoria Cross was Mr. William Hall, a black man. The first woman to publish a newspaper in Canada, in 1853, Mary Ann Shadd was a black woman.

Blacks, both French and English worked to build Canada. They built railroads, they worked on the trains, they were inventors, farmers and scholars. They were elected representatives.

I ask all hon. colleagues to join with me, not only to recognize Black History Month but to develop a stronger understanding of the experiences and contributions of black Canadians.

* * *

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL PETER KENWARD

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Kenward, commander of the Canadian Airborne Regiment at Petawawa has been awarded the Order of Military Merit for his work as an outstanding soldier and officer.

This career infantry officer took over command of the Airborne Regiment in September 1993 and has done an excellent job in bringing good discipline, the usual high degree of training and dedication to the regiment.

For his outstanding and upbeat achievements, Colonel Kenward will receive the Order of Military Merit from the Governor General of Canada, particularly for his achievements in bringing the Canadian Airborne Regiment up to first class standards.

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The incidents by a mere handful of the regiment that the mass media of this country has used to tear an outstanding Canadian military regiment apart occurred before Colonel Kenward took command.

We and all present members of the airborne congratulate him and thank him for his fine leadership and other qualities as an excellent officer, soldier and Canadian.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year will be a crucial one in the history of Canada, presenting us with formidable challenges, not just in the economic and social areas but about the very unity of our country.

Certain things have set Canada apart. The principles of equity and fairness have translated into programs that reflect our values as Canadians. Equalization payments to those provinces and territories that are less privileged established the principles of regional fairness.

Being a Canadian and the right of citizenship is not based on where you live and whether you are rich or poor. Yet instead of maintaining these principles, the federal government is clearly contemplating destroying the very fabric that binds us together as a nation by turning over health and social programs to provinces and territories without national direction and standards.

I challenge the Prime Minister to show all Canadians that the federal government will stand in the national interest, not simply promote regional disparities.

The Speaker: Colleagues, welcome back to the House of Commons and welcome to 1985.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the social program reform scheduled for last September has already been postponed once. Now, after more than a month of consultations, the government is further postponing this reform it had promised to implement in the upcoming budget. It is well known that cabinet and the Liberal caucus are seriously divided on this issue.

(1420)

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Since the Prime Minister maintains that social program reform is still on the agenda, can the Minister, who is unable to sell his reform plan to cabinet, and the Minister of Finance in

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particular, tell us now what the revised timetable for his social program reform will be?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say that the Minister of Human Resources Development has done a terrific job and that he has the confidence of all his cabinet colleagues. Never has there been so much consultation on a fundamental reform that will bring about changes in Canada.

Naturally, the Bloc Québécois will promote the status quo. But these changes are under way, and the committee is expected to table its report at three o'clock this afternoon. So, it is a bit much to ask a minister to prepare for such changes before the committee report has even been tabled. To adopt such a stance in this House does not show much respect for the democratic process.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there certainly is no shortage of consultations. But the minister himself said on television last week that his reform plans had to be delayed because Canada's financial situation makes any real reform of social programs impossible. That is what the minister himself, true to his own way of showing respect for the democratic process in this House, stated outside this House.

Does the Minister of Human Resources Development recognize that social program reform has been cast aside not only because of the budget but mostly because of the Quebec referendum, as the minister knows that his reform will affect thousands of Canadians and Quebecers who are among the most disadvantaged in society?

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is engaging in some very unfortunate speculation.

At no time did I say the reforms were postponed. There may have been a headline writer or two who made that judgment but I certainly did not say it. We said that we had to have the committee report that we will have today. We will examine the recommendations in the report very carefully.

We will begin discussions with the provinces in terms of their putting forward a proper new blueprint and design. There will be a budget which we know will establish a new sense of economic confidence in the integrity of the country. That is the best platform and basis for undertaking social reform.

We will be following our timetable which is to bring in new legislation dealing with social issues this fall. It is exactly the timetable we laid out a year ago and it is a timetable we are still on.

We would only hope that the Bloc Québécois and other members in the House will learn and be willing to participate in what should be and can be one of the most important initiatives in the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my third question is for the Minister of Finance, who will have the final say on social program reform. In that sense, he is the real human resources minister.

Can the Minister of Finance give us the assurance that his next budget will not, once again, target the unemployed, with further cuts in benefits and increasingly restrictive eligibility requirements for UI, as his first budget did?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Following the last budget, Mr. Speaker, more than 438,000 jobs were created in Canada. This is the best performance in a decade. I am quite confident that we will see the same results after the next budget.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Let me just say quickly that, contrary to what the Minister of Finance just said, it is not 400,000 jobs, but an annual average of 261,000 jobs, a total which has been verified over and over again. Rumours are spreading about the upcoming budget.

(1425)

It is even being said that a document from the Department of Finance proposes that the federal government completely withdraw from financing some social programs without, of course, transferring to the provinces equivalent financial resources allowing them to take over from the federal government. I remind you that Ottawa has deprived the Quebec government of more than \$12 billion since 1982 by cutting into transfer programs.

Does the Minister of Finance confirm his intention of transferring responsibility for some social programs by putting an end to his financial contribution without full financial compensation for the provinces, which would effectively amount to offloading his deficit onto the provinces once again?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only are the figures I just quoted accurate, but I might add that 82,000 jobs were created in Quebec in 1994, the best performance since 1988.

Moreover, am I to understand from the question that the hon. member is in favour of the status quo? We, on the other hand, stand for change and for reform.

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Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if we compare December with December, the figures are accurate, but the Minister of Finance is supposed to know that the figures we are referring to represent the annual average, which is 261,000 jobs, including 70,000 in Quebec.

Does the Minister of Finance not realize that such actions on his part would be totally irresponsible since he would be reducing transfer payments for education, health and social assistance, leaving the provinces with the extra burden while imposing national standards that are more and more restrictive under the circumstances? Is this what you call flexible federalism?

[English]

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite interesting that the member opposite and I are engaged in a debate as to whether the job creation record of the government in its first year of operation is the best record in five years or the best record in 10 years. But it is the best record we have seen in one heck of a long time.

The Minister of Human Resources Development made it very clear when he embarked on the program of social security reform that we intended to bring it into the nineties, that we intended to make social security reform a very important part of the job creation capacity of the country and a very important part of the overall program of the government.

I support what the minister has done. He has had the courage to deal with fundamental and far reaching changes. I find it very difficult that a party opposite is so rooted in the status quo, in the 1940s, that it fails to understand what the Canada of the future means.

Mr. Speaker: At the beginning of the period I said welcome to 1985 because in 1985 they had very long questions and very long answers. But in 1995 I am sure we are going to shorten both. The hon. member for Beaver River.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are glad to be here in the first period.

Canadians are among the highest taxed people in the world. Over 50 per cent of our pay cheques go to the tax man in one form or another. That is more than food, shelter and clothing combined. That would be more than enough but evidently it is not enough for this finance minister. He seems ready to add to our crippling tax load in this month's budget.

Canadians are not going to take it any more. Their message is no tax increases, period. Will the Prime Minister listen to Canadians and immediately rule out any tax increase in this month's budget?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Reform Party are very desperate. They set the target there to be in the news because they cannot really attack the government.

The hon. member should be patient—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): No, they cannot. Now they say that we will increase the taxes. Even I do not know. The budget will be later in the month. I will discuss that with the Minister of Finance.

(1430)

Again the Reform Party will have to recognize that the Minister of Finance last year predicted that growth would be 3 per cent. It turned out to be 4.2 per cent. Inflation has been zero. Unemployment went down from a prediction of 11.1 per cent to 9.6 per cent.

We have a big problem, the debt. In the previous nine years before we arrived the previous government accumulated \$300 billion of its own debt. We have a problem with that. We all recognize it. We will do what we said we would do in the red book. We will meet our target of 3 per cent of GDP next year.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, aiming at a target of going \$25 billion per year in the hole is hardly considered noble.

The Prime Minister says to wait until the budget. That is of little comfort to Canadians. Why should home buyers who have seen their monthly mortgage rates go up over \$200 wait until the budget? Canadians want this government to act now. They have wanted it to act for over a year.

The finance minister is not dealing with abstract numbers. He is dealing with the lives of real people, not just balance sheets.

Will the Prime Minister send a clear signal to Canadians and tell them that their tax burden will not be increased by his government in its upcoming budget?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nobody can say what will be in the budget until it is tabled in the House of Commons. It will be before the end of the month. It is going to be another good budget through which this government will meet its targets.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to putting our national house in order, leadership should come from the top. We have seen precious little leadership from this government.

Oral Questions

After 18 months the gold plated MP pension is still in place. The bureaucracy is still spending wildly on new fax machines, office renovations and computer software. Over 100 loyal Liberals have sallied up to the trough to collect their government patronage positions. The government has the nerve to ask Canadians to pay more money into taxes.

Wait until the budget is one thing. What about these practical steps? When will this government start leading by example? When will the minister reform the MP pensions and put the brakes on out of control government spending?

[Translation]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one party accuses us of cutting too much, the other one wants us to cut deeper. I am confident that when the budget is tabled, the Liberal Party will, as always, find a middle ground and will not make indiscriminate cuts, nor go to the other extreme of refusing to control government spending.

We gave a clear idea of where we stand in the last budget and we will do it again in the upcoming one.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Last Thursday, Quebec's National Assembly passed a resolution denouncing proposed federal cuts in post-secondary education and asking the federal government to withdraw from that sector and give Quebec the tax points equivalent to the level of Ottawa's current financial contribution to that sector.

Given the differences of opinion of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Human Resources Development, can the Prime Minister tell us if his government will give a favourable reply to the National Assembly's request?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be very important for the hon. member to relay the message he has just delivered to colleagues in the Government of Quebec. Just before Christmas, as he will well know, it announced it will be cutting \$1.5 billion from health services, social services and education.

It would seem to me that if any government is going to take its responsibility, the question should be asked of the provincial Government of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister of Human Resources Development that the motion was unanimously approved; in other words, it was also supported by the Quebec Liberal Party.

Are we to understand that, by refusing to provide a clear answer, the federal government persists in wanting to eliminate cash transfer payments and instead allocate part of these funds to the Canada Student Loans Program, without any regard for the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces over education?

(1435)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again they should wait for the budget. To wonder whether the government will do this or that is to speculate. A budget will be tabled and the hon. member will have the opportunity to look at it. I find it unbelievable that, at a time when it is being rumoured that there will be more room to maneuver and more freedom of action for the provinces, the Bloc Québécois wants to maintain the status quo. That makes me very happy indeed.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this government has had 16 months to do nothing and it did. The Canadian Manufacturer's Association told the Minister of Finance that governments do not create jobs, customers do.

This government is talking about increasing taxes to the customers, taking money out of their pockets. Does the Minister of Finance not realize that increasing taxes will only kill jobs in this country?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the hon. member's question. I know that he is a very sincere member and he is very sincere in the questions he asks.

One likes to check what other governments have done. It was very interesting that the Government of Alberta, when the member asking the question was a member of that cabinet, had a series of budgets that substantially increased the tax burden on Albertans.

The question I would like the member to explain to me is what is the difference between the taxes that were introduced by that government and the taxes that he is attempting to forestall now?

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance should also recognize that this minister at

that time cut a billion dollars of spending in the public and placed it back in the treasury of Alberta. That billion dollars is helping the taxpayer of Alberta today.

I want to tell the Minister of Finance and also the Prime Minister today that there is a message from Canadians, from the tax rallies that I have attended in the last week or so. I want to tell them something about taxes.

If the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance increase the taxes to Canadians, they are going to bring on themselves and the government of this country what they call the triple-R whammy. They are going to resist. They are going to react. They are going to revolt in terms of any kind of tax increases. If that is not good enough, they are going to reform this country.

Will the Prime Minister stand in his place today and tell Canadians that there will be no tax increases in 1995?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I know that the member did not mean his words to come forth as they did. He is not encouraging Canadians to revolt. I am sure that is not the case. I would not interpret it in that way. Revolting is not a word that one would use when applied to the Reform Party.

There is some time between now and when the budget will be brought down. The Prime Minister stated it very clearly. We know that Canadians do not want to see themselves burdened with further taxes. That has been made very clear. The Prime Minister stated it.

He also knows that until I bring down the budget, I am not really going to respond to individual questions.

(1440)

I understand that the Reform Party is desperately trying to get ahead of the movement that is so far ahead of it. It should not take the time in this House to ask hypothetical questions that I cannot respond to until such time as I have brought down the budget.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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

The president of the CBC met with the members of the Liberal caucus, at his request, on Friday to discuss the CBC's budget. According to the chairman of the Quebec caucus himself, Mr. Manera discussed the CBC's coverage of the referendum on sovereignty.

Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that the president of the CBC made a serious error in judgment by discussing the CBC's coverage of the referendum campaign in camera with the

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members of his party, in total disregard of the CBC's requirement to remain independent and neutral?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the caucus met with the president of the CBC at his request. He requested the meeting. They asked questions as they are entitled to do. You can ask me questions in this House. You can ask the ministers questions. We will pass them on.

We want news coverage to be fair across the country and that the CBC be allowed, within its mandate, to do what it wants. We just want it to be fair for everybody and we want all viewpoints heard and not just one. In fact, we are asking all the broadcasters in Canada to give everyone an equal opportunity.

Up to this point, provincial government money has been spent on distributing pamphlets—not the pamphlets of the Liberal Party—but the pamphlets of the Parti Québécois and the other parties. The system is unfair. We want the debate to be fair and both campaigns to be given exactly the same coverage.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was not the one who described the Liberal Party's mail-out as pamphleteering.

Given that Mr. Manera has put himself in a situation which is to say the least vulnerable and delicate, does the Prime Minister intend to use harsh measures by asking for his resignation, as the Premier of Quebec has asked, in the interest of maintaining the CBC's integrity and autonomy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have full confidence in Mr. Manera; he is an experienced civil servant with long service at the CBC who asked, in the interest of defending his organization, to meet with members to explain the role of the CBC. It is quite normal for members to have asked him questions regarding the work of the CBC. I have not spoken to Mr. Manera since he became president and I do not intend to speak to him either, nor will my wife.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance keeps saying that he will not raise taxes, just close loopholes. Canadians see right through this public relations gimmick.

If a policy hurts like a tax increase, if a policy raises revenue like a tax increase, it is a tax increase. Canadians do not want higher taxes under any guise. Will the minister neutralize the effects of closing tax loopholes by lowering other taxes?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, both of the third party's critics on financial matters are people I respect a great deal. I enjoy discussions with them and I enjoy this in Question Period.

Oral Questions

Do they really think it serves the public purpose for them to consistently stand up in advance of the budget and ask the government, under our position which is not to respond on what the budget is, all kinds of questions, knowing that the answers are not going to be satisfactory and cannot be until such time as the budget has been presented?

(1445)

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am responding to a principle enunciated by the minister in the House several times.

Sweden recently cut spending and raised taxes. The higher taxes were seen by investors as a lack of government will to attack the causes of chronic deficits. They punished the Swedish krona in the exchange markets.

I have a supplementary question. What has the minister learned from the experience of Sweden?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing is don't ever be the Swedish finance minister.

We have made it very clear that in the next budget we intend to deal with the deficit primarily by cutting government spending. We have said that. The Prime Minister has said that on countless occasions. I can confirm it to the member opposite. We are going to deal with the deficit. We have demonstrated that clearly, and we are going to do it primarily by cutting government spending.

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*[Translation]***INTEREST RATES**

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the repeated drops in the value of the Canadian dollar and hikes in interest rates can be attributed to the government's inaction and its refusal, for more than one year, to work on cutting the government machine's overall spending. Financial circles are becoming even more sceptical because of the possibility that the government will try to arrest its deficit by implementing new taxes or a general surtax on income.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that his government's inaction and complete nonchalance have directly caused interest rates to rise, in particular mortgage rates? Will he admit that implementing a general surtax will strangle economic growth and will only drive interest rates even higher?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the opposition

is asking hypothetical questions and is inventing straw men. Why? I do not know.

Allow me to say that at our last meeting, my counterparts from G-7 countries and IMF officials had only praise for the progress that Canada has made over the past year. When we hear the figures that the Prime Minister quoted earlier, when we see the action taken since the last budget, we can conclude that, for the first time in a long while, the government not only intends attaining its goals, but also is credible in this pursuit. The hon. member should be very proud of our achievements since we formed the government a year ago.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, of course we have nothing but praise for the fact that interest rates have increased during the past two months and the fact that the financial community has lost confidence in a Minister of Finance who, for the past year and a half, has done nothing to bring the deficit under control. That is certainly praiseworthy.

How can the minister reject the official opposition's recommendations to cut spending and review the tax system? How can he justify imposing new taxes and asking the middle class to add to its tax burden, while at the same time giving Canada's wealthiest taxpayers tax credits of over \$2 billion so they can buy deluxe condominiums in the United States? Now, that is good management. That is something to be proud of.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have yet to receive any constructive proposals from the Bloc Quebecois as to the kind of cuts we should make. The hon. member says he will give us a list tomorrow. I can hardly wait.

Since the hon. member mentioned interest rates, perhaps he could explain why, for the past few months, the interest rate differential between Quebec bonds and other provincial bonds has been increasing every day.

[English]

The member should explain why it is that the interest rate differential between Quebec bonds and the other provincial bonds is getting larger and larger. That is the real question that ought to be asked in the country.

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*[Translation]***PUBLIC SERVICE**

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

It was disappointing to find out that the Public Service Alliance of Canada has refused the government's buyout package for downsizing.

(1450)

Could the minister reassure public servants that the government remains committed to fair treatment of its employees and will continue to try to reach an agreement with unions and to minimize any job losses as a result of downsizing?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I can give those assurances to the hon. member.

We certainly want to make sure that our employees are treated in a fair and reasonable fashion, both those who will be leaving as a result of the downsizing and those who will remain to provide excellent services to the public of Canada.

May I also point out that I will be meeting further with union representatives with respect to this matter. I have been doing that for a number of months in an attempt to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. I am quite willing to continue to have a dialogue with them.

We are however running out of time. Soon we must make decisions about this matter with respect to the forthcoming budget.

In terms of minimizing any job losses, we have reviewed the programs and services of the federal government. We are not out to cut employees per se, but as a result of reduction of programs and services there will be downsizing necessary.

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SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, apparently the human resources development minister has finally come to realize that we have no more money for increased spending on social programs. We are mortgaged and taxed to the max.

Why can the minister not understand that social programs can be reformed without spending more money?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I draw the hon. member's attention to the opening statement we made about a year ago in the House. Right from the very beginning we said that one of the most important reasons for undertaking social reform was to make existing programs work better, to get better value for our money, to make the money go further, and to target it where it would do the most good.

That is exactly the purpose we intend to follow. That purpose is entrain, on schedule. We will continue to put together the kinds of proposals we hope to receive this afternoon from the House of Commons committee that has spent a lot of its valuable time listening to Canadians. Once we have that report we can then get on with the job.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, just last week the minister was quoted as saying that the government would have to deal with its budgetary problems before it would be able to get on with the reforms.

When will the minister show some leadership and start real reform of Canada's social security programs?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. member we believe that it is possible, to use an old metaphor, to walk and chew gum at the same time. Unlike the Reform Party that seems to be focused on only one issue, this party is able to take a number of issues and deal with them simultaneously.

We have said very clearly that a precondition, a necessary condition for social reform, is having a stable and effective fiscal system in the country. It is not a sufficient cost. It is a necessary cost.

We have to put the two of them together: good reform in the budget to bring about fiscal stability and then good reform of our programs to get people back to work.

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*[Translation]***U.S. PRESIDENT'S VISIT**

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

Obviously put out by the Leader of the Official Opposition's request for a meeting with U.S. president Clinton during his official visit to Ottawa on February 23 and 24, the Prime Minister objected to such a meeting. Yesterday, his Minister of Foreign Affairs set the record straight and stated that the government would not object to a meeting between the American president and the leader of the official opposition.

Could the Prime Minister indicate on what grounds he objected to this meeting on Friday? Could he also explain since when a Canadian Prime Minister dictates whom an American president may or may not meet?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was asked that question. I thought it was about a letter sent to me but it was a letter to President Clinton.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

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Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): No, it was not mine. I did not receive a letter. I made enquiries.

I was sent a copy of a letter, but the request was made to President Clinton, who will answer it himself. I cannot speak for President Clinton.

(1455)

I would like to point out to the hon. member that I am just back from a trip to six countries, where I never met the leaders of the opposition. I only met the ministers. And I did not object. The point is, this is not a general custom, and when I was leader of the opposition, there were some presidents who came here whom I did not meet, and in fact, in December when President Zedillo came, he did not meet the Leader of the Opposition.

In any case, President Clinton, who received the letter, will respond, and we will see what his answer is. It is not up to me to answer that question.

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now that he no longer objects publicly to a meeting between Mr. Clinton and the Leader of the Official Opposition, will the Prime Minister promise he will not use pressure tactics or indulge in any behind-the-scenes manoeuvring to try to discourage the U.S. president from meeting the Leader of the Official Opposition?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the normal course of events, President Clinton's letter should come from Washington, not from Ottawa.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Liberals on the Standing Committee of Finance recommended that the government implement a 2-cent per litre tax increase on gasoline as a way of dealing with the deficit. The Minister of Finance has stated that Canadians are up to their eyeballs in debt, but they are also up to their eyeballs in taxes. The tax on gasoline has risen by 466 per cent in the last 10 years.

Could the Minister of Finance tell the House how increasing the tax burden would not further drown Canadians in a sea of ever increasing taxation?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member will have to wait for the budget.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

Consumption taxes account for 52 per cent of the average consumer price for gasoline in Canada, compared to 37 per cent in the United States, our largest competitor and trading partner.

Could the minister explain how siphoning another \$500 million out of the pockets of Canadian taxpayers would enhance Canada's competitiveness, its ability to stimulate the economy and its ability to create jobs?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed in the last 30 seconds nor in the last 15 minutes nor in the last hour. The member will have to wait for the budget.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville—Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

We all know that GST credits are supposed to be paid only to low income Canadians. It has been reported that they are also being paid to those with incomes above \$100,000.

Is this true? If so, what is the minister doing to stop it?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question which allows me to correct and clarify some misunderstandings on this subject.

The GST credit is for low income Canadians. For example, a Canadian family of four with a family income of \$38,000 would be above the limit for any GST credit. Eligibility is based on family income and this reflects the situation of these low income Canadians.

I should add, however, that it is net income that creates the entitlement to the GST credit. There may be cases of people with high nominal incomes but low net incomes who can in fact obtain benefit from the system through the GST credit. We are doing our best to tighten up the system.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. In another of his surprising pronouncements, last Friday in Toronto, the Prime Minister said that there are public servants who are paid to sit around and do nothing. He was immediately contradicted by the President of the Treasury Board.

Given that he was contradicted by his own minister, does the Prime Minister maintain that there are federal public servants who are paid to sit around and do nothing? If so, how many are there, and if not, was he referring to those three National

Oral Questions

Defence generals who chartered an Airbus to go and play golf in Florida at taxpayer's expenses? After Operation William Tell, are we having an Operation Lazyboy?

(1500)

The Speaker: This is a long question.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am informed that there are some. I could find out how many, although the President of the Treasury Board acknowledged not knowing any personally. I do not know any either, but I am told there are some. I got this information from the Privy Council. If I was misinformed, I will apologize, but I was told again, afterwards, that there were some.

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[English]

WORKFORCE ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. This weekend negotiations over the workforce adjustment directive failed and public servants, including those who live in Ottawa—Vanier, want to know what the government is doing about it.

Is this government afraid to finalize its position because of the byelection in Ottawa—Vanier? Why will the government not tell public servants now whether it is going to legislate changes to the workforce adjustment directive?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member should be worrying about Ottawa—Vanier at all. I do not think it is in the cards for him to worry about it.

Long before there was to be a byelection we were talking with the unions with respect to the matter of workforce adjustment because of the number of people involved in downsizing as a result of the program review process. We will continue with those discussions. I hope to have further discussion to try to bring some resolution to the matter because the workforce adjustment directive is in the union agreement.

As I said earlier in response to the previous question, we intend to treat our employees fairly and reasonably in dealing with this matter.

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SOCIAL POLICY

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. His government has now

brought Canadians through a major social policy consultation. We will soon have a budget in the House of Commons that promises major cuts to social policy.

The minister of human resources today said that they are targeting for more efficiency. My question to the Prime Minister is quite simple. What are the targets and priorities pursued by his government in the area of social policy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader of the Conservative Party would read the red book he would know what our priorities are in terms of social policy.

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TAXATION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, N.D.P.): Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Finance simply say that what we read in the press today is not true, that in spite of the fact that we all appreciate there are a whole host of loopholes for the wealthiest in Canada, now we find out that the minister is going to provide one more loophole outside the parameters of the budget? Canadians who sell off assets in excess of \$600,000 in the U.S. are going to pay U.S. tax but this minister now is contemplating giving them a tax credit to make up for that.

Will the minister stand in his place and say this will not be a tax loophole that he will be introducing, although it is part of the protocol being negotiated? While he is on his feet, will he tell us what the Prime Minister is going to tell President Clinton to do about that head tax at the U.S. border?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the most recent measure does is protect the Canadian tax base on the one hand. It also makes sure that Canadians who own property abroad are not further discriminated against as a result of their Canadian citizenship compared with Americans.

What has happened is a very good measure that protects not only the Canadian tax base but Canadians. I am sure the member would agree that is worthwhile.

In terms of what the Prime Minister should tell President Clinton, it is really an absurd idea that the Americans at the time of NAFTA and the current times of exchange of trade would put on some kind of crossing border tax. It is simply absurd. It is an idea to which this government takes great exception.

I know that I speak for the minister of trade, although I also would say that it is sometimes very difficult to speak for the minister of trade.

Routine Proceedings

(1505)

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Leonid Kravchuk, member of Parliament and former President of Ukraine.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising out of the leaking to the media of the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development on changes to social programs.

I submit that the privileges of members of this House have been breached by the premature release to the media of this report due to be tabled today. It is a question of privilege because it is a violation of the proper order of proceedings that reports from committees should be presented first in the House of Commons so as to ensure equal opportunity to access by all members of Parliament and all Canadians. Until such presentation in this House, reports should be confidential.

To accentuate the breach that has taken place, as an associate member of the committee I was denied access to the report while it was freely available to the press.

I would ask that you consider what appropriate action might be taken to deal with what is surely a gross contempt of the rules and procedures of this House.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the question of privilege. Of course I will look into it and report to this House if necessary.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-226

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 13 a vote was taken on Bill C-226. Although I stood to be recorded as voting for the bill, I was inadvertently omitted from the list. May I have the record corrected?

The Speaker: My hon. colleague, it would be difficult to go back and change a vote that has already occurred. It would set a precedent that would be very difficult for us to manage in the House.

I am sure the hon. member will have his views put on the record. They stand there now. This is not really a point of order but his point has been made.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, the hon. member was present in the House and he voted on a measure.

Through inadvertence his vote was not recorded. It was not his inadvertence, it was the inadvertence of the Table. It seems to me that the only appropriate way of dealing with this matter perhaps by unanimous consent is to record the hon. member as voting in favour of the bill that was before this House.

The Speaker: I would take the suggestion of the hon. member for York South—Weston. Notwithstanding the fact that it is rather a different approach, if there were unanimous consent by the House I would agree to letting the vote be recorded.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before giving unanimous consent, are we to understand that this would create a precedent and that it will now be possible to ask for a vote to be reviewed after three, four or five days or even a week?

The Speaker: Dear colleague, with unanimous consent in the House, we can change just about anything we want. I hope this will not become an everyday occurrence. That is why I asked for unanimous consent. If there is unanimous consent, the vote can be changed; if not, it will stay the same.

(1510)

[English]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Perhaps the Speaker would allow the whips from all three parties to confer on this issue and we will come back to the House tomorrow with our recommendation and that would perhaps save the time of the House and solve the problem more rapidly.

The Speaker: If the three whips would get together we will come back to the point tomorrow.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 215 petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development entitled *Security, Opportunities and Fairness: Canadians Renewing their Social Programs*.

[English]

Pursuant to the order of reference of February 8, 1994 your committee has completed its study of the modernization and restructuring of Canada's social security system.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, we in the Bloc Québécois wish to thank the Canadians and Quebecers and all the groups who came to testify before the committee in difficult circumstances. We thank them for their welcome.

I must add, however, that the Minister of Human Resources Development did not publish most technical discussion papers in time, something which we and the groups who appeared before the committee find unfortunate.

I also wish to commend the work done by all committee members and say that the report was produced and the consultations held in difficult conditions. In closing, I want to add that the good will that was in evidence at the beginning made it all the more painful to conclude that it was impossible to come up with a common report.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[English]

This report relates to Bill C-47, an act to amend the Department of External Affairs Act and to make related amendments to other acts. The committee considered this bill and presents this report with amendments which it recommends to this House.

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order to comment on the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I wish to inform the hon. member that members of the official opposition are the only ones who would normally respond to the report. In order for the Reform Party to do so we will need the unanimous consent of the House?

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

(1515)

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present today the fifty-sixth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs relating to the list of committee members.

With leave of the House, I intend to move concurrence in the 56th report later this day.

[English]

I move that the 56th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, I think you will also find unanimous consent for the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper under motions for concurrence in the 53rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented on Friday, December 9, 1994.

I move that the motion be passed and that the report be concurred in. I think you will find there is disposition on the part of the House to adopt that motion, of which notice has been given today, without debate or amendment.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

ABORTION

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of petitions. The first petition is on the issue of abortion.

The petitioners pray that Parliament act immediately to extend protection to the unborn child by amending the Criminal Code to extend the same protection enjoyed by born human beings to unborn human beings. I concur in that petition.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I also concur with a petition where the petitioners pray that Parliament ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously and that Parliament make no changes in the law that would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

Routine Proceedings

MINING

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I also have a very voluminous petition of 107 pages with 1,207 signatures. The petitioners are drawing to the attention of the House the Canadian Mineral Industry Federation's proposal of a 10-point plan of action to keep mining in Canada. Again, I concur very vigorously with it.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, additionally, I have received a petition of 11 pages with 144 signatures.

I note it is from a very small area in my constituency where they are very deeply concerned about the restrictive firearm controls that are being proposed by the government. Again, I concur with it.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am also very encouraged to present one last petition which arrived on my desk. It was an absolute surprise to me. It consists of 66 pages with over 1,400 signatures.

The petitioners ask for a national, binding referendum by all Canadians on the issue of capital punishment. That is the position of the Reform Party and it is certainly my position. I concur completely with this petition.

MINING

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and present a petition. The petitioners, who are from several communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, have signed their names by the hundreds on the issue of Canada's mining industry, noting that it is the mainstay of employment in over 150 communities. It notes that Canada's investment climate is forcing its mineral industry to look for new opportunities elsewhere.

(1520)

The petitioners call on Parliament to take action that will grow employment in this sector, promote exploration and re-build Canada's mineral reserves.

I have great pleasure in supporting this petition.

VIOLENT OFFENDERS

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise today, as I will every day until April 11, 1995 to present petitions. This date is set for the scheduled parole hearing of Robert Paul Thompson seeking his early release.

The petitioners I represent are concerned about making our streets safer for our citizens. They are opposed to the current

practice of early release of violent offenders prior to serving the full extent of their sentences.

The petitioners pray that our streets will be made safer for law-abiding citizens and their families of the victims of convicted murderers.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to present a petition made possible through the efforts of Bill C-55 and especially Mr. Doug Collins, Mr. Nick Carter and Daniel Earl and signed by residents of the great city of Kamloops.

Motivated by the Melanie Carpenter tragedy the petitioners call for changes to Canada's justice system, including assurance that those who are violent and sexual offenders are jailed for sufficient terms and if necessary for life to ensure that safety and security return to our streets and to our neighbourhoods.

This is the first of many petitions to come. To this date well over 3,000 signatures have already been gathered in just the last few days urging for changes to our criminal justice system.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present three different petitions from people in my riding and elsewhere dealing with discrimination and sexual orientation.

The petitioners urge among other things to bring forward the Canadian Human Rights Act amendments that would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

On that issue I am very much in agreement and I think it is time that we have this enacted in our legislation.

INCOME TAX

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today to the House of Commons.

In the first one, 558 constituents from Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt have signed the following: "We the undersigned residents of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt draw the attention of this House to the following: that the finance minister has indicated that he might change the rules regarding RRSPs and pensions and tax the holdings or income of these plans. Therefore we request that Parliament oppose any attempt to alter our ability to provide for secure retirement by way of taxation of assets or income of RRSPs and pension plans".

The message is clear, Madam Speaker. Do not touch our RRSPs or our pension plans.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the second petition is signed by 86 petitioners from Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. I point out that to date

1,271 people in my riding have signed this petition which asks the House of Commons assembled to oppose further legislation for firearms acquisition and possession and to provide for strict guidelines and mandatory sentencing for use or possession of a firearm in the commission of a violent crime.

I concur with both of these petitions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I would like to present three petitions on behalf of constituents of Shawville, Quebec dealing with social issues.

In the first two, petitioners pray that Parliament not amend the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way that would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality including amending the Canadian Human Rights Act to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase sexual orientation.

ABORTION

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the third and final petition the petitioners pray that Parliament act immediately to extend protection to the unborn child by amending the Criminal Code to extend the same protection enjoyed by born human beings to unborn human beings.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, as part of my parliamentary duties I rise today to present four petitions to the House.

The first is on behalf of Mr. Michael Dobbin and T.S. Symington who along with 82 other Calgarians call on Parliament to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The second petition is on behalf of Mr. Robert McNutt who along with 36 other Canadians calls on Parliament to prohibit discrimination the basis of sexual orientation and to adopt all necessary measures to recognize the full equality of same sex relationships in federal law.

THE FAMILY

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): The third petition, Madam Speaker, represents the opposing view on sexual orientation as 55 Albertans call on Parliament to oppose any legislation that would directly or indirectly redefine the family.

(1525)

The fourth and final petition also relates to the subject of families, as 34 Calgary and area residents call on the government to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a child care expense deduction to all families and not just those using outside receipted child care.

Routine Proceedings

I will continue to present all petitions that are sent to me by constituents of Calgary Centre regardless of my personal or political views on the subject.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to present a petition with 16,300 signatures.

This petition was collected by a constituent, Mr. Bernard Castet, whose son was murdered by two young offenders. The petition asks for amendments to the Young Offenders Act stating anyone committing a crime of violence will be tried in adult court if he or she is 14 years of age or older.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the second petition is much smaller. It calls on Parliament to not enact any further firearms legislation.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to table today. The first two pertain to the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The petitioners call on Parliament to put an end to discriminatory treatment in Canada of gay and lesbian citizens and their familial relationships by amending federal legislation that currently allows unequal treatment, including an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

I have explained to the petitioners my disagreement with sections of their petition, but I feel it is their right to have me table it in the House on their behalf.

ABORTION

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the third petition is a little more complicated. I will not go through the whole petition itself.

The petitioners claim it is clear that in the languages of Parliament and Canada there is evidence that the unborn human foetus from fertilization onward has recognition as an individual and also is included in "everyone"; whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to the Parliament and Government of Canada and article VII guarantees to everyone the right to life and security of the person and article XV(1) states that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law.

The petitioners call on Parliament to urge the government to recognize the unborn foetus from fertilization onward as an entity separate from the mother and to prepare a response to this petition which identifies the formal parliamentary process which selected the response of Petition No. 3510130, which I tabled last year, as the sole basis for the government's position

Routine Proceedings

and provide dismissive argument for each issue raised in this petition.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present three petitions signed by almost 300 people from several communities in my Cariboo—Chilcotin constituency.

My constituents are convinced that existing gun controls are sufficient. Therefore they call on Parliament to support laws that will severely punish all violent criminals who use weapons in the commission of a crime, support new Criminal Code firearms control provisions which recognize and protect the right of law-abiding citizens to own and use recreational firearms, and support legislation that will repeal or modify existing gun control laws that have not improved public safety or have proven not to be cost effective or proven to be overly complex so as to be ineffective or inefficient.

These petitions are presented with my concurrence.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have two petitions, representing the views of over 163 Erie constituents which I wish to present to the House today.

The first petition calls on the government to enforce the existing provisions in the Criminal Code prohibiting assisted suicide. It also asks that no further changes be made in the law that would sanction the aiding or abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

(1530)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second petition is on the issue of same sex benefits.

The petitioners request the government not to consider any amendments to the human rights act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the phrase "sexual orientation".

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, N.D.P.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by hundreds of residents of my constituency of Burnaby—Kingsway.

They point out that the current provisions of the Criminal Code deny people who are suffering from terminal or irreversible and debilitating illness the right to choose freely and voluntarily to end their lives with the assistance of a physician. Therefore they call upon Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to ensure the right of all Canadians to die with dignity by allowing people with terminal or irreversible and debilitating illness the right to the assistance of a physician in ending their lives at a time of their choice, subject to strict safeguards to

prevent abuse and to ensure that the decision is free, informed, competent and voluntary.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to table.

In the first the petitioners request that Parliament recognize that those who commit murder should never be released from prison. To that end, we ask that capital punishment be reinstated for those offenders.

The petition bears over 2,200 names.

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, in the second petition the petitioners, residents of communities in Alberta, in memory of Ryan and in support of Stu and Marg Garrioch and their family request that Parliament recognize that crimes of violence are serious and out of control, putting our society at risk.

They ask that the House amend the Young Offenders Act to give society the protection it deserves. There are over 2,500 signatures.

CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the third petition bears 1,655 signatures and requests that Parliament recognize that crimes of violence are serious and out of control, putting all of society at risk and that life should be life with no parole for violent offenders convicted of first degree murder and a minimum of 25 years without parole for those convicted of second degree murder.

I concur with the contents of each petition.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions that have been duly certified by the clerk of petitions.

The first petition is to the House of Commons assembled and requests Parliament to ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously and that in addition, Parliament make no changes in the law that would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or any activity designed to terminate human life.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the second petition the petitioners are asking Parliament to ensure not to amend the human rights code, the human rights act or the charter of rights and freedoms in any way that would indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or homosexuality.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am proud to present four petitions dealing with the issue of euthanasia,

assisted suicide from the people of the three towns of Prince George, Vanderhoof and Burns Lake in the great riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

The petitioners humbly pray that Parliament not repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code in any way and not allow the Supreme Court of Canada's decision of September 30 to disallow assisted suicide, euthanasia.

I am pleased to say that I concur in every respect with these four petitions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have several petitions to present today.

In the first one the petitioners request that Parliament not change any legislation that would indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality, including amending the human rights code. They will be pleased that the minister has agreed to delay the introduction of that legislation.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the second petition requests that Parliament ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously and that Parliament make no changes in the law that would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, in the third petition the petitioners pray that Parliament act immediately to extend protection to the unborn child by amending the Criminal Code to extend the same protection enjoyed by born human beings to unborn human beings.

(1535)

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a petition from residents of my constituency who point out that a very vocal minority of citizens are requesting Parliament to institute a dual marketing system for wheat and barley for export.

The petitioners humbly request that Parliament continue the wheat board monopoly powers for marketing wheat and barley and that it extend them to include all grains and oilseeds.

Routine Proceedings

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 76, 88 and 108.

[Text]

Question No. 76—Mr. Peric:

Regarding the decision to proceed with construction of the Kitchener prison for women, (a) how much money has been spent to date on the prison project, (b) how were those funds allocated, (c) was consideration given to relocating the prison to the Maple Grove road site? If yes, why was the site found to be unsuitable, (d) has any consideration been given to the recent offer by the warden of the Oxford Regional Centre in which a portion of that prison was offered to Correctional Service Canada, as an alternative to building the prison for women in Kitchener? If not, why not and (e) what would the anticipated cost of relocating the prison to an alternate site be and what types of expenditures would be included in that cost?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): In so far as Correctional Service Canada is concerned, the answer is as follows:

(a) Money spent to date: Approximately \$3.11 million has been spent to date.

(b) Allocation of funds: \$1.61 million for acquisition of site, including legal fees; \$1.5 million for two environmental studies, architectural design drawings, salary and operating cost for the Kitchener federally sentenced women office to house the warden, the deputy warden and support staff.

(c) In November 1993 the Maple Grove site was given consideration as a possible site for the prison. However, the location was found to be unsuitable for the following reasons:

(1) There are only two possible locations at the Maple Grove site which are sufficiently level to permit construction of the new women's prison. Neither is large enough to build on.

(2) Making the site larger to accommodate the needs of a women's prison would entail removing an esker. This would require provincial environmental approval and such a process would be both costly and time consuming. Meeting the anticipated environmental concerns would significantly increase the cost of the prison. Also, an agreement would have to be negotiated with the province of Ontario concerning the role of Correctional Service Canada in sharing the costs arising from this process.

(3) There would be significant additional costs of bringing storm and sanitary sewers to the Maple Grove site.

Routine Proceedings

(4) The minimum travel time required for services such as ambulance, police and fire to reach the location in the event of an emergency is exceeded because it is not close enough to these services.

(5) The Maple Grove site is not within a maximum 15-minute walk to available public transit services.

(6) Alternative sites would only have been considered if the Solicitor General had decided to reopen the site selection process. This is not the case.

On June 6, 1994, the Solicitor General issued a news release announcing the decision to proceed with the site already purchased on Homer Watson Boulevard and describing the reasons not to reopen the site selection process. This decision was based on an extensive review of all aspects of the Kitchener project and confirmed that the site on Homer Watson Boulevard was the best of the 21 sites originally proposed by the city of Kitchener. The review did not include consideration of sites not on the original list.

(d) The Oxford Regional Centre does not have design features that are consistent with the principles established by the task force on federally sentenced women, such as a home-like atmosphere with small cottage units to promote independent living in small groups, building structures that have natural light and good air ventilation, a size that would allow an interactive atmosphere, and non-intrusive security measures, in order to reflect the low risk to the community presented by most inmates. For these reasons further consideration was not given to the Oxford Regional Centre.

(e) The cost of relocating the facility to another site is estimated at \$5.2 million, which consists of an estimated \$2.8 million to acquire a new serviced property, conduct environmental studies and modify the architectural drawings to the new site. The remaining \$2.4 million represents the cost of operating the prison for women in Kingston, Ontario, for an additional year. As for federally sentenced women, the construction of the other facilities is planned to be completed in late fall 1995.

Question No. 88—Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast):

For 1992 and 1993 what were the car leases for the CBC, who had a lease, what were the make, model, year and detailed costs of each lease?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): For the years 1992 and 1993 the CBC's total number of car leases, which includes leases starting or ending within the two-year period, was 78 and 64 respectively.

All those leases were for general use vehicles for the purpose of corporate business, except for the following which were assigned to specific individuals and were leased under the name of the CBC: (1) 1989 Buick Lesabre at \$560 per month; lease expired April 23, 1992; (2) 1988 Buick Lesabre at \$450 per

month; lease expired June 30, 1992; and (3) 1993 Buick Lesabre at \$529 per month; lease expires May 4, 1996.

Question No. 108—Mr. Forseth:

How much money was spent in 1992-93 for ad hoc private lawyers to do local federal prosecutions in place of local provincial crown counsel?

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): The Department of Justice does not hire private lawyers either on a standing or ad hoc basis to replace local provincial crown counsel. Agents of the Attorney General provide legal services that would otherwise be provided by Department of Justice lawyers but cannot be provided because of geographic location or workload pressures.

In those circumstances where it has been necessary to hire standing or ad hoc crown agents to conduct federal prosecutions, the prosecutions have been pursuant to such legislation as the Narcotic Control Act, the Food and Drug Act, the Income Tax Act, the Competition Act and the Fisheries Act. In 1992-93, the federal government paid crown agents \$21.3 million for criminal prosecution work. As well, other work performed by crown agents on behalf of the federal government totalled \$18.7 million. This means that the total cost of crown agent work for 1992-93 was \$40 million.

As a result of these very significant costs, the Department of Justice began to look at alternate approaches in its provision of criminal prosecution services. One approach involves pilot projects that, where economically feasible, would replace crown agents currently performing prosecution responsibilities with respect to the Narcotic Control Act and the Food and Drug Act with in-house Department of Justice counsel. The first such project is currently under way in Toronto with two other sites under consideration. It is expected that these pilot projects will realize savings ranging from 15 to 20 per cent and serve as part of the department's commitment to the cost effective provision of government services to the public.

[English]

* * *

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Questions Nos. 99, 103, and 114.

[Text]

***Question No. 99—Mr. Godin:**

What results were produced by the \$3,404,136 invested in the Kahnawake Reserve from 1989 to 1993 under the national native alcohol and drug abuse program?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): The amount injected into the national native drug and alcohol abuse program (NNAADAP) for the Kahnawake community between 1989 and 1993 is \$3,095,853.27. This breaks down as follows: 1989–90 \$489,800.60; 1990–91 \$560,601.60; 1991–92 \$662,860.50; 1992–93 \$681,331.07; and 1993–94 \$701,259.50.

These amounts were provided to the Kahnawake community through contribution agreements, but they were not necessarily used exclusively for the Kahnawake aboriginal population. Shakotia'takehnhas Community Services is the organization mandated by the Kahnawake Band Council to co-ordinate the following programs: (1) social services (2) NNAADAP program (3) community health representatives program and (4) NNAADAP resource centre program

It acts as an administrator for regional NNAADAP activities for the entire aboriginal population of Quebec, submitting financial reports to Health Canada.

The key NNAADAP activities at Kahnawake are as follows:

Prevention: Various strategies (control, influence, education) have been used to prevent or minimize the use of the substances involved. The team in place has been involved with consciousness raising and education activities, as well as those offering alternatives to substance abuse. All these address the population of Kahnawake in general; some have specific target groups.

Activity reports are submitted to us regularly to justify the funding.

NNAADAP Resource Centre (Film Library): The resource centre is administered by Shakotia'takehnhas Community Services. Its purpose is the acquisition and distribution to aboriginal communities and other organizations affiliated with NNAADAP of films, videos and other material free of charge. Principal activities are: material loans and handling, searches for pertinent and user adapted material, and support to workers in preparing promotional and educational activities in both official languages. The centre is not exclusively for the population of Kahnawake but rather for all aboriginal communities throughout Quebec.

Rehabilitation: An aboriginal centre has been set up to provide rehabilitation services to Quebec's Mohawk population: the Onen:To'Kon Centre. While mainly serving the Kahnawake and Kanesatake Mohawk, it also provides services to other English speaking nations in Quebec, as therapy cycles are available.

Administration of the various NNAADAP activities: Shakotia'takehnhas Community Services acts as the administrator, co-ordination and reimbursement of costs, for certain regional activities, at the request of Health Canada. Note: these activities are for the entire aboriginal population of Quebec.

Results: The results of these activities have been a new attitude toward drugs and alcohol within the aboriginal population. Alcohol-free social activities are now more popular. There has also been a markedly increased interest in National Drug Awareness Week; the last time, related activities went on for a month. It is also worthy of note that the Onen:To'Kon Treatment Centre has treated more than 1,312 persons for alcohol and drug abuse on an in-patient or out-patient basis.

*Question No. 103—**Mr. Caron:**

As of November 1, 1994, how much money has the federal government invested and how much will it invest under the Economic and Regional Development Agreement (ERDA) and, more specifically in relation to the project to upgrade the highway linking the municipalities of Alma and La Baie, Quebec (highway project 70/170)?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): The 70/170 highway project is part of the Canada-Quebec subsidiary agreement on transportation development signed in 1985 within the framework of the Economic and Regional Development Agreement (ERDA).

The transportation agreement, administered by Transport Canada on the federal side, expired on October 31, 1993, but commitments for registered projects were met with current funds under the agreement for an additional 12 months up to October 31, 1994.

The project concerned was registered when the agreement was signed. A \$25 million portion was to have been financed in equal parts under the agreement between the Canadian and the Quebec governments, \$12.5 million each.

The total amount allocated under the agreement from the early stages up to October 31, 1994 was \$21,529,600, of which \$10,764,800 came from the federal government. Since no additional funding could be allocated after October 31, this sum was for all intents and purposes the federal government's total maximum contribution to this project.

Each government's \$1,735,000 shortfall relative to the \$12.5 million initially promised was primarily attributable to delays during the course of the project.

The 70/170 project was not able to follow the originally planned schedule. Although the first section between La Baie and Jonquière was completed on schedule, construction was slowed down significantly in 1991 and 1992 because of environmental studies, cancellation of the Jonquière bypass road and budget restrictions in the Quebec department of transport. Later, construction resumed on the Jonquière-Alma section, a four-lane divided highway. The first 3.8-kilometre segment beginning three kilometres north of Jonquière is currently nearing completion. Expropriation for the remainder of the segment leading to the outskirts of Alma has also been completed.

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It should be noted that funds which could not be committed to the highway 70/170 project were reallocated to another highway project under the agreement in order to ensure that these funds were spent. The Quebec government is expected to carry this project to completion subject to availability of funds.

***Question No. 114—Mr. Hanger:**

What was the printing cost of the photo bookmarks that were included in the 1995 immigration plan document package?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): The minister's compliments card, which was included in the 1995 immigration plan document package, was intended to be generic in nature and useful for distribution with various Citizenship and Immigration Canada documents. Accordingly, 30,000 were ordered for a total cost of \$2,083.48 or less than 7 cents each.

[English]

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, due to the number and length of responses, I ask that they be printed in *Hansard* as if read.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec—Est, BQ): I have a point of order, Madam Speaker, concerning Question No. 93, which was tabled on October 19, 1994, that is to say 110 days ago. Normally, such questions are to be answered within 45 days. I would like an explanation as to the reasons for this delay, a delay that we consider unreasonable.

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, perhaps I could finish what I was saying before dealing with the point of order raised by the hon. member.

[English]

I indicated that these questions would be answered as if read. That was agreed and those are now acceptable.

* * *

QUESTION PASSED AS ORDER FOR RETURN

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that Question No. 94 be made an Order for Return. If it is, then the return would be tabled immediately. Then I will deal with the request.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House that Question No. 94 be deemed to have been made an Order for Return?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 94—Mr. Atlhouse:

Regarding the Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) payments, (a) how many individuals participated in NISA over each of the last 4 years, (b) what has been the cost of purchasing and installing computing and processing equipment since the program began in 1991 to the present and are there any plans for future major improvements, (c) what is the waiting time from date of receipt of application until date cheque is issued, (d) in 1993 and 1994, how many applications fell into the category requiring 1 month for processing, 2 months, etc. up to 10 months or more and what are the chief reasons for the delays?

(Return tabled.)

[Translation]

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, Question No. 93 standing in the name of the hon. member for Québec—Est relates to contracts for services, supplies and leasing awarded by the Department of Public Works and Government Services since October 25, 1993, in all federal constituencies in Quebec, and to the list of government properties located in these same constituencies.

As you can imagine, the list is long. The government has been working on a response ever since the question was received. I understand that it is almost ready and I will table it in this House as soon as possible. I hope that the hon. member can wait that long because there are many items to put down on that list.

The government owns many properties, as he knows, and he also knows that the department in question has a great many contracts in the province of Quebec and that, with 75 constituencies, the list will be very long. I hope that he can wait for all the information to be compiled in response to his question. I will be tabling that response in this House shortly.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The questions as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered.

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

(1540)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion, that Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act, be read the third time and passed.

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Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to participate in the debate, at third reading, on Bill C-44, which amends the Immigration Act, the Citizenship Act and the Customs Act.

Before getting to the crux of the matter, I want to make a few comments to help us during this debate or at least to make us think of the importance of the decisions which we will be making when we vote on this bill.

In Part I of the Immigration Act outlining the Canadian immigration policy, sections (i) and (j) mention the need to "maintain and protect the health, safety and good order of Canadian society", and also "promote international order and justice by denying the use of Canadian territory to persons who are likely to engage in criminal activity".

We agree with these principles and objectives because they reflect the large consensus on which are based our legal and justice systems. But there are also concerns which are directly related to Bill C-44 and which are equally important to understand the issue being debated.

During the recent consultations held by the minister regarding immigration, someone said that "intolerance was the fastest growing industry in Canada". Hysteria, racism and fear result from intolerance and generally lead people to confuse reality with perception. Reality is what exists in fact, while perception is the representation of something based on an impression.

This is why, for some time now, Canadians have been under the impression that criminal immigrants abound in our country. Given such an impression, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that immigrants are responsible for most crimes.

We must firmly oppose the spreading of adulterated and erroneous information on immigration, since it adversely affects the relation of confidence which should exist between a host country and its immigrants.

Last year, a study conducted by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration revealed that there is no link between ethnic origin and the propensity to commit crimes. Contrary to what some people would have us believe, persons born abroad and now living in Canada are under-represented in the prison population, as Derrick Thomas, senior researcher in the department has confirmed. While new arrivals represent 20.2 per cent of Canada's population, they represent only 11.9 per cent of the population in prison or on parole. Moreover, contrary to certain popular beliefs, visible minorities are not inordinately represented in statistics on crime.

In view of the many questions people have and the concerns they express, it is worth pointing out that the crime rate dropped by 5 per cent in 1993. According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, the crime rate reported by police departments dropped for the second consecutive year in 1993. The 5 per cent

decrease is the biggest in a single year since the practice of gathering statistics on crime began in 1962.

This confirms the statement I made earlier about reality and perceptions. While the public feels that crime has increased generally, this is not actually the case. The same thing may be said for the relationship people try to establish between immigration and criminality.

It is certainly not my intention to downplay the seriousness of criminal activities. They exist, and we are aware of them. I know people experience real fear about their safety. Surveys have shown this. Nevertheless, we have to look at the facts.

We should also look for and decry the source of public misconceptions. This House must not reflect the sensationalism of supermarket tabloids or the media, which give too much attention to individual cases making them appear to be the norm in Canada.

(1545)

It is unbelievable that, having first singled out young people as being the source of all evil, we are now pointing to immigrants as being the scourge of humanity. Should we not regard socio-economic conditions as the fundamental basis of crime and not immigration? And are not the difficulties in the areas of finances, adjustment, training and employment experienced by immigrant families, and young people in particular, the true causes of crime rather than immigration itself? Do you agree?

An hon. member: Yes, it is true.

Mrs. Gagnon: Beyond the fears weighing on our minds, we have the following reservations about specific provisions of Bill C-44. The most important of these is the clearly expressed desire to eliminate the right to appeal allowed immigrants and refugees accused of crimes punishable by a prison term of ten years or more. This seems to run counter to the fundamental principles which should exist in a just society. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms should apply for us all as regards a fair and impartial procedure.

Another element of the bill which concerns us is that of sentencing. The bill considers only the nominal act, that is, the maximum penalty for the type of crime committed, without regard for the sentence actually imposed. We all know that, even though a crime is punishable by a 10-year prison term, in practice, judges use principles of sentencing to set terms. For example, someone who breaks into a private residence can be given a life sentence. According to the bill, the accomplice of someone who issues fraudulent credit cards could be deported to his or her country of origin.

In general, defendants are given much lighter sentences than the maximum. In certain cases, the sentence does not even include a prison term or a fine, the defendant is only given a suspended sentence or is put on probation. Persons given only very light sentences could see themselves, under the bill before

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us, forced to leave the country. This provision of the bill could constitute, in our opinion, a violation of the Geneva Convention. The manual of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees states that, depending on the nature of the crime presumed to have been committed, all of the pertinent factors, including extenuating circumstances, must be taken into consideration. In our opinion, bill C-44 should take these considerations into account.

Another aspect that is ignored in the bill is the distinction between political crimes and common law crimes. It seems imprudent to deport persons convicted for political reasons to their country of origin without taking into account the risks they will face there. This kind of regulation is clearly lacking in flexibility and humanity. Would it not be better to take a closer look at the anticipated risks as compared to the seriousness of the crimes committed?

Other important issues are of concern to me, and I ask myself what will happen to permanent residents who have been living in Canada for several years. In some cases, they arrived in this country when they were quite small. Today, they are adults, they work here, are part of the same family and have only vague memories of their country of origin. They have no more relatives and often no more friends over there. Since these people are now Quebecers and Canadians, is returning them to their country of origin the answer?

Other aspects of the bill also deserve closer scrutiny. The bill proposes to authorize immigration officers to seize and open any parcel or document if they suspect it may be used for fraudulent purposes. Is this not a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? One of the principles of our judiciary system is the presumption of innocence, but these provisions on seizing mail reverse the burden of proof. On what grounds will seizures be made and how can the criminal nature of the contents be identified? That is something to think about.

(1550)

The bill also provides that certain decisions that were formerly made by the Immigration and Refugee Board will, from now on, be made by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and its officials. The minister and his officials are being given new powers to appeal decisions made by an adjudicator in the course of an inquiry, but on the other hand, the commission is being deprived of its power to review cases on humanitarian grounds. Does this mean the administrative process is being politicized? Is this an attack on the independence of the IRB? Would it not be better to improve the way the IRB operates?

I would also like to mention the findings of a study by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration which were released last summer. According to the study, 1,888 foreign criminals who were to be deported were still at large. Is there a way to find these people and try and prevent others from doing

the same thing in the future, without necessarily making it harder to enter the country and running the risk of creating situations that are just as embarrassing as the one I just described? Is the problem of foreign criminals at large specific? In other words, are there more foreigners at large than Canadians or Quebecers that were born here? How many Canadians and Quebecers are now wanted by the police? Do they represent a percentage of Canadians that is significantly smaller than the percentage of immigrants in the same situation? We think the government should provide all the facts on the subject in order to better inform the public and set the record straight on the number of foreign criminals at large. In that way we would stop the witch hunt for immigrants and refugee claimants.

I would like to say again that the Bloc Québécois is aware of the problems associated with foreign criminals presently in Canada. We also know that crime causes turmoil and terror in our communities. We will support the government in its attempts to arrive at an enduring and fair solution to this problem. We agree wholeheartedly that immigrants and refugee claimants cannot use the legislation or reputation of Canada or Quebec to escape their country of origin if they have committed serious offences.

We will not be distracted by unfounded observations which, as we have emphasized, do not reflect reality. The Canadian government seems at this time to be toughening its stance in order to appeal to certain voters. Consider for instance the Young Offenders Act passed during the last session or the increasing hesitation of Liberal caucus members in respect of gun control, or even motion M-157, tabled by the Liberal member for Scarborough—Rouge River, which aims to restrict immigration during periods of recession.

And while we are on the subject, I would also like to point out that Bill C-44, like many other government initiatives, does not reflect the situation in Quebec. In fact, public opinion in Quebec differs greatly from that in the rest of Canada in regards to the link between crime and immigration. As the *Globe and Mail* reminded us last week, Quebecers did not let the few bad cases recently experienced in Canada—which we deplore—influence their attitude and behaviour. This may be another aspect of Quebec's distinctiveness.

Immigrants make a fundamental and undeniable contribution to Quebec and Canadian society's collective wealth. A law designed to prevent criminals from enjoying the right of admission to and asylum in Canada should not be misused. The goals set are not always consistent with the measures put forward to achieve them.

That, unfortunately, seems to be the problem with Bill C-44 as it now stands.

(1555)

Unfortunately, the government caved in to public pressure from certain groups and ignored our recommendations.

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The minister unjustifiably rejected our recommendations. Let us take only one example, as time is running out. Let us consider the minimum two-year limit that we propose as a guideline. The minister replied that this proposal was not credible because the duration of the sentence handed down varies according to geographical and other arbitrary factors. He would rather keep the theoretical ten-year limit, when the courts use well-established rules to determine sentencing. These rules take into account the mitigating circumstances surrounding the crime. The minister thinks he is better able to determine an individual's fate than the courts. Instead of relying on the court, he prefers to decide himself whether or not he should use his power for humanitarian reasons. That coming from the same person who said barely a year ago that there should be less political involvement in the immigration system. It is easy to see that he is already under some pressure. What will happen when he and his colleagues are continuously subjected to strong public pressure?

For all the reasons I mentioned in my speech, the opposition cannot support this bill.

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on her excellent speech. Several of the problems that Bill C-44 touches on could be dealt with administratively. In this regard, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the malfunction of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration through a number of examples.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain information from immigration officials for a number of reasons: there has been enormous personnel cuts in the department and there are more to come. This has caused a lot of motivation problems within the department.

In the Montreal area, for any information, you have to dial 496-1010. Everyone knows this number: the lawyers, anyone who works with immigrants and refugees. The mere mention of this telephone number can provoke an allergic reaction, because there are six stages involved and it takes several minutes to get a final answer. If you ask to speak to an official, you are told: "Sorry, the line is busy."

That is no good for us members of Parliament, as a large part of our work consists in resolving immigration problems. Last year, the department put out guidelines saying: "If you want information, send us a fax." But it received so many faxes that we never got an answer. Now, they are telling us: "Phone instead." But it is even worse than last year. It is incredibly difficult for government services users because they never get to talk to a department official. In some instances, they come from abroad and do not know the language spoken here, let alone how our telephone system works, a completely dehumanized system. You have a machine answering calls, instead of people. It is

becoming increasingly difficult for us, members of Parliament, to fulfill our role as representatives of the public, particularly as regards immigration. When we write to the minister, it takes two to three months to receive an acknowledgement, and another month or two to get a substantive answer. Yet, these are not minor issues: sometimes, what is at stake is the life of refugees who want to bring to Canada family members who are abroad.

(1600)

The minister should take action to solve these administrative problems within the Department of Immigration, because these problems will become more serious once Bill C-44 is passed. The decision-making process regarding immigration issues is becoming increasingly politicized. The minister and his senior officials will make the decisions.

We, members of Parliament, will constantly have to contact the minister. We will not get answers within reasonable delays and this will generate a lot of frustration for the users of that service. I ask the minister to take the necessary steps to correct the problem as quickly as possible.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a comment.

I listened with great interest to the excellent presentation made by the hon. member for Québec. I liked the way she described the public's perception of the crime rate in Canada.

I agree that for some time people have been saying, especially certain opposition members, and even members of the general public, that more and more young people are involved in crime. This is just not true. In fact, according to statistics compiled by the Solicitor General and other departments, there has been no increase in youth crime, contrary to public opinion. Indeed, according to a Maclean Hunter poll, nearly 60 per cent of Canadians thought, and this of course includes Quebecers, that crime was on the increase.

I would also like to say that with respect to immigration, there is a general consensus in this country on the importance of recognizing not only the work done by the department but also by new immigrants to this country. We must not forget that during the eighties, nearly 90,000 immigrants came to Canada each year. As you know, Canada is known as a host country that is generous and tolerant. In fact, more and more people in other countries are interested in becoming citizens of the country with the best reputation in the world.

We now receive nearly 300,000 immigrants annually. Our strength is immigration, attracting people from other countries to come here and settle and become full fledged Canadians and contribute to the economic prosperity of the country.

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But to say that the process has become very politicized—I do not think that is part of our culture. I do not think that in this country, we necessarily make political decisions on who will or will not be allowed into the country. We have certain procedures, we have a well established public service and programs to promote immigration by investors. People cannot say Canada is not a host country, is not a country where you can have a good life. If we only admit 300,000 annually, I am convinced—

An hon. member: Two hundred thousand.

Mr. Gagnon: It does not really matter, but I would like to know how many applications we get from all the Canadian consulates or embassies throughout the world.

Mrs. Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment because this is not really a question. I agree with the member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine when he says that crime has not increased; on the contrary, as I mentioned in my text, it decreased by 5 per cent in 1993, and we are very happy about that.

However, I would like to go back to the comment made by my colleague for Bourassa, who says that we should have been more efficient in this bill and provided corrective action of an administrative nature. It is inconceivable that all the services should have been concentrated in Végréville.

In my riding, people are demanding services. They have expectations. They complain about public services that are very impersonal and becoming more and more inhuman, especially for an immigrant or someone who wants to come to Canada. It seems to me that the relationship that should exist between the people from the host country and those who want to come here has been removed.

(1605)

I think that this contact has been removed and I too would have liked to see some corrective action in the bill. I will not go back to all the clauses in the bill, but I believe that some of them are contrary to the principle of equity and fairness towards the immigrant population and permanent residents. I think that leaving in the bill the concept of discredit, that is that immigrants are more criminals than native born Quebecers and Canadians is to harm these cultural communities that have chosen to live in Canada.

My colleague for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine said that Canada and Quebec are indeed societies that welcome immigrants and are in favour of immigration, but this bill, in my opinion, will contribute instead to an increase of racism towards these cultural communities. We read in the newspapers that a black or a Haitian has committed a crime, but when it comes to a

Quebecer or a Canadian, they just say an individual. We should be extremely careful on this issue and I will not repeat my speech, but I think that many clauses in the bill are not flexible and compassionate enough, and I will conclude my remarks on that.

[English]

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak once again in support of Bill C-44. I believe the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration clearly highlighted the bill's intention and the changes proposed as a result of the amendments that were passed by the committee.

As I have said in the past, Bill C-44 will provide us with the tools to deal effectively with people who abuse the system. Moreover it is part of the government's strategy to introduce an immigration plan that is fair, sustainable and responds to the needs of Canadians.

The minister of immigration said last August: "A good immigration policy is one that ensures the balance between equity and tolerance on the one hand and law enforcement on the other hand". Unlike members of the opposition, we have listened and continue to listen to what Canadians and Quebecers want in their immigration policy.

The legislation is long overdue. The bill we are dealing with today is necessary if we are to restore integrity to a system that has been damaged by the infiltration of a small but destructive criminal element.

My experience has shown me that for the most part immigrants who come to Canada wish to become full members of Canadian society. Canada is a great and generous country as all of us in the Chamber agree. Our doors have always been open to people fleeing economic hardship, persecution, war, civil strife, and to people who seek a better future for their children and themselves.

Immigrants, people like my parents, became Canadian citizens and participated actively in all segments of our society. Canada's history is full of such stories. The Chamber is full of stories of immigrants who through hard work and perseverance have made the country what it is today: one of the best countries in the world in which to live.

[Translation]

Canadians will not tolerate those who take advantage of their generosity, violate their laws or try to use the immigration and refugee determination process for criminal purposes. They must know that the government will not tolerate abuse. With Bill C-44, the government has taken all necessary measures to prevent abuse and protect the Canadian public against criminals.

*Government Orders**[English]*

As the minister mentioned earlier, the amendments we are considering today respond to various criticisms that the bill was vague and open to misinterpretation.

(1610)

Furthermore the amendments we are examining today will improve the enforcement package we have put forward. They are not draconian measures as the opposition would like us to believe. They are a fair, efficient and common sense approach to the problems criminals pose to our immigration system.

The opposition parties continue to be opposed to our legislation, yet both have admitted they agree in principle that changes have to be made. The Bloc Quebecois thinks we have gone too far with our proposal and the Reform Party thinks we have not gone far enough. I think we are on the right track.

We are here to represent all Canadians. We have listened to Canadians from across Canada and put forward what we feel is the best solution.

The main points of the legislation are as follows. First, serious criminals deemed to be a danger to the public will not be allowed to claim refugee status as a means to delay their removal from Canada. Appeals against removal orders by persons convicted of serious crimes will be decided by the minister or his designate and not by the immigration appeal division. Senior immigration officers will be allowed to terminate refugee hearings because of criminality. Further, the legislation will give immigration officers the authority to seize identity documents from international mail if it is clear they are meant to be used to circumvent immigration requirements.

The legislation will also ensure that persons with summary convictions whether obtained inside Canada or abroad will be inadmissible. Bill C-44 will allow us to stop the processing of citizenship when a person is under inquiry.

Concerns have been raised over the definition of a serious criminal. Some are concerned that rightful refugees will be turned away. This will not be the case. One of the amendments we are considering today clarifies the definition of criminality. This is the essence of much of what Bill C-44 says.

It is important to note the two conditions. To be ineligible for refugee status an individual must be convicted of a crime punishable by 10 years or more in prison and must be deemed a serious threat to public safety by the minister. Both those conditions have to be met. Those considered a danger to the public would lose their right of appeal to the IRB on humanitarian grounds, law and issues of fact. They would retain the right to

seek judicial review in the federal court and humanitarian issues would be considered by the minister when he or she makes a decision.

Contrary to what a lot of opposition members said, this responds to a lot of the concerns brought forward by the various organizations that presented their briefs before the immigration committee, for instance the Canadian Bar Association and other groups. We listened, took note and made those changes in Bill C-44. This is a government that listens to Canadians and, as we have proven in various other areas of legislation, takes their concerns seriously when the time comes to bring forth legislation.

Unfortunately the two opposition parties continue to voice the concerns of only parts of Canada. It is easy to put forward the ideas of just one region of Canada. It is, however, much more difficult to find the middle ground that will try to satisfy all Canadians. I believe we have done that with Bill C-44.

The Reform Party continues to call for an inquiry into the practices of the Immigration and Refugee Board and most recently proposed a total ban of the board. We recognize that Canadians are tired of abuse and we have moved quickly to respond to these concerns. Bill C-44 addresses a number of concerns of the Immigration and Refugee Board to allow for flexibility, a respect of humanitarian and compassionate grounds, and the need to prevent abuse of the refugee system.

The government recognizes changes have to be made in order to make the system work better. We are streamlining the system, making sure that other points such as enforcement are stronger.

[Translation]

Our government is committed to maintaining a truly effective immigration policy, preventing illegal immigration and ensuring effective border control. These new provisions are fair and reasonable. Furthermore, contrary to what was said on the other side of the House, they are consistent with the crime-related provisions of the Geneva convention on refugees. It is a matter of justice, of democracy.

The measures proposed in Bill C-44 are not excessive and do not ignore the needs of immigrants.

(1615)

Madam Speaker, allow me to add that the immigrants themselves admit that the system is being abused. Those who took part in the public consultations and testified before the Minister of Immigration asked us to amend the legislation as it now stands. I reiterate that our goal is not to penalize immigrants but to eliminate existing cases of abuse in the system.

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[English]

Bill C-44 is about crime. There are a small number of criminals who abuse Canada's good nature and compassion. We must protect the integrity of the system against these few, and I repeat these few.

Hon. members of the Bloc have said that we are tainting all immigrants by bringing forth this legislation. I do not believe that this is so. In fact, we are presenting the true picture of what immigrants have brought to this country. We are assuring that the few criminal elements that do exist in any system are dealt with quickly and efficiently and thereby, in my opinion, assuring that the good name of all immigrants is protected under the Canadian system.

[Translation]

Again, Bill C-44 will help us restore integrity and instill renewed confidence in the Canadian people.

[English]

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, this member will recall that she sat in on a meeting with a group of Vietnamese people who expressed concerns about the undesirable elements among them. The gist of that meeting was that they indicated they wanted certain individuals removed from their midst.

I have the names of several of those individuals who have been causing problems in their community. Unfortunately half the Liberal members got up and walked out of the meeting when this group of Vietnamese concerned citizens wanted some deterrent and strong action on the part of the government.

An adjudicator just released several of these individuals into the community. Some have been charged with sexual assault with a weapon, B and E with a weapon. One was a gang member. Another one shot a kid in the face with a gun in Vancouver. One was just released from the Fraser Regional Institute. There is robbery, assault, trafficking in heroine and the list goes on and on. These individuals walk freely in the community. Why does Bill C-44 not deal with these very violent criminals?

Mrs. Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, first I would like to correct something the hon. member said. I remember sitting in on the meeting with the Vietnamese community and I did not walk out. Neither did the rest of the members but that is not the point of the hon. member's question.

As far as the cases that he has brought up, I am not personally aware of those cases. I do not know if they are real or fabricated. A lot of times the terms of what is brought forth by members of the opposition is sensationalization. That is exactly the type of thing that gives a bad name to all immigrants, including myself if I may say so since I am a child of immigrants to Canada.

What we have to keep in mind is that Bill C-44 is one way we

can as a government effectively, efficiently and quickly take care of the criminal elements in our society.

Bill C-44 does address some of the problems that have been raised by the hon. member.

An hon. member: What about the other one?

Mrs. Bakopanos: That was before Bill C-44. That is not after Bill C-44. We have not adopted it yet, have we?

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, I often hear government members say that Canada is the best country in the world. I am not disputing it, I am simply urging more caution. There are 1,500,000 Canadians who are unemployed and four million living under the poverty line.

(1620)

We are struggling with enormous problems. Unemployment is high in Montreal. In the riding of the hon. member for Saint-Denis alone, 20 per cent of the population is either on UI or on welfare.

Each year, 80,000 persons leave Canada. Why? When we travelled to Cyprus together—a very pleasant trip—many Canadian Cypriots told us they had returned to their country because of the problems we are having here. I think we should be more careful.

As for Bill C-44 not violating the Geneva Convention on refugees, the Canadian Council has testified that certain clauses are in violation of the Geneva Convention. Not one of the major organizations that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has heard supported this bill. Every organization and individual who testified before the committee criticized it, some going as far as asking for its withdrawal. The Canadian Bar Association, a most respectable organization, criticized the substance of the bill. When I asked the Canadian Ethnocultural Council if any cultural community organization in Canada supported this bill, the answer was “no”.

So, I wonder if the hon. member for Saint-Denis could tell me why no organization supports Bill C-44.

Mrs. Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I do not think that all of them have said that we had to get rid of the whole legislation.

[English]

I think a lot of them said they would like to see certain clarifications and certain amendments made to the legislation. We have listened to their concerns.

We have in fact brought forward some of those amendments. I stated one: In order to be ineligible for refugee status an individual would have to be convicted of a crime punishable by 10 years or more in prison. It must be deemed a serious threat to public safety. I think that was brought up because in Bill C-44 we did not stress that it was 10 years or more in prison.

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We did listen to the representations of the various organizations and did take their concerns into account when we prepared the legislation. To say that they told us to do away with the legislation is not the truth. In fact, a lot of people felt there were valid reasons for bringing forth this legislation.

I do not want to repeat what I have already said in my speech. The minister has held public consultations across this land. He has listened to the Canadian people. The Canadian people have told him that they want to see criminals deported as quickly as possible. This legislation does respond to the general sentiment across this country, including Quebec, that criminals who commit crimes in Canada which are punishable by imprisonment for 10 years or more will be dealt with quickly and will be deported to their country of origin.

I do not think that anyone who came before the committee can dispute that fact.

Mr. Hanger: Madam Speaker, just a point of clarification from this member in reference to the search of mail coming through customs.

I ask the member what the government is going to do about the shortage of manpower in the area of customs in order to adequately search for the illegal documents. I am very much aware, as is the member, that there is a serious shortage of manpower to do this job. As the customs union representative pointed out the legislation would be moot. It would be of no value whatsoever.

What is your government going to do?

Mrs. Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I think the minister has answered that question often enough. He has been asked that question numerous times by the hon. member.

(1625)

I think what we have said is that we are going to work closely with the Minister of Justice and the minister of public security to ensure that there is seizure of the mail. That question has been answered numerous times.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Madam Speaker, there are a number of deficiencies in this bill, deficiencies that were drawn to the attention of the government by witnesses who came and spoke eloquently at the standing committee hearings. These deficiencies were not dealt with and I would like to just deal with those now at some length if I may.

In 1991 The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future released its final report on the state of our country. It was one of the most wide ranging and I might add, one of the most expensive committees in Canadian history. It spent over \$23 million to get the pulse of the citizens of this country. However, it amounted to little more than a very expensive blood pressure check. Thanks to chairman Keith Spicer we were told what we knew all along: that people get angry when they are ignored by their governments.

The Reform Party grew out of this frustration and the fact that

52 of us now sit in the House of Commons is proof that this frustration is still alive and well.

Among its findings, the citizens' forum found Canadians have had enough of this partisan political system that the Liberals enforce and encourage with a passion. According to the report: "One of the strongest messages the forum received from participants was that they have lost their faith in both the political process and their political leaders. They do not feel that their governments, especially at the federal level, reflect the will of the people and they do not feel that citizens have the means at the moment to correct this".

It adds later: "They would like major decisions affecting them to be made in a responsible manner and in a manner that is responsive to both the expressed views and the general well-being of citizens".

Two years later the Liberals promised in their much touted red book to restore respect for government. They said that in the House of Commons a Liberal government would give MPs a greater role in drafting legislation through the House of Commons committees.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, I was looking forward to playing a constructive role in drafting legislation that reflected the needs and the aspirations of Canadians. It was my hope that a new spirit of co-operation would come from this government, a spirit I am always willing to help and encourage.

To me, Bill C-44 was to be a test of this Liberal commitment. Would the Liberals be willing to co-operate with the Reform Party of Canada in making Bill C-44 work? Would they be willing to listen to Canadians on the pros and cons of this bill? Would they be willing to make changes to the bill to account for its flaws and shortcomings? I am sad to say on all accounts they most emphatically were not.

From the very start of the hearings Reform MPs have been faced by Liberal members who have shown neither an interest in working with us in the manner the red book promised nor the respect their peers expect and deserve. After promising to take the high road in dealing with the opposition, the Liberals have suddenly taken a liking to slinging mud at anyone on the opposition benches.

The Reform Party members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and the Bloc Quebecois members I might add have tolerated constant interruptions when questioning witnesses, sarcastic comments in the middle of statements, an atmosphere of unfounded animosity and confrontation at levels never before seen in Canadian politics. I wonder, is this what this new style of government is all about?

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I am more upset though with how undemocratic the entire committee process has become. In black and white, the Liberals promised to give the Commons committees more leeway as well as the power to be more than just lap-dogs of the ministers. Committees are supposed to be the eyes and ears of the House, ensuring that average Canadians are heard on important issues.

(1630)

Over the past several months the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration heard from numerous witnesses who came at taxpayers' expense to share their concerns about Bill C-44 and to offer their suggestions about how it can be made more effective.

The standing committee heard from a wide range of groups and individuals: lawyers, refugee advocates, police officers, labour groups and international organizations. Not one of these groups had kind words for the government on this bill. Yet clearly the Liberals have turned their backs on Canadians and followed the beck and call of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

For the record, and to jog the memories of the Liberal members sitting opposite, let me state what some of these groups had to say on this piece of legislation.

Amnesty International believes:

Measures contained in Bill C-44 potentially violate rights guaranteed by the charter and in international treaties concerning refugees and the prevention of torture.

The Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association, after outlining 14 series concerns, concluded: "Bill C-44 must be withdrawn".

The Canadian Bar Association is concerned that "the express goals of saving money and reducing delay are not likely to be advanced by the provisions of Bill C-44".

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Canada believed that Bill C-44 violated sections 30, 58 and 1(f)(b) of the Geneva convention.

The Canadian Labour Congress stated:

We believe C-44 in fact violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are numerous other warnings from groups all across the political spectrum. I wonder what my Liberal colleagues across the way remember of these concerns.

In summary, these and other groups accused the government of breaking sections 11, 7 and 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as numerous international conventions dealing with refugee treatment, torture, execution, war zones and disappearances.

The bill would not stand up five minutes against a charter challenge and would be condemned by the international commu-

nity if passed. It is hard to believe that the government would refuse to deal with these serious concerns or even at least acknowledge that they exist.

On the issue of enforcement, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and I had a rather heated discussion when he appeared before the standing committee. I asked him bluntly: "Can you enforce Bill C-44? Yes or no?" His response was: "Yes, we can". That was a strong pledge in my opinion, but fortunately for the minister he is not the one who will be enforcing the bill. What about the people who will be enforcing the bill? What did they have to say?

According to the Canada Employment and Immigration union, "Additional staff is needed to process applications and help integrate new entrants in a timely fashion". They do not have the staff needed to fulfil their current duties, let alone any new duties.

The customs union said:

What benefit can be derived by the amendments proposed by Bill C-44, if we currently do not have the resources or the capacity to enforce even the existing legislation?

Finally, Canadian Police Association President Neal Jessop said:

It reminds me of putting a band aid on the Hindenburg. The problems are not going to go away.

What else is there to say? Whom should I believe? The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, a politician with little or no background in policing issues, who claims that Bill C-44 can be enforced? Or, shall I believe the people on the front lines who admit that they cannot enforce the laws now and that Bill C-44 will not make enforcement a more realistic possibility in the future? Whom should I believe?

The hon. member for Calgary Northeast, Bloc Quebecois members on the committee and I have pointed out each and every one of these flaws to the committee. We have brought them to the attention of the Liberals through questions, statements and finally a motion last December calling for an inquiry into these concerns.

(1635)

Liberal members struck down the motion. When asked why, the Liberal member for Elgin—Norfolk responded: "We don't need to tell you".

The member for Bourassa cautioned the Liberals that they were being disrespectful of their fellow MPs. I was shocked at the response from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. She responded: "If the shoe fits, wear it".

Is this the new form of government the Liberals promised? Is this how the Liberals listen to Canadians? Is this how our country is going to be governed for the next three years?

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I say for the record that the committee hearings into Bill C-44 have been an absolute and total farce. They have wasted my time as a member of Parliament, time that could have been much better used perhaps in dealing with constituency concerns. They have wasted the time of witnesses who have travelled hundreds of miles in some cases to share their concerns with us, only to find they were shut out in the final analysis. Finally, they have wasted taxpayers' dollars on a series of consultations that the government obviously did not take seriously.

The Liberal government has not addressed the serious concerns over the legality and the enforceability of Bill C-44. In the process it has made a mockery of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The Canadian people want meaningful legislation. They want to deal firmly with criminals who take advantage of our country's goodwill. They do not want laws that will be struck down by the courts and ridiculed by the international community. Most important, they do not want laws that cannot be enforced.

Until these specific concerns are addressed by the government, until the Liberals prove they are willing to seriously listen to the Canadian people, until they deal with the unconstitutionality of the bill, and until they give our enforcement officers the resources they need to make the bill work, I and the rest of the Reform caucus intend to oppose Bill C-44.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to follow my colleague on the parliamentary committee, the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin, because I heard something in his speech that appears to be a departure from normal Reform policy.

As you are well aware, Madam Speaker, and as other members of the House who were here in the previous Parliament are aware, I have a very deep and abiding affection for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I feel it is one of the great gifts that the legacy of the Right Hon. Pierre Trudeau left to the people of Canada.

An hon. member: You can't say his name.

Ms. Clancy: The hon. member opposite might want to check parliamentary procedure. The Right Hon. Prime Minister Trudeau is no longer a member of the House. Ergo it is permissible to name him without breaking the rules of Parliament.

It was a pleasure to hear the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin cite with regard to Bill C-44 that it would not withstand a charter challenge and I forget whether he said for three seconds

or three minutes. I would like to know specifically from the hon. member what that charter challenge would be. Under which section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would he put it and could he possibly outline an argument?

Mr. Mayfield: Madam Speaker, I was in discussion with a constituent of another constituency, not my own. The concern there was that following the policies of the right hon. member who has been mentioned we hardly live in a country any longer. "We are a large plot of geography", he said, "in which a lot of different people try to make a living without any common history, without any common destiny or without any means of coming together".

With regard to the member's question, if she would like to review the transcript of the committee meetings the information is all there.

(1640)

Ms. Clancy: Madam Speaker, it is fairly rare that I am accused of being obscure in my comments. As a matter of fact most people tend to think that I can perhaps be outspoken at times. I will be as succinct and as quick as possible. I already talked with my colleague next to me from the province of Saskatchewan who is a member of the bar. I found that he had the same concerns as I do with regard to the comments of the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin.

I repeat. The hon. member said in his speech that the bill would not survive a charter challenge. I cannot remember whether he said three seconds or three minutes but he did say it. I know my colleague in the Chamber from London, another member of the bar of Ontario, would agree with me that there are sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that can come in conflict with federal legislation.

If one is to make a statement that says a bill before the House would not survive a charter challenge, as we would say in the land of my birth, Nova Scotia, "put your money where your mouth is and tell us how it will not survive a charter challenge". What section does it offend? What is his argument that states it would leave us in a constitutional quandary?

Mr. Mayfield: Madam Speaker, I will be glad to quote the sections of my speech once again for the hon. member's benefit. If the hon. member has her pencil out, she can take notes.

I quote Amnesty International that said there were measures contained in the bill that potentially violate rights guaranteed in the charter.

I also quote the Canadian Labour Congress that says:

We believe C-44 in fact violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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There are other groups that accused the government of breaking sections 7, 11 and 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as numerous international conventions dealing with refugee treatment, torture, execution and war zones.

I do not have to quote the sections because they have already been quoted by people who know more about the law than I do, and the hon. member too, I might add.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to take part in third reading debate on Bill C-44.

I am sure the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin who spoke before me will probably stay for some of my speech. I was very interested to hear the comments of the hon. member. I am still waiting to hear which sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms are violated, but I was particularly interested to hear him talk about the way people feel about politicians.

I was particularly interested in the comments of the hon. member for Medicine Hat who made a comment about politicians. I would really like to tell the member for Medicine Hat that like it or lump it the day he got elected he became a politician.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): A representative.

Ms. Clancy: We are all representatives, Madam Speaker, through you to that gentleman.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Some better than others.

Ms. Clancy: I represent the people of Halifax and I have been re-elected.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): You won't be next time. That seat is gone.

Ms. Clancy: Wait and see.

At any rate, the member for Cariboo—Chilcotin talked about this and I would like to say it is interesting that he used that against a government with a Prime Minister who enjoys an unprecedented rate of approval and popularity. I merely bring it up as an anomaly, clearly in the way the members opposite seem to deal with the realities of politics.

(1645)

What I really want to talk about here today is again the question of a phrase that is often used in this House and is perhaps ill understood. The phrase I want to talk about is due process. I want to make it very clear that I ascribe to my Reform colleagues across the way the best of intentions when it comes to areas of criminal law and the protection of Canadian citizens, the protection of victims and the incredible need to ensure the very important concept of safety in our streets and in our homes. I want to make very clear to my colleagues across the way that the questions of safety for Canadians are very important.

The hon. member is whistling. I will talk to him later. I will finish my thought first.

At any rate, the whole question of due process is one that can be very frustrating, as we all know. Situations arise and the way the law works can often be mystifying, lengthy, unsatisfactory. To many people it creates a solution that on the face of it at the very least is unjust or appears to be unjust. It is a difficult concept to come to grips with.

If you look at the concept of due process and the development of English law under which our criminal law has developed you will know that it is a process that has been developing for well over 1,000 years. The courts in England developed it prior to the Magna Carta and the bill of rights and they worked along through these various times and ages, through the politics of monarchs to the politics of Parliament, until now when we have arrived at the last decade of the 20th century and they still are colossally imperfect.

I do not think anyone who deals with the criminal justice system in any of those countries that follow the English system of common law would disagree with that. They are colossally imperfect. While they are colossally imperfect, they tend to be better than anything else. The difficulty is that if you lift the rights for some you lift the rights for all.

I have a constituent with whom I discuss these matters quite frequently and we tend to disagree a lot. This constituent is very concerned with questions of public safety, as am I. He feels that our courts are too lax, give too much credence to the rights of the accused, and on and on.

Not too long ago he told me about his son who in his early twenties was pulled over because his car resembled a car that had been used in the commission of an offence. He was very upset that his son was stopped and put in the position of possibly being a suspect in a criminal offence. As it turned out for his son it came to nothing because his son was completely innocent in this case and went on his way. It was a frightening experience for the young man and a disturbing experience for the father.

I listened to that and I took it under advisement. A couple of weeks later when he called me and talked again about the accused having too many rights and the accused being allowed this and that, I reminded him of his concern about his son who had been stopped, who was completely innocent.

(1650)

I reminded him that those safeguards that protected his son have to protect the guilty and the innocent alike or they will not work at all. We have to believe in the presumption of innocence and we have to practise the presumption of innocence. We have to practise fairness in the courts. We have to practise the independence of the judiciary and the independence of quasi-

judicial bodies. There are lots of times that the decisions that are mounted are irritating and frustrating and downright wrong.

There is an old story in a book about judges that was published some years ago. A particularly narrow minded member of the judiciary was giving a barrister a very difficult time. Finally he said: "I can only advise you to take your petition to the Lord", to which the barrister responded: "Thank you very much, my Lord, but I will take it to the appeal court and probably will do a lot better".

At any rate, the point is that the freedom and the balance of the law sometimes tip too far one way or the other. What we attempt to do through legislation, what we attempt to do through the administration of justice in this country is to keep the balance as fair as possible. It does not always work.

When I was in law school a professor who is now teaching at the University of Victoria used to talk about something called the universal theory of rough justice which is not terribly satisfactory. His theory as a professor was that 80 per cent of the time justice gets done.

I can remember as first year law students we were horrified at this because that meant 20 per cent of the time justice did not get done. He explained to us that by and large it was a pretty good average. To this day that still frightens and horrifies me, that in 20 per cent of cases justice does not get done.

In the 20 years that I have been involved either as a lawyer or a legislator I have yet to see another system that works better. That is not to say that we do not constantly strive to refine the system that we have, but we do not refine that system by taking away rights. We refine that system by ensuring its fairness and its balance. We refine that system by refining the basic theory of due process and justice.

With regard to Bill C-44, we have listened over the past year or more to a variety of people telling us where we needed refinements, particularly with regard to the criminal justice system and immigrants, and we listened.

My hon. colleague from across the way made the statement that we did not listen to the people who came to us at the committee. I would like to say with the greatest of respect to that member, we did listen. We brought in 11 amendments that reflected the majority of concerns of the people who came before us.

One of the things that I have learned in six years in this House, and I think it may be the most important lesson one can learn as a legislator, is again the lesson of balance. We cannot go too far one way or the other way. That probably reflects my own political philosophy. It reflects the political philosophy of the party of which I am proud to be a member. It reflects the political philosophy and the response of the vast majority of Canadians.

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To quote the former Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, those of us in the Liberal Party were the party of the radical middle, the party of the extreme centre. To paraphrase a poet, William Butler Yeats, the Irish poet, the centre cannot hold.

(1655)

In Canadian politics and in the affairs of Canadians, particularly those matters that relate to the criminal justice system, to maintain fairness and to ensure justice the centre must hold. It is our responsibility on this side of the House to hold that centre.

I want to say a few words in particular about immigration in Canada. I want to say that it bears repeating over and over that every single one of us in this House, every citizen of this country is of immigrant stock. Even both our colleagues who come from the north and several other colleagues from Manitoba, those of our colleagues who belong to Canada's founding peoples, the aboriginals, will admit that their ancestors first came here across the land bridge from Asia 5,000 years ago. Everybody in this country came from somewhere else.

We are a nation of immigrants. If it were not for the Scots, the Irish, the English, the French, the Germans, the Italians, the Ukrainians, the Poles and on and on, all of the different groups that came here and chose Canada, we would be a poorer country. We would be a weaker country. We would be a less tolerant and less fair country.

The vertical mosaic that is Canada is an amazing experiment, a terrific example to the rest of the world. The response to the vertical mosaic from other countries is the response that the United Nations told us, that this is the best country in the world in which to live. Obviously that forms part of the reason for people choosing to come here, but it is also something that we must hold on to as legislators as we pass laws that will affect the citizens of this country, the people we are here to represent.

I have been very fortunate in the year and a month that I have been parliamentary secretary in immigration and citizenship to travel all over this country. I was in the riding of Calgary Northeast on Friday with the hon. member opposite, the immigration critic. I was there for a symposium on immigrant youth. There were 350 I believe—and my hon. colleague will correct me if I am wrong—places at this conference. They were all filled and there were 100 on the waiting list to meet and talk about the problems and concerns of young people who come to this country from other places.

At the opening ceremonies that the hon. member and I attended there were about 100 people, most of whom represented service organizations, NGOs, government levels, et cetera, all there because of their concern for immigrant youth to ensure that they settle into this country, to ensure that their needs are met. These things are increasingly important because we hear over and over again when so and so came 100 years ago we did not have settlement groups. No we did not. Of course we

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also did not have small pox vaccinations and medicare. I hope we have improved to some degree on both of those things.

I note, Madam Speaker, that you are cutting me off in full flight. I have two minutes to go, so I had better wind up and talk a little bit about the specifics of Bill C-44.

(1700)

The specifics of Bill C-44 are the response to a need. This morning the minister talked about the problems we dealt with, the rank insanity, if you will, of convicted criminals calling the immigration board to prisons to hear their stories on whether they should be granted status in Canada. Those problems will be dealt with by Bill C-44. Those problems will not be solved completely by the bill, but again we move forward to deal with each difficulty in the area as we see fit.

Bill C-44 is a strong and open response by the government to the problems evinced to us by the major players and stakeholders. We will deal with the bill and if further developments are necessary in the legislation, so too will we deal with those.

I support the bill and I adjure my colleagues on the other side to do the same thing.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Québec—social program reform; the hon. member for Frontenac—international trade.

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, I, like several lawyers who participated in the committee hearings, believe that this bill violates certain provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and of the Geneva Convention. I hope that, once it becomes law, it will be immediately challenged before the courts.

I am thinking in particular of the provision which allows for the seizure of international mail by immigration officials. This is a reversal of the burden of proof. The presumption of innocence is protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but not in this legislation. The mere fact of importing or exporting identification documents or papers is an offence. Consequently, a person must prove that he or she has not committed an offence, which is contrary to the basic rules of law.

The parliamentary secretary then tells us that this is an excellent bill. Why is it then that all the organizations and all her colleague lawyers, including the president of the Canadian council for refugees, David Matas, who is also a lawyer and a former Liberal Party candidate, told the committee that this was

a bad piece of legislation and that it violated the Charter and the Geneva Convention for refugees?

Indeed, the Canadian bar association, the Barreau du Québec, the Canadian ethnocultural council, as well as highly respected members of the legal profession in Canada criticized this bill, from a legal standpoint. I agree with the comment made by the hon. member who spoke before me to the effect that the Liberal majority did not co-operate. The Liberal members did not read all the briefs and they did not listen to all the testimonies made before the committee. More importantly, they did not listen to the opposition.

We submitted amendments that have been implemented in other countries. We said that it was necessary to protect those who are here, the permanent residents who have been in Canada for at least ten years. These people already belong to our society; they have very little in the way of emotional links with their country of origin; they no longer have any family left over there. Why not make an exception for the people who have been living in Canada for a long time, for 40 to 50 years, and who, for many reasons, have not become Canadian citizens? They still are permanent residents.

(1705)

We also said that we have to protect the younger people who are living here, in Canada, with their parents but who are not Canadian citizens. They are the products of our society. If they commit an offence, they have to pay for it here. Why should we deport them? They no longer have any family over there, their family is here, and our society is responsible for their education.

So, why were the amendments put forward by the opposition, by the Bloc Québécois, rejected? I refer to amendments designed to include in this bill provisions found in other jurisdictions like Australia, which is as open to immigrants as Canada. Even in a country like France, not recognized for its open immigration policy, the immigration act is more caring than this bill introduced by the minister.

[*English*]

Ms. Clancy: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to respond to the questions of the hon. member for Bourassa.

First, with regard to his contention that we are in conflict with the Geneva convention I can only say that I believe the hon. member was there, as I was, when the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' representatives came to the committee, were questioned on that and did not agree with him.

The government does not think it is in contravention of the Geneva rules and neither does the UN. Beyond that I am not quite sure where we should go. Perhaps the hon. member thinks we should run to the position of the Bloc. I can only say that I am not now nor have I ever been nor do I intend to be a member of the Bloc Québécois.

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With regard to co-operation on amendments, particularly on the amendment that the hon. member mentioned—I am going to try to say this as clearly and as succinctly as possible because this is something that a number of members on the other side in both parties do not seem to understand—the reason is that we are on opposite sides. We have different beliefs and different ways of achieving our ends.

We are on the government side. We have a majority. Frequently we are going to disagree with the Bloc on a number of issues, particularly those issues that go to the heart of what it is to be Canadian. We disagree as well most vociferously with the third party on practically everything.

Consequently I am not quite certain what the members of the opposition expect here. That is the point. They are the opposition. We are not supposed to agree.

I am quite happy to think that both parties are serving Her Majesty in the best way possible by being a loyal opposition and disagreeing with what we say. If we agreed, I would be worried.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I know that the parliamentary secretary likes to talk about flying as does the minister. He certainly has alluded many times to the planes that fly and land and the ones that crash. I believe the parliamentary secretary is still flying and she has not come down to earth yet to learn what is happening. She needs to put her feet on firmer ground.

The parliamentary secretary attended various meetings and listened to all kinds of experts dealing with Bill C-44. Several flaws have been pointed out in the removal provisions by these experts.

These flaws are in the existing legislation as well as Bill C-44. It is not going to change anything.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell me if the government is going to keep confined those violent criminals until travel documents to remove them are obtained rather than releasing individuals into society. I have the name of one here. Mr. Gregory George Jordan has been charged with second degree murder. He is an Australian with a deportation order against him. He is walking around on day parole. What is the parliamentary secretary going to do about individuals like that? Is she going to keep them confined until removal orders are present to remove them?

(1710)

Ms. Clancy: Madam Speaker, sometimes one feels as if one is a voice howling in the wilderness. The hon. member knows, or at least he should know after a year and some time in the House and

after a year and some time as the critic for immigration, that commenting on individual cases is neither proper nor appropriate. He knows I am not going to comment on a specific case.

What I am going to do is refer the hon. member yet again to the provisions of the bill that deal with the question of serious criminals, that deal with their removal. I remind the hon. member that a bill that is not yet passed can hardly be enforced. Let us get the bill passed so the kinds of criminals he is talking about can be dealt with expeditiously.

If we had the support of the third party on this bill, if they were so concerned with the whole question of criminality and the speedy removal of serious criminals, then perhaps they would support this bill instead of haranguing on issues that are not really on point.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Madam Speaker, in a sense it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to address Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act. This bill is not all bad but it surely is not all good. If I had to summarize, it is just not good enough.

When the government first announced its intention to amend these two controversial pieces of legislation it was my hope to be able to offer support. However, since the bill is little more than smoke and mirrors I have to speak in opposition to it.

The bill offers very little of substance and provides only a false impression of security to the millions of Canadians who are concerned about our lax immigration process. It offers no significant changes, contrary to the words September 19, 1994 by the immigration minister. During his speech at second reading the minister said: "Enforcement is a priority of my department".

Yet in this bill we see no provision for extra enforcement officers. There are also no specific measures for strengthening the enforcement process. In fact, during his speech the minister admitted: "There has been slow enforcement" yet I repeat there are no provisions to increase enforcement.

He also said: "When it comes to enforcement of immigration issues we have to do a better job". I fully agree with the minister's statement and therefore have to ask why this bill has side stepped the issue of enforcement?

The minister also talked of the integrity of the immigration system saying: "If we do not deal swiftly and crisply with both the perception and the reality of abuses to our immigration and refugee system, the integrity of the entire system is in jeopardy". The minister was correct in his assessment, yet by offering up this innocuous legislation he will create a false sense of security that will do more harm than good to the integrity of the process he is worried about.

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While the minister talked a good talk during his speech his actions have failed to match his words. He says he wants to get tough on immigrant criminals. However, in Toronto the minister recently cut the number of investigation and enforcement officers back from 36 to 30. Only 30 officers to track down the approximately 24,000 deportables suspected of living in and around the greater metro Toronto area. The minister also cut overtime staff in the Vancouver region. This is what the minister calls making enforcement a priority?

(1715)

The minister might argue these cuts were made to save money, but that is a red herring. If he wants to save money he should stop appointing his friends to the high paying jobs at the IRB. When those friends are found to be abusing the power of their positions he should not be permitting them to receive golden handshakes. Need I remind this House of the Michael Schelew affair? If the minister wants to restore integrity he should disband the Immigration and Refugee Board instead of giving it more power.

Under this bill the IRB is given the power to stop a refugee claim if a serious criminal background is discovered. Sounds good. The minister heralds this part of the bill as a great improvement. However, what the minister does not say is that he already has that power under section 69(1) of the current Immigration Act.

The problem is the minister is afraid to use that power. In bestowing that authority on the IRB the minister is abdicating his own authority. He is the man ultimately accountable to Canadians, yet by abandoning this power it is obvious he is unwilling to be accountable.

In fairness, in reviewing the bill I have to acknowledge that the government has made an effort to make the appeal process slightly tougher. However, it is only a small step in the right direction and it simply does not go far enough.

There are also other measures contained in this bill where I must say the government is on the right track, but in typical Liberal fashion these are only half measures. For example, the minister has seen the wisdom of limiting the power of the immigration appeal division to stay the removal of or allow appeals by serious criminals on humanitarian or compassionate grounds. Again this is only a half measure.

It is also a positive step to fully legitimize the act of allowing customs officers to seize mail suspected of containing fraudulent identity documents. However, at the committee hearing on this bill Mansel Legacy, the head of the Customs Excise Union, said there are so few mail checkpoints and inspection personnel that this measure is not enough in itself and will accomplish very little.

Many may say the examples I have cited here in opposition to this bill are just further proof of the Reform Party's desire to shut Canada's borders to immigrants. I would like to remind this House that almost without exception witnesses before the standing committee condemned this bill as inadequate.

Just for the sake of clarity I want to reiterate a few of the salient points of immigration policy that the Reform Party advocates.

First the Reform Party supports an immigration policy that has as its focus Canada's economic needs and we welcome genuine refugees. The Reform Party remains convinced that immigration has been and can be again a positive source of economic growth, cultural diversity and social renewal.

The Reform Party opposes any immigration policy based on race or creed. We do support an immigration policy that would be essentially economic in nature. Immigrants should possess the human capital necessary to adjust quickly and independently to the needs of Canadian society and the job market.

(1720)

The Reform Party supports restricting sponsorship privileges to members of immediate families, that is, wives or husbands, minor dependent children and age dependent parents. All others should apply for entry through the normal selective process.

The Reform Party supports a policy accepting the settlement of genuine refugees who find their way to Canada. A genuine refugee is one who has a well-founded fear of persecution and qualifies under the strict requirements of the United Nations convention.

By the same token, we support a policy of immediate deportation of bogus refugees. If the government opposite would like to read from this it is all contained in the Reform's blue book, good reading as opposed to the red one.

During his speech the minister also talked about his broad consultative approach in all of this. However, a leading Toronto immigration advocate labelled that same process a sham. Well I will not do that, but I will say that on a couple of occasions I invited the minister to come to my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan to hear what immigrants there think needs to be done to address current problems. It is unfortunate, I know the minister is busy, but he has been unable to find the time to accept those invitations for true grassroots consultation.

In Nanaimo we are experiencing the type of problem the minister talked about in his speech at second reading, namely a few immigrant criminals casting a shadow over the reputation of many. In fact, a confidential police report obtained by my office states: "The hub of Asian organized crime for the world will be situated in Vancouver and Vancouver Island by the turn of the decade". Unfortunately I see very little in this bill to stop this ominous prediction from becoming a reality.

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People of Nanaimo, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, are concerned about this fact. That is why I wanted the minister to hear directly from these people. Since that has not been possible, at least not so far, I would like to tell the minister and this House just what a group of Nanaimo immigrants feel must be done to correct the current immigration process.

First, a direct quote from one of the Vietnamese participants at a meeting I held in Nanaimo in this last year: "The government screwed up by allowing many immigrants into Canada without properly checking their backgrounds". Again, there is nothing in Bill C-44 that leads me to believe this situation will be addressed.

Second, the same Vietnamese Canadian participants said: "Those immigrants selling drugs have no fear of the law". That is because most of these immigrants know that even if they are ordered deported, it may be years before they are actually kicked out of the country, that is if they are ever tracked down by a grossly understaffed and overworked enforcement service.

(1725)

Third, quoting again from this group of Vietnamese participants: "The government must get serious about toughening its immigration laws". These are immigrants telling the government what they believe should be done.

Legitimate law-abiding immigrants in Nanaimo do not fear the kind of tough measures Reform has advocated. In fact, they would welcome the kinds of proposals Reform has talked about knowing that our policies would only be detrimental to those who do not or will not abide by Canadian laws.

In short, Nanaimo's immigrant population wants to be a productive part of Canadian society and we want them to be. They want to contribute toward building a better and safer Canada. However they agree that this cannot be done without a strict immigration policy of zero tolerance toward immigrant criminals. This bill does not have the teeth required to implement such a policy.

It is with the views of immigrants within my riding in mind that I appeal to this government here today to abandon this nebulous piece of legislation in favour of meaningful and significant changes.

Those changes should include provisions for extra enforcement officers, a zero tolerance policy for immigrants convicted of serious crimes either in Canada or prior to their arrival, the addition of health provisions such as mandatory HIV testing, and a policy to refuse admittance or expedite deportation of those suspected of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

In his 1994 annual report the Auditor General also suggested changes to the way in which immigration responsibilities are carried out by different government departments. The Auditor

General has concerns about the lack of reporting either by the immigration department or the other departments that have some responsibility in this area. If the minister is looking for ways to save money, which he should be, he should consider making the necessary reporting changes advocated by the Auditor General a part of this legislation.

There are many more areas where this bill falls short. The minister has shown some courage in taking these first steps but he has also demonstrated a lack of understanding as to what Canadians want in a sound immigration policy. Either that or he simply lacks the intestinal fortitude required to make the needed changes.

The minister is fond of telling this House that the buck stops with him. In the sense that the buck is a dollar, I urge the minister to withdraw this two-bit piece of legislation and come back to this House with the entire dollar's worth of change needed to address the serious inadequacies in the current immigration process.

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was following the speech given by the hon. member. He always refers to new Canadians other than his own race as immigrants. I want to know, the people he was talking to, the Vietnamese Canadians, are they still immigrants or are they Canadian citizens who have the right to express themselves? Just because they look different, we should not call them immigrants for the rest of their lives.

He quoted the figure of 24,000 deportees and mentioned that we have only 20 investigators. I am sure he knows that of the 24,000, not all of them are criminals. Some of these people are missing papers or documentation. One cannot call 24,000 refugees waiting for papers to be in order as criminals and ask them to be investigated.

Can he clarify those two points for me? I would appreciate it.

(1730)

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, to respond to the first point, of course concerning people who are landed immigrants, we should stop calling them immigrants after a while. The group I was referring to was a mix. Some were immigrants without status, others have status.

We are all immigrants after all, as the hon. parliamentary secretary stated just a while ago. In this case there was specific reference to a Vietnamese community. Am I to go into the political correctness realm to try to skate around the fact that they are identifiable? It was a group to whom I spoke, identifiably with a Vietnamese background, whether they are immigrants or not. Let us not skate around things. Let us call them as they are.

Mr. Assadourian: Call them Canadians.

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Mr. Ringma: All right, fine, then this group of Vietnamese Canadians. I can speak to a group of French Canadians, Dutch Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians. There is nothing wrong with identifying their background I hope because we should all be proud of where we came from.

I cannot clarify the hon. member's question on the 24,000. The phrase I used on that—I would have to go back to it—was a suspected group that are at large. This comes from a source. The public domain says this is what it probably is. If we do not have the inspectors, the people to back it up, let us increase it. Let us spend more money there where it is needed.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, N.D.P): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan pointing out how he and his party feel that there has to be more staffing in the immigration department. It seems that is a necessity.

I have also been listening to his party for the last year and a quarter complaining that the government must cut some \$40 billion from the deficit and they keep saying it should be done almost immediately. That will mean reducing about 25 per cent of the services that the government now looks after which presumably will mean a 25 per cent cut in the personnel who have been delivering those services.

If the hon. member is going to be adding to the immigration department, what departments is he going to be proposing to do away with and where can he get rid of 25 per cent of the current crop of civil servants and still add to some departments? He will have to do away with whole departments and perhaps do away with the military to perform these new services that he is now advocating. Where can he take these kinds of cuts and still get rid of about a quarter and still add to his chosen ministry?

Mr. Ringma: The answer to that question, Madam Speaker, is very simple. We take the cuts out of the fat bureaucracy and put them into the sharp end. The Department of National Defence was mentioned as an example. It is taking 3,000 out of its headquarters in Ottawa to bolster the front lines where it needs them in support of the UN.

I say the department of immigration should do the same thing, take it out of the bureaucracy here in Ottawa and put it into the front lines where it is needed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, if I understand correctly, my hon. colleague agrees in the case of a genuine refugee. I would like to ask him a question.

After an individual has been allowed to enter the country as a refugee and has been given refugee status, there is a fee of \$500 per adult and \$100 per child for permanent residency. A lot of

genuine refugees are impoverished when they come here. They have no money and sometimes have to turn to churches or to agencies that help immigrants and refugees find the \$500.

(1735)

We looked into the matter and found that genuine refugees do not have to pay anything for permanent residency in the United States. What does my colleague think about this problem?

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, genuine refugees need not fear. If they fit the definitions set by the United Nations, we have to accept them, we have to pay their expenses, etc. But the number of genuine refugees is undoubtedly much smaller than what the immigration department currently claims. If they truly are refugees, we accept them and give them financial assistance.

[*English*]

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I go back to my second question about 24,000 deportees. I would appreciate if in the near future the hon. member would look into the numbers and report to this House the exact number of criminals. He says there are 24,000. Maybe he can tell this House how many criminal deportees he is referring to.

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, I would be more than pleased to try to pin down the exact numbers and report back to this House.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I suppose I could start by wishing everyone a happy 1995. I wish everyone prosperity.

In this House sometimes we educate others, sometimes we get educated from discussions such as this. I welcome this opportunity to discuss Bill C-44 today in this House.

I was watching television on January 16 which happens to be Martin Luther King's birthday in the United States. In one of his speeches he said that a first class nation deserves first class citizens. This bill calls for Canada being a first class nation, which it has been called for the last two years by the United Nations. This is a first class bill for first class citizens, especially those who are new arrivals in this country. They know they are going to start a new life with their family in this new country which they have adopted.

I was following the comments of both of the opposition parties, the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party. Obviously the Bloc Quebecois is telling us that we are not going far enough. I know its point of view because it sits with us on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The Reform Party spokesman said that it does not go far enough. We are confused as to how far to go to satisfy the Bloc or how far to go to satisfy the Reform Party. That is why as good Liberals we always support the middle ground because the middle ground is where

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the average Canadian's mentality rests. That is where average Canadians want us to be.

When we talk about immigration we always refer to negative things, the cup is always half empty. Let us look at the positive side of immigration.

Earlier I asked my colleague if he could give us the number for the 24,000 deportees which he mentioned. He could not give me a number. I would think the number is not more than 625. For 625 criminal refugees it is fair not to raise the figure to 24,000. It gives the impression that immigrants are all criminals, that they all have criminal records or that they intend to commit a crime when they adopt Canada as their new homeland.

This bill makes six basic points. Earlier the Reform Party spokesman said that this is a good bill but does not go far enough. As was mentioned earlier, the job of the opposition is to oppose. That is what it is paid for. We on this side are paid to put forward programs, which we are doing. The six points that were mentioned by the hon. member go far enough.

(1740)

We should not take the approach that we are going to build a cement wall like the Berlin wall against refugees coming in, saying that anybody coming in from a certain part of the world is a criminal or intends to commit a crime in this country. That is not the way we do business in Canada. That is not the way we do business in western society.

I am sure the member agrees with me that we cannot put police officers with machine guns at every step of the way who will say: "You look different than I do, so you had better stay out because you look like a criminal to me". We cannot do that.

The hon. member from the Bloc Quebecois says that he hopes after this bill is passed that someone will challenge this bill in the courts. I hope they will because we want to do the best we can. We want to make sure that we become first class citizens in this first class country.

That is the responsibility we have and we take it very seriously. I hope they will share that responsibility with us and support the bill. If there are improvements or suggestions to be made, we should do that as we go along. The system allows that to be done. For the time being we should support this bill because it is the best we can do under the circumstances.

Before we arrived at this bill we had one year of consultations. I know the Bloc Quebecois says that consultations were not good enough because of a, b, c or d. The Reform Party says they were not good enough because x, y or z and because 29 million people did not have a chance to come forward to speak.

In my riding I organized two or three meetings to talk about immigration. People spoke up. Some said yes and some said no. Some said it was good policy and others said it was bad policy.

I sent out questionnaires and 1,100 people responded. I passed those questionnaires on to the minister. I am happy to say that most of the concerns presented to me by my constituents are addressed in this bill.

I am very happy to support this bill. I will do whatever I can to support this bill because it is important. We must have it because we have to go forward and be forward looking. We cannot be negative on everything new planned by this government.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have heard several times today from Liberal members about hitting the middle road when it comes to immigration, that they would like to pick the so-called balance and policy and compare the message of the Bloc with the message Reform delivers.

I do not think the hon. member across realizes that we are talking about apples and oranges when we compare messages the Bloc sends and what Reform has been saying for some time now. The Bloc already has an agreement on immigration levels and on the way it handles immigration policy which differs dramatically from the rest of the country. The levels that the Bloc has are probably more realistic than the levels set by this government for the rest of the country.

I am going to ask this hon. member what he has in his mind when he wants to tell the people of this country that they have struck a balance. I would suggest to this member that there is no balance struck by the Liberal government when it comes to immigration policy, that it is floundering. If a comparison is to be made between the Bloc and the Reform the member should abandon the comparison.

I would like to hear more comments from the member regarding the so-called balance he is talking about between the Reform and the Bloc.

Mr. Assadourian: Madam Speaker, I would be more than happy to address the hon. member's concern.

A few months ago when I put forward Bill C-229 about limiting political parties from becoming federal parties when they do not have 50 per cent of provincial representation. I noted at that time the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party both voted against my bill. They shared that regional concern.

The other point I want to make is that both of them have national headquarters for their parties outside of Ottawa. I want to remind them that Ottawa is the nation's capital. The way I see it you cannot be a federal party in this country and have your headquarters in some other region of the country. Members work in Ottawa so their headquarters should be here.

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Concerning immigration policy levels, the *Globe and Mail* said the minister did not go far enough because he has to have 255,000 new immigrants. We have dropped to 190,000. This person complained that we dropped too much. This is a conservative newspaper that speaks often on behalf of the Reform Party.

(1745)

It says we have to increase the number to make it 255,000. It says here that each immigrant coming in will add to the national budget a \$10,000 surplus. How much more of a balance do we want?

Mr. Hanger: Go to the immigration department and find out.

Mr. Assadourian: Why do we not go together? Maybe you can apply to re-enter Canada so you will know what Canada is all about.

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, on several occasions, my hon. colleague mentioned the Bloc Quebecois. I am proud to be the citizenship and immigration critic of my party.

During the past year, as a member of the House and of the standing committee, I noticed that the positions of the organizations and individuals who appeared before the committee have been closer to that of the Bloc Quebecois than to the Liberal Party's. Of course, they do not even come close to the Reform Party's position.

We found that we shared identical views on many issues regarding immigration and the plight of refugees. This is because we come from a province, the province of Quebec, which is generous with immigrants and refugees, takes care of them, welcomes them and helps them settle by providing French language instruction and assistance to find work and housing. We have our own immigration department. We are the first province in Canada to have its own immigration department and a well defined immigration policy, and to have signed agreements with the federal government, giving us self government in many areas.

We are proud of the fact that Quebec has a progressive, generous, and open policy. Quebec is the province where there are the fewest problems with immigrants and refugees. We have not seen in Quebec events such as those in Toronto. We do not see in Quebec papers the kind of over-reactions we sometimes see in the English press with respect to refugees and immigrants.

I am very proud to be from Quebec. We do not need and never will have headquarters in Ottawa. Our headquarters are in Quebec, where we are from, where we work; we are only trying to make Canadian immigration policy a little more humane. This is the contribution of the Bloc Quebecois to the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Assadourian: Madam Speaker, he cannot have it both ways. First he complains we do not listen, then he says that all the witnesses spoke very highly about the Bloc Quebecois. Which one is true? Did they speak very highly about your policy or our policy? We listen. If he does not like the decisions we make, I am sorry. He does not want to stay in Canada anyway, so what is the point? He wants to go.

Also he says he is proud that he came to Quebec. He should know if Canada was not here he would not have any Quebec anyway. He should stand up and thank Canada for allowing him to come here and also thank the people in the province of Quebec for asking him to serve Canadians in the province of Quebec in this Chamber.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have just a couple of questions for the hon. member. First, I have a general comment. I do not know where the hon. member spent the Christmas break. I assume in his riding. If he spent his time in the riding perhaps he would realize that the world does not revolve around Ottawa, but the world actually does go on outside of this place.

The idea that a party must have its headquarters in Ottawa, must lick the boots of the special interest groups in Ottawa, must spend its time catering to Ottawa, looking after Ottawa, making its friends comfortable in Ottawa is typical, I may add, of the Liberal Party.

(1750)

However, since they brought it up and not myself, I would like to take issue with a couple of comments that the member made that if immigrants sometimes look different they are persecuted. Obviously when that happens or if that happens then Canadians should be outraged that people are persecuted based on their looks, their race or their gender. It should not be tolerated and has no place in Canadian society.

However, the point that the member does not seem to want to admit is not that people may look different, it is that they commit serious illegal acts while they are not Canadian citizens. While they are refugees and commit serious acts what should happen to them?

I guess my question for the member is this. If someone who is claiming refugee status is charged with a serious crime should they be held in detention pending a deportation order or should they be released back into the general population?

Mr. Assadourian: Madam Speaker, I am appalled that some members take the matter so lightly. They make the accusation that 24,000 new Canadian immigrants or refugees who are waiting to be processed are criminals and that 30 people are not enough to investigate them. Now they turn around and try to defend themselves which is indefensible.

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The other point that the member made earlier was that one did not have to be in Ottawa to know in which direction the government is going. He is very right. He is 100 per cent perfect. During the Christmas recess I was in my riding and I knew it far ahead of the hon. member. The reason I mentioned that they do not know what is going on in Ottawa and the rest of the country is because during the campaign in my riding on Victoria Park Avenue, the Reform Party candidate had a four by eight sign which read: "We will run the country the way we run the campaign" and they ran the campaign without Quebec, just remember that.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, how apropos that I have the floor after that rather inane comment by the member opposite because of course the sign reads: "We will run Canada as we will run our campaign, which is debt free". The Liberal Party is still paying off its debts from the election because of course it cannot even run an election. The Reform Party has a tidy surplus which we will use to win a majority in the next election.

It is a pleasure to address Canada's immigration policy within the context of Bill C-44 this afternoon. I find myself a bit of the horns of a dilemma with respect to this bill. On the one hand it does represent a rather feeble attempt to toughen up the immigration system. Since Canadians want and need changes in the immigration system the bill at least recognizes that change is required. Therefore in one sense this bill is better than nothing.

Unfortunately it is not a whole lot better than nothing. It places some restrictions on the rights of refugee claimants who would abuse our system. It contains provisions allowing immigration authorities to seize fraudulent immigration documents from the mail. Any non-citizen convicted of a crime in Canada carrying a sentence over 10 years long would be deported. Although with our justice system one pretty well has to murder someone to receive a 10 year sentence. Those immigrants who are found to have been convicted of a crime in another country that would carry a sentence of more than 10 years here would be automatically barred from entering Canada.

These are welcome provisions and I generally support this tentative first step toward creating an immigration policy acceptable to Canadians. However, when we look at the government's overall priorities as they are seen in terms of its actions, not just its words, it places the bill in a different light. We will see that as a whole this bill is timid. It is weak and it is ineffective.

Edmund Burke said: "The concessions of the weak are the concessions of fear". His proverb is two centuries old but it rings true today. If there are two dominant characteristics of the Liberal government they are weakness and fear. The Liberals

fear going out on a limb. They fear acting aggressively in the public interest. They fear confronting wrong in order to accomplish justice for all Canadians. Fear causes the government to act with timidity and weakness.

(1755)

This fear drives the strength out of the government's legislation and it saps the morale of government officials, officials who are supposed to be zealous in the protection of Canadian citizens but who are today demoralized and discouraged because they are not properly supported by the government.

I am not without feelings of goodwill toward bona fide refugees. The people who testified before the standing committee dealing with the bill have expressed their reservations about the fact that it reduces the rates of refugee claimants. They are very concerned that every refugee have access to fair consideration of his or her claim and they do not want people deported into countries where they will be tortured and imprisoned because of their political views and other obvious injustices.

I appreciate the sensitivities of groups like Amnesty International and the Mennonite Central Committee came to testify. The fact that we have tender consciences in how we treat refugees reflects well on our nation. This is a wonderful thing, a thing to be thankful for in Canada. I stand with them in their desire for fairness in their hope that Canada will remain an international sanctuary for people who are truly oppressed.

However there is a question of balance today, a question of the genuine concerns of the Canadian people balanced against the convenience of some of the phoney refugees who use our system as a cloak to hide their criminal intentions.

Today Canadians are the ones being oppressed by some so-called refugees. The balance must be swung in favour of protection of our own citizens. It appears to me that the presumption of innocence in Canadian law has come to mean the determination of innocence without investigation.

It has become the practice of our immigration system to assume that all refugees are nice people, that all refugees are good for society. They ignore the fact that some of them have long criminal records. The government appears to ignore the outrageous crimes some of them commit on our soil.

One of those crimes was the senseless murder of Todd Baylis, a constable in Toronto who was gunned down last year. An immigrant who had been ordered deported in 1991 stands accused of the crime. The department simply failed to deport him earlier, which I am sure provides little comfort to the Baylis family. Would the people at Amnesty International agree that this person should have been deported four years ago? I think they would.

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I will cite one more outrageous case. There are many more. A Vietnamese man is serving an eight-year sentence in Kingston for murder. He stabbed a man to death in a Toronto bar in 1991. His case was heard while he was in prison in Kingston serving his sentence and all his legal fees were paid by the Canadian taxpayers.

That man was granted refugee status. In a few more years he will be free and soon he will be a Canadian citizen. I doubt that the Mennonite Central Committee would approve of this situation.

Our system is becoming unbalanced. The focus of this imbalance is the Immigration Refugee Board, a quasi-judicial body set up to hear the cases of refugee claimants and hear appeals of deportation orders.

A few weeks ago the Reform Party critic for immigration advanced a discussion paper that said that the IRB is out of touch and is virtually untouchable. The IRB is ridiculously lax. In some regions of Canada, the IRB accepts more than 90 per cent of the claimants that come before it.

In making a determination about a refugee claim, IRB officials are not even allowed to use an adversarial approach as in a regular judicial hearing. They take the burden of proof on themselves to disprove a refugee's claim and even take pains to avoid using a tone of voice that would suggest that the onus of providing proof of legitimacy rests with the claimant and not the board.

Officers of the IRB are discouraged from checking into the personal history of a suspicious claimant or even cross checking to verify their stories. It is incredible.

As I stated earlier, this is a question of balance. Where the safety of Canadians is at stake, any error should be on the side of caution, not caution in favour of the refugee claimant who is already known to be a dangerous criminal but the balance must lean in favour of the victims, the Canadian people.

Bill C-44 intends to change the appeal process for refugees convicted of serious crimes. It will take away the right of appeal on humanitarian grounds from the Immigration Refugee Board and give it to departmental officials. Why is the minister doing this? This action really amounts to an accusation against the IRB. The bill in fact shows that the IRB cannot protect the public.

(1800)

The Liberals act in weakness and respond in frailty. First they appoint their friends, friends who are usually non-objective refugee advocates, to the board. Then they allow their ridiculous decisions to stand. When the public outcry becomes so great that someone must do something, the Liberals grudgingly take action. They certainly do not want to disturb their leftist friends

at the IRB. No, the Liberals will just give their work to the department.

The government refuses to attack the problem at its roots. The problem lies in the decisions of the Immigration and Refugee Board. Rather than taking the board in hand and taking it to task, the Liberals take the easy way out and pass legislation that changes the board's authority.

The bill is a vote of non-confidence in the IRB. It is an admission that there is rot in the system and the rot should not be ignored. It should be cut out. Bill C-44 will not be able to patch up this problem; it will only fester and grow worse.

We would know exactly what to do with the Immigration and Refugee Board. Reformers would dismantle it and replace it with immigration department officials who have a mandate to protect Canadian citizens. These competent public servants would be able to do a much better job of determining refugee claims at much less expense than 235 left wing political hacks making \$85,000 a year.

In short, we would toughen up our system to protect Canadians born in Canada as well as Canadians who have been welcomed as immigrants to our land. Canadians born in Canada and newer immigrants who are Canadians by choice realize that some refugees come to Canada not to escape persecution but to escape prosecution.

In Vancouver near my own riding there was a recent headline in the Vancouver *Sun* quoting the Vancouver chief of police saying that one of the greatest problems facing the police in that city were despicable Asian gangs that extort money through violence and intimidation from other innocent recent Asian immigrants. These gang members act with virtual impunity because of loose laws and a silly bleeding heart Liberal government lacking both the will and the courage to protect innocent people.

That brings me to another issue. Immigrants call my office and tell me they are ashamed and disgusted by the illegal actions of a few and because of the government's inaction in this regard every immigrant is tarred with the dirty brush of the criminal. That is not fair to the vast majority of immigrants and refugees in the country. The government is undermining its own policy by allowing criminals to roam free. It is not fair.

Allow me to suggest a recommendation of the Canadian Police Association that we would do well to think about. At present we have two parallel systems of justice in Canada: one for refugees and one for everyone else through the criminal courts. The police association says we should allow criminal courts to determine whether or not refugees are criminals and then to decide if they should be deported, so that there is one system for everyone in Canada: the equality of treatment idea.

This would take the burden away from the department and the minister and give it to judges who work daily with criminal law.

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However the Liberal government will no doubt leave its friends in the Immigration and Refugee Board undisturbed.

Bill C-44 is like sewing a new patch of cloth on a ragged old pair of jeans. When we wash them the new patch shrinks and tears away, and in the end the hole is bigger than it was to begin with. The bill will do nothing more than tear new holes in the fabric of our old flawed immigration system.

Why? Because it mandates more work and more powers for officers without providing the resources to get the job done. The bill barks but it has no bite. It is nothing more than window dressing. It is good theatre with a parade of fine characters, but when the curtain comes down and we go back to real life nothing will get done, nothing will change.

Canada does not need more patchwork legislation. It needs a completely new wardrobe. Nothing less than a complete refit of our immigration system will do the job, and I might add that Canada will probably also need a new tailor to finish the job. Decades of Liberal neglect have whittled protection to the bone.

(1805)

You may not be aware, Madam Speaker, of an amazing fact. These figures are give or take a thousand so I will not argue with the figures in totality. There are currently 24,000 outstanding deportation orders in the city of Toronto. How many enforcement officers are there to deal with this problem? There are 35 officers to locate and deport 24,000 people. This is just one indication of the priority the Liberals place on the protection of ordinary Canadians.

Even when the immigration department just trying to do its job issues deportation orders to these people, the Liberal government does not have the will to remove them. Canada's refugee determination system is in a shambles. It is worse than shameful. The electorate will one day act as police, judge and jury because of it. The people will try the Liberals, convict them and stick them in the political slammer for a generation.

The minister with great fanfare set up a task force last July to crack down on illegal immigrants.

An hon. member: Rhetoric.

Mr. Strahl: Oh, no. He means it. This so-called task force is made up of twenty RCMP officers, four assigned to Montreal, four to Vancouver and only twelve to metro Toronto where there are 24,000 outstanding deportation orders. Immigration officers are so overwhelmed by the sheer numbers that they are unable to execute a removal order unless the individual voluntarily turns up. What a mockery of our system.

When the task force was struck the words of the sergeant in charge were pitiful. He said right away to the press that he was not going to go knocking on doors and arresting people. What was he supposed to be doing then? This is symbolic of the

government's attitude toward 24,000 illegal acts gone unchecked, 24,000 people flouting Canadian law and laughing behind the backs of a lax justice and immigration system.

Listen to what the Canadian Police Association said just before Christmas during the committee hearings on the bill. I quote:

How anyone in this world when you have a police service of 16,000 members—that's the RCMP—could call 20 persons spread in the three major cities across Canada a task force is really inconceivable to me. That phrase is seriously abused—I'm not trying to be facetious, but (C-44) reminds me somewhat of putting a band aid on the Hindenburg.

Ms. Clancy: I think I have heard this line before.

Mr. Strahl: The Canadian Police Association said that band aid solutions would not work any more. Our system is hemorrhaging and nothing less than radical surgery will restore it to health.

There is the question of balance and there is the issue of protection. I want to address one final issue upon which this entire discussion turns. That is the issue of priority. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration and all the costs associated with settlements and so on approach \$3 billion each year. It costs \$1 billion alone to process refugees. They teach English, settle immigrants and do a host of other good things. They also enforce the provisions of the Immigration Act.

However the priority placed on enforcement is the real barometer of the government's real concern for these law and order issues. The government can talk all it wants about protection, but all this is just talk unless the government puts its money where its mouth is. Only \$50 million each year is spent on enforcing the act, and that is compared to total expenditures of \$3 billion.

If my math is correct—and I think it is because I checked it on this side of the House and not with the finance minister—that amounts to 1.6 per cent of total expenditures. Less than 2 per cent of the money we spend on immigration is spent on protection and for that matter protecting recent immigrants as well. How much is spent on salaries alone at the Immigration and Refugee Board? I am sure you could guess, Madam Speaker. In salaries alone the IRB costs the Canadian taxpayers \$58 million each year. It is an outrageous abuse of taxpayers' money and an indication that the government places less priority on protecting innocent Canadians than on pleasing its fat political friends at the Immigration and Refugee Board.

(1810)

Reformers do not suggest that the government spend more money on immigration. Far from it. Reducing immigration flows as we have suggested would reduce expenditures and free up some of the taxpayers' funds to be placed where the priority should be, on the protection of Canadians. Changing the priority

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from an Ottawa based bureaucracy to a front line bureaucracy would save additional millions.

While the government announced a reduction in immigration rates last year, as a York University professor argued today in the *Globe and Mail*: "Mr. Marchi imposed only a symbolic reduction. He has buckled to the pressure of ethnic lobbies".

Bill C-44 is just talk and it will remain empty talk until the government gets busy and makes real and not just symbolic changes to the immigration system.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am overwhelmed at the extremely low level of knowledge with regard to the entire working of the immigration department shown by my charming and well meaning colleague across the way.

I would like to ask an absolute plethora of questions.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Have you ever been at a hearing?

Ms. Clancy: Many times I have been before the refugee board. I have appeared before it many times. Heaven knows I never thought I would find myself in the position—

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): What is the question?

Ms. Clancy: This time is for questions or comments. I can do either, and this is a comment.

I never ever believed that I would be in the position of defending Edmund Burke. It is a very difficult position for a Liberal to be in, to be defending Edmund Burke. I can only say that I studied Edmund Burke. Through his works I knew Edmund Burke. I would almost say in the sense one can be a friend of a literary person who lived 200 years before one that Edmund Burke was a friend of mine. To the hon. member for Fraser Valley East, through you, Madam Speaker, he is no Edmund Burke.

At any rate, the number of 24,000 deportees has been batted around ad nauseam in the House. I just wonder if the hon. member across the way has a scintilla of an idea as to how many of those 24,000 have criminal records. The answer is very few, but I am sure the hon. member does not wish to be distracted by fact.

May I also say that one should be careful in the realm of comment, with the greatest of respect to members on the other side, when talking about people who have not yet been tried in our criminal justice system, about guilt or innocence. The word alleged is a good word to throw around here. I am sure my colleague, the hon. member for Rosedale, who is on leave from the faculty of the University of Toronto Law School, would be happy to agree with me on that score. It is extremely unwise as legislators to throw around words about guilt or innocence

before someone has been tried. If that were the case this legislature would not need to exist.

My colleague from Fraser Valley East said that he does not want us to spend any more money. That is admirable. As I understand it that is the Reform theory. Yet he thinks that we should be hiring all kinds of people to rush out and find these 24,000 people. Yes, they are under deportation. Yes, they should be out of the country. But, again, the vast majority of them are not criminals.

Does the hon. member understand how small a number of immigrants and refugees actually has criminal records, particularly when compared with born Canadians who have criminal records? Does the hon. member know the difference between immigrants and refugees? He tosses the two words around as if they were interchangeable. As my hon. colleague from Bourassa would agree with me, they are not the same. They are quite different.

I am glad my whip is here. He may have to bring me water because I may faint from the criminal level of lack of knowledge that has been evidenced here by people standing and declaiming about things they know absolutely nothing about.

(1815)

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Rhetoric is what you got.

Ms. Clancy: Can you spell it? Probably not.

At any rate I want to say that if the hon. member can answer these questions, I would like to hear an answer instead of the nonsense that has been put forth about immigrants and refugees in this country from this member.

Mr. Strahl: Madam Speaker, it was interesting after the verbal tirade and pontifications of the hon. member that she went on at some length to talk about the need for a proper trial and so on that she says that I have a criminal lack of knowledge. I guess she has tried and convicted me already. Maybe there is no point in answering.

When it comes to the exact number of people of the 24,000 that I mentioned earlier who have criminal records, I would not know. Say there is 10 per cent, say there are 2,500 cases serious enough for deportation. Certainly in one city the size of Toronto I would be alarmed at 2,500 people having criminal records causing them to be deported. That is cause for serious concern. The rest of course are also ordered to be deported and according to the government's own figures and facts no fewer need to be deported. It says that it is the one that has given the deportation orders. It is just that it does not carry them out.

There is a sad part about this. There was a case a little while ago. Someone wanted to bring in a 14-year old girl from Fiji on a student visa and this is the gong show they had to go through.

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They have to get the student visa which is the last step in the whole process. However that is what they are trying to get.

These people put forward a net worth statement and had to prove they had an ongoing job, that they could support this student while here. They did that.

Next they had to give a floor plan of their house showing they had a room for this girl when she got here. That was kind of insulting but they got the floor plan for their house and faxed it off to try to arrange for this student visa.

Then they had to arrange for legal guardianship so that they could say they would be her legal guardian while she was in Canada on this student visa. They arranged for that.

Next they would have to get permission from the school board. They arranged for written permission from the school board for the girl to attend.

Then they received a fax saying that was not enough. They now have to have a transcript of the court decision that gave them legal guardianship. It was not enough that they had the paper. They now had to jump through another hoop and show the transcript.

All this is safe. This is what someone is trying to do to legally bring someone in on a student visa.

Ms. Clancy: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Strahl: There is nothing wrong with that. What is wrong with that is these people are Canadians by choice. They are relatively recent immigrants. All of their friends ask them: "Why do you bother? That is the legal way to do it. Why bother? Nobody does that when they want to get someone over. You just go through the refugee system and bring them in".

This girl should be here. I put a letter of endorsement on this girl's application. They reason she cannot come to Canada to get four years of senior secondary education is that the system is so screwed up that it is better to come through a bogus refugee system than it is through the legal means. That is what is wrong with this system.

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it certainly is my pleasure to continue this debate in the House today regarding Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration and Citizenship Act.

Amendments have taken place in part because of public opinion, because of a need to address some abuses of our immigration system by criminals. Although the incidence of abuse is minimal, this bill will reduce the possibility for abuse.

(1820)

I would like to spend some time on that process and on the statement I made regarding the use of public opinion. In this House public opinion emerges, is debated and is transformed

into rules and regulations governing the behaviour and actions of the people, institutions, companies and so forth in this country. It is a very time consuming and costly process in a democratic society. If it were a dictatorial society decisions could be made instantaneously depending upon the whims and fancies of the dictator.

So far all the rhetoric we have received from the Reform Party clearly indicates they have the absolute solutions to all the major problems that exist in the field of immigrants and refugees. It is a very strong and dictatorial approach to problem solving.

Today the member for Calgary Northeast made two statements that all those who are in this House and those who made deliberations in the past have laughed in the faces of Canadians. He clearly indicated that Canada is an international laughing stock. The deliberations in this House of Commons both past and present at no time have deserved that type of abuse from the member for Calgary Northeast.

I feel very strongly that the member should apologize not only to all the present members of the House of Commons but also to those of the past hundred years who devoted their time and energy to solving the problems in our society. Above all he should openly apologize to the people in the riding he represents because the House of Commons is not laughing in their faces. They are not laughing in the faces of all Canadians. They are demanding an apology from the member for the type of ridicule imposed upon members of Parliament who represented his riding in years gone by and who devoted their time and energy to make this a much better country. That is the kind of dedication we would like to see in this Chamber. That is what a member of Parliament of honour and nobility would portray in this House as he tries to enhance the lives of all Canadians.

Yes, we do have problems in this country, but we will continue to search in a very positive and sincere manner for solutions to these problems. Problems emerge as people provide us with their opinions. Through studies and the multitude of strategies that we use in our communities the information flows and we have to make a list of priorities and deal with them using the resources we have, whether they be human or financial. The time factor is very important here in what should be dealt with immediately and what should be dealt with in the future. Long range and short range planning are critical as far as the deliberations of the members of the House of Commons are concerned.

One problem we have that has been mentioned by members across is the problem of selection, the problem of screening prior to a refugee or an immigrant being accepted into this country. What actually takes place beyond the shores of this country when an individual puts in a claim to be accepted as a refugee or an immigrant?

Adjournment Debate

Contrary to what has already been presented by members of the Reform Party, for the viewing public as well as for members of the House of Commons I would like to clearly stipulate the process all potential immigrants and refugees must go through.

(1825)

All immigrants to Canada are screened in depth by officers for security and criminal concerns. Visitors are checked against Canadian indices and followed up if there are previous adverse records. Visitor applicants from high risk countries which may pose security or criminal concerns are subject to additional screening in Ottawa. There is a mandatory delay before which a visa may be issued.

Contrary to what has already been presented by the Reform Party I would like to point out to all listeners that immigrant applicants abroad are requested for criminal purposes to produce a police clearance where such is available and reliable. In certain cases a secondary verification of this document takes place. The RCMP also provides support in verifying criminal record information in related matters.

Another point is these officers in selected countries abroad also receive and gather information on selected individuals who are suspected of war crimes or crimes against humanity. This information is used to prevent admission of such undesirables.

I have just given a portion of the strategies used in order to glean and to screen the applicants who wish to come to this country.

Most of the people who came to this country in the past and are here now are very good Canadians. They have chosen very wisely. They have chosen to come to the best country in the world. The vast majority of them turn out to be the very best citizens we have. They are extremely hard workers, dedicated and conscientious, constantly supporting the family unit, constantly honouring and abiding by those values that Canadians in general adhere to and support. They are not an army of criminals. They are not an army of potential thieves. They are not an army of potential deceivers.

We have to be very careful how we address this problem and how we accept the data that is being presented by those opponents to the immigration acts, not only on Bill C-44 which is being presented, but on all those acts that have been presented and passed in this House of Commons in generations gone by.

In support of what I have been saying, I would like to quote from the Toronto *Star* of November 6, 1994 where in a flippant manner an individual from the Reform Party has misquoted and used numbers and figures to serve a certain purpose. The purpose is suspect, the purpose is questionable. It states: "Reform MP Jim Silye has insisted that RCMP documents prove a total of 1,935 people were accepted as refugees without any

prior screening. Only later did police discover they had criminal records".

However all indications from the RCMP, the documentation from immigration officials are that the statement is 100 per cent totally inaccurate. However it could have an impact in tainting the perceptions and tainting the opinions and attitudes of the people who had first heard it.

What we did find out is that the number was used when that number of people were being processed and had been fingerprinted. We have to be very careful how we use figures that appear in the documents and in public.

In my riding individuals approached me and were very concerned about the criminal element. The criminal element has been receiving a tremendous amount of attention in the media in the past few months. Every time a society, no matter whether it be Canadian or any other society in the world, goes through some negative process, a decline in productivity, in employment and so forth, in other words there is a recession or a depression, we will find without fail that immigration policies will be constantly attacked.

(1830)

Every time it happened in our society there was a scapegoat that took a tremendous amount of abuse and a great deal of unhappiness was generated in certain communities because people did not take the time to understand and be compassionate. They listened to the kind of rhetoric that we are getting from the Reform Party that does nothing but incite fear in the minds of individuals wondering what is going on and what the Canadian government is doing and so forth. They are frightened. They are afraid for their jobs and so forth.

I could go on a great deal continuing with this debate but unfortunately time is running out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The hon. member has 10 minutes left on his time when we resume debate on Bill C-44.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I asked for an opportunity to comment on and criticize the answer given by the Minister of Human Resources Development in response to my question on December 6, 1994. I asked the minister how he could claim that his reform was supported by 96 per cent of the population.

Adjournment Debate

This is called putting a spin on the figures. It is a very good example of the old saying that you can make figures and statistics say anything at all. The minister has turned this into a fine art. I carefully examined the results of the poll the minister used to support his statement, and I was very surprised when I found that the poll's originator, the Angus Reid group, reached conclusions that were sometimes the exact opposite of what the minister said.

Before I give you some examples, I would like to make it clear that in the interests of authenticity, I will quote the results of the poll as written. This way, people can hardly accuse me of the kind of behaviour I did not appreciate in the minister.

As my first example, I will quote question 4 which reads as follows: The federal government is proposing measures to reform social programs in Canada. Do you think it is a good or a bad idea?" On December 5, the minister claimed that "96 per cent of Canadians believe major changes have to be made in"—and here is the difference—"social policy".

I take this opportunity to remind you that the minister then accused me of misunderstanding. According to the minister's statement, we could expect 96 per cent of the people to answer yes to question 4. Surprise, surprise. Only 70 per cent of respondents thought it was a good idea. People thought social reform was a good idea but a comprehensive reform is a different story.

Can someone tell me where the missing 26 per cent are hiding? Not among the 13 per cent who are undecided or the 17 per cent who are opposed. I might add that the question to which 70 per cent replied yes referred to a reform and not a comprehensive reform, as the minister claimed.

Another flagrant example of inconsistency with the facts concerns Quebec's support for the federal initiative. The minister said that "when the survey is broken down by region, as many people in Quebec support the social reform proposals of the government as in the rest of Canada". This statement differs substantially from the authors' findings. Let me quote them on two issues. On page 7, they say that Ontario respondents were the most likely to say that programs should be completely revamped (64 per cent), while Quebec respondents were the least likely to give the same answer (44 per cent).

(1835)

I note a 20 per cent difference between the two provinces. Is that what the minister calls equality?

My second quote is the following. On page 11, we read, concerning the proposed scheme for seasonal workers, that respondents from Quebec are much less favourable to these options; for example, 39 per cent of Quebec respondents agree with the amount of benefits paid being reduced beyond a certain number of applications, as opposed to an overall average support of 52 per cent, a 13 per cent difference.

One last comment. It is not by overstating the importance of an alleged popular support that we will convince the people of the merits of these proposals. It would be much wiser to stick to reality and, this way, preserve our credibility. This comment is valid today and it will still be when the reform proposal is back on the agenda, as we now know that political considerations have prevailed over the need for reform.

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this government has consulted extensively with Canadians in an unprecedented number of ways on whether and how Canada's social safety net should be improved.

These consultations as well as a number of independent polls show a clear consensus across all regions on the need for reform. Canadians want change and they want it now. In one poll 96 per cent of Canadians believe that some change must be made to social programs. In another poll after being questioned on all key proposals almost two-thirds of Canadians felt the government is moving in the right direction.

Support for the directions of reform has increased to 50 per cent in Quebec and has also increased in Atlantic Canada. During our consultations with Canadians over 600 organizations, including women's organizations, appeared before the committee. Over 100,000 Canadians participated in other consultations including town hall meetings, seminars and completing workbooks. Women's groups held a separate consultation process, as did aboriginal groups. We welcomed their contributions to the debate.

With respect to the hon. member's concerns regarding proposals to modify the unemployment insurance program, it should be pointed out that while income testing is one option being considered, 70 per cent of women who claim UI are not frequent UI claimants and would therefore not be affected by this proposal.

It should also be noted this government has taken concrete measures to address the concerns of female UI recipients. Recent changes to the UI program through Bill C-17 included a new 60 per cent dependency benefit rate for low income earners. To date nearly 78 per cent of claimants under this rate are women.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Madam Speaker, on December 15, I asked the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to tell us why the Canadian government let the United States unilaterally change the classification of products with a high sugar content. I should point out that, because of that decision, Quebec and Canada stand to lose 2,400 jobs.

Adjournment Debate

The minister replied that Canada was opposed to the position taken by the United States and had made representations to the U.S. department of agriculture.

For those who work in the sugar industry and who are trying to keep their job, these platitudes mean absolutely nothing. Since these changes occurred before the signing of GATT, the federal government should have taken action then. It should not have waited until it was too late and then use its commitments to GATT as an excuse.

The minister also told us at the time that the Minister for International Trade was in touch with his U.S. counterpart to make the Canadian position abundantly clear, which was very reassuring at the time. It is nice to talk, but it is even better to act.

Along with such evasive answers, the minister also promised that the best interests of Canadians and Quebecers would be protected swiftly and efficiently.

It would appear that the lion has shrunken to a pussycat when confronted by the American giant, since it seems that the restrictive measures taken by the Americans have been in place since January 1.

(1840)

It is increasingly clear that Canada is the lightweight in these bilateral negotiations. The sugar issue will follow the red wheat and durum wheat issues on the list of good examples of the federal government's spinelessness.

The federal government accuses us left and right of criticizing without making any suggestions. When I raised this issue last December, I strongly suggested that the minister submit the issue to the GATT panel. At that time, he replied that the Government of Canada would take all of the steps necessary to protect Canada and Quebec from measures taken by the Americans of which he disapproved. Since the government who is supposed to be protecting us is scared of its own shadow, we Quebecers have to defend ourselves, and there is not much time.

Worse yet, we learned today in a Canadian Press report that the United States intends to challenge Canadian tariffs on dairy product, egg and poultry imports.

Since we have lost the fight with regard to durum wheat, sugar, ice cream and yogurt, I fear for our producers and our processors. In one corner, the Minister of International Trade, a cocky little scrapper, and in the other corner, the American trade representative, Mickey Kantor, who knocks out our minister, our defender, our leader in the fight for our economic rights.

The sugar industry has already lost 2,400 jobs and will lose several thousand more. That is exactly what the Liberals wrote in the red book: jobs, jobs, jobs. They were right in the sense that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry but your time has expired.

[English]

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to respond to the hon. member's comments tonight.

I want to point out to the hon. member that the minister of agriculture and the Minister for International Trade have had numerous discussions with their U.S. counterparts during the Uruguay round of GATT and after that in order to try to resolve the issue of Canadian access to the U.S. market for sugar and sugar containing products.

During those discussions the Canadian approach to the issue that remained outstanding was to seek a solution which would, at the very least, preserve existing levels of trade in sugar and sugar containing products. The minister made his concerns very clear when in December he said we regret that the U.S. has rejected this approach and implemented draconian measures.

The minister of agriculture clearly expressed our government's disappointment with the U.S. and continued to seek a delay in the implementation of the U.S. measures against Canadian exports. He went on to say that the U.S. decision is one that has been and he could see would be inequitable and shortsighted on their part.

The U.S. has proceeded with the reclassification of certain sugar containing products so as to make the access of those products to the U.S. more difficult or impossible. The effects of these changes has been to reduce Canadian access to the U.S. for sugar containing products and the market there for us.

Officials are continuing to work with the industry and industry officials to develop a reliable estimate of the impact. We certainly have seen a worst case scenario and that has been quantified. However, these are not based on fact but mainly on hypothesis.

As to the government's reaction, the minister will continue to consult with the industry and the provinces as to possible action, look at reviewing legal options and of course our preferred approach is a negotiated solution because we consider the best way to resolve these issues is to deal with each one on its own merits without trading off the different sectors against each other.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), a motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.45 p.m.)

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