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Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 10, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from November 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-96, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak this morning to this bill to establish the Department of Human Resources Development. However, I am also somewhat frustrated and astonished that the government could introduce this bill for second reading after the clear message sent in the referendum that significant changes were necessary in Canada.

Although Quebecers decided to vote no and give federalism a last chance, they certainly did not have in mind the kind of action proposed in Bill C-96.

This bill illustrates the fundamental difference in perception between the federal government and Quebec. Mr. Axworthy said yesterday in his speech, and I quote—

Mr. Boudria: Order.

Mr. Crête: I apologize. I should have said the Minister of Human Resources Development instead of referring to a member by name.

The minister said yesterday in his speech: “It is decentralization of a very different kind. There has been a lot of talk about decentralization, but so far it has been a somewhat restricted debate as it talks only about decentralization in terms of transferring from the federal government to the provincial governments. Should we not also be talking about how to empower communities and individuals to make more choices?

Is that not what we should be looking at in terms of decentralization? Partnership: government with the private sector, government with school boards, government with the provinces. That is the kind of philosophy we have to continually talk about because that is what works”.

That is what Mr. Axworthy claims, or should I say the Minister of Human Resources Development.

• (1005)

In fact, this statement by the minister runs completely counter to the existing consensus in Quebec on manpower management. For example, I would like to quote from a 1991 letter written to the Minister of Employment and Immigration of the time by the Quebec Minister of Income Security which states: “Quebec does indeed recognize the crying need to define its own manpower policies, to establish its priorities with respect to manpower development in close conjunction with its partners in the labour market, and then to design and administer programs tailored to the needs it has set as priorities”.

Further on in the letter he goes on to say “Even if the greatest constitutional harmony reigned in the country, which is not exactly the case, Quebec would make the same demands with respect to manpower, since it is so urgently necessary for Quebec’s economic development that manpower programs be made efficient and tailored to Quebec’s specific labour market priorities”. The person saying this in 1991 was a federalist Liberal Quebec minister.

Today the federal government is tabling Bill C-96, and what is Quebec’s reception to it? The Quebec Minister of Employment describes it as the final rejection of the unanimous consensus in Quebec that the federal government must withdraw completely from active manpower measures and hand back to Quebec the relevant budgets.

So far, one could qualify this as a squabble between politicians, with each one wanting to hang on to his powers; the people will be the final judges of this. But there is something peculiar to this issue of manpower: the Quebec government position is also the position of all those in Quebec involved in this field.

For instance, to quote someone who has never been identified as a sovereigntist or as a backer of the present Quebec government, Ghislain Dufour, the spokesperson for the Conseil du Patronat du Québec, was still saying as recently as yesterday “It

Government Orders

is essential that the manpower issue be handed over to Quebec, so that there may at last be a proper policy”.

He went on to say: “This is one of the cards the federal government ought to lay on the table to indicate that it has indeed heard Quebec’s message calling for change”.

Despite Mr. Dufour’s position in support of federalism, his heartfelt cry in his apparently unflagging hope that federalism might change went completely unheeded by the federal government, which, as if it were a matter of daily routine, is presenting Bill C-96 for second reading. The aim of the bill is simply to give the federal government the equivalent of a federal minister of education.

I quote clause 6 of the bill as proof. It provides as follows.

The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction relating to the development of the human resources of Canada not by law assigned to any other Minister, department, board or agency of the Government of Canada, and are to be exercised with the objective of enhancing employment, encouraging equality and promoting social security.

The clause contains no reference to provincial jurisdictions or to the fact that Quebec already has a network set up to take action in the manpower sector or to the whole problem that has existed in this sector for the past five years. The government’s position should be an obvious sign to Quebecers of the sort of change hinted at during the week before the referendum, without any basis or forethought, which today has been lost in the federal government’s return to its old habits.

What is Quebec’s claim based on? It is based on the fact that an integrated policy on economic, social and political action, means that the government assuming responsibility, for instance for education, for the Quebec labour code which covers 90 per cent of workers in Quebec, for occupational health and safety, for labour standards, for regulating professional qualifications, professional conduct and mass layoffs—all having a direct impact on jobs—should control the other aspects, as well, such as training, the way we prepare our workforce for the challenges of the globalization of the marketplace and of new technology.

It is rather like taking away half its tool box and thus preventing it from doing its job in a area that is critical for the future.

• (1010)

I would like to give you more examples. I mentioned Mr. Dufour, from the Conseil du patronat, but a similar plea was voiced, last week, by Gérald Ponton, the president of the Quebec manufacturers’ association, who cannot be accused either of being a sovereigntist or a proponent of Quebec’s independence. Mr. Ponton made the same kind of remark as Mr. Dufour. He even said that, during the referendum campaign, people every-

where in the field were saying: “If they give us control over manpower or such and such an area, that might make it worth our while to listen to what is being said”. This man speaks on behalf of manufacturers, people who must adapt to changes on a daily basis. They never said that the federal government was the best level of government to deal with this. They are saying the same thing as the people from the job forum and the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d’oeuvre. They are telling us that it is imperative for Quebec to have control over manpower management in the province.

I suggest that bringing Bill C-96 forward at second reading stage, as the federal government did, is somewhat of an affront not only to the Government of Quebec, but also to the people of Quebec as a whole, because, while they want changes, they want the assurance that Quebec will be able to control these major aspects of its development. We notice the same kind of attitude at the Canadian Institute of Adult Education, another group seriously involved with training, which asked the federal government to withdraw Bill C-96.

How did this kind of approach come about in Quebec? Because Canada—and this fact was recognized by the OECD—is considered as some sort of testing ground, given its dismal track record in manpower training. It is characterized by the fact that we have hundreds of thousands of jobs available in Canada but at the same time more than one million people are out of work. The system is responsible for this mismatch between the number of jobs available and unemployed workers, because it should be possible to have only structural unemployment, caused for example by individuals quitting one job for another or by temporary situations arising from layoffs or other changes in the industry.

But that is not the situation at present. We have a large workforce that has never been trained properly. And this cannot be blamed on Quebec achieving sovereignty, since it has not taken place yet. The present situation is the result, the doing of the current system. It was produced by this system. One of the most striking realities is how differently UI recipients are treated compared with welfare recipients or, even worse, with those who fall between the cracks.

Canada has no integrated policy on how people looking for jobs should be treated. Our very sectoral approaches have led to results such as the last UI reform. The federal government has found two ways of dealing with its budget responsibilities and very tight fiscal constraints. To reduce its UI costs, it increased the number of weeks required to qualify for UI benefits and reduced the number of weeks of benefits.

It then ended up with a UI fund surplus of \$5 billion this year. At a time when our unemployment rate exceeds 11 per cent, is a UI fund surplus the best option? Is generating a surplus to be

used by a bureaucracy that has already proven its ineffectiveness the best way to create jobs?

At the same time, the provincial governments, which are also struggling with budget constraints, are responsible for welfare and systematically trying to keep social assistance costs as low as possible. Employment programs are therefore created so that people can go on unemployment insurance. But these jobs are not permanent. They are just a temporary measure.

We are caught in a vicious circle. If we had a single level of government responsible for the whole manpower issue, including welfare recipients in the labour force who are able to work, UI recipients and those falling between the cracks, its sole objective would be to make the best possible use of human resources and not to reduce welfare and UI costs by offloading its deficits and responsibilities onto the other level of government. Only one government would then be judged in terms of the effectiveness of its manpower policy.

• (1015)

Why is it necessary that Quebec be responsible for that sector? Realities vary widely in the Canadian economic space. For policies in the social, regional development, manpower, health, housing and employment training sectors to be adequate, they must be geared to the environment in which they are apply. They must also be effective.

It is not true that a single policy for the whole country can be effective, given the differences between regional economies. For example, the Maritimes and Quebec's eastern region have an economy which is largely dependent on natural resources and which, therefore, has fostered the development of a large number of seasonal industries. If you apply a national policy to these regions, you only generate disillusion, as is now the case. Moreover, many investments have been made year after year in these regions, but they simply did not produce any result. This can be explained by a number of reasons, including the fact that responsibility for the manpower sector was not delegated to the appropriate level of government.

When you think of it, the accumulated surplus in the UI fund, which will be the primary funding source for the new human resources investment fund, is a new hidden tax. Once it realized that it could no longer borrow on foreign markets to keep trying to control everything—because international lenders were no longer willing to provide funding for that—the federal government found a new trick. It makes Canadians themselves lend money, through UI contributions.

The government is trying to use a new artificial instrument based on a mismanagement of money. If, instead of generating this \$5 billion surplus, the government had left that money in the economy, do you not think that it would have helped create a lot

Government Orders

more jobs, that it would have given much more concrete results? So today the least trained categories of workers would have the possibility of getting jobs more easily and we would not be trying to give them training for which they are not necessarily prepared.

The other element I would like to draw to the government's attention is that Bill C-96 will lead to open warfare between the Quebec educational system and others who might want to get involved in training. In fact, this may be the hidden agenda of the federal government, to demolish all of the educational tools Quebec has developed, but I believe that such educational bodies as la Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec and la Fédération des cegeps du Québec have, nevertheless, developed original approaches that make Quebec very competitive in the world market.

The deliberate choice by the federal government to sign agreements with organizations outside these systems, with criteria that differ from those of these systems will lead, within a few years, to an incredible mess with equivalencies. Who will have trained whom? How? To what standard? And this outcome will be just one more example of federal government waste and inefficiency, at a time when we no longer have any money to waste.

This may have been done in the seventies in an attempt to put a Canadian model in place, some artificial concept of what Canada could be, but nowadays this is no longer possible, because of financial constraints and pressure from international lenders, as well as the future demands of each taxpayer in Quebec and in Canada.

There is still time for the federal government to decide either to withdraw Bill C-96 or, at the very least, to heed the clear call from all those involved in this field in Quebec for the responsibility for manpower training to be handed over to the Government of Quebec.

• (1020)

This consensus has existed in Quebec for five years, during which all players have asked for manpower to be transferred to the Government of Quebec, while the federal government—Conservative or Liberal—turns a deaf ear. We must try to find the reason for this lack of openness, this failure to listen. What is happening at the federal level that they will not respond to the demands of all those people who earnestly want to reshape federalism?

In any case, there is an aspect to decentralization that is very obvious and which the federal government refuses to recognize. Why? Because any decision to give Quebec responsibility for manpower or to give any other province the same kind of responsibility in this or other sectors would have the effect of taking power away from the federal mandarins.

Government Orders

The people who were appointed during the Trudeau era and who since then have generated a lot of activities and believe that solutions in Canada will come from the top down instead of from the grass roots, all these people cannot bear the thought of a policy that would turn the decision making pyramid upside down, so that not their views but only the views of the citizens of Quebec and Canada would prevail.

This government will be judged by the way it manages to shake up its senior public servants. After four years in power, the government will no longer have an excuse. It can no longer say: "The Conservatives were like that, and this is our first year and that is why nothing is happening, we have not had time to adjust". They are now starting their third year, and if the federal government does not make any changes, the record will be there for Canadian to judge.

There is another reason why C-96 is unacceptable: it perpetuates two levels of intervention in education. Today, no business in any industrial sector can afford this kind of duplication. There is a lot of unnecessary spending here.

The minister of income security in the Liberal government preceding the Parti Québécois government calculated the cost of this overlap between Quebec and Canada at between \$250 and \$275 million a year. Can we afford such overlap in the future? Two hundred fifty million dollars, when, with the prebudget consultations underway, we are being told everywhere that the government has to make choices. It has to decide to be efficient where it can. It has to decide to withdraw from areas where it is not.

Here we have concrete examples with obvious results that the government's involvement in labour matters over the past 10, 15 or 20 years has been totally ineffective and has not permitted any sort of matching of available jobs and manpower. It is also an example of decentralization being a solution when you have faith in the government that is on the receiving end, that will have to take it on and that will be judged by the voters.

Bill C-96 is being criticized by the Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre, the Quebec department of employment, the Institut canadien des adultes, the Forum sur l'emploi, the Association des manufacturiers du Québec and the Conseil du patronat du Québec. Here are enough reasons for the federal government to withdraw it or amend it so that Quebec could have control over the management of its manpower.

[English]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the words of the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. He was very clear in his presentation.

• (1025)

The member began by stating that the referendum gave a clear message to the federal government. Yes, it did send a very clear message. The clear message is that the majority of Canadians in Quebec do not want to separate from Canada. That is the clear message and that is what we should be working toward.

However, the Bloc Québécois keeps pushing its hidden agenda, which it tried to hide during the referendum. The agenda was complete separation. The sooner the Bloc Québécois accepts this, the sooner all three parties and the independent members in this House can start working together and continue building the strong, beautiful country we have.

Yesterday we heard about the hospital closings in Quebec. That is going to hurt my family in Quebec. Why did that come out only after and not during the referendum? It would have hurt the hidden agenda of separation.

We are bringing in a bill which deals with administration rather than any substantive reform. It does not entail new organizational changes as the Bloc Québécois tries to make us believe. It does not introduce new statutory powers or affect federal-provincial jurisdiction. I do not know why that would concern the Bloc. The bill draws together portions of the former departments of employment and immigration, health and welfare, secretary of state and all the former department of labour. Think of the savings this will bring to Canadian taxpayers. Why not pass those savings on to the people who are looking for jobs and the people who have to be re-educated?

I was an educator for 27 years. I have learned and am learning more so that education does not stop at the end of grade 8, at the end of grade 12 or at the end of university. Education is becoming a lifetime process. We are also learning that people with good professional jobs are not going to keep them for a lifetime. They are going to go through two, three, four jobs in a lifetime. Therefore they have to be retrained.

Because of the kind of environment we are in, we have to give workers the freedom to move from province to province. If they are forced to move from one province to another or they do it of their own free will, why should they be hampered because one province has a program different from another province? Why should they not be able to move from one program to another from province to province? I cannot understand why speaker after speaker from the Bloc are against this federal-provincial operation of working together to save taxpayers money, to keep building this beautiful country.

I have talked to many diplomats. I will not mention any names or countries but they are shocked at what has happened to our country. Canada is always used as a model and an example when countries move to more democratic forms of government. Now they are so let down. We are letting them down because the

model they worshipped, the country to which immigrants from all over the world want to come, is quarrelling within instead of working together.

I do not want a response, although I probably will get one. I want to leave a very clear message. The referendum did affect everyone in this House. We were elected by the people and the kind of comments I am hearing do not represent the majority of the people living in the province of Quebec. They showed that in the referendum.

Bill C-96 is not changing any statutory powers. It is not taking any powers away from Quebec or from any other province. This bill is an attempt to work together, to give programs and services more efficiently at less cost to the taxpayers.

I hope I have made my message clear. The Bloc is trying to resurface its hidden agenda and we are not going to accept it.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, it is easy to see the lack of understanding in this country. I would like to remind the hon. member who just spoke of a little historical fact. The sovereignist movement captured 40 per cent of the vote in 1980 and 49.4 per cent in 1995. This represents a 20 per cent increase for the sovereignists, while the federalist vote fell from 60 to 50 per cent.

If you do not see this as a very significant warning to Canada, if you do not understand the message, you will bear the consequences of this political choice for the rest of Canada, which is accusing the federal government of misleading them for two years by pretending that there was no problem to be resolved with Quebec. But there is a problem. Canadian citizens felt compelled to travel to Montreal, to make long-distance calls, because the Canadian government misled them for two years by claiming that everything was fine. If you ever go back to your old haunts, you will pay the political price.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order, please. I simply want to remind the House that all comments must be made through the Chair, so that our debates can take place according to the best parliamentary tradition.

Mr. Crête: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that, in my speech, I presented the arguments put forward by Quebec federalists. I talked about the chief executive of the Quebec manufacturers' association, Gérald Ponton, former chief of staff to a Quebec Liberal minister. I also mentioned the spokesperson for the Conseil du patronat du Québec, Ghislain Dufour, who is not known for his sovereignist views. They both agree that it is important that the federal government withdraw from manpower-

Government Orders

er management. This is not mean separatists speaking, but Quebec federalists telling the federal government: "Unless you get out of there, the next time will be right one for Quebec sovereignty". That is the bottom line, and I think that the people of Quebec and Canada will be the judges of that.

The hon. member said that the bill contained no major changes, that it was a technical bill. Let me read you clause 6 of this bill.

The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction relating to development of the human resources of Canada—

Is that not a substantive change. Never before had the federal government dared lay down in an act that it had the power to interfere to such an extent with education, in spite of the fact that the Constitution clearly states that education falls under provincial jurisdiction. I will leave it up to the people to decide whether this bill is a technical or a substantive bill.

The hon. member also indicated in his remarks that manpower adjustment has become important, given that people now have to change jobs often. We could not agree more on that. This is the basis for the whole argument put forward by the Quebec government, which maintains that education does not include only primary and secondary school, as it did at the end of the 19th century, but encompasses all training. That is what Quebec's position is premised on.

To conclude, I would like to say that the fact that Canada is considered as some sort of democratic model does not mean that, because there is, within this democracy, a major movement for the sovereignty of one part of the country and because this movement has a voice, we are any less democratic. People are supposed to be able to express themselves in a democracy. And that is what the people of Quebec have done and will do again, especially if the present government in Ottawa keeps ignoring the demands made not by sovereignists alone, but by sovereignists and federalists who are looking for profound changes. That is what the federal government will soon be judged on.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-96. I am sure members know the bill establishes the Department of Human Resources Development and amends or repeals certain related legislation.

In the time I have I will focus on the labour side of the bill and the duties the Prime Minister has entrusted with the Minister of Labour. Included in the bill are clear definitions of the direction and structures of the minister and the minister's duties. Clause 107 of the bill repeals the Department of Labour Act. Clause 4, though, authorizes the appointment of the Minister of Labour.

Government Orders

• (1035)

According to subclause 4(2), the powers, duties and functions of the Minister of Labour extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction relating to labour not by law assigned to any other department, board or agency of the Government of Canada.

In other words, the Minister of Labour has all the powers, duties and functions related to labour matters under federal jurisdiction, except for staff relations and the federal public service.

So that my hon. colleagues in the House understand the extent of this jurisdiction, I will sketch a broad outline for them. The areas covered by the Canada Labour Code fall within the labour minister's jurisdiction. The code governs industrial relations, occupational safety and health, and labour standards in the federal sphere. The code applies to Canadians working in major industrial sectors such as interprovincial and international rail, road and pipeline transportation, shipping, longshoring, air transportation, grain handling, international and interprovincial telecommunications, broadcasting, banks and certain crown corporations. These are critical sectors of the economy.

Parts I and III of the code dealing with industrial relations and labour standards apply to over 700,000 Canadian workers. Part II also applies to the federal public sector so it affects over 1 million Canadians.

Through the Canada Labour Code and other initiatives of the labour branch of HRD Canada, stable industrial relations are facilitated and safe, healthy, fair and productive workplaces are promoted. In the industrial relations sphere the Canada Labour Code has long been recognized as a model that successfully balances the rights and responsibilities of both labour and management.

Application of the Canada Labour Code is the minister's major responsibility, but several other acts and policies fall under her jurisdiction. Among these is the Canada Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. The centre disseminates occupational health and safety information across the country and plays a key role in protecting the lives and health of workers in Canada.

Other statutes that fall in whole or in part under the labour minister's jurisdiction are the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act, the Government Employees Compensation Act, the act respecting the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company, the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act, the Merchant Seamen Compensation Act, part II of the Status of the Artist Act, the Wages Liability Act, the Non-Smokers' Health Act and the Corporations and Labour Unions Liabilities Act. All these

deal with matters of security, justice and equity, basic entitlements of all Canadian workers.

The only function not carried over from the old Department of Labour is the program for older worker adjustment. This is the only responsibility that will be carried out elsewhere. On the other hand, the Minister of Labour could have added responsibilities under the Employment Equity Act once Bill C-64 has received royal assent.

Given the broad scope of the labour branch, members may wonder why we want to merge into Human Resources Development. It is a logical way for the federal government to meet the challenges facing us as we enter the next century. By merging the two departments into one we want to give concrete form within a single structure to an integrated vision of all various issues relating to the work world and social security.

If the development of our human potential is to be successful it has to be seen as a continuous whole. Society has undergone great changes and we have to adapt. An integrated and unified structure will obviously allow us to do that.

We can no longer succeed in helping Canadians achieve their full potential by creating artificial bureaucratic categories for each of their needs. Nor can we respond to people's needs by losing them in the red tape of poorly co-ordinated government programs. Intelligent and careful integration is necessary but it does not preclude flexibility in procedures, enforcement or service to the Canadian public.

• (1040)

We need an administrative structure that allows us to deliver services in an efficient manner and at a reasonable cost, taking into account both the financial restrictions facing us and our moral obligations toward the Canadian public. By rationalizing resources under the Human Resources Development banner we can and will achieve this goal.

As well, we need a structure that fosters partnerships with the provinces, the industrial sector, the labour movement, the academic community and community groups. We have made great progress toward this and we will go even further under the new act.

The model proposed here is similar to that in several provinces. Integration has already taken place in Quebec, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Since we are integrating departments some members might wonder why we need a labour minister at all. I will explain that rationale.

We have had labour ministers throughout most of our history. It was the previous Tory government, which did not care much for the views of working Canadians, that eliminated the post. I am concerned the Reform will get the opportunity. The government believes that labour matters deserve special attention, and rightfully so.

The labour movement, labour-management relations, workplace conditions and equity for all workers are probably more important today than they have ever been in the past. For these reasons Bill C-96 provides for the appointment of a Minister of Labour. There is no separate bureaucracy or infrastructure, just a minister who can devote her time to the concerns of working Canadians.

The minister uses the services and facilities of the human resources department. This keeps costs and duplication down without depriving the ministers of the tools needed to deal with their responsibilities.

Last February the Prime Minister appointed the current Minister of Labour. Without waiting for the bill before us to pass he wanted to assure working Canadians that we were ready to deal with urgent and pressing matters affecting Canada's labour situation.

I will outline some initiatives already undertaken by the minister since last February. In the area of industrial relations the minister continues to firmly believe in a free and open collective bargaining system which places the onus on labour and management to be responsible for resolving their own disputes.

Where they are unable to do so, assistance is provided by the federal mediation and conciliation services of the labour branch at Labour Canada. The FMCS has had an astonishing track record, one that most people probably do not realize. Over 90 per cent of disputes referred to it are resolved without work stoppage.

Throughout the world our federal system is seen as a model of balance and effective labour legislation. To have competitive and productive workplaces we need effective labour-management relations. To assist employers and unions to build effective communication channels the FMCS has developed a preventive mediation program which has been well received by its clients.

The minister has undertaken two significant initiatives to ensure that our industrial relations system continues to set standards for the rest of the world. In recent years a number of labour disputes on the west coast have required the intervention of Parliament. In May the minister appointed an industrial inquiry commission to study industrial relations in longshoring, grain handling and other federally regulated industries at west coast ports. We expect to receive the commission's report later this month.

In June the minister established the Sims task force to conduct an independent review and recommend improvements to part I of the Canada Labour Code. The task force will identify options and make recommendations for legislative change with the view to improving collective bargaining, reducing conflict and facili-

Government Orders

tating labour-management co-operation, ensuring effective and efficient administration of the code and addressing the changing workplace and employment relationships.

• (1045)

The task force is consulting at this moment with labour and management groups that are subject to the code and is scheduled to report to the minister by December 15 of this year.

In the area of occupational health and safety, we are working to better harmonize our legislation and regulations with the provinces and the territories. In co-operation with them, we are trying to achieve greater uniformity throughout the country with regard to this issue. This is a win-win scenario for workers and employers. We all stand to gain through increased efficiency and savings resulting from a reduction in overlap.

To further this initiative we are conducting two pilot projects. One is aimed at harmonizing the provisions of the Canada occupational safety and health regulations dealing with diving and confined spaces, while the other involves the field of ergonomics.

I have already mentioned the review of part I of the Canada Labour Code, but we also are planning to revise parts II and III. In co-operation with our various partners we are seeking to modernize the code to better reflect the requirements of today's labour environment. Consultations are under way and labour and management have approached the revision process with energy and enthusiasm.

Like all government organizations, the labour branch is reviewing all of its activities and methods. This review will help us to pinpoint more ways to increase both the quality and cost effectiveness of the programs and services we deliver to Canadians.

The labour program also has international obligations. The adoption of the North American agreement on labour co-operation led to the establishment of a relatively new component within the program. The agreement is aimed at promoting co-operation and guaranteeing effective enforcement of labour legislation by Canada, the United States and Mexico. The labour branch opened a national office to implement the agreement in Canada not too long ago. This is welcome news.

I am providing members with a sampling of the many activities currently carried out by the labour branch. These examples show that restructuring has in no way impeded the work of the branch. In fact, it has energized it. Since integration, the labour branch is vital, invigorated, and better able than ever before to make a strong contribution to the lives of working Canadians. Its integration within the Department of Human Resources Development ensures a healthy continuity and an integrated use of the resources available to promote the economic and social well-being of Canadians. In my mind, integration makes a lot of

Government Orders

sense. It is not just some arbitrary measure, but a decision made necessary by the times in which we live.

The work of the labour branch cannot be done in isolation from considerations involving Canadians who are on unemployment insurance and employment programs. The challenge is to harmonize and co-ordinate all of our federal programs dealing with human resources. To meet that challenge we are guided by a logical and coherent vision.

The bill before us offers the best of both worlds. It entrenches the powers and responsibilities of a full fledged Minister of Labour while at the same time placing the labour branch within a broader context, producing definite benefits for the government and for all Canadians.

Without hesitation I ask my hon. colleagues to support this important piece of legislation, which confirms what already exists: a very good and solid labour department in this country, which has done an exceptionally good job up to now as far as the rest of the world and Canada are concerned.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. member, who is an expert in labour relations and who knows a great deal about the human resources issue. We all acknowledge the great expertise of the member in these sectors.

• (1050)

Earlier today, we heard a Bloc member claim that this bill would give new powers to the federal government, that it was a centralizing instrument used by the government, or some non-sense to that effect.

Could the hon. member tell us if it is true that the bill gives new powers to the federal government? Is it not a consolidation of existing laws on the sharing of powers between the two ministers responsible for human resources, namely the Minister of Human Resources Development and the Minister of Labour? Is it not true that the bill does not give any new power, does not centralize anything, and that, once again, the Bloc Quebecois' claims have little to do with reality?

[*English*]

Mr. Nault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

In the last couple of days I have had the opportunity to listen to the Bloc on this bill. I have to admit I am saddened that members opposite have continued to make suggestions to their constituents that are factually incorrect.

If we look at what the Department of Labour is doing, it is just the opposite of what is being said by the members of the Bloc

Quebecois. Let me give an example. As I mentioned in my speech, under health and safety we are going to be devolving powers and co-operating with the provinces. We have already entered into an agreement with Quebec to harmonize the way we deal with health and safety as it relates to federal and provincial jurisdictions. In essence, we have done what the Bloc is arguing we have not done, which is to decentralize to a certain extent the powers of the federal government under labour to the provinces to deal with certain areas like health and safety.

I do not know why the members opposite continue to do this. Sooner or later someone in Quebec will start paying closer attention to what is going on in the House and start picking up the bills and reading them, only to find out that they are being misrepresented by these individual members across the way.

Anyone who has been around as long as you and I have been, Mr. Speaker, will know that most people pay very close attention to what takes place in their country as it relates to the laws. These laws we are passing, which the opposition continues to suggest go in a totally opposite direction—that they are new powers and we are going to be stepping all over the provinces—sooner or later will show that we are working very hard to co-operate and do just the opposite.

I want to give the Bloc a challenge in my final comments. I would like the members to change their approach of trying to get Quebecers not to like Canada. If Quebecers are to leave they should leave for other reasons than the fact that the federal government is not trying to do a good job. Quite frankly, that is the furthest from the truth I have ever seen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It certainly would not be for me to debate with the hon. parliamentary secretary as to how long we have been here, but in light of the fact that a few days ago we marked the 30th anniversary of the members for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, I submit that we have not been here all that long.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to this debate now for a couple of days. I have heard how much things are going to change for the better in our social programs and so on. After almost three decades of overspending by Liberal and Conservative governments, we have amassed \$565 billion in debt; that is 565 thousand million dollars. In the last two years this government has overspent its income by approximately \$80 billion, adding to that debt.

The Canada pension plan has in it about two years' worth of payouts, about \$40 billion, all invested in low yield provincial bonds. The fund, if pensioners were to be fully paid out, would have to have about \$550 billion in it, which it does not. It is another liability over and above the \$565 billion we owe in operating costs.

• (1055)

If the government is to look at social programming and improve the Canada pension plan, for instance, how will it do that with the burden of a \$565 billion debt, a liability in the Canada pension plan and a deliberate plan of overspending? How will it happen without the government coming to the conclusion that something must change, perhaps even looking at premium increases and benefit reductions? Is that what the government will do? How will it get around being held accountable, like the last group that was over there?

Mr. Nault: Mr. Speaker, since I know Reform Party members a little better than I know Bloc members, because I have to deal with them on a regular basis in my neighbourhood, I will tell the House what impresses and intrigues me the most about them. They came to the House with a particular focus and a promise they made to their constituents. I was in one of those ridings where they made that promise. They were going to be different. I frankly found that they were quite different. They were the most partisan group I have ever met in my life.

One of the questions posed to us during the last election campaign was why not become more like those Reformers, who are non-politicians, who will ask questions of substance. I will see if I can answer the question.

The member and his party have been spinning this scenario that the world is coming to an end in Canada and it is all going to fall apart unless we go as far to the right as we can, that everybody in Canada has to start paying massive user fees, including the seniors and the poor, because we cannot afford to tax anybody any more and our debt is so bad that we are going to sink under this big huge debt and some other country will have to bail us out.

We all know that is not true. I will try to explain this to the members across the way. I had the opportunity to sit on the committee that reviewed the pension plan with actuaries. Under the legislation we have to review this every five years. I spent some time looking at how we were to restructure it. During that time, with all the experts in front of us, never did one of them say this program would collapse under a particular problem of liability and having no money.

The problem with the individual across the way is he does not want to hear the truth about how the program works. These individuals across the way have no program or suggestions on how to run Canada. Their doom and gloom scenario, as with Klein and others, is to cut the government adrift, get rid of the government and let some right-wing business corporate elite look after it so they will not have to.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): It is okay, be happy, you have your pension.

Mr. Nault: Yes, I have my pension. Quite frankly, I am proud that I have earned it. I will be here for a long time before I get to collect it. At least I pay tax. A lot of the boys across the way do

S. O. 31

not pay any tax. There is an individual there from Ontario, our multi-millionaire friend, who does not pay any tax.

If this regional fringe party can articulate its vision of Canada and get higher than 10 per cent in the polls, then maybe we will start to look at some of its ideas. To date it is so far down that no one in the country is taking it seriously, including the people in my riding.

The Speaker: It being 11 a.m., we will now proceed to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WOODSTOCK MEMORIAL FOREST

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I attended a special event in my riding, the second annual memorial service held outdoors at the Woodstock Memorial Forest. Over 300 people attended.

This memorial forest was established by the city of Woodstock, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and a local funeral home. Twenty-three acres of conservation authority land has been set aside for the forest. The trees planted are chosen from original Carolinian species indigenous to our region. Each tree commemorates the life of a citizen who has died.

The Woodstock Memorial Forest was started in recognition of the depletion of the earth's forests. Trees provide shelter for wildlife, control soil erosion, provide shade, remove carbon dioxide and provide oxygen. The beauty and grace of these trees enhance our environment and stand as living memorials to the memory of our loved ones.

I suggest my colleagues encourage such forests in their ridings.

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[Translation]

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we will celebrate Remembrance Day. Over 100,000 young Canadians and Quebecers gave their lives during the two world conflicts, and hundreds more died in Korea and in various peacekeeping missions.

Such is the price that we have had to pay for of our strong belief in the values of democracy and peace. And it is because they also shared these values that our young soldiers fought all over the world.

We remember the sacrifices and the self-abnegation of those to whom we owe this legacy of freedom and democracy. Again, we want to pay tribute and express our gratitude to those who

S. O. 31

gave their lives, as well as to those who were prepared to do so for such a noble cause.

Let us honour their memory.

* * *

[*English*]

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow Canadians will stop to remember those who served and those who died in the world wars and the Korean war as well as the peacekeepers who have served on United Nations missions since 1947 and the many Canadian forces' members who over the years have given their lives in service to our country.

The spirit and sacrifice of these men and women have been dedicated to preserve the freedom and peace we cherish today. None gave their lives willingly yet all voluntarily put themselves in danger.

In remembering, let us be mindful of the political turmoil and circumstances which led to conflict and be attentive to our responsibility to learn and profit from that history. The wreathes laid at the National War Memorial and others across our nation must cause us to remember so that those lives were not given in vain.

As we pay tribute to the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Merchant Marine, let us remember that without freedom there can be no enduring peace and without peace no enduring freedom.

* * *

MRS. HILDA SIMANAVICIUS

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today in the House of Commons to pay tribute to an outstanding member of my constituency of Parkdale—High Park.

Mrs. Hilda Simanavicius has recently returned from Lithuania where she was involved in a program to improve the management and administration facilities of a consulting service within this eastern European country. Mrs. Simanavicius' initiatives were in conjunction with the Canadian Executive Services Organization known as CESO and the Canadian Volunteer Advisers to Business.

This organization provides advisers to businesses in emerging economies in central and eastern Europe, often with the help of volunteer Canadian men and women who are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge with others who are in need.

I would like to thank Mrs. Simanavicius and other Canadian volunteers from CESO who are working to improve economic markets and the quality of life of others around the world. Hers

is a shining example of the goodwill and benevolence for which Canadians have come to be recognized.

* * *

MR. PHILIP MCKENZIE

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mr. Philip McKenzie, a constituent from my riding of Fredericton—York—Sunbury who was one of three young Canadians selected to attend the World Energy Congress in Tokyo a few weeks ago.

His paper entitled "Nuclear Energy: A Green Option" was selected to be presented at the Youth Energy Symposium. Philip is a student of the department of chemical engineering at the University of New Brunswick. It is heartening to see his hard work and commitment being internationally recognized.

The work of talented young individuals such as Philip McKenzie is leading Canada into the 21st century.

• (1105)

Once again I want to congratulate him on an outstanding accomplishment.

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[*Translation*]

ALCAN CABLE LAPOINTE PLANT

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House that Alcan Cable's Lapointe plant in Jonquière, Quebec earned this year's Canada award for business excellence in the category manufacturing—quality, small business. The Lapointe plant, constructed in the 1970s, is one of seven Alcan Cable plants in North America.

In 1990, Alcan Cable made a commitment to quality by defining a new business mission, with the objective of becoming a world class manufacturer within four years. In their determination to meet that objective, the management and employees of the Lapointe plant spared no effort to indeed become an international class company. Alcan Cable's Lapointe plant in Jonquière is a shining example of the success any business can have if it sets its path resolutely toward quality.

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[*English*]

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's blood supply system is in a state of crisis.

Day after day, testimony before the Krever commission reveals a tale of bureaucratic bungling and government inaction that has compromised Canadians' health by exposing them to

such diseases as HIV, AIDS and hepatitis-C. Credibility and trust in our health care system has been severely compromised.

What has the government done to restore credibility to our blood system? The minister recently declared that our blood system is as safe as any other in the world, yet Canadians know it is not good enough.

Handing over another \$3.3 million to the commission is not the answer. Doubling the budget of the Bureau of Biologics is not the answer. It was this bureau that originally was part of the tragic bungling.

The answer Canadians want is not more study, but decisive action and leadership now.

* * *

CANADIAN UNITY

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiak, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, in late October the original voices of Canada spoke resoundingly: the Cree, the Inuit and the Montagnais. We are proud of who we are, what we have accomplished and what we can become.

At the unity rally in Montreal, northerners were there in support of the no forces. Aboriginal and non-aboriginal, we live in many different languages and cultures in the north, but we share many values and strengths. Our experience tells us this land is big and great enough for us all.

I urge the nation to acknowledge that the aboriginal people delivered when called on to support the country. We can and must be included in the changes that need to be made.

Together with open hearts, let us build an even greater nation from sea to sea to sea.

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

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[Translation]

INTERCULTURAL WEEK

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today marks the start in Quebec of intercultural week, this year organized around the theme of "Living together". This will afford us a new opportunity to forge solid links between Quebecers of all origins, and to encourage understanding, dialogue and rapprochement. This year, the emphasis of intercultural week will be on Quebecers' belonging to a common culture, and on making Quebec, its history and its culture better known, as well as the important contribution the cultural communities have made to its development.

S. O. 31

Numerous community groups, schools, businesses, private and public organizations and agencies are involved in organizing hundreds of big and small events throughout Quebec. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to wish all of them an enriching intercultural week of exchanges and discoveries.

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LEADER OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, who said he had not concluded that so many hospitals would inevitably be closed and that the decision to close them had to be based on the assurance of better health care? Who said that proof of this had to be provided and that he had his own ideas, which he would express at some point? It was the leader of the Bloc Québécois, offering advice to his provincial counterpart.

However, the Quebec health minister did not wait to find out the Bloc leader's personal opinion on the matter. He closed five hospitals in Montreal alone. The fine social democrat promises of the PQ and the BQ did not survive the referendum. People have just discovered that the PQ government and the separatists do not want to invest in hospitals. They prefer investing in referendums. Yes, separatists can indeed close hospitals.

* * *

• (1110)

[English]

THE LATE HANS DAIGELER

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Ottawa—Carleton suffered a terrible loss with the death of Mr. Hans Daigeler who died at the age of 50.

I had the opportunity of meeting Hans on several occasions and found him to be a caring, compassionate man. During his seven years as MPP for Nepean he brought integrity and dedication to his role. Hans was well known in Queen's Park and within the Liberal caucus. He brought a refreshing honesty to politics, was never afraid to speak the truth and was an unabashed supporter of the city of Nepean and its people.

On behalf of my colleague, the federal member for Nepean, who is stricken with grief this morning, and on behalf of the national capital region, may I offer my condolences to Hans' family, friends, relatives and neighbours. He will be missed.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis—Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and Canadians continue to believe profoundly in promoting democratic values and in protecting fundamental rights. We all deplore the violation of these rights by the Nigerian military

S. O. 31

junta, and were shocked by last week's announcement of the impending execution of nine dissidents.

The official opposition calls on the Government of Canada to put pressure on the Nigerian authorities to stop all violation of fundamental rights. Canada must take the lead and use the occasion of the meeting of the Commonwealth countries to raise this matter and promote respect for human rights, as it did in the 1980s in the case of South Africa.

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[English]

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Ontario's highest court ordered the release of Robert Owen Ross Currie. Mr. Currie had been jailed indefinitely as a dangerous offender. Mr. Currie has a long history of sexual assault. He was convicted of rape, possession of a dangerous weapon and two counts of indecent assault. The court declared Mr. Currie's indefinite sentence a form of unjust punishment.

Canadians have lost faith. They have lost faith in the justice system because it is releasing dangerous offenders into society. Canadians are frightened. They are frightened because the bleeding heart mentality that prevails within our courts and our parole systems are turning dangerous sexual offenders free to prey on more innocent people.

For the first time in Canadian history, a dangerous offender status was revoked. The courts have just fallen over the edge of a slippery slope. Who will be next, Clifford Olson or Paul Bernardo? And what is the Minister of Justice doing about it?

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[Translation]

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT ARTHUR BOUCHER

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, all across Canada, we will be celebrating Remembrance Day. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to sergeant Arthur Boucher, who lived in the village of Magog until his death.

Heroism, courage, dedication, honour, such are the words which come to mind when thinking of sergeant Arthur Boucher. His sacrifice must not have been in vain.

Similarly, the referendum which took place in Quebec 10 days ago will not be in vain. We can draw three main lessons from it, as stated by the MLA for Brome—Missisquoi who said: "that, first, we can never take our country for granted; second,

patriotism must be practised and taught daily; third, Quebecers want the federal system to change, and fast".

Together, we can do it.

* * *

[English]

EDUCATION

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 10th anniversary of International Year of the Youth.

We are in the midst of dramatic change. Statistics show us that 45 per cent of all new jobs created between 1990 and the year 2000 will require more than 16 years of training and education. Never before have education and training played such a vital role in the future of our youth.

In order to face this challenge head on, the government introduced the youth employment and learning strategy. This strategy is the cumulative result of many years of consultation, policy development and town hall meetings with Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Key elements of this strategy include youth service Canada and youth internship program. Youth service Canada gives young people an opportunity to develop skills and confidence while serving their community. The youth internship program provides a combination of on the job and in class training.

• (1115)

To date these programs have given over 30,000 young Canadians a head start on their career path. This Liberal government recognizes that our youth is a very important resource and as such should be treated as a top priority. That is why this year during a time of fiscal restraint, the overall budget for youth employment services was increased by—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fraser Valley West.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since Canada elected a majority government. Let us take a reality check and see how well it has done.

The government has borrowed over \$80 billion by overspending and has increased the debt to \$560 billion. Crime has expanded, is unchecked and even encouraged by useless federal legislation. Liberal friends and party hacks have been given federal jobs and Senate positions for life. Liberals gorge themselves on the MP pension plan gravy train. Immigration and

Refugee Boards dominate the ministry. Ministers are not held accountable.

Sick yet? Most of us are. Add on an ethics counsellor whose job is a joke, inept ministers and prisoners who run the prisons. That is enough to make me sick.

I ask you: Are we well served by this government? No. No. No.

The Speaker: We are going to put that member down as a doubtful admirer.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY AGRICULTURE MINISTER

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since it was unable to deliver the changes it promised Quebecers during the referendum campaign, the government has resorted to an old federal standby: creating committees.

Ottawa has made a big thing of the phoney committee chaired by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, but kept quiet about another committee which will be chaired by the minister of agriculture. Discreet though it may be, this shadow committee is supposed to prompt the federal government on basic directions for change in Canada.

My question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. By establishing two committees, one supposedly to respond to Quebecers' desire for change and one to discuss the division of powers, does the government intend to keep sending two messages on the constitution, one to Quebec and one to the rest of Canada, as it has done for more than two years?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is high time the official opposition realized we are in the business of governing Canada and that when problems arise with respect to unity and economic issues, we will appoint groups of ministers to make a thorough analysis of the options for dealing with these problems.

This should come as no surprise. It is what any good government would do, and that being the case, I am not surprised the official opposition fails to understand what we are doing.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at least there is more of an inclination to be frank this morning. We are told there are problems with unity. There was no problem for the past two years. The constitution was not an

Oral Questions

issue. We had some flamboyant speeches in this House, which was not the case before. The economy used to be fine, but this morning it is a real problem. They are aware of that.

When we realize that the shadow committee of the minister of agriculture will consider the division of powers and that, unlike the other committee, the most influential ministers from Quebec will sit on this committee, will the Prime Minister finally admit that the phoney committee of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, which is supposed to respond to Quebecers' desire for change, is just a lot of window dressing?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, your typical example of a phoney committee is the regional commissions that were set up in Quebec by the Parti Québécois, with the co-operation of the Bloc Québécois. They were phoney committees that never accomplished a thing.

In this case, it is entirely normal and appropriate that we should examine and try to solve the problems that exist in Canada today. At least we are trying to provide good government. In fact, all the players in Quebec, including Mario Dumont and the Conseil du patronat du Québec, have told the Quebec government it is time to deal with the real problems: jobs, unemployment and investment. That is what we are doing through the committee chaired by the minister of agriculture.

• (1120)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, actually, I want to thank the minister because the more he talks, the more he strengthens the sovereignist cause in Quebec.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister, although he was halfway around the world, managed to set the record straight. We know the phoney committee chaired by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs will accomplish very little since, as the Prime Minister said, they do not intend to tinker with the constitution to satisfy Quebec.

That being said, and since we cannot expect to deal with Canada's problems without dealing with Quebec, does the Acting Prime Minister not realize that the shadow committee of the minister of agriculture is also doomed to fail?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a good example of a phoney question, one that has no substance and does not make sense.

First of all, in the Outaouais, in the five Outaouais ridings, the no side received 72.6 per cent of the votes, more than in any region in Quebec. This was more than in 1980.

Oral Questions

So obviously, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie does not know what he is talking about when he indicates the influence we can have on what Quebecers have decided, which is to stay in Canada.

Furthermore, if the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie thinks economic issues are not important enough to warrant consideration, he is abdicating the basic responsibility of the official opposition, which is to protect the interests of Canadians and Quebecers at a time when the majority of Canadians and Quebecers want to see a solution to these economic problems.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

While travelling in New Zealand yesterday, the Prime Minister claimed that his government's main concern is to deal with what he calls "the real problems of Canadians". Yet, federal ministers are unable to name a single major legislative measure taken by their government, simply because there has not been any. Instead of taking action, they are creating yet another committee.

Here is my question. While Canadians are faced with a growing poverty problem as the federal government keeps postponing reforms that will supposedly put the unemployed back to work, how can the government claim that setting up another ministerial committee will meet the real economic needs of Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, jobs and growth have always been central to this government's agenda.

It is very important to note that in the first two years of our administration, from the fall of 1993 until the fall of 1995, economic circumstances have been created in Canada whereby 500,000 new jobs have been created for Canadians. At the same time, the unemployment rate in the country has dropped below 10 per cent, the lowest level in a long time.

That is good progress in the first two years of our administration. It is still not enough progress from our point of view. We want to work very hard to accelerate job growth and to reduce unemployment. All members of the government, in cabinet and in caucus, will be sparing absolutely no effort to achieve that larger objective.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the minister is saying is that while they were creating jobs in the rest of Canada, Quebec was becoming the poorest province in Canada with its unemployed workers and its people living below the poverty line.

Can the Acting Prime Minister tell us—

Mr. Massé: It is because of the Parti Québécois.

Mr. Robichaud: Stop talking about separation.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Joliette.

• (1125)

Mr. Laurin: Mr. Speaker, I realize it is not important for the party in power to listen to the question because their answers never make sense.

Can the Acting Prime Minister tell us what concrete and substantial legislative measures his government has taken since the referendum to tackle what he calls the real problems of Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows that the intervening period from the date of the referendum to now has only been a matter of a few days. The member should take into account the record of performance prior to the referendum date. It includes a broad range of initiatives, probably longer than you would allow me to answer during the course of question period, Mr. Speaker.

I can think of such things as the Canada infrastructure works program which has been an enormous success from coast to coast to coast. There are the internship programs for Canadian youth, the Canadian Youth Service Corps. There is also the successful battle against the deficit. Not only have we met but we have exceeded every single one of our deficit targets which builds confidence in the Canadian economy. There is also a large list of measures for small business where 85 per cent of Canadian new jobs come from.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a heck of a week. We have had the official disloyal opposition acting—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the word disloyal.

Mr. Silye: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the word disloyal. It has been a heck of a week. We have had members of the official opposition acting like spoiled brats in not recognizing the results of the referendum which they lost. Now we have the government members who do not know why they won striking up the divine nine committee. We have a Prime Minister who wants Cops out of the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Silye: In the meantime, this week we have been busy meeting with the governor of the Bank of Canada and with 10 of this country's leading economists which prompts my first question.

Oral Questions

I believe that the size of our federal debt is \$567,902,132,500.57. Would the finance minister please confirm to this House what the size of our federal debt is?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member's estimate of our national debt is within a couple of pennies.

The problem is not only the size of the national debt, but that as a nation over the course of the last decade we did not face up to the fundamental problems of job creation, the preservation of our social programs and the preservation of the social fabric of this country. What is crucial is that we continue the course that has been set by this government. We must deal with the fundamental problems so that a subsequent government does not have to stand up and admit to the kind of heritage the member just described.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is the debt. That is this country's major problem. The soft targets this finance minister has set are not solving the problem. He should get serious and set some targets that really mean something, such as a zero deficit within the time frame of his mandate.

I know the finance minister has heard what many of the economists said yesterday when they were looking at forecasts into the future. If the minister were to listen to the advice of these leading economists he would recognize that the track he is taking this country down is not good enough. There is a demand by taxpayers to solve our problem quicker. It is better to err on the side of quickness than to err on the side of slowness.

Why does this finance minister not commit his department and his government to a clearly defined program of when we will get to see a zero deficit?

• (1130)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has never been a better expression of the difference that exists between the Reform Party and the government than the one just expressed by the member.

He said that the end of government was to reduce the deficit, that the purpose of government was to make itself smaller. That is not true. The purpose of government is to make itself smarter. The purpose in reducing the deficit is to help in job creation. The fundamental role of the country is to give its citizens a better future.

Yes, we have done a great deal to reduce the deficit. We will continue to reduce the deficit and we will balance the budget,

but that is not the end of this society. The purpose of society is to give citizens a better standard of living, to give children a better chance and to make sure we take children out of poverty. That is what we will do.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister talks about making things better for Canada. He talks about how he will improve things for Canada. From when he came into power until when he leaves power overall spending will be the same, if not higher. He is not solving the problem. He is adding to the problem.

The problem is the debt. The solution is to get to a zero deficit so that we do not add to it. Whether it is over three years, two years or whatever, that is the objective.

The Speaker: I know the member will ask his question right now.

Mr. Silye: Mr. Speaker, for the good of the country and for the good of the financial community, will the finance minister quit playing politics with the deficit, come clean with Canadians and present a balanced budget before he goes to the electorate in the next election?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as set out in the last budget, program spending by the government by 1996-97 will be at its lowest level as a percentage of our gross domestic product since 1951. We will be the only government of the G-7 that will have put into place an absolute reduction in its expenditures.

The minister of agriculture has just listed what we have done in terms of job creation which is fundamental. If our only objective is to reduce the deficit, the fastest way to do it is to put Canadians back to work. The minister of agriculture has just set out what we have done.

We will reduce the deficit. Let there be no doubt about that. However we will do it in a balanced way, one that does not harm the Canadian economy, one that gives our children a chance.

If we want anything different, we can take a look at the budget set out by members of the Reform Party this year: scorch and burn, demolish the country. They are so ashamed of it that ever since it came out they have refused to bring it forth and talk about it because they know it was a dud.

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[Translation]

PURCHASE OF HELICOPTERS

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the defence minister. Yesterday, the minister quoted, in support of his decision to buy new search and rescue helicopters, an analysis published in *Le Devoir*. Had he read it

Oral Questions

through, he would have learned that Quebec was the biggest loser in the cancellation of the EH-101 contract.

Given that the Canadian aerospace industry is mainly based in the Montreal area, that Quebec is far from getting its fair share of defence spending and that the minister did not hesitate to award without tender to Ontario a \$2 billion contract for armoured personnel carriers, how can he explain the fact that there is no Canadian content requirement in the new contract? How can he justify that?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member forgets that, a few years ago, the previous government awarded a contract worth more than \$1 billion to Bell Helicopter, in Mirabel, to build helicopters for the Canadian army. This was a major contract for 100 helicopters. But that is something he failed to mention in the House.

[English]

Quebec has a large part of the aerospace industry. Bell Helicopter has received the world product mandate for the construction of certain types of helicopters it is now delivering to the Canadian army. It was because of the government's decision—perhaps this is one of the few things the previous government did correctly—that Bell Helicopter company was able to get the world product mandate and bring jobs to Canada, to Quebec, for the making of these helicopters to serve Bell's worldwide market.

• (1135)

The hon. member conveniently forgets that, when he criticizes the announcement I made on Wednesday.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is like a propeller, we never know which way he will turn. Does he not realize that, by refusing to include a Canadian content requirement in this contract, he is not only compromising our businesses' chances of securing the contract but also completely ignoring the policy on managing major crown projects, namely projects in excess of \$100 million, which clearly requires him to give top priority to industrial and regional development?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have stated as government policy that we will get the best deal for Canadian taxpayers. Where possible, we will buy off the shelf, and we have done that.

As I said the other day, the hon. member and his party do not have much confidence in Quebec companies, many of them

world class, that will easily be able to compete and offer their services to provide components for these helicopters. He does not have faith in their own industries in Quebec. That is shameful.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance basically released his annual financial report. On page 2 of that report the minister acknowledged that he massaged the personal income tax collection figures for the previous year to take \$3 billion out of revenue in 1994.

Using the real figures, will the Minister of Finance acknowledge that the 1994 deficit was only \$39 billion and that the 1995 deficit is exactly \$38.7 billion, which means that the deficit has not come down hardly at all?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the accounting principles we followed in reporting the state of the government's finances have been consistent and are ones determined by the auditor general.

If the hon. member is accusing the auditor general of massaging the numbers, I would suspect he should do so in another forum. Even if one accepts the premise of the member's question, which is obviously false, one would have to ask him to apply the same principles from one year to the next and he would find that his question does not stand up.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from the report of the Minister of Finance that there were some changes and some fixing of the numbers in 1994.

While we listen to the daily drivel of the government of how it cuts costs and is trying to create jobs, using his actual numbers tax collections were up \$7.3 billion and the deficit has only come down by \$4.5 billion.

Therefore would he acknowledge that he is reducing the deficit on the backs of taxpayers, not by cutting spending, and that increased taxation kills jobs? It does not create jobs as he talked about earlier today.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member did not quote my words. He quoted his own words. He would have been better off to have quoted mine.

First, we follow the accounting principles established by the auditor general. Second, the member will understand the basic problem of the country is compound interest. While our spending may well go down in terms of programs, our interest costs continue to rise. That is the basic nut we have to deal with.

Oral Questions

Over the course of the last two years we have engaged in more deficit reduction than any government, certainly over the course of the last decade. We have hit our targets and we will continue to hit our targets.

It may reflect Reform Party policy but he should not say that paying attention to job creation and job creation policies are drivels, because that is what Canadians want their government to do.

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[Translation]

AGUSTA

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government announced that it had reached a settlement to compensate the Italian company Agusta, following the cancellation of the contract for the EH-101 helicopters. No details will be made public until several months, but we know that this settlement will cost several hundred million dollars. Agusta, it must be remembered, is currently facing bribe and corruption charges in Europe.

• (1140)

My question is for the Minister of National Defence. While the terms of the settlement reached between the government and Agusta are not yet known, and given that the inquiry called for by the Liberals when they formed the opposition never took place, how can the government explain that Agusta is still being considered for the new helicopter contract?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was quite right in saying that an agreement in principle had been reached between the Government of Canada and the company to which she referred. Unfortunately the hon. member went on to make an assumption which has yet to be realized. The Minister of National Defence has yet to give to the Department of Public Works and Government Services a request for a proposal.

We do not know who in the world might be submitting bids for various procurement initiatives of the Government of Canada. How the hon. member could stretch an agreement on termination costs with a particular company into saying that it will now be somehow successful in some subsequent bid is beyond the realm of reality.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that answer has nothing to do with the question. My question was on the second contract, but the minister keeps referring to the first one. Will we have to make a video for the minister to understand the question?

Let me put it again. Since Agusta is at the centre of a huge scandal in Belgium, how can the minister justify that, without any inquiry on the circumstances surrounding the signing of the EH-101 contract, he will pay Agusta hundreds of millions in compensation, without telling us whether he intends to exclude that company as a bidder for the new helicopter contract? That is my question to the minister.

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to receive the video at any time. Perhaps she might want to have Canada Post deliver it.

The Government of Canada, as I am sure any reasonable individual would understand, had a binding contract with the company in question. We made a decision upon coming to office about the termination of the contract. There are termination costs the Government of Canada will have to provide in accordance with the contract. We will live up to the contract obligations and we hope to be able to provide that information in due course.

However the hon. member cannot jump from that resolution into thinking that automatically the company to which she refers may have some upper hand with regard to possible procurements of the Government of Canada.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Minister of Finance that job creation and putting Canadians back to work are not drivels. The brother-in-law of the head of Canada Post is about to be awarded an untendered \$300 million contract and get an extension on another to the year 2002, and the minister responsible does nothing about it.

If the minister of public works again alleges there is nothing wrong here, would he assure the House that the contract will be investigated as part of the much anticipated review of Canada Post?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member once again likes to roll around in the mud. It is pretty sad when we informed his colleague who raised the issue at a previous time that the suggestion the hon. member was making was incorrect.

A letter I have, which I would be pleased to table for the benefit of the House, says:

Canada Post has completed their evaluation of your proposal dated July 28, 1995 for the sale and leaseback of community mailboxes. Our evaluation has concluded that the financing cost does not meet Canada Post Corporation's requirements.

Oral Questions

I do not know what the hon. member is talking about.

• (1145)

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister seldom does know what I am talking about.

I talked a lot about patronage and about rolling around in the mud and the slime. We only have to go as far as Sydney, Nova Scotia, to see what is going on at the tar ponds in the middle of the member's riding.

The federal conflict of interest code is being blatantly ignored over and over and this minister does nothing about it. Two senior executives in public works dole out federal money to their relatives, get caught in the act, and again the minister does nothing.

How does the minister of public works expect to clean up nepotism at Canada Post when he continues to allow his public works employees to give out money to their wives and nephews without even going through the pretence of tendering?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows a lot about stench. He knows a heck of a lot about it. He makes allegations continuously in the House.

He refers to the tar ponds, which are not even in my constituency. I hope he will get his facts correct.

With regard to the specific allegations he raises, I hope the hon. member would clearly understand that ministers of the crown do not have the authority to deal with public servants within their own departments. That is a responsibility of the respective deputy ministers of each of our departments. That is codified by law.

My deputy minister responsible for public works and government services has this particular issue in hand and he is dealing with it in the most appropriate way.

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[Translation]

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for regional development in Quebec.

The minister responsible for regional development in Quebec is now contributing to the loss of jobs in the forest industry in Quebec since Ottawa decided unilaterally to withdraw from that sector and he refuses to grant the \$80 million requested by the industry.

By refusing that compensation to forest workers in Quebec, as he did recently in the case of farm producers in Western Canada where the federal government withdrew from the grain trans-

portation sector, is the minister not applying double standards and being unfair to Quebec?

[English]

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this issue has been discussed over a number of years. The previous government is the one that cancelled those programs for forestry agreements. We have continued to try to extend that to give the woodlot owners an opportunity to adjust to the change. Last year the plan was extended for a further year and it does not expire until March 1996. The woodlot owners have been given lots of notice and lots of compensation in order to adjust.

[Translation]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister recognize that when he refuses to react positively to the claims of 170,000 stakeholders of the forest industry, he simply confirms the fears of Quebecers who thought that after a no to the referendum, the federal government would also say no to all of their requests?

[English]

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the member would be asking for compensation on the one hand and at the same time saying that it is a responsibility of the provincial government. So let the provincial government do its job.

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CANADA POST

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very disturbing that pornographic and sexually explicit advertisements were delivered to several thousand households in western Atlantic Canada. This unsolicited and unaddressed material could easily be opened by children.

How does the minister responsible for Canada Post intend to prevent this disgusting material from reaching people in my constituency of York—Simcoe and other Canadians?

• (1150)

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

I too find the material in question very objectionable. The president of Canada Post Corporation has issued a directive that it will not be delivering in the future any of this unaddressed material. Yesterday we were able to preclude the forwarding through the mails of some 40,000 pieces in St. John's, Newfoundland.

There is another issue, however, the addressed pornographic mail. I have conferred with my colleague, the Minister of Justice, and we are hoping to combine our forces with a task force to look at ways we can address that issue in terms of either amendments to various statutes or other remedies. We want to get a remedy that will be effective and will not be challenged by the courts or by any of those companies that wish to distribute that pornographic material.

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BLOOD SUPPLY

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Krever inquiry has done a pretty good job of pointing out flaws in our blood system. Our health minister's reaction is like a deer in the headlights. The time for dithering is over.

Can the parliamentary secretary maybe give the health minister a little nudge so we can have a little more accountability in our blood system?

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer that question, but it is really rather sad that such an important subject as blood should be dealt with in such a flippant manner.

The Krever inquiry has been set up to look at the safety of blood in the 1980s. That report has not yet come down. Mr. Krever has had an audit done on safety so far, which has shown that the blood system in Canada is as safe as any system of blood can be in any other part of the world. The hon. member, as a physician, should know that there is not 100 per cent safety in any issue that has to do with pathogens or biotechnology.

We in health are not waiting for the Krever inquiry to come out with its recommendations. We have already begun. We have doubled the number of inspectors for blood in this country. We have started annual inspections, which was never done before. We have implemented at least 10 measures, which are too long for me to respond to right now, that will enhance safety before the Krever inquiry even comes out with its recommendations.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister simply says that our blood system is fine. The report says the system is confusing, has poor accountability, is frozen in the past. If hers is not a flippant response, I do not know what is.

Maybe it takes a hip check for the health minister. Will the parliamentary secretary ask the minister to at least clarify the lines of authority so that we do not have confusion in our blood system?

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not only the Minister of Health

Oral Questions

who said the system is safe; it actually came out of Mr. Krever himself. Those are his words on his safety audit.

I believe the hon. member is speaking about another audit. All these audits are tools the Krever commission is using to come up with its final report.

At the moment the Krever commission is looking at management issues, which is appropriate to do. We are waiting for that report to come out. When it does, we will look at it and take the appropriate steps, as we always do.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

The Minister of Health said last Wednesday in the House, and I quote: "—we have not waited for Justice Krever's report before taking steps to make the system safer".

How, then, can the minister explain that the report prepared recently for commissioner Krever deplored the same major deficiencies as those identified by the expert committee report a year ago?

• (1155)

[English]

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the safety of blood and with regard to what the Krever inquiry has suggested so far, we have responded to Justice Krever's interim report and have acted on every recommendation within our jurisdiction. Unfortunately we cannot react on recommendations that have nothing to do with our jurisdiction. I will list these. I spoke to them earlier, but maybe what I need to do is list them.

We have increased resources in the area of blood regulation. We have increased the frequency of inspections and improved the way we do them, making them on a yearly basis. We have enhanced the way we do inspections, requiring now a written report at the end of the inspection. We have introduced an exit notice that clearly sets out our observations and requirements for corrective action. We have established an independent advisory committee on blood regulation to provide us with advice on a range of issues, and so on.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. Can the minister then explain how it is that a recent study by Dr. Robert Rémis, who was an important witness before the Commission, shows that Canada has one of the worst records among industrialized countries for the safety of blood products?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is up to the Ministry of Health to respond to the witnesses who present to the Krever commission. It is up to us to respond to what the Krever commission itself says.

The Krever commission has, I repeat, said that the safety of the blood system in Canada is as safe as any blood system in the world can ever hope to be.

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GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Senate committee studying Bill C-68 has passed a motion asking the Minister of Justice to “document or conduct such consultations as contemplated in section 35 of the Constitution and laid out in the Sparrow case, and various agreements such as those with the Yukon First Nations and the Cree, and inform the Senate committee that the Constitutional requirements are not violated”.

I ask the Minister of Justice, will he comply with the senators’ request?

The Speaker: Order. This question is before the other house. However, because it deals with the hon. minister, if he wishes I will permit him to answer the question.

The hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that is a first for this minister.

During the hearings of the other place on this bill a question was raised. I will ask the minister if he wishes to respond to this question. The question was why is the House passing legislation that is not constitutionally sound.

I ask the minister, why was Bill C-68 rammed through without the constitutionality of the bill being assured?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and his party are not in a position to say they are the champions of aboriginal rights in this country. When they see in this issue an opportunity to attack Bill C-68 they take it.

For the many months the bill was before the House committee, of which the hon. member formed a part, it was examined in great detail. There were both legal and constitutional witnesses before the committee. It was established there, as it has been established before the Senate, that this bill is completely constitutional.

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GRAIN EXPORTS

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In recent weeks a small group of farmers have blatantly defied federal law by trucking their wheat and barley across the U.S. border without an export permit. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House what impact this illegal action will have on prairie farmers who are not breaking the law?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, illegal action or illegal protest is no way to have an effective influence on the shaping of government policy. In fact that conduct sets back the case of those who would legitimately argue for some changes.

It is a fundamental precept of democracy that we must all respect the law, even those laws with which we may disagree. If we do not have that fundamental respect for the law, soon we all descend to the law of the jungle.

● (1200)

This kind of illegal conduct with respect to the United States border is tremendously dangerous. It could trigger that very political firestorm on the American side of the border which could lead to increased pressures in the United States to shut the border in some way for the access of Canadian grain into the U.S. market. The conduct is dangerous in terms of trade.

The law is there. It is clear and it is valid. I want to make it very clear the law will be enforced.

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POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period the Minister of Finance said that I should quote my own figures rather than quote his. At the same time the Minister of Finance said that my accusations called into question the integrity of the auditor general.

If I may quote from the annual financial report—

The Speaker: What the hon. member has is an interesting point but it is not a point of order. I rule it would be a point of debate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

*Routine Proceedings**[English]***AGRICULTURE**

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109, I am pleased to table in both official languages the government's response to the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled "Dismantling the Crow: Curbing the Impacts", which was tabled in this House on June 22, 1995.

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*[Translation]***PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts concerning the Atlantic Freight Assistance Program.

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*[English]***GOVERNMENT REVIEW**

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table in both official languages the first ever annual report to Parliament entitled "Strengthening Government Review". This is in keeping with the commitment made by the government in its response to the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I am pleased to present my report on strengthening government review.

[Translation]

This document is our way of delivering on a promise.

[English]

Specifically, it is delivering on our promise to address some of the concerns expressed about review in the sixth report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

In a larger sense this document is also part of our effort to fulfil the government's election promise to Canadians. We told them that we would make government more efficient, that we would make it more affordable. We also promised we would make it more accountable.

To get government right, we need to know what works and what does not work. Feedback in the form of reviews, evaluations and audits is the best way for the government to learn and to improve. As well, regular reviews are an excellent opportunity to remind our employees of what the public service is all about: delivering quality service to the public and doing our best with the resources that are available.

• (1205)

Canadians want to know how their tax money is spent. They want to be assured they are getting value for those tax dollars. As the people's elected representatives, we have a right to an accounting on those expenditures. Through the public accounts committee we have been told we need timely, relevant and useful feedback on the effects of government policies and programs.

As the auditor general pointed out in his 1993 report, the government's feedback system does not always work as it should. This is why we are implementing many initiatives for things like quality management, a better expenditure management system, a modernized financial information system, a smarter use of modern information technology and of course with this report today, a strengthening of government review of its programs and services.

The government-wide program review process is bringing many significant changes to the way we govern. It is more than just a short term tune-up. Our research shows that those changes are making a real difference to the way we manage the public service. We are working to create a new management culture, one that is results oriented and one that is client focused.

Results oriented management means defining the results the government seeks to achieve in its programs. It means giving managers the resources and guidance they need to achieve those results. It means performance measurements, measuring and demonstrating actual achievements. It means ultimately finding a way to share what we learn with each other in the government and also with the public.

This report is our way of documenting these changes. It is the product of a thorough investigation. We consulted many different groups, both internally and externally. Our valued professional auditors, our evaluators and others in the review community played a key role in the evolution of this report.

What did we learn from these consultations? Our research showed that public service employees really do understand the importance of review.

[Translation]

This is apparent in the extensive amount of review activity carried out in the departments.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

The Treasury Board is leading the evolution of review in three key ways. First, we are linking results information with our business plan process and other forms of decision making. Second, we are improving our ability to co-ordinate government-wide reviews. Third, we are enhancing our review and performance database so that it will be a convenient source of information on key reviews as well as lessons learned and best practices.

There is still room for improvement. We are committed to do what it takes to continue down the road this report puts us on. Administrative structures will be reinforced and results commitments will be more visible. In helping to provide the information for evaluation, we also need a better financial information system. We will continue to find better ways of measuring and making performance information available to Parliament.

Finally, we are going to help departments develop better accountability or control frameworks giving the kind of training and expertise that is needed. We are going to analyse the information gaps for issues where more than one department is involved.

Review is a powerful tool for change. It is integral to delivering quality services to Canadians. It is vital to the changes under way to improve our expenditure management system. We intend to continue our actions to strengthen government review and evaluation on government programs and services.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the efficiency of the civil service depends on a close and frequent assessment of all of the government programs. Departments must ensure that their programs meet their original objectives. Also, they must ensure that the various departmental programs produce very good results, in the best possible way, and that they do not waste the taxpayers' money.

In his 1993 annual report, the auditor general made an assessment of the federal government programs which was very negative. He concluded that not only was the program assessment process seriously flawed, but also that only a quarter of federal expenditures had been reviewed between 1985-86 and 1991-92.

For over two years now, the official opposition has been calling for a comprehensive assessment of all federal programs. Also, for this assessment to be efficient, it must be transparent, which means that members of Parliament should be able to take part in it. As you know, only elected representatives are accountable to the people. The President of the Treasury Board told us today that, as elected representatives of the people, we have the

right to be well informed on how the money is spent. But what have we seen since this government took office?

For example, the so-called program assessment undertaken by his colleague from Intergovernmental Affairs was done behind closed doors. At a finance committee hearing, the official opposition even asked the President of the Treasury Board to release the studies, especially those on duplication, made in connection with the program review.

At the time, the President of the Treasury Board referred us to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs who refused to release them on the grounds that they were useful only to the policy makers. So much for transparency. We have to judge a government by its actions and results rather than by its rhetoric.

I am afraid this new management culture that the President of the Treasury Board says he wants to put in place clashes with the policies the present government has been practising since it took office.

It is all fine and well for the President of the Treasury Board to preach and to say he wants to improve the federal program review, but the results will be disappointing as long as parliamentarians are denied access to the necessary information.

I mentioned duplication of services earlier. To be effective, every program review process must answer this very simple question: Who is doing what? Which level of government is best able to deal with various areas? The federal government said and still says that jurisdiction must be given to the level of government which is best able to deal with it. Again, we must ensure this is not only rhetoric.

What is the every day reality since the present government took office? The reality is that the federal government is interfering increasingly in areas where the jurisdiction and legitimacy of Quebec and the provinces are absolutely clear. I will give you examples, passage of Bill C-76 and the issue of manpower training.

With Bill C-76, the federal government has given itself the powers to unilaterally impose national standards, particularly in the areas of post-secondary education and welfare, thus increasing useless duplication.

• (1215)

Even though all of Quebec's social and economic stakeholders agree that the Government of Quebec is the level of government which is in the best position and which is the most effective to deal with manpower training, the federal government refuses to withdraw from this sector with compensation.

A government is judged by its actions. The federal government's profoundly centralist philosophy prevents it from improving effectiveness in the public service. Instead of eliminating duplication and the waste by making a strict assessment—through an open and transparent process—of all of the federal programs, the federal government has once again de-

cided to send the bill to the provinces and limits its action to tabling yet another report.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Reform Party to the minister's first report on strengthening government review.

It is interesting to note that the first review, which the minister has said he takes great pride in tabling, is the result of the work done by the public accounts committee. It tabled a report last year calling for this review. There were eight specific, strong recommendations to help the government do its job better. We know the government is trying. Quite often we give them a failing grade but at least we see that they are trying.

Looking at the report I noted he said: "What did we learn? First of all our research showed that public service employees really do understand the importance of review". I hope so because it meant that 30,000 of them were out the door.

During the last election the Liberals said they would create jobs, that they would create an infrastructure program and spend \$6 billion of borrowed money.

The President of the Treasury Board admitted before the committee that \$6 billion only created 8,000 full time jobs. We have now found that the government is spending another several billion dollars to move 30,000 civil servants on to the street and on to the rolls of UI.

Canadians are going to be out \$10 billion and we are also down about 20,000 jobs at the same time. We need program evaluation to do things properly. Unfortunately, by looking at the report that was just tabled—we have not had the opportunity to examine it in detail—it seems this is the same old review rather than a proper evaluation of the programs of government, reviews that the auditor general has said focus primarily on efficiency and tinkering with the system rather than a full blown evaluation to save money.

Take an example. I am not going to give the government the credit because it was actually started under the previous government, when the department of transportation decided to do a review of the Atlantic freight rates assistance program. This program had been started around the turn of the century and codified around the 1920s. This was to subsidize freight being moved from Atlantic Canada westward into Quebec and Ontario.

By 1993 it was costing us \$100 million a year in subsidies. When an evaluation was done it was found the subsidy was going into the hands of these poor people called Irvings and McCains and so on in Atlantic Canada. It was all set up by trucking firms owned by these large companies inflating the cost

Routine Proceedings

and the subsidy they were collecting. We found out the subsidy was providing no public policy benefits to the people of Canada, yet we were paying \$100 million.

Program evaluation reviews can do the job properly if they are focused and done well. However, the auditor general tells us that the government is cutting back on its commitment to reduce \$11.8 million, in I think it was in the 1992–93 contracting to look at evaluation of programs. It cut back \$8.5 million, a decline of 28 per cent while we listened to these wonderful words of the President of the Treasury Board telling us how reviews are doing a great job.

• (1220)

Page 26 of the report is about UI. The minister says: "Studies include over 20 projects, assessing many aspects of the UI program", which continues to keep people unemployed while we wait for the Minister of Human Resources Development to bring down the big review to find out how we can save billions in the program.

An hon. member: And it is coming in this lifetime.

Mr. Williams: Program evaluation can do very great wonders to the deficits of the country if it looks at four fundamental elements. First, is the program still relevant? Has the focus changed over the years or should the focus be changed? Second, does the program meet the relevant need which has been identified in society? Third, is it being delivered efficiently? The fourth element is as important as any of them. Is there a better way of spending our money to achieve the same results more efficiently and ensuring that the need is served?

I am glad to see that the President of the Treasury Board has tabled his first report. Perhaps it is a new beginning. It is certainly a small beginning. I have to compliment him on starting down the road. I only hope he is going to move aggressively and sincerely to save taxpayers a great deal of money.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 98th Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which will allow our national anthem to be heard every Wednesday in the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this report later this day.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 99th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the selection of votable items in accordance with Standing Order 92. This report is deemed adopted on presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour to present the 100th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding Standing Order 107, which permits associate members for the liaison committee.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this 100th report later this day.

Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent that the following motion be put to the House without debate or amendment. I move that the 98th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the leave of the House, I move, seconded by the hon. member for St. Paul's, that the 100th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, tabled in the House earlier today, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

• (1225)

[English]

PETITIONS

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by a group of Canadians with respect to the harmful effects of tobacco.

The petitioners point out that tobacco use is clearly linked to many illnesses and should therefore, according to them, rightly be termed a hazardous product.

MINING

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present

some 600 signatures on a number of petitions dealing with the Keep Mining in Canada campaign. One of the most important issues in Canada is the one of mining. It is a cornerstone for the betterment of Canada.

The petitioners ask the government to look at overlapping regulations and the investment climate. They hope that in reducing the overlap they can get the mining industry back to the number one position it held in the past.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos 210 and 230.

[Text]

Question No. 210—**Mr. Riis:**

In 1994 and 1995, did the government provide any funding or financial support for any festivals or events which included the names "Du Maurier", "Players", "Craven A", "Export", "Matinee", "Benson and Hedges", "Rothmans", and if so, what was the location and amount of funding or support for each such event?

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): To the best knowledge of the government, the following departments and agency have provided funding to events which included the name of a cigarette company:

Canada Council:				
Du Maurier Limited Atlantic Jazz Festival	Halifax	1994/95		\$875.26
Canadian Heritage:				
Craven A Just For Laughs Festival	Montreal	1994/95		\$250,000
		1995/96		\$200,000
Du Maurier Limited World Stage Festival (Under the umbrella of Harbourfront Centre Corp.)	Toronto	1994/95		\$70,000
		1995/96		\$80,000
Du Maurier Arts Limited New Music Festival	Winnipeg	January 1994		\$70,000
		January 1995		\$46,500
Foreign Affairs Canada:				
Du Maurier Limited World Stage Festival	Toronto	1994/95		\$25,000

To the best of their knowledge, seventeen other departments, agencies and crown corporations had no information on this subject.

Question No. 230—**Mr. Blaikie:**

What has been the total cost of developing, operating and marketing AECL's slowpoke energy system project from its inception until the present time?

Government Orders

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): The total cost of developing, operating and marketing AECL's slowpoke energy system project from its inception until the present time is \$45.1 million.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTION PASSED AS ORDER FOR RETURN

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No 101 could be made an order for return, that return would be tabled immediately.

[Text]

Question No. 101—**Mr. Breitzkreuz:**

For each federal riding, what has been the total amount of financial assistance provided by the department of Western Economic Diversification from October 25, 1993, to date?

Return tabled.

[English]

Mr. Milliken: I ask that the remaining questions stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 33, because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 18 minutes.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENT

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period the Minister of Public Works and Government Services indicated he would be pleased to table a document. I request he do that for our information.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. The minister obviously was called away following question period and forgot to table the document.

He indicated his willingness to do so. I would be happy, on behalf of the hon. member for Fraser Valley West, to raise the matter with the minister and see if the document cannot be tabled either later this day or on Monday. I hope that is satisfactory with him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank the parliamentary secretary for his co-operation in this matter and I am sure the matter will be resolved in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-96, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-96, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts.

Last week in my office I received a status of women document that prompts me to speak to this bill today. That document was a prepared camera ready piece to be used as an insert in house-holders from members of Parliament across Canada.

It describes Canada's role at the fourth UN conference on women to an unsuspecting public. It described the government as recognizing the importance of strengthening the family. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Department of Human Resources Development is one of 24 federal departments included in the status of women plans. I will read from the document:

In preparing for the Conference—

—that is the fourth UN conference on women—

—Canada developed its own national action plan for gender equality "Setting the Stage for the Next Century: the Federal Plan for Gender Equality," published in August, is a framework for federal action to advance women's equality in Canada to the year 2000".

This federal plan for gender equality outlines eight lofty sounding objectives. Today I will touch on five of the eight objectives to which the Department of Human Resources Development has committed.

The first is to implement gender based analysis throughout federal departments and agencies. The second is to improve women's economic autonomy and well-being. Sixth, incorporate women's perspective in governance. Seventh, promote and support global gender equality and, eighth, advance gender equality for employees of federal departments and agencies.

Government Orders

• (1230)

Human Resources Development before and after the reorganization this formalizes agreed along with other federal departments to implement this gender based analysis. What is gender based analysis? What is the definition offered by the government in its own publication? According to the federal plan:

A gender based approach ensures that the development, analysis and implementation of legislation and policies are undertaken with an appreciation of gender differences. It also acknowledges that some women may be disadvantaged even further because of their race, colour, sexual orientation, social economic position, region, ability level or age.

Notice the subtle reference to sexual orientation in this list. This word, until recently with the passage of Bill C-41, did not exist in federal legislation. Even now the recognition of sexual orientation is not yet in our Canadian Human Rights Act. With this government document, however, it is now official policy in every government department, courtesy of the Status of Women and not of Parliament.

It is the ambiguous concept of gender I should like to give close attention to today. The dictionary definition of gender refers to a person's sex. In contrast to this, according to the federal plan:

Gender refers not to men or women, but to the relationship between them and to the ways in which the roles of women and men, girls and boys, are socially constructed.

The document goes on to expand on the concept of gender equality. To achieve gender equality, the social arrangements that govern the relationship between men and women will have to change to give equal value to the different roles they play as parents, as workers, and so on and so forth.

The word parent does occur here. Does this mean that the importance of parent and family is being recognized? Has the traditional family or family been deemed to be worthy of the government's attention? If we go further in the document we realize that this is not the case. It goes on to say such statements as:

Equality for all women will come about only as these attitudes embedded in the workplace, education institutes and family are challenged and begin to change.

Another example of this policy duplicity is the following:

Unequal participation and progress in paid work further undermines a woman's ability to achieve and sustain personal autonomy throughout her life.

This statement reflects the bias that it is only paid work that defines a woman's ability, value and worth in society. This illustrates the government's contempt for home and family relationships.

Participation in the workplace defines ability, value and worth according to this Liberal government document. With this bias it is not only family structures that become criticized under

the microscope of their gender equality, but such things as religion, customs and traditional practices. The free choice or preference of individuals is replaced by this government imposed priority of workforce participation.

Gender equality is also based upon the assumption of attaining equal outcomes, as noted in the federal plan:

Attaining gender equality is predicated on the achievement of equal outcomes for both men and women.

That is brought about not only by equal treatment but by "positive actions". Positive actions imply government intervention. This document blatantly states that treating women and men identically will not ensure equal outcomes. Thus the philosophy of gender equality leads to the policy of employment equity and affirmative action from the workplace right through to the kitchens of our national homes. This policy has been rejected outright by Canadians and certainly by my constituents in Port Moody—Coquitlam.

A recent survey I conducted of my constituents indicated that some 87 per cent believe that merit and merit alone should be the sole criteria for hiring and promotion. They have rejected employment equity and affirmative action, certainly in the workplace and most certainly in the home.

• (1235)

The policy or practice of employment equity is a fundamental insult to the abilities of women. It is a fundamental insult to me. The government cannot and should not mandate equal outcome in workplace participation between the sexes, between men and women. That should not be its role. Rather, the government should seek to encourage equality of opportunity and freedom of choice. Individuals should be free to decide how they wish to participate, both inside and outside the home.

The government obviously has no respect for the value of nurturing or sustaining families. The government does not take into account nor does it respect that women may have other alternatives and priorities in life, may wish to make choices other than government choices, and may wish to invest their time and efforts in their families. Therefore it was to my great surprise to read the status of women document which states that they recognize the importance of the family and the importance of strengthening it.

The minister pays only lip service to the needs and priorities of Canadian families while giving full service to radical feminists through such documents as the gender equality plan and the Beijing platform for action. It should be noted that neither the platform for action nor the federal plan for gender equality has been presented to the House. We have not seen a shred of those documents in this place for discussion. We have not been able to scrutinize what is in them, as we deserve to do. The government

has legislated in 24 federal departments, including human resources, without this legislature.

Where is the accountability in our system of government? The government, according to its notorious red book, stated that "open government would be the watchword of the Liberal government program". Why has not the government brought this agenda to the public's attention? Yet the two documents to which I referred, one being domestic and the other an international UN agreement, will have wide-ranging impact upon our legislation, our public policy, our society and our families.

We will recall last month the passage of Bill C-64, a monument to employment equity in all federal departments. It is no coincidence that this is in the Beijing document.

Human resources development is a main player in the realization of the Liberal government's gender based analysis agenda. It intends at any moment to interfere in the free choice of Canadian families by introducing a national day care program. It intends to add a further tax burden to all Canadians with this program in its desire to become a nanny state.

We thought last year that the power of the radical women's lobby was defunded and disempowered with the removal of the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Human Resources Development Department has committed to continued and added support for and influence from gender equity activists through the platform for action. This department among many others has committed to the funding and advice of gender feminist NGO groups to implement their gender equality objectives.

We find that even the promotion and support of global gender equality is one of the mandates of the new human resources development. It applied to the department's funding radical feminists going to Beijing. It will apply to ongoing NAFTA labour agreements. Its mandate even applies to other international activities.

Nothing is free or even cheap in federal government. What will the new priority cost this department or other departments? In lean economic times should the limited resources and sadly needed resources of a human resources development department be used to realize the unwanted agenda of a powerful special interest group, or should its limited resources apply to the needs of real Canadians?

Instead of debating substantive and controversial policy issues such as the gender based employment equity contained in the platform for action and the federal plan for gender equality, we are debating a pro forma bill, Bill C-96, which actually offers nothing new, nothing fresh, nothing bold enough to

Government Orders

reform this department or, more important, to reform federal-provincial relations. While RD is enacting fundamental, costly, revolutionizing social policy behind the scenes, Bill C-96 does not even have a royal recommendation attached to it.

• (1240)

I am sure however that the cost of implementing the plan for gender equality and the platform for action will be considerable not only in this department but in every department across government. This is an issue I intend to pursue. This cost will not only be in dollars but it will be in the weakened viability of our most precious societal institutions, and one such institution is our families.

The government's non-legislative agenda is of great concern to me. This non-legislative agenda permeates every nook and cranny of every federal department at this point in time.

Earlier the minister was saying that their policies affect the social fabric of the country. They certainly do. This one in particular strikes the very centre of our social fabric. The general secretary to the Beijing conference, Gertrude Mongella, declared at the opening ceremony of that conference that "all evidence points to a social revolution in the making".

The two documents I have mentioned, the ones going into this department and others, will have a profound effect on our governments, our laws, our society and our families. What Bill C-96 shuffles around on the surface and what we are talking about today actually belie a whirlpool of change underneath.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to the hon. member's speech, but sometimes I find that members of the Reform Party miss some major points in legislation. I will quickly review for the hon. member the major objectives of the legislation and what the legislation allows the federal government to continue doing.

Essentially it does a few things. It draws together portions of the former departments of employment and immigration, health and welfare, the secretary of state, and labour. The legislation will also allow the Government of Canada to continue improving employment programs and services for Canadians and building on what I consider to be significant achievements over the past two years.

We enacted some major changes to make student loans more accessible, flexible and sustainable, helping more than 300,000 students this year alone. The hon. member from the Bloc will know that because of the flexible federalism that exists in the country there is an opting out provision for the province of Quebec which allows the province of Quebec to administer its own Canada student loans program.

Government Orders

For the very first time the federal government moved to establish a special opportunities grant for individuals, like high need, part time students, women pursuing doctoral studies and disabled students. Through this department we have also created youth internship programs that have led to real jobs for some 27,000 young Canadians, which is 20 per cent more than the red book commitment.

We have approximately 130 Youth Service Canada projects across the country that give young people the opportunity to serve their community and to obtain valuable work experience.

• (1245)

Through effective partnerships with major industries and through the establishment of sectoral councils the government has been able to generate, for every federal dollar, \$1.50 from the private sector because it believes the way to go in the new economy is through effective partnerships. We also have joint federal-provincial initiatives helping some 60,000 single mothers, older workers, aboriginals, young people get the new skills and new jobs.

Approximately \$111 million has been spent on older workers. The government has invested in a program for older workers over the past three years to help displaced workers deal with the new dynamic configuration occurring in the Canadian economy.

The government has also done something that I believe is extremely important. In order to modernize the economy you must modernize the way government delivers its services. Services have been integrated and decentralized, moving from 450 to 750 points of service reaching smaller communities 24 hours a day.

We talk about family. We talk about our seniors. We talk about young people. We talk about providing all Canadians—we are part of the Canadian family—with better services. There are four times as many offices where seniors can get in-person service. That is a fantastic accomplishment.

The best technology is used to speed up service for UI. Processing time has been cut by two days. OAS claims have been cut from eight days to one-half day. We are focusing on employment programs that work like the self-employment assistance program from which 34,000 Canadians have benefited. They have created a job for themselves but more important, they have also created jobs for others. On its own this program has created 68,000 jobs.

The point I am making to the hon. member is if we are talking about the Canadian family, i.e. everyone who resides within this country, it is crystal clear the government has moved in a positive direction. I hope that once in a while members of the opposition would get up on their feet and applaud these excellent initiatives by the Liberal government.

Mrs. Hayes: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if that was a question or a comment.

I enjoy the opportunity to answer my colleague's presentation. He talks about the Canadian family. I am talking about Canadian families, the root of our society.

I would like to reflect on what has happened in the last 20 years to Canadian families. In that time, especially in the last five years, youth violence has more than doubled. Real income, the amount of money a family has to support itself with, has dropped by some 6.5 per cent in the last five or six years because of taxation, because of government overspending and because of fiscal policies that are putting tremendous pressures on the people that are trying to hold this nation together.

Consider suicide rates. We have the third highest suicide rate among male youth in the world. The divorce rate has increased 10 times in the last 35 years and we are shuffling the chairs around on the deck saying: "We will spend more money".

What are the priorities of Canadians? Is it their priority to find out what government can do or what they can do in job creation? We want to put the tools in the hands of Canadians so they can create the jobs. It is not what government can do, it is what Canadians can do. Government priorities should not be prompted by special interest groups, but what Canadian priorities are.

The Canadian priorities are that their families be strengthened and that they be given the instruments to create their own future. That is exactly what the government's fiscal policies, justice policies and social policies are stripping away from those families. I put that to the hon. member who made the comments.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief comment to make. I want to congratulate the member for the relevance of the example she gave with regard to the family. Indeed we can see how the government is giving itself a lot of leeway in connection with policies that it is presenting abroad as being Canadian without having them validated in the House or even commented on.

Based on this example, we have good reason to question the appropriateness of giving the federal government the responsibility it wants to give itself in clause 20 of the bill, for example, which says: "—the Minister may enter into agreements with a province or group of provinces, agencies of provinces, financial institutions and such other persons or bodies as the Minister considers appropriate".

If this clause is left unchanged, and this is the question I will put the member, it means that the federal government can go against policies put in place by the provinces. Family policy is

an interesting example because choices in this regard may differ across Canada.

If clause 20 is left unchanged, it allows the federal government to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction, in areas where policies already exist. Does the member not agree that we should at least amend this clause by adding to it that, when agreements are signed with public bodies, financial institutions or any other person, it be done in accordance with priorities established by the provinces? I would like to hear the member's opinion on this subject.

[English]

Mrs. Hayes: Mr. Speaker, certainly as a Reformer and as a supporter of the accountability of programs being in the hands of those closest to the people who have to put the programs in place, I support the premise that the control of programs and decisions that are made be as close to the people as possible.

Every part of our nation should have the same input into what those decisions are. Certainly provinces can be deemed equal in the administration of the programs. The federal government's participation in those programs should be minimized as much as possible while maintaining the integrity and protection of Canadians across the system. The actual delivery of programs should be in provincial hands in an equal fashion from coast to coast.

[Translation]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-96, the act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development.

The main object of this bill is to lend unified legal status to the department, enabling it to continue to assist Canadians in getting back to work. This is a housekeeping bill and is not intended to implement any major reforms. It does not call for any new organizational changes or new expenditures, and does not affect federal-provincial relations.

[English]

Bill C-96 draws together and consolidates the legislative foundation of the new Department of Human Resources Development. It does not add anything new or subtract from the foundation. It merely puts everything in one place. That in itself is important. It is plain common sense. For administrative reasons alone, it is far more efficient to have a single legislative basis for the department. However, there is more to this than mere administrative convenience.

When the government launched the department under the name of human resources development, it set the stage for a real change not just in name but in direction, in the way Human Resources Development Canada serves Canadians.

Government Orders

Over the past two years, HRDC has been changing, innovating and adapting to the realities of today's economy and today's labour market. It is modernizing the way it does business, the way it delivers the services Canadians need, the way it works for Canadians in the changing world. For the nine million Canadians who come to HRDC for help this is why Bill C-96 is so important. The bill provides the solid foundation the department needs to keep moving forward.

• (1255)

It is important to Canada's seniors. Last year the department completed the first year in a three-year income security program redesign project. Phase 2 is already well under way. The department is streamlining rules and procedures, developing the best technology available. The end result will be a fully modernized, efficient network for delivering services to clients of the old age security and Canada pension plan programs.

[Translation]

Once fully implemented, the new system will save taxpayers up to \$100 million yearly in operating costs. Moreover, it will also provide faster service to seniors, the people who really depend on these programs for their security. For their sakes, let us ensure that the bill stays on track and is passed as quickly as possible.

Income security program redesign is only the start. As the minister has already announced in the House, Human Resources Development Canada has undertaken a complete review of its service delivery network, with a view to making it decentralized, integrated, user friendly and flexible. It will serve a greater number of Canadians everywhere in the country better than before. In reality, because of the new network, the number of departmental service points will be increased from 450 to 700 within three years.

These will include 300 Human Resources Development Canada centres, which will provide quality one-on-one counselling to clients; self-serve mechanisms such as telephone, interactive television and computer services, which will broaden access to HRDC services; up to 400 electronic kiosks, which means self-serve terminals will be available in communities throughout the country.

[English]

The department is already creating the most advanced, efficient service delivery network in the federal government. Work on developing new technologies for this new network is well advanced, with things like a national on-line labour market information system incorporating an electronic job search bulletin board. The system will help people do their own matching between their skills and the jobs available anywhere in Canada.

Pilot testing a new system called TELEDEC lets unemployment insurance claimants submit their bi-weekly report over a

Government Orders

touchtone telephone instead of by mail or in person. TELEDEC allows people to get their cheques two days faster.

TELE-APP, a new system being tested in partnership with NBTel allows people who have collected UI in the last 52 weeks to reapply using a touchtone phone.

APPLI-SYS, a touch screen computer program helps people apply for UI benefits more quickly.

Pilot testing document imaging begins the movement toward paperless claim processing.

Early results from these new systems are promising. They are just the first of a range of technologies from the Internet application to software training packages that HRDC will explore to provide faster, more efficient service.

We are bringing service delivery into the 21st century. In the process we are empowering more Canadians to help themselves.

[*Translation*]

One of the main objectives of the new service delivery network is to facilitate decentralization of the entire structure of departmental operations, to put into place programs and services within the community, to move decision making centres as close to the client as possible, and to get those most affected by programs and services actively involved in them.

• (1300)

For instance, the network will include community-based mechanisms which will involve input from provincial governments and business, municipalities and community groups, working as partners with Human Resources Development Canada.

With the human resources investment fund, we integrate these partnerships with our programs and services. Partnerships work, as seen from what has been achieved by sector councils that bring together entire industries and promote strategic initiatives with the provinces and co-operation with community groups across the country.

Take one of the youth internship projects, in Winnipeg, where 45 young people go to work every morning and go to school every afternoon. They acquire practical experience while taking courses that are relevant to that experience, and they are guaranteed a job when they finish the course.

[*English*]

What is really interesting about this project is that five major private sector firms in Winnipeg, for example, are not only taking part, they are taking the lead enthusiastically. It is not a case of government and business working on separate tracks; it is a case of partnership in action. This year alone there will be 25,000 young interns in similar projects across the country.

That is where the department is headed. It is a new direction for Human Resources Development Canada and it is getting real concrete results for Canadians, for seniors, for young men and women, for people working hard to develop new skills for a new economy. It is getting results for the single mother, who for the first time can now get a grant to help care for her children while she goes to school. It is getting results for the older worker who finds a lifetime job taken over by technology but now has a real opportunity to prepare for new work and find a new job. That is why this bill is important.

Over the past few years the transitional arrangements put in place to create the new Department of Human Resources Development have worked well. They have helped to put HRDC and our labour market and social programs on a new course. It is up to us to make sure the department can continue on that course. It is up to us to ensure the department moves forward and does so with a solid foundation. Bill C-96 provides that foundation. We need to pass the bill and get on with the work of serving Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was particularly surprised by the hon. member's remarks at the start of his speech, when he said the bill served to consolidate legislation and that it had no effect on federal provincial relations.

I would like to ask the member why, then, the Quebec minister of employment made the following statement: "Bill C-96 flies in the face of the consensus in Quebec that the federal government should get completely out of labour matters and give the budgets involved back to Quebec".

I would also like the minister to tell us why the Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre passed a unanimous resolution in favour of the bill's withdrawal, stating that Quebec should have sole responsibility for workforce adaptation policies and occupational training within its borders and should therefore have the funds the federal government allocates to these programs in Quebec.

I would also like the member to tell us why Ghislain Dufour, the spokesperson for the Conseil du patronat du Québec, known in Quebec for his federalist stance, said the same thing in the papers yesterday. According to him, if the federal government really wants to show its good faith in wanting the sort of change Quebec was seeking in the referendum, could it not, in this sector, at least have the decency as a federal government to correct its bill so the provinces could withdraw from its application, should they consider it relevant to do so, so that, in the end, the consensus in Quebec echoed by union federations, the Conseil du patronat, the party in power and the opposition may extend to all Quebecers? Why does the government not decide to give Quebec an opportunity to exercise its jurisdiction over

manpower? Have the promises of change made prior to October 30 already disappeared in a puff of smoke?

• (1305)

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here again we have a Bloc member, a separatist member, who is babbling away in true separatist fashion, in a parochial manner, focusing exclusively and constantly on Quebec.

He should be talking about Canada as a whole, and considering how we can advance the cause of young people, single mothers, single parent families, and senior citizens. We are debating a bill providing the federal government with a structure to maintain and develop partnerships with the provinces and territories, management, labour, community groups and those involved in education, in order to reach common social and economic goals.

We are talking about giving young Quebecers, since he is only interested in Quebec, the opportunity to find out, via computers in their own area or community, if there are jobs outside their own parish, town, or province. They are given access to the labour market anywhere in Canada, and mobility throughout the country.

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member does not want to answer the question from a bad separatist member, could he answer Ghislain Dufour, spokesperson for the Conseil du patronat du Québec, a recognized federalist, and Gérard Ponton, president of the Association des manufacturiers du Québec, who is not identified with the sovereigntist camp either? Let the member reply to those people if he will not give an answer here, to the Bloc Québécois, or to the Quebec government. Let him reply to the federalist Quebecers who unanimously support Quebec's consensus on the repatriation of jurisdiction in the manpower sector.

What is the member's answer to those people concerning Quebec's request that has been there on the table for five years?

Mr. Bellemare: Mr. Speaker, I find it funny that the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup has finally admitted that he is a no-good separatist.

Mr. Crête: I did not say "no-good".

Mr. Bellemare: I editorialized a bit; he is a separatist. I do not know if separatist is synonymous with no-good, but many in this country would say that the separatists are no good as a group but not necessarily as individuals.

Do you think for a minute that I will answer questions from Bloc members, from people who have led the province of Quebec in all kinds of directions, into a muddle, who drafted a referendum question that got everyone confused? Thirty per cent of those who voted yes thought they were voting for some kind of association and not for separation.

Government Orders

Bloc members, Quebec separatists and PQ members manipulated referendum scrutineers, telling them to reject ballots marked with an X that was too dark or not dark enough. There is an appalling number—this is unprecedented in Canadian history—except perhaps when Maurice Duplessis was in power. Maurice Duplessis may have come back as a Bloc member. During the referendum, these blockheads blocked some people's access to the polling stations.

If they did not like someone's face, colour or language, they stopped and harassed them to prevent them from voting. Then, after those Canadians living in Quebec managed to cast their votes, they would check to see if their X was a little crooked. Those with shaking hands were unfortunate because their votes did not count. I have never seen something as outrageous as the counting of the votes on the night of the referendum.

If you think I will answer quotes from a separatist—First of all, I would question the accuracy of his quotes and, second, I will not waste my time answering Bloc members.

• (1310)

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-96, to restructure the Department of Human Resources Development. I have been following the debate with interest ever since the minister made his presentation yesterday. I listened to the minister and his parliamentary secretary. I also listened to some speeches made by government members and the various questions that were asked, including the one put by our colleague from Parkdale—High Park.

I draw from all of this a vision of Canada. I am not one to impugn motives right off the bat. I noticed that speeches were high quality, and a number of general principles have emerged. Of course, other remarks, and those made by the previous speaker are perhaps an example of this, remind us that mediocrity is to be found everywhere, even in the House of Commons.

I would like to look back over the debate, because, as I listened, I could perceive two visions: the standard Liberal vision and the Bloc Québécois vision. I will not deal with what my hon. colleagues from the Reform Party said, but I think that basic issues were raised by the Liberals that need to be pointed out and set in the context of this debate.

Basically, we are looking at the same mountain, except from different points of view. I think that the Minister of Human Resources Development was sincere in his presentation. What did this presentation contain? First, he described a vision of Canada, along with the federal government's responsibilities according to that vision.

I understood the minister to say that the federal government feels it has responsibilities regarding the development of human resources everywhere in Canada. That sector includes issues related to manpower, employment, education, daycare and, in

Government Orders

fact, anything that directly concerns individuals, such as their families, their training, their education and their children.

The minister told us that this bill merely seeks to provide a legislative framework for what is already being done in Canada, partly through the federal government's spending power, but also under the laws passed by this Parliament. I have seen, in my riding, some initiatives taken by the Department of Human Resources Development. I must say that, before coming here, I was not very familiar with the Canadian realities related to that department. I knew that there was an employment centre. I also knew that the federal government was involved in various ways, and I saw it take action.

I have no criticism of the way department officials take action. They implement the programs. They do so with the best of intentions and they also try to do it efficiently. Just think of programs such as Article 25, the employability development program, and also programs such as the youth service, or the access to work program for women, which is designed to help women who do not get UI or welfare benefits find work.

• (1315)

These programs reflect good intentions, as well as a clear desire to do the utmost. Through its initiatives, the department seeks to reach out to people in their everyday lives. It reaches out to individuals and community groups, and it signs agreements with municipalities. All this is currently taking place. It is being done and the bill before us seeks to provide a legislative framework for all these initiatives.

Clause 6 clearly states that the minister's powers apply anywhere in Canada. It says:

The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction relating to the development of the human resources of Canada—

That provision is extremely wide in scope. As for clause 20, it provides that:

—the Minister may enter into agreements with a province or group of provinces, agencies of provinces, financial institutions and such other persons or bodies as the Minister considers appropriate.

In other words, given the provisions of this bill, the minister may enter into agreements with anyone, so as to get involved in the education, manpower and employment sectors.

If we lived in a unitarian state, that might be a solution. Although Canada is a very big country, it has a rather large population and it could be said that, because of regional characteristics, it may be good to have some degree of decentralization so that local needs are taken into account by the minister.

But we are not in a unitarian country although a number of constitutional experts, considering the evolution of Canada, are not willing to say that we are in a federation, let alone in a confederation. But, in a federation, there are various levels of government and, ordinarily, these levels of government are sovereign in their jurisdiction. Canada is made up of provinces which, if we take a look at the Constitution, are supposed to have jurisdiction over education, training, over all the areas that have to do with Canadians as individuals, the federal government having kept, in 1867, jurisdiction over external trade, defence and the economy in general.

If we examine the bill and its objectives, we realize that this legislation which is now before Parliament will give a federal minister the right to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction. It is shocking. People of my race have found this shocking for years—and I use the word race in the sense of nation, as Mr. Duplessis did, since, moments ago, the member for Carleton—Gloucester reminded us of Maurice Duplessis. My people have always been shocked by these ways of doing things.

For us, it is not only a question of what we could call a constitutional orthodoxy, according to which the federal government should have no say in provincial jurisdictions, but there is also an element of efficiency because in Quebec—other provinces may do what they want in this regard—there has been a large consensus for years now. My colleagues talked about it, especially the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who raises the issue every time he has the floor. That consensus is that, for reason of efficiency, all the issues of professional training, manpower and employment must be Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction.

I think that is self evident. I do not want to repeat what has already been said by other Bloc speakers, but nonetheless, I want to relate a personal experience. A few years ago, I was a career counsellor in the professional training centre in Jonquière, which is the biggest training centre in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. At the time, we provided training in many areas: mechanics, plumbing, electricity, and so on. Every year we trained a group of students in industrial mechanics.

• (1320)

At one point, a study had concluded that industrial mechanics was a trade with a future.

What happened? Our school board kept offering a course in industrial mechanics to a group of about 20 students. The Government of Quebec, willing to provide training to social assistance recipients, commissioned the school board to train people in industrial mechanics—which made two groups—and the federal government also commissioned the school board to train two other groups in industrial mechanics.

Whereas every year we used to have one group of students in industrial mechanics, that year we had four groups. The school board, the Government of Quebec and the federal government did not consult with each other, everybody being busy with their own little policies.

What happened? At the end of the year, instead of 20 people applying for a job, they were about 80. As a result, most of them did not find a job, which killed the industrial mechanics option in the area for several years.

It is sad to see that people genuinely wanting to go back to the labour market were offered training for what was basically a dead end trade, not because studies promising jobs in that field were badly done, but because there had not been any consultation between the federal and provincial governments and the school board. That is what we want to avoid in Quebec.

In Quebec, we want to have a full employment policy, the same type of policy they have in Austria, in some Scandinavian countries or even in Germany. Those full employment policies usually produce unemployment rates of about 6 or 7 per cent, instead of the 12 or 13 per cent rates we have in Quebec and instead of the 15 or 16 per cent rates we have in my area, Jonquière, or in the Saguenay—Lac—Saint—Jean area.

That is what we want to do, but to do so, we need tools. We need co-ordination, but with the present practices in Canada, there is no co-ordination.

This is why everyone in Quebec, whether the Quebec Liberal Party, the Conseil du patronat du Québec, or central labour bodies—with the exception of the provincial wing of the Liberal Party of Canada—is calling for the return of powers regarding manpower training and employment policies to Quebec so that the province can set policies to ensure that people will get useful training, taking the present job market into consideration, and will not be the victims of jurisdictional disputes or arguments between public servants.

For four or five years now, the Government of Quebec, whether Liberal or Parti Québécois, all governments of Quebec have been calling for training to be made the responsibility of the government of Quebec.

And what do we see this morning in the House? Bill C-96, which says exactly the opposite, which says that the co-ordination will not be done by the Government of Quebec. This bill tells us that the minister will be entitled, for each community, municipality or province, as he wishes, to present programs, to suggest actions to community groups in order for them to create jobs or to propose the hiring of trainees to employers.

This maintains the present policy, which is not effective. Despite all the good will, despite the relative success of some federal or provincial programs, we realize that we do not have the expected results when we take into account all the money

Government Orders

invested and all the skills called up in both the federal and provincial public services.

Why is that? It is not due to ill will or lack of skill; it is simply a matter of organization. Things are poorly organized, and in order to properly organize manpower training, to properly organize employment policies, there must be only one decision maker.

In Quebec, past and present governments, Liberal and PQ alike, unions and business owners' associations, everybody says unanimously that, considering the circumstances, considering the history, considering the needs, considering what is in place right now, it is the Government of Quebec that should have the responsibility for co-ordinating all these policies so that we can one day train our people properly and have a full employment policy that makes sense.

• (1325)

The bill before us means exactly the opposite. This bill says no. The consensus in Quebec is totally useless because a minister in Ottawa, the Minister of Human Resources Development, will have the power to develop programs and enter into agreements with provinces, municipalities, community groups, and individuals, implementing these programs in order to help Canadians get better training and better jobs.

By saying "to develop programs", we are referring to money, because, in the end, it is always a matter of money. In fact, there is always a relation between any given program and the funds allocated to it by the Minister of Finance. So, a proposal is being made to Canadians, even in my riding, where people voted—one mentioned that the sovereignists were defeated in the referendum, but in fact they received almost 50 per cent, or 49.4 per cent. In my riding, however, it was 71 per cent for Quebec's sovereignty. You cannot ignore 71 per cent of the population. My riding came third in Quebec, after the riding of my colleague for Charlevoix and the riding of my leader, the Leader of the Opposition. This is no mean feat.

In a sovereignist region like ours, people are still getting involved in the process, so they keep asking Quebec to fund certain programs and they request funding under some federal government programs. People know perfectly well that something must be done, in Quebec and Canada, as far as training and employment are concerned.

People are not as partisan as some others, and in any case—I am not sure this is parliamentary—people are not against the federal government's involvement, even though they may have very deep-rooted sovereignist convictions. People are concerned and ask themselves: Will there be someone, one day, to make a decision and give us employment policies which are worthwhile?

We do not see any hopeful sign coming from the government side. We do not see any in the area of manpower and, as we have

Government Orders

seen this week during Question Period, we do not see any hopeful sign either in the area of constitutional reform.

I have the distinct impression that eventually, when the question is asked next time, people are going to give the answer that the Quebec sovereignist movement has been waiting for for so long. Why? In order to have effective policies and a state which is efficiently managed, so that its citizens get their money's worth. Taxpayers want effective programs. It is not by stepping on each others toes, as we are doing now, that we will get valid manpower and employment policies.

I hope that the House will support the motion from my colleague from Mercier and that this bill will be sent into oblivion as quickly as possible.

[English]

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on debate, but I also want to embellish my fan club member from Simcoe Centre. He does well to applaud before because he may not applaud after he hears what I have to say.

After reading the title of the bill, we realize it is just another piece of legislation, typically dry, typically complicated. It is easy in that context to lose sight of what the bill is about. Bill C-96, which I am happy to address for a few minutes, does just one single thing. It has a very simple and single purpose, and that purpose is integration.

• (1330)

My friend from Crowfoot would understand all about integration. Any party that can get the member for Simcoe Centre and the member for Crowfoot at the same caucus table understands integration, I submit.

[Translation]

I would also like to emphasize to my colleagues in the Bloc that this bill is about integration, and just that. It will consolidate the legal powers of the original departments in a single piece of legislation that is clear and coherent.

This is the only goal of this bill. It does not provide new powers or establish new programs. It does not add anything to or take anything away from the powers of the human resources development department.

This bill is merely an official document that puts the integration of social programs and labour market programs in Canada on a sound footing. That is important. But the underlying principle of this bill is even more important, that is the implementation of an integrated approach to human resources development in the new department.

[English]

I recognize that my friend from Mercier has an amendment to which technically we are speaking right now. That is another debate. This is really about bringing together a number of functions that heretofore had been under the umbrella of several departments of government.

I say to my friend from Port Moody—Coquitlam we have to make up our minds about what we want. I heard critics of the government at one point talk about duplication of effort, doing several things, the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. Then when we come up with what I believe is an absolutely laudable effort under Bill C-96 to bring together some functions, so we do not have that kind of duplication, we are accused of just shuffling the chairs.

It is difficult to do the right thing? No, it is not difficult to do the right thing, but it is difficult to be seen to be doing the right thing if somebody has a cliché to cover every situation, even if some of the clichés are mutually exclusive. Which are we doing, unnecessarily duplicating effort or just shuffling the chairs?

I listened with interest to her speech, as I did to the speech of my friend from Jonquière, whom I always enjoy. We do not always agree, but he has a real ability to state his argument in a very reasoned way. I have always admired his ability to do so.

I want to come back to my friend from Port Moody—Coquitlam. In her speech she said something that was rather curious, about the bill's not having a royal recommendation. I wanted for the record to come back on that one. If she looked at the bill, she would realize that what she says is not true. It does have a royal recommendation. There are several proofs of that in the documentation she has in front of her. If she looked at the Order Paper for today, where Bill C-96 is listed, she will find a little "R" beside it. That means that this bill has a royal recommendation. If she does not believe my word, she should look at the bottom of the page, because it says at the bottom of the page "Recommended by the Governor General".

If she wanted to actually look at the bill, and far be it from me to suggest she did not look at the bill, her own words almost condemn her on this point. If she had taken the time to open the cover to page 1A, the very first page inside, the very first thing she would have seen would have been "Recommendation. His Excellency the Governor General recommends to the House of Commons", et cetera. That is the royal recommendation she says the bill does not have. I can only hope that the rest of her input was more informed, because that one was dead wrong.

• (1335)

With this bill the Department of Human Resources Development brings under one roof all of our efforts to help Canadians

achieve their full potential in our society and in our economy. Within a single department we are going to have programs and services under this bill that will help people who are looking for work find and hopefully keep jobs. It will help the employers find the people they need. It will provide services that will help both workers and employers under federal jurisdiction to maintain fair labour standards and a safe work environment.

It will provide services that will help people between jobs, Canadian seniors, families with low incomes, and people with disabilities to get the income support they need. We will have under this umbrella department services to help people get training and to develop new skills for an economy that is always changing. It will provide services that will help local businesses and communities and entire industries to target the skills of the future and build a skilled workforce to keep Canada competitive and prosperous in a changing world.

I think this integrated approach makes sense. It recognizes that in reality people do not neatly fall into tidy little categories. A young person looking for work may really need to get back to school first. She may also be a single mother and the lack of good child care support may prevent her from taking a course she needs. The person with a disability may be quite capable, willing and eager to work, but also needs help meeting special medical costs. The older worker displaced by technology may need income support, but in the long run he or she needs help retooling and adapting to a new labour market.

By bringing all the different programs these people need into one department we have taken the first step toward making sure the programs work together to provide meaningful co-ordinated solutions for the real world. By taking that first step we set the stage for real integration in the way programs and services are delivered to Canadians. For example, employment and UI services used to be delivered through Canada Employment Centres. Canada pension plan and old age security and guaranteed income supplement services, which used to come from a separate department, were delivered through separate client service centres. Now we are bringing all these together in new human resources centres across the country.

Let us face it, when someone comes looking for a service they could not care less which particular program, branch, or department delivers that service. The last thing they need is to be sent running from one office to another to obtain those particular services. Combining those services in one location means reduced overhead, reduced administrative costs, and more importantly it means people getting better access, with one-stop shopping for all federal social security and labour market services. The ability to access those services under one roof on the part of the client is the real immediate benefit of the integration this bill provides for.

Government Orders

• (1340)

The new service delivery network the Department of Human Resources Development is developing goes a bit beyond that. It goes well beyond that. The new network will make a new kind of integrated service possible, one that is more flexible and responsive to changing needs and circumstances. A fundamental goal of this approach is to ensure that integration takes place at the local level by locating the decision making and even the design of services at the local level instead of highly centralized and compartmentalized programs dictated from a headquarters somewhere.

Ultimately each human resource centre would become an integral part of the community it serves. Decisions about what kinds of programs make sense in that community will be made in that community by the community. To make this work we have to completely rethink the way we define programs and services. We cannot say to communities across Canada here is a program and here are all the rules you have to follow, do it our way or not at all.

[*Translation*]

We cannot tell people: "We will enrol you in this program even if you do not need it because it is the only one we can afford".

We want to be able to tell communities and individuals: "Here are the basic tools that have proved useful. Here is the money and the resources that are available. It is up to you to decide which tools you want to use and how you can use those resources most effectively. You should not worry about the restrictions of the various programs. The only thing that matters is the task at hand".

[*English*]

We have developed an increasingly sophisticated and effective set of employment programs, a set of tools to help people develop new skills, gain work experience and find jobs. Our challenge is to integrate these two components to build a single integrated employment system that people can turn to not just for a cheque but for help to get back into the workforce. This means finding a way to combine that essential system of income protection provided by UI with an effective active system of empowerment, a system that gives people the resources and the opportunity to make choices about the kinds of jobs they need, the kinds of skills that are required, the kind of future they want to build for themselves.

For example, we are experimenting with a form of internship with small businesses. These are companies that desperately want to hire new workers but cannot afford the training new workers require. With this program, we help them hire young people, older workers, women coming back into the workforce, and we provide some support to pay for the learning curve, the time it takes the workers to become fully productive in their new jobs. That experiment is already beginning to show some good results. Small businesses are creating permanent jobs for unemployed Canadians. That simply would not exist otherwise.

Private Members' Business

Let us look at another example. Over the past year we developed a program for self-employment under unemployment insurance so that people have a choice: rather than simply collecting benefits and waiting for a job to come around, they can create their own jobs. The department provides some financial support, mentoring and counselling to help participants get their businesses started. Over the past year 30,000 individuals have started up their own businesses through the unemployment insurance program. They have created not just 30,000 jobs, but 60,000. Not only are they helping themselves, they are helping other unemployed Canadians to get back to work.

• (1345)

That is the kind of thing that can happen when we stop thinking in terms of separate compartments and start thinking in terms of integration. By bringing together the full range of Canada's social and labour market programs, we are setting a new course and making a real difference in the lives of Canadians.

Bill C-96 provides the basis for this new direction. It ensures that the structure is in place for the federal government to continue bringing programs and services together, working with our partners in the provinces and communities across Canada.

As we debate all of the detailed clauses of the bill, let us not forget what the bill is about. It is about making this kind of integration possible. It provides Canadians with a future which is full of new possibilities. That is what the bill is about.

Implicitly the bill is not about several things. It is not about shuffling the chairs, as someone has said. It is about trying to eliminate the unnecessary duplication, unnecessary inconvenience for clients, Canadians across the country who demand and have a right to certain services from government. They demand and have a right to services which are provided at the least possible cost, in the most efficient manner and at the least inconvenience to the taxpayers.

The bill brings together various functions of other departments, including the Department of Health, the Secretary of State, the former department of labour, as well as the Department of Human Resources Development. The bill seeks to consolidate in a manner which gets a bigger bang for our buck. At the same time, it is not meant to underline the role of the provinces, as has been suggested. That is another debate for another time. This is simply a bringing together of several functions which have always pertained to the federal government and will continue to do so until some level of government decides otherwise.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 1:48 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the vote on Bill C-94, previously deferred until November 20, 1995, be further deferred to the conclusion of Government Orders on Tuesday, November 21, 1995, and that any recorded division which may be requested on Bill C-317 later this day be also deferred until the conclusion of Government Orders on Tuesday, November 21, 1995.

(Motion agreed to.)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-317, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Public Service Staff Relations Act (scabs and essential services), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks with a quote by the present Minister for Human Resources Development who said, on November 23, 1994, in a letter he sent me: "I wish to inform you that I am presently examining all aspects of the Canada Labour Code, including the issue of limiting the use of replacement workers, with the view to updating and improving the code to bring it more into line with today's realities". We are now in November 1995, and we still have not been given any notice that this overhaul of the Canada Labour Code would take place.

• (1350)

In the meantime, a member of the Bloc proposed a private bill, which is before us today and which, in my opinion, makes good horse sense. There has been anti-scab legislation in Quebec since 1979. We have witnessed a 35 per cent decrease in labour disputes in Quebec since that date. This has led to decreased tension in labour relations, and has avoided very awkward situations that would have ended in unacceptable assaults.

To find out what occurred in Quebec before the adoption of anti-scab legislation, one need only remember the Ogilvie conflict. Unfortunately, this company came under the Canada Labour Code which contains no anti-scab provision, and that poisoned labour relations.

Learning from this experience, learning from what has been done in Quebec in this area, it would be very important for Parliament as a whole to pass this anti-scab legislation at second reading.

On October 17, 1995, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said that it was not appropriate to amend only one aspect of the Labour Code, that it was not the best way to proceed, and that the whole code should be revised. I recall last year's statement by the minister who said that we cannot wait forever for the government to act, if it does not take action. I believe that when a member chooses as a vehicle a private member's bill, and proposes an amendment which could improve Canadian legislation, it should be taken advantage of and that he should be given as much leeway as possible.

This kind of legislation, which will make it possible for all Canadian workers to be covered by anti-scab legislation, is something of a sign of respect for workers. In the past, gains were made by labour unions, and also by the population, in Quebec, for instance, where minimum working conditions are set out under legislation which is a bit like the collective agreement of non unionized workers. This is why, if we passed anti-scab legislation which covered federal civil servants as a whole, it would somewhat remedy an unacceptable situation. I think this could be compared to the minimum wage issue.

A few months ago, it was because the Bloc questioned the fact that the minimum hourly wage within the federal government was still four dollars that the government reacted, a few weeks later and rectified the situation by order in council. This is completely unacceptable.

Now we are faced with another situation in which the inaction of the present government and of preceding governments as well is perhaps more of an ideological choice. We have to remember that some of the members of this government voted in favour of the recent anti-scab legislation tabled in the House. A number of these people are now in cabinet, and it would be most inappropriate for them to vote against the present bill.

The advantage of such a private member's bill is that it does not necessarily require party solidarity. It will be a recorded division. So we will have an opportunity to see whether those in favour of anti-strikebreaking legislation a few years ago, who are now members of Parliament, will be consistent and let Canada give itself legislation that—I would like to say, will set the record straight—will give workers governed by the Canada Labour Code the same rights as Quebecers.

Private Members' Business

This is all the more important given the example we have just seen in Ontario.

• (1355)

The Government of Ontario decided to abolish this right. I believe that in the coming years we will witness disgraceful acts, bodily assaults; relations between employers and employees will grow more bitter and create all kinds of problems that the antiscab bill prevents.

To give a concrete example of this, one or two years ago in Quebec, the Conseil du Patronat du Québec had a favourable judgement from the Superior Court which would have allowed it to have the antiscab legislation quashed by the Supreme Court. We are not talking of a union here but of the Conseil du Patronat du Québec. They thought preferable not to take their case to the Supreme Court, even if they could have won in that instance, because they realised, in the time it took to get that judgment, that, in a majority of cases, antiscab legislation contributes to better labour relations.

Let us remember what happened as regards the definition of essential services. During the first few years, there were a few problems: what should be considered an essential service and who should define them? We used the experience we had gained so far to come up with the most adequate bill possible, in order to give the workers who come under the Canada Labour Code the opportunity to be properly covered and also to give the employers who are subject to this code the chance to enjoy better labour relations.

With an antiscab legislation, we will not have to deal in the future with so many situations as the one we had with the Ogilvie workers.

This is why I would ask members of this House to put their partisanship aside for the second reading of this bill and to determine if, given the way they perceive quality labour relations in the future, in the 20th century, it would not be better to pass this piece of legislation, to promote it internationally and to gain from Quebec's experience in that field?

[English]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to speak on Bill C-317, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Public Service Staff Relations Act to prohibit the use of replacement employees during a legal strike and to maintain essential services during a work stoppage at a crown corporation or in the public service.

I shall confine my remarks to those matters pertinent to the Canada Labour Code but I would like to say a few words about the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

As members opposite may know, it was under a Liberal government that federal government workers gained the right to strike. However, it was also recognized at that time, 1967, that the rights of federal government employees to strike could not

Private Members' Business

be absolute. There are health, safety and security considerations that come before the employees' rights to engage in job action.

As a result, the Public Service Staff Relations Act provides for the right to strike but it ensures that services which are essential to the health, safety and security of Canadians are maintained during a legal work stoppage. The act does this by permitting the employer to designate three months prior to the notice to bargain the positions that cannot go on strike because they are essential to the health, safety and security of the Canadian public.

In addition, the employer has no right to lock out employees under the provisions of the act. This approach is a reasonable one and it is not clear to me why the member across the way would want to change this.

I read very carefully the member's speech of June 15 when he discussed the intent and provisions of his bill. I really must question some of his exaggerated comments. For instance he says:

A strike broken by scabs is no strike but a right to strike hypocritically denied. Either we are for the right to strike, a basic right won by workers after many years of fighting, or we are against. If we are in favour, we will not undermine, either directly or indirectly, the workers' sacred right to strike—

• (1400)

Surely the member would agree with me that no right is absolute, let alone sacred. The Canadian citizenry, employers, managers, entrepreneurs and employees, all know there are limits to every right, including the right to strike. That is only common sense. Even the right to free speech is not absolute. To use a famous example, we do not have the right to scream "fire" in a crowded theatre. So it is with the right to strike. It too must have some limits.

I also note that in his speech the member referred a number of times to the three provinces, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia, that have anti-replacement worker legislation. The member must be aware that as of last week only two provinces currently have such legislation.

I want to draw attention to the views of a distinguished authority on labour relations, Mr. Paul C. Weiler. For those who do not know this gentleman, he is a Canadian labour lawyer who at one time chaired the British Columbia Labour Relations Board. Under his guidance the British Columbia board was responsible for introducing a number of progressive innovations in labour relations. His work has been praised by neutral observers and union leaders alike.

Mr. Weiler is now teaching labour law at Harvard University. Recently he served as chief counsel to the U.S. Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations. I am saying all this because I want to quote Mr. Weiler who wrote:

For employees who may have spent 20 years with a company building up a wealth of experience and seniority that can rarely be duplicated elsewhere, the stark reality is that if they do go on strike, they can be replaced by the company with people who, in less than 20 minutes on the job, gain permanent priority over the striking veterans.

Clearly the American practice is unacceptable, but while Mr. Weiler is strongly against the hiring of permanent replacement workers, he does not favour the Quebec solution. He speaks about this:

The type of alternative rule that I favour exists already in Ontario labour law, which grants lawful strikers a right to return to their jobs for a period of up to six months after the beginning of the work stoppage, even if their return will dislodge newly hired replacements.

He states unequivocally that he does not "favour adoption of the recent response of Quebec labour law to this problem" whereby the government "effectively requires employers to shut down at least the bulk of their operations because they are legally prohibited from using any non-managerial personnel to replace strikers".

I am not saying that I agree with everything Mr. Weiler has said, but I do think that the issue is not clear. If this highly regarded expert in industrial relations, as strong a supporter of the collective bargaining process as we will find anywhere, does not favour a ban on the use of replacements, then I as a federal member concerned with the interests of the country as a whole must proceed cautiously and thoughtfully on this question and be open to the arguments and concerns of both sides.

Labour law is about balance among other things. We need to balance the rights of workers with the rights of employers. We need to balance equity concerns with growth concerns. As national legislators we must be interested in policies that increase democracy at work and give greater protection to workers and in policies that encourage the efficient management of enterprises. We must also be sure that we know the priorities of the workers.

There are a number of issues of concern to workers on matters related to labour standards, occupational safety and health, employment equity and industrial relations. These issues are best dealt with through the consultation process involved in a comprehensive and careful review of the federal labour code.

The member across the way I am sure knows that such a review is presently under way in the House. It is a timely undertaking since a complete review of part I of the Canada Labour Code has not been done in over two decades.

• (1405)

Since last winter federal government officials have been having discussions with labour, management, academics and others. The review is now in the capable hands of a task force headed by Andrew Sims, former chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board, a man well qualified to lead the task force. Rodrigue Blouin from Laval University, and Paula Knopf, a

Toronto based mediator, are the other members of this task force.

The task force is mandated to look into a number of critical labour relations issues including those raised by the member in his bill. I have considerable confidence in the task force and I might add in the Commission of Inquiry on Labour Relations at West Coast Ports. Both are comprised of very knowledgeable, dedicated and highly regarded experts who I am sure will have important things to say on labour relations.

I agree with those who argue that once we have had a chance to study and discuss the findings and analyses and the recommendations of these two groups, we will be in a much better position to decide on the questions that concern the member and indeed all of us in the House.

The review of the Canada Labour Code is taking place while the Canadian workforce is in the midst of profound transformation. We need to take account of new computer technology among other factors transforming our workplace. The emphasis is now on flattened hierarchies, decentralized decision making, flexible production systems, work teams, high quality products and services and continuous learning.

Labour has generally not shown opposition to technological change. However, with the pressures which come to bear on us as Canadian legislators it is important and fortunate for us to have this discussion in the House.

It seems to me that because this change is occurring, reform to the federal law should be studied very carefully. We would not be doing anyone any favours by acting in an imprudent and precipitous manner.

Whatever the merits of the member's bill, those who have been telling the member to wait until the court review is completed are right. It seems to me to be common sense that we wait on those results.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a delight to enter into the debate on Bill C-317, a bill that would cause certain amendments to be made to the Canada Labour Code.

The hon. member who has proposed this bill and its amendments to the code has a very good motivation in standing up to try to defend the workers. The country is very dependent on its labour force in order to continue to enjoy our high standard of living. The bill is certainly in the best interests not only of the workers but also of the companies involved, the organizations, the rest of Canadians and customers both in Canada and around the world. They benefit from Canadian products if the workforce is very well organized and works efficiently and smoothly.

Private Members' Business

What is being addressed here is the problem of a dispute. What happens when the firm that employs the labourers and the labourers cannot reach an agreement? Sometimes these disputes are over wages. Members will agree that there have been occasions where employers have been unfair to workers with respect to wages. Even more important, there have been a number of occasions where the workers' safety is at risk and the employer is unwilling to spend the money or to take the necessary measures to protect the safety of the workers.

Bill C-317 proposes that if any of these disputes regardless of their origin result in a strike, then as that strike is a hard won right of the workers, it should not be reduced or eliminated by the hiring of replacement workers. To me that is one of the solutions. If we are to provide that workers cannot be replaced, that considerably strengthens the bargaining position of the workers in areas of dispute.

• (1410)

However, we need to ask whether this is the best way of solving the problem. I propose that it is not. While we are saying the worker is having his hamburger taken away from him, what this bill proposes is to simply give him ketchup on the hamburger. What I would like to propose is that we offer that worker a good Alberta steak instead.

What am I talking about? I am talking about ways of dispute resolution. Having worked in this area for a number of years as a representative of people who were employees in a professional association, which to a degree is a euphemism for a union, because we did collective bargaining, I believe very strongly that the very worst way of dispute resolution is that of the strike, because no one wins in a strike. When there is a strike and business is shut down, or in my case the educational institution is shut down, the students, the employees, the instructors, and all of the other employees in the work suffer because of a loss of wages during the time of the strike.

In the case of industry across the country, not only our own domestic customers suffer but our customers around the world suffer when our businesses are put on strike or when our transportation systems fail because of strike or our communications systems are brought down to their knees because the employees refuse to work and no one else is ready and permitted to work in this area.

What then is the solution? If it is not a strike, what can be done? There are many, many other areas of disputes in which we do not resort to strike. For example, if there is a dispute between one of us and our neighbour as to where the boundary should be, we do not proceed to put something in front of their driveway so they cannot get out of the house in the morning. That would not be an acceptable way of solving that problem. Instead, we go to

Private Members' Business

the authorities. We may get surveyors in to make sure the boundaries are clearly marked. When that is done and if your neighbour still does not agree to it, then we may go to a court of law.

I propose, and I have experience in this and it works very well, that what we need to do in the case of a dispute between employees and employers is to have an orderly mechanism that works to solve this problem, so that the workers, the employers, all of the customers, all of the citizens, and indeed our reputation around the world for timely delivery of goods and services can be maintained. It would help us in the long run because of the reliability that would be automatically assumed when people around the world place customer orders with Canadian firms.

I am proposing that we should be using a dispute mechanism that involves some sort of a hearing, a court, an arbitrator, something that is final and binding.

I have had firsthand experience with this. I had the honour of being chosen by my fellow instructors, way back in 1982, to be the founding president of our staff association. I had considerable input. It was not a one-man show by any means, but I had considerable input into the formulation of our first collective agreement, which then became the pattern for all subsequent agreements at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, where I worked. Many of the items in that contract persist to this day. One of the things I pressed for very strongly was that we would immediately bargain away our right to strike.

• (1415)

We built into our contract and the constitution of our association a mechanism that provided for a dispute resolution with time lines. So many days prior to the expiration of the contract we had to give notice of our desire to enter into negotiations, and if we did not the employer might. If neither of us did, that was a tacit understanding that we would carry on with the current agreement. After so many days of that happening we had to have negotiators in place. After so many days we had to lay our opening positions on the table. After so many days if an agreement had not been reached we had to name an arbitrator. And so it went. It was all set up in such a way that prior to the expiry of a contract the new contract would be in place by one means or another.

A very important problem developed. With that contract we had an excellent mechanism and did not have any strikes or work stoppages. Unfortunately the Government of Alberta played its hand. I need to say this because there are dangers in this type of a system. When we went to the arbitration system the government passed a law that stated that in the case of an arbitration the arbitrator must take into account the policy of the government. Unfortunately the government was our employer. We were in the situation of being in the boxing ring and our opponent happened to also be the referee, which made it very difficult to get fair settlements from then on.

If the mechanism is truly independent of any pressure from either party so that there can be a really justified way of reducing the problem and dispute to a resolution, that is by far the best way.

If we are not going to go for things like final position bargaining or arbitration as the method of solving labour disputes, we will continue with these very wasteful and hurtful strikes. Instead of supporting this bill, which would only strengthen the dispute mechanism of striking and fighting with each other, I would like to propose the opposite: that we move toward a more rational system of dispute resolution, which would benefit us all.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am highly tempted to dedicate this speech to the government whip, but I will resist the urge.

It might a good idea to remind everyone of what this bill is all about. Thanks are due to the member for Manicouagan for having introduced this private member's bill, the purpose of which is to prohibit the hiring of persons to replace employees of an employer under the Canada Labour Code or of the Public Service who are on strike or locked out.

Why did I insist on reading the purpose of this bill word for word? Because the bill under consideration is a logical follow-up to rights workers presently have, the right to unionize, the right to strike. What surprises me, in the statements I heard from the government majority as well as from the Reform Party, is that they claimed that providing anti-scab mechanisms would hinder any attempt at mediation prior to a strike.

Members will agree that, in a labour organisation, a strike is a final step and it is defined as such by the legislator. No parliamentarian wishes to see strikes become a spontaneous solution in the workplace. Everybody agrees on the fact that any group that goes on strike was forced to do so by circumstances. Adopting antiscab legislation does not spare us the previous steps.

I cannot see why government members as well as our Reform Party colleagues have presented this bill as a rather sorry mess without going into this kind of nuance that we feel is very significant. Worse still, the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister—whom I usually respect and will continue to respect as long as you are in the Chair—argued that this measure was put forward by the Conservatives in Ontario.

• (1420)

First, you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, to ask the parliamentary secretary not to quote that government too often. I do not think that government should serve as reference to the government majority unless, as we suspected, blue or red in Ottawa amounts exactly to the same thing and that no distinction has to be established.

Private Members' Business

Until very recently, three provinces making up 70 per cent of the labour force were protected by antiscab provisions. What did this have as a concrete effect? Two things. As we have said on several occasions an antiscab legislation brings an element of civility, of courtesy to a power relationship that could be tempted to break negotiations. That is the first thing.

What very concrete effect does this have? When we look at the specialized literature on the subject, we learn, and that has been a powerful argument raised by the member for Manicouagan, that in provinces where there are laws such as this one, labour disputes do not last as long. I think this is an objective which must be supported.

It is not the first time that we have a legislation such as this one. In its time, the NDP suggested a similar provision. The member for Richelieu did so in a more recent past. Yet, no agreement was achieved, they were not successful in ensuring that a provision, without being insignificant, would be a tool for the legislator, a tool for those who are concerned with labour relations and a tool for the management of human resources.

What do we say when we are in favour of a provision such as this one? We say that, a few years ago, as a society, the people of Quebec and Canada democratically voted for a recourse, and that is the right to strike. Admittedly, this is a last resort. A strike is never fun for the union, the workers or the employer, because this has to do with carrying out work.

When there is a work stoppage, we can all agree that, unavoidably, the economy in general is affected. This kind of situation is not desirable. Once it has been democratically recognized by a society—and you will recall that, around the time when discussions started, people used to say, even in the public service, before there was a legal right to strike: “The Queen does not negotiate with her subjects”. I am sure that those of us who are older will remember. For me, this is history, but some were there when all this was happening.

Once the choice has been democratically made to give workers the right to strike, we, as legislators, have the duty and responsibility to ensure that strikes are carried out with civility and without violence.

When you have workers who get up every morning to earn a living, who must go on strike for various reasons including improved standards and better salaries, and who see their jobs threatened by scabs doing their work, you end up with a potentially explosive situation.

As even the political neophytes among us know, without antiscab legislation all long term strikes involved violence.

We as legislators—and I am sure my colleagues across the way will agree—have a responsibility to ensure that the people who exercise their right to strike, a right that is recognized and well defined, can do so in the right conditions.

I did not quite understand the comments made by the previous speaker, who, as we know, is rather easy to get along with. He seemed to be saying that they would rather try to use existing mechanisms. That goes without saying.

• (1425)

Furthermore, the hon. member for Manicouagan, wise man and experienced parliamentarian that he is, provided in the legislation a sound instrument known as an essential services board. This is to say that, even in cases where the final step, a strike, is taken, it will be recognized that nobody can be taken hostage because a democratic right is used, and that certain conditions have to be met, a notice has to be given and essential services have to be maintained.

Where have all the true Liberals gone? People on the other side—the government whip among them—tell us that they are Liberal in the noble, true and historical sense of the word. They tell us they are Liberals. To be a Liberal, to be a liberal, is to recognize a number of rights in a very clear context.

What are they afraid of? I would like to ask them, through you, why they are afraid of such a bill. Is it because workers will be able to exercise their democratic right to go out on strike? If this legislation is not passed on the pretext that it is incomplete, this will bring us back to a dramatic truth about this Parliament, which is that our labour minister is a time shared minister, a part time minister. A full time minister would have had taken her responsibilities. Since it came into office two years ago, this government has had ample time and opportunity to introduce a major revision of the Labour Code.

We have a part time minister, and the government whip will agree that this is why we are in a deplorable situation where the Labour Code has not undergone a major overhaul.

This is a balanced and democratic bill. It reflects values that are widely recognized in our society.

If the government majority went so far as to oppose this bill, I am sure that the price it would have to pay would be extremely high, both in Quebec and elsewhere, because workers under federal jurisdiction have the right to be legally protected against the possible use of scabs.

You are indicating to me that my time is up. My colleagues will be disappointed, but I will use this last opportunity to urge them to adopt such a bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The hon. member for Manicouagan, who presented this motion to the House, has indicated to the Chair that he would like, if possible, with consent of the House, to take two minutes to close the debate. But I want it to be clearly understood that after the House gives its consent, the member will speak to close the debate, which

Private Members' Business

means that nobody else will be able to speak after that even if there is some time left.

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank, naturally, all those from each party, who made the effort to speak, to express their personal opinions and that of their party.

I am sure we have made progress, ideologically speaking, in many areas. We have also had the opportunity to understand somewhat better the more radical positions of certain other individuals and certain other parties.

I heard certain key words, like "wait". This bill is a bit too early, we have to wait for the upcoming reform. I say that, if we have to wait, why not wait for third reading on this? It might perhaps provide an opportunity for the Code to get out in the meantime. This business about waiting, you know, it is not our fault if we are ahead. We are what we are in the Bloc.

Bill C-317 provides a good opportunity for social advancement and for respect of those who keep the economy moving, that is, the workers, and the employers too, because Bill C-317 has the highest regard for employers, as it indicates.

I would simply like, at this point, to repeat my thanks to all those who felt it was worthwhile taking part.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank all the hon. members for their co-operation. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to the order made earlier today, a recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred until Tuesday, November 21, 1995, after Government Orders.

[*English*]

It being after 2.30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until Monday, November 20, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28 and 24.

(The House adjourned at 2.41 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, November 10, 1995

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Department of Human Resources Development Act

Bill C-96. Consideration resumed of motion for second reading and of amendment	16469
Mr. Crête	16469
Mr. Flis	16472
Mr. Nault	16473
Mr. Boudria	16476
Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	16476

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Woodstock Memorial Forest

Mr. Finlay	16477
------------------	-------

Remembrance Day

Mr. Mercier	16477
-------------------	-------

Remembrance Day

Mr. Frazer	16478
------------------	-------

Mrs. Hilda Simanavicius

Mr. Flis	16478
----------------	-------

Mr. Philip McKenzie

Mr. Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	16478
--	-------

Alcan Cable Lapointe Plant

Mr. Bertrand	16478
--------------------	-------

Health Care

Mrs. Hayes	16478
------------------	-------

Canadian Unity

Mr. Anawak	16479
------------------	-------

Intercultural Week

Mr. Pomerleau	16479
---------------------	-------

Leader of the Bloc Quebecois

Mr. Boudria	16479
-------------------	-------

The Late Hans Daigeler

Mr. Bélanger	16479
--------------------	-------

Human Rights

Mr. Paré	16479
----------------	-------

Dangerous Offenders

Mr. Ramsay	16480
------------------	-------

Tribute to Sergeant Arthur Boucher

Mr. Paradis	16480
-------------------	-------

Education

Mr. Bevilacqua	16480
----------------------	-------

Government Policies

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	16480
--------------------------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Committee Chaired by Agriculture Minister

Mr. Duceppe	16481
Mr. Massé	16481
Mr. Duceppe	16481

Mr. Massé	16481
Mr. Duceppe	16481
Mr. Massé	16481
Mr. Laurin	16482
Mr. Goodale	16482
Mr. Laurin	16482
Mr. Goodale	16482

The Economy

Mr. Silye	16482
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	16483
Mr. Silye	16483
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	16483
Mr. Silye	16483
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	16483

Purchase of Helicopters

Mr. Ménard	16483
Mr. Collenette	16484
Mr. Ménard	16484
Mr. Collenette	16484

Finance

Mr. Williams	16484
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	16484
Mr. Williams	16484
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	16484

Agusta

Mrs. Debien	16485
Mr. Dingwall	16485
Mrs. Debien	16485
Mr. Dingwall	16485

Canada Post

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	16485
Mr. Dingwall	16485
Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	16486
Mr. Dingwall	16486

Forest Industry

Mr. Canuel	16486
Mr. Rideout	16486
Mr. Canuel	16486
Mr. Rideout	16486

Canada Post

Mrs. Kraft Sloan	16486
Mr. Dingwall	16486

Blood supply

Mr. Hill (MacLeod)	16487
Ms. Fry	16487
Mr. Hill (MacLeod)	16487
Ms. Fry	16487

Blood Supply System

Mr. Godin	16487
Ms. Fry	16487
Mr. Godin	16487
Ms. Fry	16488

Gun control

Mr. Ramsay	16488
------------------	-------

Mr. Rock	16488
Grain exports	
Mrs. Cowling	16488
Mr. Goodale	16488

Points of Order

Question Period

Mr. Williams	16488
The Speaker	16488

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Milliken	16488
--------------------	-------

Agriculture

Mr. Goodale	16489
-------------------	-------

Public Accounts

Mr. Young	16489
-----------------	-------

Government Review

Mr. Eggleton	16489
--------------------	-------

Government Review

Mr. Eggleton	16489
Mr. Laurin	16490
Mr. Williams	16491

Committees of The House

Procedure and House Affairs

Mr. Milliken	16491
Motion for concurrence in 98th report	16492
(Motion agreed to.)	16492
Motion for concurrence in 100th report	16492
Mr. Milliken	16492
(Motion agreed to.)	16492

Petitions

Tobacco Products

Mr. Duhamel	16492
-------------------	-------

Mining

Mr. Nault	16492
-----------------	-------

Questions on The Order Paper

Mr. Milliken	16492
--------------------	-------

Question Passed as Order for Return

Mr. Milliken	16493
--------------------	-------

Points of Order

Tabling of Document

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	16493
Mr. Milliken	16493

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Department of Human Resources Development Act

Bill C-96. Consideration resumed of motion for second reading and the amendment	16493
Mrs. Hayes	16493
Mr. Bevilacqua	16495
Mr. Crête	16496
Mr. Bellemare	16497
Mr. Crête	16498
Mr. Bellemare	16499
Mr. Caron	16499
Mr. Simmons	16502

Business of the House

Mr. Boudria	16504
Motion	16504
(Motion agreed to.)	16504

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Canada Labour Code

Bill C-317. Consideration resumed of motion for second reading	16504
Mr. Crête	16504
Ms. Augustine	16505
Mr. Epp	16507
Mr. Ménard	16508
Mr. St-Laurent	16510

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