



Third Session — Thirty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

33 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Second Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
ADAM, Hon. A.R. (Pete)	Ste. Rose	NDP
ANSTETT, Hon. Andy	Springfield	NDP
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BANMAN, Robert (Bob)	La Verendrye	PC
BLAKE, David R. (Dave)	Minnedosa	PC
BROWN, Arnold	Rhineland	PC
BUCKLASCHUK, Hon. John M.	Gimli	NDP
CARROLL, Q.C., Henry N.	Brandon West	IND
CORRIN, Q.C., Brian	Ellice	NDP
COWAN, Hon. Jay	Churchill	NDP
DESJARDINS, Hon. Laurent	St. Boniface	NDP
DODICK, Doreen	Riel	NDP
DOERN, Russell	Elmwood	IND
DOLIN, Hon. Mary Beth	Kildonan	NDP
DOWNEY, James E.	Arthur	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert	Emerson	PC
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	PC
EVANS, Hon. Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
EYLER, Phil	River East	NDP
FILMON, Gary	Tuxedo	PC
FOX, Peter	Concordia	NDP
GOURLAY, D.M. (Doug)	Swan River	PC
GRAHAM, Harry	Virde	PC
HAMMOND, Gerrie	Kirkfield Park	PC
HARAPIAK, Harry M.	The Pas	NDP
HARPER, Elijah	Rupert Island	NDP
HEMPHILL, Hon. Maureen	Logan	NDP
HYDE, Lloyd	Portage la Prairie	PC
JOHNSTON, J. Frank	Sturgeon Creek	PC
KOSTYRA, Hon. Eugene	Seven Oaks	NDP
KOVNATS, Abe	Niakwa	PC
LECUYER, Hon. Gérard	Radisson	NDP
LYON, Q.C., Hon. Sterling	Charleswood	PC
MACKLING, Q.C., Hon. Al	St. James	NDP
MALINOWSKI, Donald M.	St. Johns	NDP
MANNES, Clayton	Morris	PC
McKENZIE, J. Wally	Roblin-Russell	PC
MERCIER, Q.C., G.W.J. (Gerry)	St. Norbert	PC
NORDMAN, Rurik (Ric)	Assiniboia	PC
OLESON, Charlotte	Gladstone	PC
ORCHARD, Donald	Pembina	PC
PAWLEY, Q.C., Hon. Howard R.	Selkirk	NDP
PARASIUK, Hon. Wilson	Transcona	NDP
PENNER, Q.C., Hon. Roland	Fort Rouge	NDP
PHILLIPS, Myrna A.	Wolseley	NDP
PLOHMAN, Hon. John	Dauphin	NDP
RANSOM, A. Brian	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Burrows	NDP
SCHROEDER, Hon. Vic	Rossmere	NDP
SCOTT, Don	Inkster	NDP
SHERMAN, L.R. (Bud)	Fort Garry	PC
SMITH, Hon. Muriel	Osborne	NDP
STEEN, Warren	River Heights	PC
STORIE, Hon. Jerry T.	Flin Flon	NDP
URUSKI, Hon. Bill	Interlake	NDP
USKIW, Hon. Samuel	Lac du Bonnet	NDP
WALDING, Hon. D. James	St. Vital	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, 18 May, 1984.

Time — 10:00 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER by Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER, Hon. J. Walding: Presenting Petitions . . . Reading and Receiving Petitions . . . Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees . . .

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. A. MACKLING: Mr. Speaker, arising out of the fires that are now burning in the province, some action has been taken to protect lives and property.

The Nopiming Provincial Park is closed to all travel, to all occupancy. The Whiteshell Provincial Park is closed north of West Hawk Lake.

The West Hawk Lake and Falcon Lake cottage areas and campgrounds will remain open. Rationale for allowing those areas to be open is in the event that evacuation is necessary, transportation via the Trans-Canada Highway is readily accessible.

Cottagers, campers and other park users in Nopiming and Whiteshell north of Falcon and West Hawk that are in the park now are asked to leave.

Moisture conditions are good in the north and no change in policy is indicated north of about the Grand Rapids area. There's no change in the south and southwest of the province, but extreme caution is asked.

All fires, to the best of our knowledge that are burning at the present time, are caused by human neglect. There will be no VIA Rail service via the Campers' Special to points of Ophir, Winnitoba and Brereton. There is no back country travel in any area east of the Red River.

There are no open fires allowed in any part of the province south of Grand Rapids. There may be restrictions placed on fires even in campgrounds and park staff will advise as to the opportunities for those fires.

The public is requested to consider alternate camping opportunities where camping opportunities have now been foreclosed in those two park areas. They could look to Hecla, Birds Hill, Spruce Woods, Turtle Mountain and Grand Beach.

These restrictions will be lifted when conditions improve. However, forecasts at the present time are not auspicious. We have a continuance of very dry conditions and continuing strong winds.

We ask and plead for the co-operation of the public in preventing disaster to our forests and any loss of life.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Member for Emerson, who is the

Natural Resources critic, I would like to thank the Minister for the announcement in the House this morning and join with him in saying that I think it's essential that government take this responsible action to protect life and limb in case of forest fires, because it is one of those kinds of hazards that can move very rapidly and catch people very much unaware and put a lot of people in danger. It is important that action is taken. As well, we feel very concerned about the loss of our resources and that all equipment be put in place to keep under control the kind of fire that destroys wildlife and our important forest resource.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to request of the Minister and the government that they, because of it being a long weekend holiday, and a lot of people travelling from the City of Winnipeg and other parts of Manitoba, like to enjoy those campgrounds and those wilderness areas of the province, that the government set up a phone service so that the public can call and find out points that are available to them and that they can be assisted in this way. I know there has been a lot of plans made, a lot of people wanting to enjoy the outdoors and I would hope that the government would, through the weekend, provide the kind of information and the kind of public news service that I think everyone would expect.

I would request of the Minister that they do that so that people could maximize the time that they have off on the long weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion . . . Introduction of Bills . . .

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER: Before Oral Questions may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery. We have a number visitors from Minnesota. There are 15 students from the La Porte School. They are under the direction of Mr. Evenmo.

There are 25 students of Grade 5 standing from the Yellow Quill School, under the direction of Mrs. Blight. The school is in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

On behalf of all of the members, I welcome you here this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Burns plants closure

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development.

In view of the fact that he and the Minister of Agriculture some three weeks ago at a secret meeting with the Burns Company, dealing with the closure of the Burns Packing Plant and rendering plant in Brandon

where there will be some loss of 150 jobs plus a valuable market for the agriculture producers of this province, can the Minister confirm that he and his government have refused to take part in meaningful negotiations to assist the company, the management and the labour people to carry on with the employment opportunities that are now there and keep that plant open?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Culture.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can confirm that there has been continued involvement by myself, by the Minister of Agriculture and other Ministers with respect to the current situation with respect to Burns Foods in Brandon.

The situation was that the government, particularly myself and the Minister of Agriculture have been having continuing meetings with representatives of all of the meat packing companies in Manitoba. Indeed, it was some six, seven weeks ago that we met with representatives of Burns and discussed their overall operations in the Province of Manitoba. At that time they were talking to us, not of any possible plant closures, but of a possible plant expansion here in the Province of Manitoba, particularly the City of Winnipeg.

Subsequent to that, on about May 1st, we met with the Vice-President of Operations for Burns Manitoba at which time, to our shock and dismay, he indicated that they would be serving notice of the closure of the Burns Brandon plant. Immediately, both myself and the Minister of Agriculture asked to meet with Mr. Child, who is the President and CEO of Burns in Calgary, and met with him to see what could be done to avert the closing of that plant.

At that time, it was indicated to us that the decision had been made to close the plant and that they would only reconsider their decision if we would get the union to agree to considerable wage concessions, not only in the plant in Brandon but also in the plant in Winnipeg.

We indicated to Burns that we felt they ought to resolve their collective bargaining issues directly with the employees, that we would provide whatever assistance necessary for them to negotiate with their employees, with their union, and offered government assistance in terms of those negotiations.

We also indicated, Mr. Speaker, that we would be prepared to look at some possible assistance with respect to the Burns overall expansion in the province on the condition that both of the plants remain operating. I am quite concerned and quite dismayed that Burns has taken this action at a time when they could have dealt directly with their employees and been involved in direct negotiations.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am shocked and dismayed at the answer that this Minister has given, that he is not prepared, and I would ask him if he would reconsider his position and his government policy to get actively involved and look at all alternatives.

Will he look at all alternatives that have been proposed by the Burns plant, by the employees and everyone involved? Will he and his government get actively involved and not take a philosophical approach and stand-off and say we won't look at it, Mr. Speaker? Will he get actively involved now, Mr. Speaker?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: It seems, Mr. Speaker, that the member has problems hearing the answer. Let me repeat again for the member. This government has been involved on an ongoing basis with respect to all of the companies in the meat packing industry in the province; we have been having discussions on an ongoing basis because we are concerned about the state of the industry in the Province of Manitoba.

We have had direct discussions with Burns with respect to their announcement. We have made suggestions to Burns in terms of providing government assistance for them to sit down and negotiate with their union with respect to any concerns that they have over wage rates and other conditions. We have indicated to Burns that we would be prepared to look at possible forms of government assistance in terms of their potential expansion in Manitoba.

We also have met earlier this week with the Mayor and some of the councillors in the City of Brandon, and have sat in a committee of both elected officials with the Mayor of the City of Brandon and Cabinet representation, plus staff of the various government departments and representatives from the Brandon Chamber of Commerce and the Brandon Labour Council, to explore all options with respect to the Burns situation. In particular, we have given the mandate to that working group to examine the reasons behind the closure of the operations to determine and coordinate any efforts to keep that plant operating in the City of Brandon and, failing that, to look at alternate uses of the plant and to look at efforts to find other employment for the people that may be displaced. So this government is taking action.

A MEMBER: Get up to date, rookies.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please. The Honourable Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that there's been one of the most widely-touted programs spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money supporting the beef industry in the province, and we still see the closure of one of our major packing house plants, can the Minister confirm that he has offered to the Burns Packing House Company, money to transfer the business and the jobs from the City of Brandon to the City of Winnipeg by enlarging this plant in Brandon? Because that's what he's telling us that it's now time to put the key to close the industry in Brandon and Western Manitoba and transfer that to the city.

Second question, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet. Is not true that the organization of different groups that have been put together have been to help find jobs for those people who are going to be laid off on August 10th at which time the company plans to close the plant - August 10th - that that's what the committee has been established for, not to do all these other things, because the government has refused to participate in the lowering of wages so that plant can stay open?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Mr. Speaker, I'd strongly suggest

. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: . . . that maybe . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Culture.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Mr. Speaker, I'd strongly suggest that maybe the system of reproducing of sound in here be checked because it's obvious that the member is not hearing the answers that I have been giving to his questions. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, if it takes a bit of time, but I'm going to have to repeat those answers in some detail so that the member can hear and can understand what action this government is taking.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, to the formation of the committee, and I will quote and then table the letter that has been delivered earlier this week to the Mayor in the City of Brandon, that there has been agreement between the City Council of Brandon and our government to establish a working group. I quote the reasons for the establishment of that working group, "To examine the reasons behind the decision by Burns to consider closing of the operation, to determine and co-ordinate actions that may result in maintenance of Burns current operations in Brandon, examine the feasibility of alternate uses for the Brandon facility including its continued use as a slaughter facility," - Unfortunately in this regard, Mr. Speaker, Burns has indicated that they are closing the plant, but they are not prepared to sell it to anyone else - "and to establish a process to deal with alternate economic opportunities as well as re-employment and training issues should the closure prove inevitable."

So, Mr. Speaker, the mandate of this committee, firstly, is to look at keeping that plant operating or find other uses or other owners or other possible operations for that plant, preferably as the slaughter facility. The mandate of the committee, Mr. Speaker, is clear as I indicated before.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is not listening, or if he's listening he's not hearing, or he's not absorbing if it he is indeed hearing. The position of the government is that we are prepared to provide any assistance that either Burns or their union would like in terms of their collective bargaining. They are presently engaged in collective bargaining, Mr. Speaker.

The collective bargaining system we have in this province, in this country, indicates that the parties themselves should negotiate. I understand that the request for concessions was not made at any time to the employees or to the union, but rather Burns wanted the government to make that offer on their behalf. We indicated to them that we would provide them with assistance, but the collective bargaining should take place between the parties involved directly.

Sherritt Gordon Mines

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MS. M. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy and Mines.

In view of the concerns about layoffs this morning, can the Minister inform the House of the status of discussions between your department and Sherritt Gordon and the future of their northern mines?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. W. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform the House and Manitobans that I have just been informed by Sherritt Gordon - they are informing their workers I believe at 10 o'clock this morning, they informed them that the decision - I just received the information and so I'm trying to inform the people using the . . .

SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

HON. W. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, I believe the people of Manitoba want to hear what I have to say even though the Conservative opposition doesn't. Mr. Speaker, this is some good news and they all know you want to dwell on bad news . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

HON. W. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, the Board of Directors of Sherritt Gordon has made a decision to continue the operations . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

The Honourable Member for Lakeside on a point of order.

MR. H. ENNS: I want to assure the Honourable Minister of Energy and Mines that I am anxious to hear his statement and I'll be most happy to hear it. I would just like to have the privilege of responding to the Minister's statement as chief critic of Energy and Mines.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. We have passed that part of the Order Paper dealing with Ministerial Statements. The Minister has an answer to the question posed to him, would he please give it and not waste the time of Oral Questions?

HON. W. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, I'm quite pleased to provide the information in response to a question that I have received from a member of this Legislature.

The Board of Directors of Sherritt Gordon Mines has made a decision to continue the operations at Ruttan Lake Mine. The significance of the announcement is that the work force at Ruttan, which had received layoff notices for June 15th of this year, will now continue working in terms of the production of the mine and the deepening of the the projects, so you have short-term jobs and long-term jobs ensured to this development. They have made this decision as a result of increased productivity at the Ruttan Mine, an extension of the labour contract for one year with the cost of living tied to the cost of copper which was done through collective bargaining between the company and the union and a reduction of the estimated cost of the development program due to a tightening of the schedule.

Mr. Speaker, last but not least, the Government of Manitoba was part of that process. The Government of Manitoba made a commitment of a loan of \$10 million

to Sherritt Gordon so that it could proceed to ensure the long-term viability of Ruttan Lake Mine and the short-term improvements to that facility right now, Mr. Speaker, so we have both short-term development and long-term development.

MR. H. ENNS: Mr. Speaker, I don't know which course of action I should perhaps follow. Really, I do have a point of order to raise, but I would ask the Minister to begin with, to table the statement that he was just reading from. It would be useful to us. It's rather amazing that was all written out when he just responded in request to an earlier question that he was just apprised of this information. One is led to believe that he's had this information for some time. He also knew that some bad economic news was on the horizon when the Burns plant closure was going to be announced so they decided to play a little game of politics with this kind of announcement. I would ask the statement to be tabled, Mr. Speaker.

HON. W. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order because of the flagrant abuse of the rules of this House by the Member for Lakeside.

Mr. Speaker, take a look at Hansard. Did he get up to ask a question or make a speech and indulge in debate? Mr. Speaker, I was informed shortly before 10 o'clock by Sherritt Gordon . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

HON. W. PARASIUK: . . . shortly before 10 o'clock by Sherritt Gordon. I took time to find out exactly when the workers at Ruttan Lake would be informed, because I think it's important that they should be informed. We got that information, I was not even able to come into the House for the beginning of question period because I was doing that checking.

Mr. Speaker, when a member on the opposite side imputes motives to me, to Sherritt Gordon, to the work force of Ruttan Lake, he is stooping to new lows. That is not the way question period proceeds in this House. The Conservatives may want to indulge in that type of tactics; we won't.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for La Verendrye.

MR. R. BANMAN: On the same point of order, it has been tradition in this House . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. There is no point of order on the floor.

MR. R. BANMAN: On my point of order then, Mr. Speaker, on a new point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for La Verendrye on a point of order.

MR. R. BANMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been tradition in the House throughout the years that if a Minister had a Ministerial Statement to make with regard to any announcement in his department, leave was granted in this Legislature during the question

period if the Minister rose and requested that; and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that is the right and proper procedure to take when a Minister of the Crown is announcing something that is happening within his department and that then provides the opposition with the courtesy of responding to that announcement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader to the same point.

HON. A. ANSTETT: Mr. Speaker, to the same point of order. Members have asked or suggested that the Minister was making a Ministerial Statement. The Minister has no statement; he has speaking notes which were quickly prepared in response to a press conference held at 10:00 a.m. this morning.

I ask honourable members to consider the fact that a press conference was held at 10:00 a.m. this morning. The Minister was then asked a question in the Legislature and is communicating information, that he has had only for a matter of minutes, to the Legislature. Clearly our rules were designed to accommodate the provision of that kind of information to the House.

The whole purpose of question period - and I remind honourable members opposite - is that information of a current, topical and urgent nature can be provided to the House. That's the purpose of question period; that's clearly the purpose of the information. The Minister did not have a long statement. The Minister has a few speaking notes to provide information to the House, from the press release. That's certainly in order and is in no way a breach of our rules.

Mr. Speaker, if there is a breach of our rules - and I raise this, Sir, as a point of order - it is the direct imputation of motives, contrary to several citations in Beauchesne, made by the Opposition House Leader against the Minister of Energy and Mines suggesting that in some way he had prior knowledge, in some way the President of Sherritt Gordon in Toronto engineered a press statement to in some way diffuse a statement respecting Burns in Brandon, which I understand was released by the president of the union late yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I have great difficulty in accepting that it is parliamentary in this Chamber to, by imputation, smear not only the Minister but the President of Sherritt Gordon Mines who held a press conference this morning.

Burns plants closure

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Brandon West.

MR. H. CARROLL: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Premier, following up on the questions of the Member for Arthur.

It has been a number of weeks that the Minister of Cultural Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture have been actively involved in trying to prevent the closing of Burns Packers in Brandon and that firm is very important to the economy of Brandon. They have been unsuccessful.

Will the Minister or the Acting Premier assure this House and the people of Brandon that the Premier will become personally involved and try and solve this problem where other Ministers have failed?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. M. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I think the member asking the question has a very peculiar idea of how the economy works and what the real capacity of government to influence is. What we can do is try to work out solutions within the realm of reality and that is what we've been trying to do. That is what the Ministers working very hard in the last couple of weeks have been trying to do and the comments made by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology had summarized those efforts, they have indicated what further efforts we will make. I think that is the full and complete responsibility that we have. We've acted on it as thoroughly and as actively as we possibly can.

If the Member for Brandon West has a realistic solution or ideas to contribute to the current situation, we would be the first to sit down with him and listen to them, but all I've heard is some hope for a magic solution coming from the Premier's intervention. The Premier has authorized these Ministers to work on his behalf. They've done an excellent job in a very difficult situation, Mr. Speaker.

MR. H. CARROLL: I would ask the Minister if it's more in the realm of economic reality for the Premier to be in Switzerland than for the Premier to be dealing personally with the problems in Brandon?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to get some answers from this government and would ask the Minister of Economic Development or Culture or whatever category you would like to place him in, if he is prepared to provide the same assistance to the Brandon plant, offering that same plant in Winnipeg. A further question, Mr. Speaker. Is the government providing financial assistance to other packing houses in the Province of Manitoba?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Culture.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, we were in discussions with Burns with respect to their overall operations in Manitoba. They indicated to us that they were looking at the possible expansion of the Winnipeg plant and we indicated that we would look at the possibility of assistance with regard to that project on the condition that as part of their overall operations in Manitoba, they would continue the operations in Brandon.

We are prepared to work with Burns if they are serious in terms of their overall operations in Manitoba, because we are concerned about the impact of any closure on the economy of the province both in terms of the direct jobs, the related jobs and the agricultural community, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work in that regard.

If the member has some solutions, as the Deputy Premier outlined, we would be prepared to listen to them. If he has any suggestions in terms of action the government could take, we would be prepared to look at that. But we are prepared to work with them, but we suggest that Burns should deal in terms of its

concerns over collective bargaining with its employees and we are prepared to provide whatever assistance is necessary in that regard.

MR. J. DOWNEY: I have a suggestion and that is, that this government call an election and the Progressive Conservative Party would take over the administration of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister a further question. Are other packing house industries in the province receiving support in any way, shape or form from the Provincial Government?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: I don't know how the preamble of that question relates to the issue. I think the member himself should look at smartening up and realizing that there is a reason he has two ears and one mouth. He should listen twice as much as he talks sometimes.

We are, as I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, concerned about the overall meat packing industry in the province, because it's no secret that there are some changes taking place with respect to the meat packing industry right across Canada. We want to ensure and are prepared to work with all the companies in terms of maintaining a viable industry here in the Province of Manitoba because we know that that industry is of critical importance to the province. We are continuing discussions with all of the meat packers with respect to their operations here in the Province of Manitoba.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Morris.

MR. C. MANNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the same vein, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Economic Development. Would he acknowledge that the Beef Program of the Minister of Agriculture has been a dismal failure in light of the fact that upwards of 50 percent, by some estimates, of our feeder numbers are going outside of the province to be slaughtered and, in part, that is a major reason for the difficult economic circumstances of the packing plant industry within this province?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please. The purpose of Oral Questions is to obtain information from the government, not opinions.

The Honourable Member for Morris.

MR. C. MANNESS: Mr. Speaker, I then ask the same Minister, is it a fact that one of the circumstances, the major circumstances causing the difficult economic situations at the Burns plant and some of our other plants, is the fact that the Beef Program of the Minister of Agriculture has been a dismal failure in that 50 percent, by some estimates, of our feeding numbers are going to other provinces?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: No. The simple answer is no, that is not true. The reason behind the announced closure of the Burns plant is because of the severe operating losses that they have been experiencing at that plant over the last 14 months, Mr. Speaker. That plant was making money prior to that period and it's no secret that overall consumption of beef products is down in the country. It's also no secret that there is severe competition from the United States.

The fact is that with respect to beef numbers in province, there have been significant increases of slaughter cattle in the Province of Manitoba. There's been an overall increase of some considerable percent over 1983 over 1982, and the initial indication for the first few months of this year is that there has been a further 12 percent increase over the 1983 numbers. So it is obvious that the plans and the programs of the Minister of Agriculture and this government with respect to the beef plan are working and are providing the necessary increase in the numbers.

Legal fees re Bilodeau case

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Elmwood.

MR. R. DOERN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Attorney-General and ask him if he can provide the House with some indication of the amount of legal fees paid to Kerr Twaddle and Company in regard to his work on the Bilodeau case, and the federal reference to the Supreme Court?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. R. PENNER: This is a matter which, in the normal course of events, appears in the Public Accounts where it ought to appear and it will appear. That's where the information will be available.

MR. R. DOERN: Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney-General indicate whether it approaches the staggering amount of \$362,000 spent by the Franco-Manitoban Society on legal fees from April to December of 1983?

HON. R. PENNER: I have no knowledge of what the Society Franco-Manitoban pays in legal fees and I'm not prepared to accept any assumptions on that basis, nor am I prepared to make any comparisons since I don't have the information at hand as to the fees that are paid to Mr. Twaddle. That matter has not been completed and in due course his fees will appear in the Public Accounts.

Payroll tax

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lakeside.

MR. H. ENNS: I direct a question to the Minister responsible for Business Development.

Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as payroll costs would appear to have been the fundamental issue in the loss of 150 jobs. Mr. Speaker, in payroll costs I include of course wages and all other attendant costs to payroll. I look at the Minister of Business Development. Would he confirm that the 30 to 35 percent increases in Workers Compensation premiums imposed in the last year or two by this government, the imposition of the 1.5 percent payroll tax, would they not have in this particular issue where payroll costs was the issue that called for the closure, not have contributed to the closing of that plant?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Minister of Business Development.

HON. S. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Member for Lakeside is trying to put the proposition forward that the costs of doing business in Manitoba are exceedingly higher than they are in our competing provinces. I would like to remind him that the other provinces that do not impose the payroll tax, do, in fact, through their industries, absorb Medicare and hospital premiums. That is a very large component of their package in their agreement with the trade union movement in Canada. So that, in essence, one has to compare all of the costs that go into any particular labour/management agreement.

With respect to the reasons for Burns closing down in Brandon, I think that if one looks at the industry across North America, one will have to recognize that there has been a major shakedown of the meat packing industry in all of North America. Many plants have closed over the last few years and I would hazard a guess that a number more will within North America. Some new ones have been built which are modern and more efficient and things of that nature. So there is a shakeout taking place and I would have to expect that this is part of that process.

But with respect to cattle numbers, the Burns plant in Brandon has never enjoyed since it has been in operation more slaughter numbers than it has enjoyed in recent times, so that there is no diminishing of raw materials supplied. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, one has to conclude that it's a larger plan that's at work and it's part of what's happening throughout the whole of the world and indeed throughout all of North America.

MR. H. ENNS: Mr. Speaker, that's hardly an optimistic observation by the Minister of Business Development in this province. I ask a further question, perhaps to the Acting Premier because, Mr. Speaker, surely the rationale for taxpayers of Manitoba to put many millions of dollars into the Beef Stabilization Program is not simply to help the beef producer, but also to provide jobs in the processing industry. Now obviously it's not carrying out that mandate, we're losing jobs. How long will this government continue that program if it's failing dismally in terms of providing the other important jobs in the processing industry of Manitoba?

MR. SPEAKER: The question is hypothetical.

Eatrite Foods

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Thompson.

MR. S. ASHTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Consumer Affairs in regard to the operation of Eatrite Frozen Foods in Gillam, Thompson and other northern communities. In view of the fact that this company has been selling bulk frozen food at twice its comparable value in the local communities while its salesmen have been misrepresenting the value as being comparable to local prices; and in view of the fact that 13 people have already filed an official complaint in Gillam alone and one person has successfully taken this company to court in Thompson, I would like to ask the Minister whether he will direct his department to assist the

consumers involved and inform other consumers about their rights in regard to dealings with this particular company.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney General.

HON. R. PENNER: I'll have to take that question as notice. I'm aware of the situation with respect to this particular operation but I will take it as notice and give a fuller reply, as the question deserves, next week some time.

MR. S. ASHTON: While the Minister is taking that question as notice, I was wondering if he would also take as notice the fact that the Federal Department of Consumer Affairs is looking at what appears to amount to a consumer ripoff in the activities of this company and is presently looking at laying charges. I wonder if the Minister could look into the possibility of joint action between the two, the federal and provincial departments.

HON. R. PENNER: Yes, I will.

Labour legislation

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for La Verendrye.

MR. R. BANMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I direct my question to the Minister of Economic Development and I would ask him, in light of the growing opposition and concern being expressed by small business and business in general in this province with regard to the government's proposed labour legislation, I wonder if the Minister, now, in light of the plant closures that we're facing and other problems that are developing with regard to our competitiveness to other marketplaces, will the government consider postponing that legislation indefinitely - like forever?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Culture.

HON. E. KOSTYRA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer that question on behalf of the Minister of Labour. Discussions are continuing with a number of special interest groups with regard to the White Paper that has been released. There have been ongoing discussions with the Chamber of Commerce, with the Canadian Manufacturers Association, and with other organizations. Those discussions I think are productive and will continue and any of the concerns and issues will be taken into account before any final decisions are made with respect to the tabling of any legislation.

MR. R. BANMAN: First of all, I'd like to ask the Minister if he could tell us who the special interest groups are that he referred to; and secondly, Mr. Speaker, I would like him to inform the House whether or not the government is contemplating making some major changes to the proposed White Paper. In other words, will the legislation differ substantially or to a large extent to the White Paper that they proposed and put forward about a month ago?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: As I indicated, the government is involved in a consultation process with various groups

and until that process is concluded, it would be impossible to comment on what changes may indeed flow or what changes will be introduced. The Member for Arthur makes a comment from his seat that we'll continue to chase business out of the province. He fails to recognize what other groups and other organizations have recognized with respect to the Manitoba economy, that the economy in this province is performing better than most provincial economies right across the country, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to suggest that is due all to government action, but on the other hand, we must be doing something right here in the province.

Legislation - appearance of

MR. R. BANMAN: In light of the fact that the government has hired legal counsel from outside the province and paying these legal counsels \$600 a day to draft legislation, is the Minister telling me, that aside from that amount of money and the people that have been hired to draft the legislation, the government is not necessarily going to accept that legislation as drafted, and that they are continuing to negotiate with people and really they haven't got a bill before them at the present time that they will be introducing in the House?

HON. E. KOSTYRA: As I indicated, and I'll repeat the answer, consultations and discussions are continuing with various groups, the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association, labour organizations and other interested parties, on the White Paper. Until those discussions are concluded and until such time as a bill is tabled in this House, it would be premature to make any comment with respect to what might be contained in that bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Business Development.

HON. S. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, I neglected to respond to a second question that the Member for Lakeside put to me, having to do . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The question was hypothetical and hence out of order. There can be no answer to an out-of-order question.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. A. ANSTETT: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I don't believe the Honourable Minister of Business Development and Tourism was purporting to answer the question you ruled out of order as hypothetical. I believe he was purporting to give an answer to the second half of an earlier question the Member for Lakeside asked. Sir, with respect, I would suggest that you determine first which question the member is answering before you rule his answer out of order.

A MEMBER: That's right.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I will review Hansard to see what, in fact, is in there and whether answers were questions or not.

The time for Oral Questions having expired, Orders of the Day.

The Honourable Minister of Northern Affairs.

HON. J. STORIE: Before proceeding with the Orders of the Day, I wonder if I could ask leave of the House to make a non-political statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Honourable Minister have leave? (Agreed)

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENT

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Northern Affairs.

HON. J. STORIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As most members of the House will know, this week was Physical Activity Week and, as members may have heard via news reports, the City of Flin Flon has the honour and the privilege of having the highest participation rate of any city in the country in Physical Activity Week.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the participation rate approached 90 percent. That is indeed a phenomenal number and I believe congratulations are in order to the numerous people who were involved in sponsoring and promoting the various activities that encouraged people to come out and to show their support for physical fitness.

Mr. Speaker, we have, in the North, been known for our hospitality; we have been known for our fresh air and our beautiful scenery. I am pleased that the people of Flin Flon have now made it known that they are also No. 1 when it comes to an interest in physical fitness, and I think that all of the people that came out to participate in the activities deserve to be congratulated and recognized by members of this Chamber.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. A. ANSTETT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you please call the referral motion that is the first item on the Order Paper?

ADJOURNED DEBATE ON RULES OF THE HOUSE - BELL RINGING

MR. SPEAKER: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Government House Leader, the referral motion standing in the name of the Honourable Member for La Verendrye.

MR. R. BANMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to put a few thoughts and make a few comments on the record with regard to the matter which is before us, and that is namely the limiting of the ringing of the bells in the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we witnessed, in the last year, something which was rather unique and I believe very historical in this province. In my 11 years in the Legislature, I must say that from the point of being a legislator, that was probably the most intriguing, as well as the most

interesting and historical time, that anybody could have spent in the Legislature, and I guess one of the things that we will all look at in 5 or 10 years from now is the fact that we were involved in what became a major part of Canadian history.

When one is involved in it at the time when it's happening, I think very often you don't realize of what significance the matter will be and it takes some time and some years to go ahead and finally realize for one to understand the magnitude of what really has happened.

Mr. Speaker, I guess, having been in this Legislature for 11 years, I saw something happen during that debate which really, I guess, showed the problems that the government is having and that's, to a large extent, I guess, a problem that they will have in the next couple of years, an awful difficult time in overcoming.

That problem, Mr. Speaker, is that we started off with a House Leader who introduced a piece of legislation, not understanding what the will of the people was and really maybe not just caring what the will of the people was. After all, one of the main responsibilities of government is to assess what the will of the people is and then take that into consideration when introducing legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it's very much the same principle in dealing with one's own family. To go ahead and lay down some laws which you know there is going to be an awful lot of resistance to, it has to be implemented in a way that is acceptable to everybody, that you don't have a total rebellion, and you have a split within the family, because it doesn't do you any good, it doesn't do your family any good if one party or another just says that's it, I'm leaving, without you trying to negotiate and trying to make the situation as acceptable - and granted you can't always please everybody - but as acceptable to the majority of people in your household.

So, Mr. Speaker, what happened here is that the people of Manitoba realized that this government was pushing something through which they did not want, which they were not ready to accept.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the difficulty came in this issue when we had one House Leader that didn't understand the workings of the House and how people interact with each other in the Legislature, and didn't understand strategy, and then you had to switch to another House Leader who unfortunately had the same problem as the other one did. You know, Mr. Speaker, in 5 or 10 years from now when this episode is written up in the history books, you will find that a number of very serious errors were made by the government in proceeding with the type of hard-handed approach in dealing with the constitutional amendment that this government undertook.

One of the things that I still to this day don't understand - and, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I kept a small little diary on where the government went wrong on a day-to-day basis in dealing with the subject matter - one of the places where they really blew it was to impose closure. They spent more time on the closure motion. If they would have allowed the constitutional amendment to take its course with different amendments coming in, you would have seen a time and a place where debate would have been exhausted; but I suspect, Mr. Speaker, the government felt that they were in a real box on this, and I wouldn't be

surprised if they imposed the closure motion knowing full well what the ramifications of that would be and thereby allowed themselves to get out of the mess they were in.

Mr. Speaker, they were looking for a way out and that is a distinct possibility because I can't really believe that the House Leader, the Member for Springfield, was that naive and that foolish in running this House without having a plan because obviously, either he is not very smart in running this House, or he had a plan all rigged up to try and get out of that, but what he really did by imposing the closure motion he virtually caused himself all the problems. If he would have just allowed the debate to continue, Sir, we would have been out of here much much sooner.

But I think that, No 1, they were looking for a way out, which they got; and, No. 2, they just weren't - to use a sports vernacular - they weren't adapted for the House; they weren't House-wise. Mr. Speaker, they don't know how this Chamber operates and they don't know how, when implementing one course of action, the opposition will react. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that is the main job of the House Leader.

He should, or she should, have a feeling for what is going to happen. If you are going to do something over here, what is the reaction going to be on the other side? Surely, after the plebiscite in the City of Winnipeg, surely, with all the letters that were coming in, they must have realized what a closure motion would do to the opposition. They must have known what the reaction would be. Surely they can't be that foolhardy and not understand what would happen, because this was a major issue that was developing out there. There are enough members on that side that have sat in opposition to know what their job and what their duty would have been.

You know, Mr. Speaker, those members that knew that, if you'll research Hansard, you'll find out there are a fair number of members across the way that didn't touch this issue with a 10-foot pole, not at all.

The Member for Lac du Bonnet, who I think has been sort of shunned by the government because he was kind of close to Mr. Green and a few other people, but the Member for Lac du Bonnet, I would say, never spoke on the French language issue at all. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because he knew it was dynamite and it was suicide.

I'll bet you, in the caucus rooms - there was one member that left - but I'll bet you he told the government time and time again what you're doing here is foolhardy and he wouldn't touch this issue. There are a number over on the other side who have been in this Legislature long enough to see exactly what was happening, but for people to say that the House Leader did not know what the reaction on this side of the House was going to be, to closure, Mr. Speaker, if he didn't know that therein lies the biggest problem in this Chamber and the biggest problem with this issue, because he was not House-wise and that probably is the biggest condemnation of the government across the way.

No. 1, they weren't people wise, because they were doing something that 80 percent of the people didn't want, and they were not House-wise. The handling of this issue is one which I believe will go down in history as a classic example of how you can mess up legislation and mess up the workings of a Legislature because

he doesn't understand it - and when he made a move, what the reaction to that move was going to be.

Mr. Speaker, we all know - was it Einstein's Theory, the Theory of Relativity? - for every action there is a reaction.

A MEMBER: You remember Albert.

MR. R. BANMAN: Yes, it was Albert Einstein.

Mr. Speaker, for every action there's a reaction. So for the government to put in closure, surely they would have had to weigh what the reaction was. I suggest to you, as the members who have sat in opposition and have sat in government - there's a lot of experience out there - they knew. And if they didn't know, that is a worse condemnation on those members opposite than I guess many people would even venture to do right now.

It now comes down to a point where we have set that issue aside and that issue has gone to the Supreme Court. We are still, in this Legislature however, debating the aftermath of that. We could be spending time on the Estimates, but this government is so paranoid about this bell-ringing episode that they went through, that they are now going to try and vindicate their position and trying to get public sentiment on their side to deal with bell ringing and limit the bell ringing to 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, what we have said is, on constitutional amendments, as the Member for Elmwood put forward today or yesterday, and as the Member for Fort Garry has constantly said at the Rules Committee, on a constitutional amendment do away with the right for government to impose closure. Do away with that right. Fifteen minute bell ringing - there's no problem. That's something we could look at, but do away with the right to have closure on a constitutional amendment. That's all we ask.

That is an eminently fair position, I believe, because - and the government has to ask themselves - do you really want to go through a constitutional change, whether it would be on property rights or other things without having a consensus in this House? If the consensus of this House is achieved, there will be a consensus, I suggest, out in the public; and on some of the issues it might be 50-50, it might be 45-55 and we all know those are the dicey ones and, as politicians, those are the worst ones we have to make decisions on because it's very close and it's a judgmental call. It becomes a judgmental call if half of your constituents are for it and half are against it, and I would suggest that that was probably the case in seat belts with a lot of urban ridings here. I know there are a lot of people that have calls on both sides, about equally. That's where the politician then has to use his or her final feelings and final beliefs in dealing with the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I don't really believe that any government, after having seen what has happened on this issue, wants to put through a constitutional amendment by using their sheer numbers in this Chamber. I say to you that I believe what makes eminently good sense in this situation is for the government to make that change which says they will not invoke closure on a constitutional amendment.

It's simple. I think that one thing we will see happen then is that the 15-minute time limit won't be of that

big a concern to people. But I say to you, there are a lot of people out there that do not trust this government and now are concerned that they want to pass this piece of legislation before they even introduce any other legislation. When you look at the Order Paper, we haven't got anything controversial or really - what have we got, two bills, three bills on the Order Paper? I've had my constituents tell me, we don't trust these people.

What are they trying to do? They're trying to pass a rule change now which will, in effect, limit the amount of time, especially if they're invoking closure motions. And what is to keep them from introducing that same resolution that they withdrew after, let's say, the Supreme Court ruling or whatever happens?

Mr. Speaker, if they say they're not going to do that, why don't you then remove the right to put closure on a constitutional amendment? Why don't you do that? That's all you have to do. That is what causes all the trouble on that amendment. If there had not been closure, the debate would have continued and sure, there would have been more amendments coming in, but the House Leader - if he doesn't know this - knows it's a dimirishing process, that every time somebody speaks and every time a new amendment comes in, it comes down to a point where you're narrowing, you're getting further and further into the tunnel. That's where this government just didn't understand the people and showed a total lack of understanding of this House, and that's why we are in the dilemma we are in today.

So to rectify their bungling and mishandling of this situation, they are trying to vindicate themselves by saying, we are going to impose a 15-minute time limit. Mr. Speaker, as government, if we're dealing with any issue that is non-constitutional, I want to tell the members opposite that it really doesn't concern me too much when they're in opposition if they're going to ring the bells on a piece of legislation and stop the workings of the House because I believe that the bell-ringing tactic is a very dangerous one for the opposition, because it can be turned on them very quickly. That's what this government was counting on; but it wasn't working because the majority of people were in favour of our position.

Mr. Speaker, I'm ready to take the chance, if you want to call it, that when the members opposite are in opposition - some of them at least because they won't all be here, there might be a few left - but I want to tell them if they want to ring the bells on a highway traffic act change or something to the health act or something like that, I welcome that. If I'd be House Leader, I want to tell you that I'd let the bells ring, I'd just let the bells ring.

That was the unbelievable part with this House Leader. He had the bells ringing and then, all of a sudden, he called us back in. Mr. Speaker, the poor man didn't know if he was coming or going and that's what causes all the problems. Now, he's trying to vindicate his position by what? By a rule change, before we have any bills on the Order Paper and one almost thinks that he's so paranoiac about this that he doesn't want to put any bills on the Order Paper because he's scared we're going to ring the bells.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's utter nonsense. I think that he is overreacting and the government is just so nervous about this bell ringing thing that they again

have had their vision of what this House is all about distorted to such an extent that we have this resolution before us here now.

I want to tell them that I would take the chance to have them ring the bells on any issue, because I want to tell members opposite that we, as the opposition, were monitoring on a day-to-day basis - this is without telling any tales or secrets out of caucus - we were monitoring very closely, because we saw what happened to our federal counterparts. Sure they rang the bells, but there came a time when the people said enough is enough. We realize now that the situation is such that you've made your point, now you're going to have to go in and vote. We monitored that very closely.

I'm sure if the House Leader would have let the bells ring another week or two, the tide would have started to turn but, again, he misread the people and misread the House and that's why we're here right now and that's the problem we face. I will take the chance when they are opposition that if they want to ring the bells for a week, if I would be the House Leader I'd say, go to it; because I know that at some point in time the people will object and they will be forced back in here. They will try that once or twice on some bills and, then, Mr. Speaker, what will happen is that they will not try it again.

We now have a situation where a government is so paranoiac about this bell ringing that they are going to such lengths to try and rectify a problem which was inflicted upon themselves by their lack of understanding of what's happened here. I, for one, Mr. Speaker, can't go along with it, I can't. I cannot allow a government to pass a resolution to make an amendment by, again, their majority.

This is the other thing that I want to bring out here, is that you've got a government now dealing with the bell ringing, instead of leaving well enough alone out there; what they're doing is they are, once again, highlighting their ineptitudes to the people out there by bringing this forward. My goodness, you'd think now that it's at the Supreme Court you'd leave it alone. They wouldn't touch this thing. What we see happening is that they are moving ahead on this issue before there are any bills on the Order Paper, and I have to ask myself why are they doing it?

So, I say to members opposite you've made a number of real bad mistakes in handling this issue, and you've made some real blunders in running this House. While the bell-ringing tactic is one which was disdainful to myself, I believe that it was one of democracy's finest hours in this province because it served to have the will of the people done and that's what it did. As a result of that, I think that the Manitoban people really have found out that this government is not in a position and is not in a responsible state to run this province. That's going to be their biggest problem to overcome in the next election because the people just won't trust them. They misread the people so badly on one issue, and then they refused to back off and started using closure on a constitutional amendment and the people of Manitoba will not forgive them for doing that.

So, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to people who felt that democracy was being threatened by bell ringing, in my 11 years here it was the people that won. It was the people's will was done and if it meant bell ringing, so be it. The democratic was served extremely

well by the existing rules that are in place today. It was a government who fumbled the ball on this issue and really went ahead and did something in the House and outside of the House which was contrary to what the people of Manitoba wanted.

So, Mr. Speaker, anybody that says that they are concerned about bell ringing, let me say to them that there comes a point in time in bell ringing for an opposition, at which point there is a point of diminishing return for bell ringing. This government didn't realize it. I say to you that I realize it and I know for a fact that any opposition, before employing that tactic, they might try it once and abuse it, but I'll tell you they'll get so many calls from constituents and concerned people, as our federal counterparts did on the bell ringing over there, until finally it had to be dealt with, that I am not one bit concerned that bell ringing is going to destroy democracy because I believe that the people of Manitoba are the best judge of that.

They will reprimand anybody that is acting irresponsible in this Legislature. Mr. Speaker, we acted responsibly and that's why the polls are that good, that's why the majority of people in Manitoba are supporting us today. Democracy was well served by the rules. If the government wants to change the rules to put a 15-minute time frame limit on it, so be it; but do away with the right that for government to have closure on constitutional amendments and people will understand that. That is what caused us the problem and that is where this government went totally astray in dealing with this issue. Don't be paranoid about this, let's get on with doing the business of the House.

I, for one, will speak every time a resolution like this comes forward where the government wants to use its majority to pass a rule change which I believe is not in the best interests of this province and will not serve the people. After all that's why we're here, we're here to serve the people and that's what this rule did last time and I will not stand by idly and see it change without some fight being put up by myself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question?
The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. A. MACKLING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it is not my intent to speak at any length on this matter, but merely to indicate my support for the resolution and the rationale for that support. It is not my intent to reflect on the long hot summer or the long cold days when issue of a question of the extension or the confirmation of French language rights was a matter of debate in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber.

I recognize that the Honourable Member for Elmwood and others see in this resolution an opportunity to continue to endeavour to heat up the issue, because they see in that some political profit for themselves. I think that is a mistake; I think that there are gains to be made in the short run for some people in respect to some issues. I think it takes wisdom; I think it takes some dedication to a greater Canada, a greater Manitoba to look reflectively and reasonably at the longer issue.

We have in Canada, we have in Manitoba, a blessed people, a people that have been given the opportunity

to maintain and flourish two basic languages and cultures and because of the fact that there wasn't a dominant thrust, there wasn't an overwhelming, compelling argument and demand that everyone must only speak and understand and communicate in one language, it afforded an opportunity for all those who had come to Manitoba, had come to Canada, to reflect with pride on their beginnings, on their own cultural base and to protect that base. So rather than being a negative factor in Canadian history, in the history of Manitoba, the fact that there was a duality of language in its application from the earliest time in Canadian history, strengthened our social fabric.

So I think that I, for one, want to reflect not in a negative sense on the concern of many, to ensure that the finest traditions that we have inherited in this country are destroyed in negative, partisan political use of an issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal more precisely with the concern about a change, a strengthening of the rules. Throughout the history of political organization, it may be a mistake on the part of most people to perceive that Conservatives generally have been those who favour the rule of law and the protection of the law. I don't think the Conservatives alone in the history of the world are associated with that. I think that notwithstanding the concerns of libertarians like John Stuart Mill, there has been an overriding concern on the part of all of those who have inherited the parliamentary tradition, that our laws should be developed not from the narrow perspective of inhibiting or restricting the development of free people, but rather that reasonable law can liberate people, ensure opportunities for people to exercise their full talent.

Mr. Speaker, in this Chamber, regrettably, we have seen the opposition party for its narrow, partisan reasons to disregard the rule frequently, all too frequently, and that was exemplified during Sessions of this House up until this point - members opposite flouting the rules.

I recall the instances, Mr. Speaker, when I rose as a Deputy House Leader who was chastised and heckled, there were snickers, that I was concerned that the traditions we had inherited, the excellence of the rules that had been fashioned as a result of the long tradition of parliamentary government, were being ignored in this Chamber. I believe that the honourable members cannot help but recognize that those commentators who have looked at what happened when the members opposite disregarded the call of the bells to come in and vote; when dispassionate observers, those not in this Chamber, said that that amounted to anarchy, dispassionate, reasoned people looking at the conduct of people disregarding the rule of the bells - I think they must reflect on that seriously, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the intent of the rules and an obvious logical interpretation of those rules that are set out and those precedents that are set out dealing with bell ringing, clearly lead one to the conclusion that the bells are to call in the members. So when the Speaker of this House says, as he often does and as the Speaker does in parliamentary institutions everywhere where this system is employed, and the bells are requested to be rung and the Speaker says, call in the members, it is contempt for the rule of law, it is contempt for the parliamentary tradition, it is contempt for the rights

that we enjoy, for members by deliberate conduct to refrain from backing into the Chamber for partisan, political reasons and ignore those rules.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what the conduct of the many past months has amounted to, a contempt for the institution of Parliament. Those observers from both near and far who have commented on the actions of those who disregarded the rules, fairly reflect a support for anarchy, that is, when the rule or the law is not happily acceptable then the way you deal with it is ignore it. That is the kind of example the honourable members have displayed.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of Manitoba now recognize that it is time that a precise rule was fashioned, so that the discretion that was normally available for honourable members to recognize the precedents of parliamentary practice, can no longer be safely left to their discretion. So it is, Mr. Speaker, that the proposal that we have before us fixes a precise time for the ringing of the bells, but does afford some discretion in respect to the practical workings of this institution so that when members are unavoidably absent, there is some flexibility in the system, flexibility to provide members to get back to vote, not to run away and hide.

Mr. Speaker, now members opposite have waxed very righteous and indignant about any question of their conduct when they went away, disregarded the call of the bells, disregarded the request of the Speaker. Honourable members have said that this wouldn't have come about, I suppose, if they had been in charge. I recall the Honourable Member for Lakeside quoted as saying sometime later, oh well, he would have shut off the bells. I've heard other people saying, they would not have tolerated the situation, they would have shut off the bells.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means that those who now are critical of our endeavour to refine the rules to make sure that there's less indecision, less doubt about the application of the rules, are now saying that even if there had been a rule, they would have disregarded it. Because clearly it was your view that the bells could not be arbitrarily shut off, that there had to be a development of consensus in the Chamber by the recognition of the Whips. Mr. Speaker, they would have disregarded that according to their views. They would have shut off the bells.

Well, I believe that the Speaker, and the Speaker alone, in those circumstances, could have intervened and ordered a shut-off of the bells and demanded a vote be taken, because only the Speaker, in my opinion, has a right to determine when a contempt has taken place of the rules.

Mr. Speaker, I think for anyone now to argue that the rules should not be refined, that there should not be greater certainty for the protection of the parliamentary system by the passage of the amendment that is proposed here, one that provides for greater certainty in respect to the bell-ringing process and yet one that provides for fairness and flexibility - anyone who opposes that surely is being unreasonable. Surely, Mr. Speaker, unreasonable attitudes should not prevail. We would expect all parties to want to see the parliamentary system work and work well, want to see the rule of law cherished, maintained, protected and not attacked, not ignored, Mr. Speaker.

Surely, members in this House should be setting an example of how the rule of law should be sustained. The rules are fashioned for reasonable people. Surely, it is not unreasonable now, Mr. Speaker, after all that has gone before, to ask all members of this House to unanimously endorse what is a very reasonable, pragmatic change in the rules, one that in my opinion deserves the support of all members.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question?

The Honourable Member for Charleswood.

HON. S. LYON: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to make a few comments on this motion introduced by the House Leader and intending to make some changes in the rules with respect to bell ringing.

I listened with some interest to the remarks of the Minister of Resources who, in his pretenses at statemanship, was attempting to elevate himself into I know an unnatural position and said that he was not going to reflect in any negative sense upon the main topic that is really the true topic in this debate, the question of the ill-starred efforts by this government to effect a major change to the Constitution of Manitoba for all time, which said major change did not have the support either of this House or of the people of Manitoba. That's really what's under debate.

When we debate matters such as bell ringing and so on, we're really trivializing the debate. The bell ringing wouldn't have come about without the mishandling, sheer incompetence, arrogance and insensitivity of this government on a topic that goes to the root and branch of this province. He said, however, that he didn't want to reflect in any negative sense on that debate, that he was for a greater Canada and for a greater Manitoba and so on.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how well he remembers the statements of his First Minister and the statements of his colleague, the Attorney-General, who were at great pains in the printed material that they turned out, supporting their ill-starred attempt to make a fundamental change to our Constitution which was not supported by the people; who were at great pains, Mr. Speaker, to say to any and all who would read the documents, these changes do not reflect and will not result in the kind of federal bilingualism that Mr. Trudeau has imposed upon Canada.

Does the Minister of Resources not remember those cowardly statements that were made? Now he tries to put on the mantle of statemanship and say that what his government was in favour of was motherhood and a great Canada and Canadian unity. That's not what they said when they were in the throes of the debate. They said, no, we're not trying to do too much at all.

Mind you, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the amount of deceit, the amount of fraudulence, the amount of sheer lack of credibility generated by this government in its printed and in its spoken statements on this matter is something that history will not soon forget. One of the reasons that this government today has no credibility with the people of Manitoba is because this government tried to deceive the people of Manitoba on this issue, to tell them that black was white and so on.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, P. EYLER: Order please. The Honourable Government House Leader on a point of order.

HON. A. ANSTETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Honourable Member for Charleswood is aware that words such as "fraudulent, deceit and deceive" are unparliamentary

HON. S. LYON: I was being mild.

HON. A. ANSTETT: . . . and that they reflect a disdain for the parliamentary process that I'm sure the Member for Charleswood would not want to demonstrate in this House.

HON. S. LYON: The amount of misinformation that was propagated by this government on the issue is primarily reflected in the lack of credibility which this government has among the people of Manitoba today. If my honourable friend doesn't like the word "deceit," then "misinformation" is good enough. They are all euphemisms for lie.

What are the origins, Mr. Speaker, of the whole bell-ringing technique?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Government House Leader on a point of order.

HON. A. ANSTETT: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member used words that were unparliamentary and has not withdrawn those words. He used the words "fraudulent, deceit and deceive" and the euphemistic attempt at withdrawal by referring to them that way does not qualify as a withdrawal in this Chamber and never has.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The term "deceive" is found in Beauschesne in both lists of acceptable and unacceptable words. The Member for Charleswood is, however, treading dangerously close to the brink of using unparliamentary language. I would ask him to choose his words carefully and reflect on the intent of what he means to say and not to offend the Assembly.

The Member for Charleswood.

HON. S. LYON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I try always to be on firm ground and I will remain there.

The origin of the technique of the bells . . . "Nicaragua Nick," the Member for Inkster fondly known as "Nicaragua Nick" is piping from the outer reaches of the government benches again

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. All members of this House are known by their ministerial portfolios or the constituencies they represent. Nicknames are not appropriate.

The Honourable Member for Charleswood.

HON. S. LYON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he wants to be identified for all of his ill-considered interruptions, I'll be happy to do it, although I imagine his constituents will get rather tired of it. Mr. Speaker, he should claim anonymity, not seek identification. With his track record and loyalty, Mr. Speaker, he should seek anonymity.

Mr. Speaker, the origin of bells, of course, in this House has to do with the Mark 1 version of socialist

government that we had in Manitoba in the 1970s, the bunch that I described the other day as being the second worst government we ever had in the history of this province. They were soon supplemented by the Mark 2 version. The Mark 1 version in their indecent haste to copy a number of procedural techniques of the Federal Parliament, brought in the technique of bell ringing and, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that bell ringing, by itself, is really worthy of the time that the House is having to devote to it now.

It was used with prudence and common sense as it was in most other jurisdictions, and there it sits. However, having been hatched by the previous socialist administration as one of their techniques whereby they were attempting to make procedure in this House somewhat reflective of the House of Commons procedure, I've no great argument with that at all.

They're now seeking a change to the very rule that they brought in themselves because, in their estimation, the opposition - if we are to believe the mutterings we just heard from the Minister of Resources - the opposition has done everything from slap down motherhood to commit some form of indecent act against the parliamentary system by the use of the bells.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we are really dealing with a peripheral issue on bells because the real issue that caused bell ringing to be used in a more protracted way was the attempt of this government to amend the Constitution of Manitoba in a fundamental and substantive way to make French and English the official languages of this province for the first time in our history; a move which was not supported either by this House or by the people of Manitoba. That's really what the debate is all about, not the bells, the bells are really a peripheral issue.

Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves, the first occasion in that debate on which the bells were used was on the 17th of June, 1983. I spoke earlier, Sir, about the absence of credibility of this government, its rather pathetic attempts at revisionist history, even those that appear in Hansard, which put the lie to many of the statements that they make otherwise.

On the 17th of June you may recall, Mr. Speaker, of 1983, after persistent questioning by myself and others in the House, and pleas to the government to agree to our request for public committee hearings on the proposed amendment to amend the Constitution, the government refused to have public committee hearings and, as a result, Mr. Speaker, immediately after the question period was concluded, a motion to adjourn the House was put by the opposition, a recorded vote was sought on that motion, and the bells were allowed to be rung until near the regular adjournment hour, that is sometime around 12:00 or 12:30 that day.

Now why was that done, Mr. Speaker? It was done very simply in order to bring to the attention of the public, perhaps for the first time, that this government was going to try to railroad a fundamental change to our Constitution which, in all probability, could never be changed again through this House without any public committee hearings whatsoever.

The Attorney-General, either that day or shortly thereafter, announced his public propaganda meetings. Ah, but that was a different thing. This was where he got his friend, the Dean of the Law School, to go out

and chair some government-organized meetings in the country and one in Winnipeg, I believe it was, in order to try to tell their part of the story, but that's a far cry from committee hearings. Unless my memory is incorrect - and I haven't checked it directly, Mr. Speaker - that is the first occasion in that debate on which the bells were rung, and I may well be prejudiced, I think that the bells were properly rung that day in order to signal to the people of Manitoba the arrogance, the contempt that this government was showing to the people of Manitoba and to the whole parliamentary institution, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is ironic, if not laughable, to have a Minister of the Crown stand in his place, as the Minister of Resources did a few minutes ago, and talk about the opposition's assaults on parliamentary freedom. These assaults on parliamentary freedom that he complains of, were nothing compared to what this government had in its mind to do until the opposition and the people of Manitoba stopped them in their tracks, and the question of bell ringing, Mr. Speaker, is only one of the pieces of incidental weaponry that was used in order to stop a thoughtless, arrogant, insensitive government from showing its utter contempt for the people of Manitoba, by refusing to have public committee hearings on this matter. They were forced, Mr. Speaker, kicking and screaming, into public committee hearings on the constitutional amendment and what triggered, I suggest, in the minds of the public what this government was attempting to push through under the carpet, was the fact that they didn't dare take their amendments before a committee hearing until they were forced to.

So should we change the rule on bell ringing because this government, which was committing a form of assault upon the parliamentary tradition, was forced to change its course and do the honourable thing when the bells were rung on the 17th of June? Should we change the rule on bell ringing because of that so-called assault on the parliamentary system? I think not, Mr. Speaker. I think history will show that that was a proper utilization of a weapon of parliamentary procedure in order to bring an arrogant government to heel, as we did.

Subsequently, bells were rung again during the balance of that debate, usually to point up other examples of either government intransigents or government impatience or, finally, the willingness of this government to use closure on a constitutional amendment.

Mr. Speaker, we have never had a constitutional amendment passed before in the history of this province by the Legislature of Manitoba. The cabin boy who's been given charge of the helm and is running the NDP ship into the shoals says, from his seat, that there was a previous one passed. There was one of a secretarial nature that was passed having to do with a meeting that was required under The Constitution Act as it was passed in 1981, having to do with a meeting that was to be held. Yes, that's true; that was passed and there was no objection to it because it was largely procedural and secretarial in nature and it didn't go to the substance of the Constitution of Manitoba; but the debate that we had last summer, and leading into January and February of 1984, Mr. Speaker, was the first substantive amendment to the Constitution of Manitoba ever passed by this Legislature.

When I listen to members across the way talk about the contempt of the opposition for the parliamentary system, I say to myself, how long do they think they can get away with that kind of misinformation, trying to beguile the electorate into thinking that they had chosen an honourable course?

They chose a dishonourable course and they were brought to heel because they chose a dishonourable course, and the bells - to repeat myself, Sir, - were only part of the weaponry that had to be used against this contemptible government to stop them from performing a kind of indecent contempt against Parliament, against the democratic process, and against the will of the people of Manitoba. So should we change the rule on bells merely because it was part of that weaponry that was assembled to stop a bad government from doing a bad thing? I think not, Mr. Speaker, I think not.

Bell ringing is not really what is the cause of the problem in this House. Bad government is the problem in this House.

This matter was debated quite thoroughly. As a matter of fact, I remember the resolution, Mr. Speaker. The opposition proposed a number of amendments, each member of the opposition, sometimes occasionally members of the government spoke on those amendments; the opposition kept the debate going without any bell ringing at all for some considerable period of time by using another legitimate parliamentary weapon, namely, the power of amendment.

If my honourable friends are so concerned about their new-found loyalty to parliamentary democracy, if they are so concerned about expediting debate, can we now expect that they are going to try to limit the number of amendments that are brought in to a particular proposition? Will that be the next thing, Mr. Speaker, that they will cast their malignant eyes upon? I wonder.

The opposition, Mr. Speaker, used a number of amendments to continue the debate, and the debate did continue and members spoke and the bells weren't ringing. Ultimately, the cabin boy, known laughingly as the House Leader, raised a matter before the Speaker with respect to the third - or was it the fourth - of a series of amendments that the government had brought, or that the opposition had brought. Mr. Speaker, that's quite an understandable mistake to be talking about this side as the government because, as I understand it, the other side won't even bring forward legislation now without checking it with the opposition because they are the real government and have demonstrated that for the last two and a half years.

Mr. Speaker, it was the now House Leader who stood up and made a long speech in which he rung in everything from Alcibiades to Beowulf to McMillan, talking about his version of the precedents of parliamentary democracy, and it was on the basis of his interjection and objection to one of the amendments that Mr. Speaker found an amendment out of order.

I mean no reflection on the Chair when I say that was a very dubious ruling and one that other occupants of the Chair will have to work their way around, because how can a Speaker accept two or three amendments and then declare a fourth, which is in the same vein, as being out of order? As a lawyer, I haven't figured that one out yet and I doubt very much, Mr. Speaker,

if any other student of the parliamentary system will ever be able to figure it out.

Nonetheless, the ability of the opposition to move amendments was aptly demonstrated. The ability of the opposition to carry on the debate without using the weaponry of bell ringing, was proceeding until that ruling took place. Then, Mr. Speaker, we moved to the August situation where the House Leaders, as they then were - I believe the Attorney-General and the Member for Turtle Mountain - got together and arrived at a compromise whereby the House would clean up all of its routine business, other than that dealing with the constitutional amendment, and that the House would then adjourn and that committee hearings would proceed to be followed, if I remember the schedule correctly, by an immediate or instant recalling of the House so that the matter could be dealt with before the end of the calendar year.

Some of us remember this sense of false urgency that the government had. My heavens, it had to get these important matters through; not a word or a tittle was going to be changed; not a comma could be changed. Remember all of that sordid history, Mr. Speaker? And this government says that it has credibility in this House, or with the people of Manitoba. It just can't be believed.

So, Mr. Speaker, the committee hearings went ahead during the summer, and did the government immediately reconvene the House after? No, they didn't. No, they didn't reconvene the House until some time in January, Mr. Speaker, thereby again putting the lie to the statements that they had made earlier that this matter was so urgent and had to be dealt with immediately.

A MEMBER: December 31st

HON. S. LYON: December 31st deadline, my colleague says. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know how much we can accept the word of this government on anything that it says.

When the government finally did reconvene, or the Legislature, in January of 1984, and brought forward a whole series of amendments, a number of which the opposition indicated we had no objection to, they were improvements. I said that they had improved their original package rather considerably; I think I may even have exaggerated and said they had improved their package about 90 percent. This is the government that said they wouldn't change a word; remember that, Mr. Speaker? This is the government that claims to have credibility.

Well, when that matter was finally brought before the House again and a motion of amendment was placed by the opposition to strike out the still offensive section which, in our estimation, would still have left the implication that Manitoba was to be declared officially bilingual, which was out of keeping with our history, with our tradition, and with the history of this country, and the tradition of this country. The only bilingual province in Canada is New Brunswick and it moved of its own motion to do that for good and sufficient reason.

There was no good and sufficient reason for Manitoba to voluntarily move to amend its Constitution to make it officially bilingual. For what reason? Not, according

to the Premier or the Attorney-General, so that we would be better Canadians because they said, no, we don't want to be officially bilingual like those bad people in Ottawa. Boy, we won't have anything like that, you don't have to worry about that. So we moved an amendment, Mr. Speaker, that would strike out 23.1, the offensive part of the fourth version of the government's constitutional amendment, and we proceeded to speak on that. It was then that we started getting the whines from the government about refusal of the opposition to debate.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, they moved closure and then the bells started to ring seriously because here was this arrogant, contemptible government moving closure on the first substantive constitutional amendment ever before this House, moving closure on it after having misinformed the people of Manitoba and this House about its intentions; about the wording of the amendment; about when it was going to reconvene the House; about having misinformed, at every juncture of the debate, this House about what it intended to do. Then they had the arrogance to move closure and we rang the bells to stop this arrogant government from trying to force through a bad constitutional amendment, better than the first one, but still bad in its ramifications. We rang the bells to stop that closure from taking place.

Mr. Speaker, should the House today change the rules on ringing of bells because a determined opposition, standing up for the majority of the people of Manitoba, stopped this government from doing something that was bad? Are we going to change the rules on bell ringing because this government was brought to heel again? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I think that students of the parliamentary system will look at this debate that took place in this House with rather less frenzy and frothing at the mouth than some of the members opposite and some of their sycophants in the press across the country, and will say that wasn't an abuse of the parliamentary procedure.

After all, the opposition in this House is a minority - that's the only place, Mr. Speaker, where our party is a minority, we are a majority everywhere else in the province. We are only a minority in here and that won't be for very long.

MR. D. SCOTT: I wonder why; I wonder why.

HON. S. LYON: Mr. Speaker, Nicaragua Nick is piping up again. Has he got another flag he'd like to go and burn somewhere?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I have already remarked to the Member for Charleswood that nicknames are not appropriate in this House. I would ask him to withdraw that.

The Member for Charleswood.

HON. S. LYON: Mr. Speaker, that's a proper appellation.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. If the Member for Charleswood wishes to challenge to the Chair he knows the appropriate manner. I would ask the Member for Charleswood to withdraw.

HON. S. LYON: The Member for Inkster, Mr. Speaker. I have now identified who Nicaragua Nick is, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we rang the bells . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please, order please. One more time I would ask the Member for Charleswood to withdraw.

HON. S. LYON: I have already withdrawn, Mr. Speaker. One has to have sharp ears.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't gotten around to reflecting on the Minister of Resources yet and the way he should be reflected upon. We know about his affinity for flames, too, not only forest fires.

So the government is now suggesting that the rules on bell ringing be changed because they were stopped from enforcing closure on the House; I don't think so. The final motion that was brought forward by the cabin boy acting as helmsman was the motion that the rules be changed, this very motion, that the rules be changed in the middle of the debate. And this was a government that had gone to the Opposition House Leader in August and said, we want to sign a pact - almost unheard of - but knowing the lack of credibility of this government we agreed to sign a pact with them because you've got to get almost everything in writing from these people, and even that wasn't good enough.

In that strange pact that they asked to be signed last August, they insisted on putting in a clause that said that the bells would only be rung for two weeks. We thought that was laughable, Mr. Speaker. We really thought that was laughable but, given the paranoia on that side of the House which still persists, then we can see that this government was really in a form of dire straits that even Mr. Trudeau hasn't put the country in yet, although he's come close to it.

Mr. Speaker, they tried to change the rules in the middle of the debate and when we refused, because of their contempt for their own agreement that they had signed, when we refused to permit that motion to come to a vote, we rang the bells. Now they say we should change the rule on ringing the bells because we didn't agree to their sordid attempt to change the rules in the middle of the game because they didn't like the rules. Now, Mr. Speaker, they tell us that what we were doing was an affront to parliamentary democracy; not at all, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the House Leader, come cabin boy, has had opportunity to speak; if he wishes to speak later in the debate I'm sure he'll get the attention that he deserves in the House.

So the main use of the bells, Mr. Speaker, in that long debate of last year and in 1984, the main use of the bells was, first of all, to bring to the attention of the people of Manitoba that this government was not going to put the constitutional amendment to public committee hearings. And, because the bells were rung, the public were alerted. The main use of the bells, Mr. Speaker, was to oppose closure and, because we opposed closure, Mr. Speaker, we forced this government to reconsider its ill-considered initiatives.

The main use of the bells, Mr. Speaker, was to stop this government from changing the rules in the middle of the game. You can't do it in football, why should you be able to do it in Parliament. That's why the bells were rung, Mr. Speaker. What is at issue, Mr. Speaker, is not bell ringing . . .

MR. SPEAKER, Hon. J. Walding: Order please.

HON. S. LYON: . . . what's at issue is bad government; that's what's at issue in this House, in this Legislature, and in this province, bad government; not a bad rule. The rule, I suggest, Sir, has been used with some care. Mr. Speaker, I even believe that, given the present incompetence of those temporarily occupying the Treasury Benches, there is room for some compromise to be worked out on bell ringing. I think that that could happen if the word of the government could be taken and believed.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think this Legislature should be swayed in any way by a lot of nitwit comments in the press, or otherwise, about what we know went on in this House. Just because this government has tried to hide behind ill-considered, untutored editorial comment is no reason for us to suggest that those comments are clothed with fact; they aren't.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we should reflect on the fact that in Ottawa this rule has been used. If my honourable friends opposite want to learn something about the consistency of the press, perhaps they should refer to some of the editorial comments that were made in 1980 when the official Conservative opposition in Ottawa was ringing the bells in the House of Commons to prevent Mr. Trudeau from unilaterally taking a constitutional package to London for change without the consent of the majority of provinces. Read what the editorials had to say then. "It was a great use of the parliamentary weaponry to stop a bad government from doing something that would not be in the interests of the country." Now the fact that some of those same editorialists, maybe two or three years later, when a similar set of circumstances arose, didn't see it in quite the same way, shows the fragility of any government trying to hide behind editorial armour. It's like paper and it'll change overnight like some paper with which we're all familiar.

Mr. Speaker, there is no inherent right in a government to have all of its initiatives passed into law, nor is there any inherent right in the parliamentary system, particularly to have its initiative chiseled into stone in a written Constitution, even more so in the latter case.

I've heard and read a number - and I describe them only as nitwit comments - to this effect, that a government must always have its way. I'm sure that students of the British Parliamentary system would laugh all the way to the library if they were to fall victim to that kind of a simplistic shallow stupid argument. Ask those who have read anything about the home rule debates in Great Britain, particularly in the first decade and the second decade, as to whether or not a government should have its will. The elected House of Commons on a number of occasions, after every parliamentary device that could be used, after all of the elongated speeches, the House sitting for day after day, 24 hours a day and so on, there were so many home rule bills that it's difficult, Mr. Speaker, to be precise about each one; but on at least one occasion, if my memory serves, on at least one occasion the government withdrew the bill; on another occasion they got it through and the House of Lords turned it down. Where do we get this current nonsense about some absolute inherent right for a government to pass its

will, whether its will is flawed or not. That's nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

The government has to live within the parliamentary system. The parliamentary system says that if you can command a majority, and you can get a vote called, maybe then you can the law passed but, in the meantime, the opposition, the public, everybody have the right to use every legitimate means to dissuade the government from what it thinks is a bad course of action and, Mr. Speaker, in the context of the debate we finished last summer and earlier this winter, the use of the bells was a legitimate technique to stop a bad government from doing a bad thing.

Now, just having said that, Mr. Speaker, I repeat what I said before. I can see that a change in the rules could usefully take place and I think a consensus could be reached on that, but not for the reasons being advanced by the government; no. If they continue to advance those reasons, they will get the backs of the opposition up to the point where we'll probably insist that bell ringing stay because they're trying to get rid of bells for the wrong reasons, because they won't admit their own culpability for what took place and for the fact that the people of Manitoba were the victors, and that this government lost, for about three elections I'd say.

So, Mr. Speaker, flimflam aside, comment by the press aside, and so on, we know that we have to look again - and I know there's a resolution on the Order Paper to this effect - what we do have to look at again is whether or not a plain majority in a Legislature should be entitled to make an amendment to the Constitution. I think honestly we have to look at that. My recollection is that there was some talk of this in the formative stages of that constitutional amendment in 1980, and I intend to do some research on it to find out what happened to the concept. There was some talk about it at that time. I'm not persuaded by people who say, well, you were a party to the signing of that so therefore you agree to it. I say when you see that something can be misused as that Section 43 was attempted to be misused by this government, then you'd better take a look at curing the real problem. Section 43 needs to be cured before the bells.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest, in closing, that the facts be substituted for all the methodology and the self-serving statements that we have heard on this matter and that the House, I am satisfied, after proper reflection and the mythology and everything is stripped away and all of the editorial comments are consigned to the wastebin, my honourable members would do well to, remember the old adage that today's newspaper is tomorrow's garbage wrapping. When it comes to preservation of the parliamentary institution, I would place firm reliance upon every one of the 57 members of this House before I would on any newspaper person or editor in this country, and you know, Mr. Speaker, what I think of some of the members opposite.

So I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that what this House should do is to look at this in a reasonable way and I think that a consensus can be arrived at, not for the reasons given by my honourable friends opposite, but a consensus can be arrived at. In the meantime, we should rejoice in the fact that the people of Manitoba have been served by the rules of this House and saved from the machinations of a bad government.

The Honourable Member for Kirkfield Park.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of bell ringing and the rules, as a member who is in first term, the rules and procedures aren't as familiar to me as to many of the long-time members of the House, so listening to the debate has been interesting; watching the ideas that have come forth has been interesting, but one thing that seems to come forward more than anything else is that there has normally been consensus when there is going to be a change of the rules, that both sides will come to an agreement.

For a government that seems to take the stand that unions and management must always be at the table working and coming to a consensus, coming to their own agreement, I don't understand why this government would then be pushing forward a rule that with some more work there could be a consensus arrived at. So I really find it very difficult to understand why this government, after the terrible time that they put themselves through, they put the people of Manitoba through, that they put everyone through on the French language issue, that they would again bring something forward that they're going to have a problem passing, because they could get consensus if they just took some time and were reasonable.

What we have is a bell ringing limit of 15 minutes, which could or could not be workable, but 24 hours that you can go to the Speaker and get an extra 24 hours of bell ringing. Well, this is obviously just a loophole for the government. They haven't even got the courage of their own convictions. They want to have a 15-minute limit, but look, what if we're not in the House? What if we don't win? We want to have that opening. It doesn't matter to the opposition whether there is the 24 hours, but it certainly matters to the government, so it defeats the whole purpose to have that loophole sitting there.

They talk about other Parliaments in Canada, how things have worked. This is the only time that bell ringing has been an issue and the issue was not because of the actual bell ringing itself. It was the fact that this government was pushing through something that the people of Manitoba were opposed to. They couldn't get any fair hearings or any representation from their own members, because certainly all the opposition wasn't from this side of the House, from the people that we represented, it was all over. They were marching; they were going to see the Ministers in their offices; they were going to see the backbench. I think the Member for Riel had two delegations, signatures in the thousands.

I don't know where that puts you as a representative of the people that you're there to look after their concerns. You're not there because of your conscience. As far as I'm concerned, members don't have consciences of their own. They're there to represent the feelings of their constituents when they let them know. We're not here to represent ourselves.

The Member for Thompson, who natters away in the back seat, he's not there to represent his feelings, his convictions. He's there to represent the people of Thompson.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MRS. G. HAMMOND: Mr. Speaker, each one of us has opinions, and in the most part, we represent our constituents on what we believe they want, on an idea that they want, but when it comes down to the members' constituents, letting them know very strongly how they feel on an issue, it is up to them to listen and that's where this government has failed. It's not the bell ringing. That's not likely to happen very often; it didn't before. But here we were dealing with an issue, a constitutional amendment which couldn't be changed. If it could have been changed, we would have changed it the next time around when we're in government and they're in opposition. That's what's going to happen because of that very issue. I think that the government members lost sight of that and they were trying to figure out a way to get out of it. So what we had and what we have now is an issue that, again, we need a consensus.

When you're dealing with a constitutional amendment, we should have a consensus in this House. There should be a formula to amend, some way to protect so that a government can't use its majority against the will of the people, because constitutional amendments will be forever. I think it was coming through loud and clear, that there has to be a change. So we used the bell ringing when the government brought in closure, when they said you can only speak until 2:00 in the morning, you can bring in amendments, but you could only speak once. So if someone had spoken and an amendment came in, they weren't allowed to speak again. The rule itself is bad on that issue. If they want to bring in closure on any other issues, let them, because it's the people they'd have to answer to.

Well, they'd have to answer to the people on this issue too. Unfortunately, it couldn't be changed and no matter how the opposition members crow and cry, that was the big issue. We were representing the people, and it's their shame that they weren't.

Some government members have gone back and brought up the Autopac debate, but the government ran on that issue, the NDP ran on that issue. It was a legitimate issue for them to deal with, whether some of the people agreed. They had a mandate when they were elected and they followed that through. Had there been a consensus to change, there would have been a change, but it turned out to be something that people liked and that we all live with. So that wasn't a big problem and it hasn't got the same unfairness about it that this would have because that was an issue that could have been changed, but constitutional amendments cannot.

They talk about democracy and the protection of people's rights. Well, I feel that's what the members of the opposition were doing, protecting people's rights. Certainly, I feel that the members on the government side were closing their ears to the majority of Manitobans. They were doing something that wasn't needed, and the people were telling them loud and clear, and we constantly were hearing from their members, saying what can we do, they won't listen.

When the bells rang, the phone calls were to keep them ringing forever if you have to, do anything but let this amendment go through. So, when you have that sort of support from the people of Manitoba, then you wonder what this issue is all about. It really it isn't needed and it's a non-issue.

We've seen what happened when the government rang the bells and they weren't ready themselves. I suppose we would have to sit here for 24 hours waiting for their members to be called in. It was an issue on the Attorney-General's salary. As I believe the Member for Pembina said, he would have been earning \$1 if the 15-minute rule had been in because it would be very hopeless. So it's a foolish type of amendment to bring in when it's not necessary.

I think that the present House Leader, from what I've seen, and I must say that I haven't had the experience of watching too many House Leaders. We've had one who was the Attorney-General and that didn't seem to work out too well. It wasn't a very good example for a new member, I must say. Then, we have the present House Leader, and he seems to be a fixer. That's, I believe, the problem that the government side has is they've got a fixer on their side. He's trying to correct everything.

Well, you can't correct every little thing. This Parliament has worked for years under the present rules, and I don't see the necessity for any great changes. I think what we need is a little bit more co-operation from that House Leader, instead of every time we turn around he's trying to trick, he's trying to do something that makes us seem unreasonable when all we want to do, especially this time, is get on with the business of the House and let's get — (Interjection) — That's true! Instead of being in rules, be in Estimates and that is the truth because we really need to be back to work. I think this is a non-issue and should be dealt with in committee until they come to consensus.

It was the actions of this government by trying to force a constitutional amendment, ignore the wishes of the people, that brought about this issue. Why are we debating something that should be still in committee? Obviously, we can come to a consensus on this if only the Government House Leader will listen to the some of the debate from this side, because there have been a lot of options offered to him, and not try and push through a rule by majority.

We must have a consensus on the constitutional amendment because no matter who is in government, whether it's the Conservatives or the NDP, I do believe that the people in this province need to know that an amendment cannot be pushed through by a majority that wants to do something against the wishes of the people. So there must be an amending formula that will deal with this, or at least take off the closure and let the debate continue because I think the way the bells were used on the constitutional amendment was a legitimate use and, as the Member for Charleswood indicated, it was the only way we could stop this government from bringing in a bad amendment, an amendment that the Province of Manitoba, the people of Manitoba would have had to live with something that they didn't want.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that the Rules Committee should have a consensus on this issue so that we can get on with the business of the House and not be dealing with bell ringing at a time when there's so many issues at stake. We have a company closing down in Brandon. These are issues that must be dealt with; not bell ringing, because bell ringing in this Session is not an issue and it's not going to be an issue.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Are you ready for the question?

Before the next member, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery where we have 15 students of Grades 8, 9, and 10 from the Indian Springs School under the direction of Mr. Maxwell. The school is in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Turtle Mountain.

On behalf of all the members, I welcome you here this morning.

The Honourable Member for Arthur.

MR. J. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder in view of the fact that it's almost 25 after, if we could call it 12:30, Mr. Speaker, and proceed with my comments the next time this matter comes forward.

MR. SPEAKER: It's the will of the House to call it 12:30? (Agreed)

12:30 in Private Members' Hour - the Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. A. ANSTETT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I believe there may be an inclination to dispense with Private Members' Hour today. If there is leave to do so, Mr. Speaker, I would then, by leave, move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Lakeside, that the House do now adjourn.

MOTION presented and carried and the House adjourned and stands adjourned until Tuesday afternoon at 2 o'clock.