

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, February 16, 1990.

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table at this time the third Quarterly Financial Report for the province dated April to December, 1989.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct Honourable Members' attention to the loge to my left where we have with us this morning Mr. John Harvard, the M.P. for St. James.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this morning.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Free Trade Agreement Cancellation Clause

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I note that the deficit has gone up again. Mr. Speaker, during the free trade debate—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Osborne.

Mr. Alcock: —the Right Honourable John Turner stated that when a nation has lost control over its economic levers, the political levers cannot be far behind.

Mr. Speaker, we have let go of the economic levers in this country. Our Prime Minister has sold us out and daily we see the effects of that. On that day, in that debate, the Prime Minister replied to Mr. Turner that the Free Trade Agreement was a simple document that is cancellable on six months notice.

To the Finance Minister (Mr. Manness), in Canada's attempt to help the Americans with their trade deficit by keeping our dollar high, we are destroying the economy of this country. Will the Finance Minister of this province call upon his federal Party to exercise the clause that the Prime Minister has referenced and cancel this destructive agreement?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, before I answer the question I am going to have to deal with part of the preamble. Obviously the Member has made a mistake again. If he looks into the quarterly report he will see where the deficit forecast is down \$20 million from the second Quarterly Report,

but nevertheless I can understand why the Member just had given a cursory review to the document I just tabled.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember a time and an age not too long ago, I believe it was 1981-82, when interest rates in this country at that time were in the area of 23 percent or 24 percent, and free trade was not even an issue at that time.

* (1005)

Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to the Member that I was in conversation yesterday with Minister Wilson after the news came out that the bank rate had increased to 13.3 percent, that prime rates were moving into the area of 14.25 percent, and on behalf of the Government of Manitoba, in the strongest terms possible, indicated to the Minister our concern in the total manner in which we totally reject interest rates increasing at the rate that they are.

Interest Rates Increase

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, we had a recession the last time this occurred and we are having one now despite the Finance Minister's rosy projections earlier this week. Interest rates went down in the U.S. The U.S. prime is now at 10 percent, while in Canada it went up to 14.25 percent. Michael Wilson in his budget last year promised us that by now our interest rates would be in the 10 percent range in Canada. If it is not an attempt to harmonize with the U.S., how does the Finance Minister explain it?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, in all honesty I cannot explain it, and I do not know why it is that the Member opposite seems to expect me to be able to answer. I can say to the Member opposite that certainly we are as concerned as any provincial Government. Indeed, looking at some of the press reports today it seems to indicate that Mr. Wilson does not have control of it either, as he seems to be blaming part of this issue on prebudget jitters and the Canadian dollar's rocky road over the past number of days.

Mr. Speaker, for the Member opposite to try and get from me as to why it is happening or what solution that I possibly might bring to the situation, I can only indicate to him I call also on Governor Crow to try and bring a sense of reasonableness to interest rates in this country.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wilson's statement that he is not in control is precisely what Mr. Turner referenced during the '88 debate, that we are losing control.

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Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corp. Interest Rates

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, with a question to the Finance Minister about something - (interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Osborne.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, in an area the Finance Minister has some control over, farmers and small-business persons who need operating lines of credit will be very badly hurt by this increase. Will the Minister, through the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, offer some relief to farmers who will soon be calling on those lines of credit?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I can indicate that any decision along that line would be a governmental decision. I can also indicate that I have dialogued this morning with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), and I have asked him to bring forward certain amounts of information with respect to the portfolio of requirements by our farmers.

I have also been in conversation with my Deputy Minister to ascertain the cost of borrowing money in the Canadian market today and what it might cost us to in some fashion begin to look at some way of using that lower rate if necessary.

I say to the Member, this is very much a governmental decision which has not been discussed. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, let me also say we do not know what is going to happen to interest rates after the budget. Theoretically they could drop 2 percent, as indeed major chartered banks in this country have been calling for 1990. We are into a state of uncertainty, but let me say to the Member all options are being reviewed.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, interest rates did not just go up yesterday. They have been going this way for some time. The Finance Minister is 4.25 percent off on his projections - (interjection)- Not this Finance Minister, the federal Finance Minister. That is right.

* (1010)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. Honourable Member for Osborne.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister of this province referenced the federal Finance Minister, and he also indicated that they have not made a decision yet, this has not just started.

Federal Funding Manitoba Representation

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). The economic

levers are not the only ones you lose control of. You lose control of the political levers.

We had an astounding display yesterday from the Premier who, despite the fact that he was not really sure whether there was an announcement, decided to leap to the defence of the federal Government and defend furiously the important work that was going on, despite the fact that the federal Minister responsible says that Ottawa, not Manitoba, will be setting the agenda for important economic programs in western Canada.

Now, will the Premier tell us who speaks for Manitoba? Who is representing Manitoba's interests?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I responded to a question in which the Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) alleged that an announcement had been made. If that announcement was not made then his allegation was incorrect and the premise of his question was incorrect, as it normally is - (interjection)- normally.

Here he is again suggesting that Ottawa has made the statement that somehow they are going to choose the priorities, when in the very article which he was quoting, again in error, of February 15 in the Winnipeg Free Press it says, Grains Minister Charlie Mayer said: "It's been a while in coming but we have the funding approval in place and now it's up to the province to take the lead in setting the priorities." So Charlie Mayer is saying it is up to the province to take the lead in setting the priorities. He has it wrong again, Mr. Speaker.

Spending Agenda

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Well, Mr. Speaker, we can go back and forth a little bit. The Premier (Mr. Filmon), who now claims to be in charge of this process in leading it, said yesterday in response to an announcement that was not made that he knew nothing about, that it is a step in the right direction and it is just the beginning. Mr. Mayer did say that Ottawa will set the spending agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier, who sets the agenda in this province, him or Mr. Mayer?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, again I will quote from the Brandon Sun's coverage of this same discussion with Grains Minister Charlie Mayer: as soon as the date can be arranged, the federal Government and the province will sit down to look at its priorities, Mayer said, and come to an agreement on where the funds are to be spent. We are going to be looking to the province to take the lead in deciding where this money should go.

The Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) never does his research properly, and I am getting tired of responding to his inaccurate statements over and over again day after day.

Manitoba Totals

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, another quote, quoting Mr. Mayer: "We have talked about priorities but we will take the lead on these agreements."

The Mulroney Government has cut support for regional development by more than 23 percent in real terms over the first four years of their mandate, 23 percent, Mr. Speaker. We have repeatedly raised concerns in this House about the effect on Manitoba agreements. Each time we have raised those concerns, the Premier has stood up and said do not worry about it, we are working, it is in place, more is coming. Every time we have referenced an agreement that has been cut, he has said more is coming. The Deputy Minister responsible for these programs says the \$242 million is all there is. They have now committed \$60 million. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) tells us more is coming. Where is it coming from?

* (1015)

An Honourable Member: From the taxpayer, Reg.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): What the Liberals do not understand is that the money all comes from the taxpayers. There is no money tree around and despite the fact that the Liberals advocate spend, spend, spend, drive up the deficit, year after year it all comes from the taxpayer and they would fleece that taxpayer if they had their choice.

I will try and be very, very succinct for the Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock). What the federal Government has done is replaced the former ERDA-type agreements with a different set of federal-provincial and federal spending priorities. They have in place of the former ERDAs now Western Diversification which is a solely federal spent, federal program. It is a program that was not in place when the old ERDAs were in place. It has come as one of the alternatives to replace the former ERDAs.

They have also put in place a number of individual bilateral agreements between Ottawa and the provinces such as the Soil and Water Agreement which was announced for \$12 million. There are also putting in place a -(interjection)- Mr. Speaker, that is the problem with the Member for Osborne, you cannot learn when you are always talking. His mouth is always open and his brain is always closed. He will never learn, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Interest Rates Impact Labour

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). The high interest rate policy of the federal Conservative Government has resulted in almost a 2 percent increase in the last 13 months to families, to

consumers, to small business and to farmers in Manitoba. It will cost families \$188 million in this province alone. It will cost small business about \$258 million in this province alone. It will cost farmers approximately \$38 million at a time when they are under tremendous pressure with again the other U.S. subsidy, contrary to the free trade agreement from the Bush administration in Ottawa, or Washington. Freudian slip, Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

My question to the Premier is: how many jobs has the Government calculated will be lost with that massive amount of increased cost to families, farmers and small business? How many jobs will potentially be impacted in this province, and what counterstrategy has the Government developed, either in an interest rate relief program or other strategy, to deal with the real job situation in Manitoba communities with these high interest rates?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): The facts as have been portrayed by the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) are very, very bleak. The fact of the matter is that there has been an increase of one full percentage point in the prime rate in just three Thursdays, these past three Thursdays. This is absolutely devastating and will in my judgment be one of the worst factors, in fact probably the worst factors, in terms of the economic outlook for this province or this country in the future. We have to come to grips with it.

The high interest rates are devastating. Consistently, over and over again, the First Ministers at their Premiers' Conferences in the last two years, at the Western Premiers' Conferences in the last two years, have issued a strongly-worded communique saying to Ottawa that we cannot have this high interest rate policy. When it comes, Mr. Speaker, to the loss of jobs that are being projected, I suggest to you that—I would hope that the interest rates are as high as they will get. I would hope that they not get as high as they did when the NDP were in power in the early '80s, when they reached 22 percent and higher. So the job loss—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

* (1020)

Federal Finance Minister Resignation Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): The Premier is absolutely correct. The interest rates were intolerable under the federal Liberals. We called upon the federal Liberal Government to fire their Finance Minister and fire the Bank of Canada head that was putting those interest rates up that high. My question to the Premier is: if there is not a reversal of these interest rates pursuant to the federal budget that the Minister of Finance claims will happen next week, if there is not a reversal of these interest rates within a couple of weeks, will the Premier do what he did with Lowell Murray and call for his resignation and call for the resignation of the head of the Bank of Canada because of the devastating effect Michael Wilson's policies and John Crow's policies have on Manitoba and Manitoba families?

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Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) is so good from the seat of his pants, I would hope that his Leader would allow him to get up and ask a question from time to time.- (interjection)- There he goes again.- (interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I will remind the Honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon) to deal with the matter raised by the Honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer). The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: If I were not heckled so much I could deal with the matters at hand, but the fact of the matter is that western Premiers last year were very, very upset about the high interest rate policies that were then a point and a half lower than they are today, that were trending in the wrong direction.

We said at that time that we believed the Minister of Finance ought to take control of the situation and in fact deal with the Governor of the Bank of Canada to deal with the situation, because it is intolerable for small businesses, for agriculture, for all of the areas of potential growth in our economy.

There is no investment that makes economic sense at rates of 14 percent, and therefore we believe that this will be devastating to the economy unless it is dealt with and dealt with in a hurry.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, last year the communique was put out. It was reiterated in the Premier's statement in November at the First Ministers' meeting. My question now to the Premier is: he has already called on Lowell Murray to be replaced as the Minister responsible for federal-provincial relations dealing with the Constitution. Surely the devastation that Michael Wilson and his economic policies are placing on western Canada, on this province, are worthy of the same consideration. Will the Premier now call upon the Prime Minister to replace Michael Wilson and the Governor of the Bank of Canada, because they do not understand western Canada and they do not understand the devastation these high interest rates are placing on western Canada?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the last Government that replaced a Governor of the Bank of Canada was the Diefenbaker Government at the time of James Coyne, then Governor of the Bank of Canada. Since that point in time, no Government of any political stripe has been willing to intervene to deal with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, and his powers have remained sacrosanct and secure despite the devastation that some of the decisions that are made have on the economy.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that the time has come for people to realize how critical this is and how concerned everybody is in our economy, particularly in the regions outside of central Canada. If the Governor of the Bank

of Canada is dealing with what he perceives to be an inflationary pressure in central Canada, he ought to come out and see the effects on the rest of the country, and in so doing he ought to be aware of this when he sets policies, because they have to be policies that are good for the country as a whole. We do not believe they are. I have said so many, many times. So has our Minister of Finance in his dealings with his colleagues, and we believe that it is time now for Ottawa to take note of that.

Mr. Doer: One can only assume that the Premier does support the financial policies of Michael Wilson and its effect on Manitoba, and I am disappointed the Premier will not call for the same treatment of Michael Wilson as Lowell Murray.

Telecommunications Federal/Provincial Agreement

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): I have a final supplementary to the Premier. Marcel Masse in a communication speech two days ago stated that there is a federal-provincial agreement dealing with telecommunications. Can the Premier please table the draft agreement, the federal-provincial agreement on telecommunications, and can the Premier please advise the province of whether the legislation that the Minister is contemplating will include the regulatory control over the Manitoba Telephone System and the prairie telephone system?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Telephone Act): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Member that the western Ministers of telecommunications of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba met with Mr. Masse in December. We had an agreement at that time that officials would consult over a period of time to work out some parameters and deal with the draft Bill that he had proposed and that Mr. Masse would get back with these Ministers at some point in early February, and we would deal with it.

At this point in time that consultation process is still going on and Mr. Masse has still to get back to us with regard to meeting with us with regard to the questions of further jurisdiction on the telephone companies in western Canada.

* (1025)

Manitobans with Disabilities Rural Funding

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): We have asked serious questions during the Estimates process and during Question Period about the crisis facing the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities. The Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) says she gives the budget to the society and they decide the spending priorities. Well, they have, Mr. Speaker. As of today, services are suspended for disabled children in the Eastman region in Manitoba—no more speech, occupational or physiotherapy to needy children in this rural area. My

question to the Minister is this: is she prepared to finally act today and intervene in this crisis?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities recently opened an office in the Eastman area and are treating children out of that office. Also, there is available to people from that area service in Winnipeg, and the department helps with transportation.

The Member should also be aware that not only do people get assistance through that agency but the department also gives many families assistance through other means. I could enumerate some of them for her privately if she wishes, but it is not the only service available. There are services to people in that area. We cannot meet every single need, but we are attempting to build on these programs and improve them.

Service Suspension

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I have a supplementary question to the same Minister. The Minister is out-of-date. As of today, a press release from the society has indicated that the people on the waiting list to receive service in Eastman region will not receive any service. It has been suspended.—(interjection)— The Premier says they are on a waiting list. They are not on a waiting list. They will not receive service. It is in black and white, you guys are not—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon) and the Honourable Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) appear to be debating. This is not a time for debate. The Honourable Member will kindly put her question now, please.

Ms. Gray: My supplementary question to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) is this: the services are being suspended. Can she tell the House what she is prepared to tell those dozens of families who are now on a waiting list who have been told that they will not have any opportunities at all to receive any service in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, by raising the funds to the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, we have attempted, through providing mobile therapy service for other parts of the province, to meet the needs of people, but there are waiting lists and we recognize that. The Society for Manitobans with Disabilities on the other hand is asking for a 50 percent increase in funding. That is just not realistic.

Manitobans with Disabilities Rural Funding

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I have a final supplementary question to the Minister responsible for Rural Development (Mr. Penner). Is the Minister responsible for Rural Development at least prepared to lobby the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to urge this Government to

intervene on behalf of needy, disabled children in rural Manitoba?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Honourable Members, would you like to proceed? I am sure Honourable Members would. Time is extremely scarce. Honourable Members appear to be debating on both sides. This is Question Period. The Honourable Minister of Rural Development has the floor.

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think all of us in this House have sympathy for those who are not able to help themselves. That is very clear. This Government and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson), I believe, have done more for family services and the disabled people of this province, especially those in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch), you are attempting to grab the floor. I will give you an opportunity after the Honourable Minister of Rural Development has finished giving his answer. The Honourable Minister.

* (1030)

Mr. Penner: I think it is well realized by the association of mentally handicapped people in this province, the efforts that have been made by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) to increase services in rural Manitoba to benefit those people. However, it is also important to note that we must be fiscally responsible and there is only so much that can be done in one year. I respect—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Urban Native Strategy Recommendations

Mr. Herold Driedger (Niakwa): From the previous answers it appears there is more than just urban Native issues. It seems that the entire Government has tucked its collective tail between its legs and is running around in circles.

For the Minister of Urban and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey), there is more to developing an Urban Native Strategy than hoping it is so. There is more to developing programs and policy than standing in this House and using words such as "aggressively pursuing." After two years of such aggressive pursuit I would expect by now, Mr. Speaker, that he would have caught something. At some point it is time to prioritize, to decide and act.

We have the evaluation of the extended care beds, we have the evaluation of Winnipeg Education Centre and now the Urban Native Strategy. None of these have resulted in any decision, but only more studies and more consultants. When is the Minister going to make a commitment to the idea or recommendations and then stand by it? When will he make a decision—

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Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there was a commitment in the throne speech by this Government to develop an Urban Native Strategy. It was backed up by some quarter of a million dollars, \$220 million, to put that strategy in place and to work with the Native community.

There has been some \$70,000 go to the indigenous women of this city and this province to help those individuals who need help most, who had received absolutely nothing under the previous administration. The aboriginal women of this province have received financial support from this Government and many other Native organizations dealing with them, with Government, to resolve the problems themselves in concert with Government. This Government and I are proud of our record and will continue to work with the Native communities.

Mr. Herold Driedger: There is more to developing a strategy, Mr. Speaker, than funding agencies and organizations. When is he going to accept Native people as equal partners and sit down with them and search to find a resolution to the intolerable conditions that now exist for many of the people, the Native people in this city?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I may have made an inaccurate statement. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) informed me that I may have said \$220 million rather than \$220,000.00. I was actually trying to get \$220 million is what I should have said.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Honourable Minister.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberal Party who had no commitment in their campaign speech, in fact the only commitment of the Liberal Leader was to take away the ACCESS Program for the northern and Native students of this province. That was the Liberal policy. I will stand by ours any day.

Core Area Initiative Expiry Date

Mr. Herold Driedger (Niakwa): The Core Area Initiative and the many worthwhile community agencies and programs it supported is quickly coming to an end, Mr. Speaker. What is the relationship between the expiry of the Core Area Initiative and the Government's Urban Native Strategy?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there have been many programs that have been put in place by the Government without any other level of Government or any other agreements. I have indicated the monies that were put together in our Urban Native Strategy.

I have told him the \$70,000 that went to support the indigenous women of this province, the aboriginal

women and all the other Native organizations that truly are committed to the betterment of the lives of the Natives in this city and in this province, unlike the political posturing and playing of the Member for Niakwa, who is trying to make cheap politics of the issue -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Health Care Underspending

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

For months we have been pointing to the growing chaos in our health care system, patients lined up in hallways, increased waiting lists for surgical treatment, surgical units being shut down, emergency units being shut down. After six months, Mr. Speaker, this Government had underspent health by \$14 million. The latest figures released just this morning show that health has been underspent by close to \$29 million in the first nine months of this year.

I would like to ask the Premier: when is he going to call his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to account? When is he going to direct his Minister of Health to use his budgetary authority to deal with the growing crisis in our health care system in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) ought to know that this Government continues to spend a very substantial portion of its budget on health care. One out of every three dollars that we spend in this province goes to health care.

I think he also should recognize that in that first nine months of this year, we have spent some \$63 million more on health care than we did in the first nine months of last year, so when he suggests that we have underspent, he has absolutely no idea of economics. We understand that, because every day he gets up and asks those confused questions and points out things that are absolutely not factual—\$63 million more spent in the first nine months of this year versus the first nine months of last year.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, this Premier cannot even read his own financial statements. It says right here in Schedule 1 of the document released by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has underspent what he was budgeted for in the first nine months of this year by \$28 million.

When is this Premier going to recognize the fact that our health care system is in crisis, call this Minister of Health to account and start dealing with patients lined up—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The question has been put. The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, when you spend \$63 million more than in the previous year for the same nine months, that is not underspending. That is spending to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: For people who were in Government, they show a remarkable lack of understanding of cash flow variations from month to month, from day to day. If a bill is paid one day later at the end of a quarter, it can show up in the next quarter's expenditures.

We have \$8 million that was held in abeyance for finalizing a rate revision for rural and urban hospital budgets for payment, \$8 million that did not show up in that quarter that will be spent in the next quarter. We have \$4 million that is an accounting issue re the use of the previous year's funds. We have another \$2 million in the decline of out-of-province hospital billings. We have another \$1.6 million—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

* (1040)

Family Services Underspending

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, last year at the end of the year they were underspent \$28 million. They are right on target to doing the same thing this year.

My final question is in regard to more evidence of underspending in critical areas and is to the Premier once again. How can he justify saying to the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities there was not funding for them, to prevent what they are doing now, which is having to freeze referrals when the Department of Family Services is also underspent? It is underspent according to its budget by \$7 million.

How can the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in good conscience say in terms of health care, in terms of family services in this province, how can he deal with the crisis in that situation, underspend these areas of the department—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put. The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Similarly, in Family Services they have spent \$29 million more in the first nine months of this year versus the first nine months of last year. That is approximately a 9 percent increase in their expenditures on Family Services for the first nine months of this year versus the first nine months of last year.

We consistently are investing money in the areas where it is needed. We are consistently addressing the services that are required. Ninety percent more expenditure in Family Services is not a cutback, no

matter how the NDP wants to portray that. That is not a cutback, Mr. Speaker. It is attempting to meet the needs, but the needs that are out there are greater than any—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Seniors' Transport Service Expansion

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister representing the seniors.

For the past two years, Mr. Speaker, the seniors in the south end of the city have been serviced well with Seniors' Transport, which is a service which is badly needed. All seniors should have access to adequate transportation in the City of Winnipeg, including those seniors in the north end of the city, west Transcona and St. James.

Will the Minister today give us something in terms of days, weeks, years, when he expects to have something concrete in terms of expanding the Seniors' Transport Service to the City of Winnipeg?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, let me just say that we have been going through a series of meetings with the seniors' organizations and individuals as it relates to elder abuse. On the agenda has been an invitation for seniors to bring forward other issues.

One of the other concerns that we have and this Government has is adequate transportation being provided for those individuals. It is being assessed at this particular time during that process. Specifically I will ask my colleague, the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme), who has a more complete response as it relates to urban city-related activities and transportation.

Mr. Lamoureux: In a brief to the Legislature, MSOS asked what plans does the Government of Manitoba have to design and support an implementation of a seniors' transportation service in each region of the City of Winnipeg. Will the Minister table the studies or working papers that he has completed and give us a date as to when he is expected to see the Seniors' Transport expanded to the other areas of the city?

Mr. Downey: Let me assure you that transportation for seniors, as any other program for seniors, is extremely important. This Government is extremely concerned and interested in making the seniors' lives in this province a little easier, and the availability of services to them is extremely important. As soon as that information is available, I will provide it for the Member.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

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INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to moving into Orders of the Day -(interjection)- order, please. I am sure Honourable Members would like to hear this announcement. I would simply like to announce that we have 50 students from the University of South Dakota present here this morning.

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this morning.

ORDERS OF THE DAY HOUSE BUSINESS

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I wonder if they do it this way in South Dakota, Mr. Speaker. Is it like this on a Friday in South Dakota, too?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader, what are your intentions, sir?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Bills in the following order: Bill 31, Bills 49 to 52 inclusive, 57, 35, 19, 84, 70, 47, 48, 59 and 60.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

BILL NO. 31—THE LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), Bill No. 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail, and the motion of the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) that Bill No. 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail, be not now read a second time but be read this day six months hence.

The Honourable Member for St. Johns has 15 minutes remaining.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I am delighted to be able to carry on from where I left off yesterday in calling upon Members of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party to support this reasonable motion, this motion to refer this matter to delay this decision until the Conservative and Liberal Parties come to their senses. I think, Mr. Speaker, it is particularly appropriate to carry on where I left off yesterday, in view of the kind of shenanigans that went on in today's Question Period, in terms of the kind of macho politics we saw

at play here in the House this morning, and to put it in the context of the points I was trying to raise yesterday.

Yesterday, I said that we should support this motion, delay any repeal of final offer selection in the name of the tradition of co-operation and the spirit of consensus building that has characterized this province throughout its history. I said yesterday, and I say it again today, that we should do it not only in the name of that tradition that has marked our history, but in the name of the spirit of co-operation that has characterized the women's movement in this province and the contribution made by women over the decades to the building and development of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have called upon Members of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party to come to their senses and recognize the need to move on a model of consensus building on co-operation, on conciliation, on peaceful, harmonious coexistence. All Members in this House should know that if anyone has been in the vanguard of that kind of model, if anyone has led the way in terms of building consensus and harmonious, peaceful relations, it has been the women of this province.

Coincidentally, it is the women who are in the forefront of this movement to stop the repeal of final offer selection. Why? Because they want desperately to pursue that model of co-operation and consensus building and harmonious, peaceful relations everywhere in our society, whether it be in labour relations, whether it be in politics, whether it be in our families, whether it be in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge Members today to hear the voices of women and to respond to their cry to try something new that could lead us into a new direction of peaceful, harmonious existence for the '90s and beyond.

Yesterday, I read from the resolution adopted by the Manitoba Women's Agenda, an organization that is an umbrella group for some 35 women's organizations representing over 200,000 women, women who have come together and left a very strong message with this Government and with the Liberal party not to let them down, not to forsake the contribution of our foremothers and the pioneers of this province who have contributed so much towards a peaceful, co-operative society.

They have asked this Government to live up to its commitment in the preamble of The Labour Relations Act to encourage collective bargaining between employers and unions, as freely designated representatives of employees, and withdraw the Bill repealing final offer selection. I read, Mr. Speaker, from the preamble in The Labour Relations Act which says it is: ". . . to further harmonious relations between employers and employees by encouraging the practice and procedure of collective bargaining . . ." More precisely, its purpose is to provide a means whereby a group of employees can choose a union to represent them, protect the rights of employees to organize, free from interference by their employer, and promote orderly collective bargaining.

* (1050)

Mr. Speaker, the overriding principle behind all of that, coming from all sectors of our society but particularly from women in our communities everywhere, is to provide the framework and the model for a more co-operative, harmonious society. The women of the province are saying to this Government, and to the Liberals here in this House today, start at the very elementary level, start in terms of our homes, in terms of domestic violence, start in terms of community and crime prevention, and start when it comes to labour relations and labour conflict and dispute resolution mechanisms in our society.

Mr. Speaker, back in the early 1920s a statement was made at the all-Canadian Congress of Labour that said: The restrictions and prohibitions of women's work will testify to the shortcomings of our social and economic organization and to the failure of us all, regardless of sex, to seize the good that is within our reach.

What I am calling upon all Members in this House today to do is to seize the good that is within all of us, to pause for a moment and to consider the kind of good that we can achieve for society as a whole by listening to those voices of women and moving towards more co-operation, harmony and peace in our society today.

I do not think Members in this House will deny—I hope Members certainly from the Liberals and Conservatives are prepared to listen to the fact, as women have told them over and over again, that women have worked long and hard to establish their own definition of power in our society to overcome the kind of macho, competitive, backbiting, ruthless politics and conflict resolution that has occurred in much of our society to date.

For women, power can and should represent the capacity to change, to change ourselves and our environment. So when we speak, and I say "we" as a member of the feminist movement in this province and a woman in the Province of Manitoba, when we speak of power we must perceive it not in the sense of exploitation but in the sense of mutual strengthening. Because of our understanding of the misuse and abuse of power, we have developed non-hierarchical organizations. We have called upon Governments of the Day time and time again to put in place consensus-building models to follow the spirit of co-operation, to work steadfastly towards peace and harmony in everything we do.

Mr. Speaker, in that context I want to refer Members to a couple of recent writings and hope that this may help them understand the necessity to withdraw this notion of repeal of final offer selection. I refer specifically to an article entitled: "Women, Vanguard of the Nineties" by Frank Riessman, and it was in the Social Policy Journal back in the fall of 1986. In that article Mr. Riessman writes: Women are now almost 50 percent of the work force and are in the forefront of the emerging values of the whole society, values that are becoming more salient and related to caring, compassion, empathy, helping and co-operation. He also goes on to say it is not new for women to be more concerned than men about attending to others, about peace issues and preserving the environment.

What is different, however, is that these views are increasingly being shared by men, as witnessed by the strong support and leadership provided by the men in the New Democratic Party Caucus. The men in the New Democratic Party have joined with women in terms of adopting the values of the '90s, and we are in the vanguard of those values. We are hoping that with the power of the women's movement behind us and the power of working men and women everywhere, we can persuade Members of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party to rid themselves of their regressive, backwards thinking and adopt the values of the '90s, the values of compassion, empathy, helping and co-operation.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are the values behind final offer selection and why we implore upon Members in this House to give it a chance, to let this co-operative model, this consensus building model, this harmonious, peaceful model, be tried to see if it contributes to peace in our labour community, if it contributes to peace between management and labour everywhere in Manitoba.

I wanted to also quote from Frank Riessman when he concludes that article, by saying: None of this is meant to romanticize the status of women. Clearly some women can be as aggressive as men and power may corrupt them, too, but in the process of struggling for equality, society as a whole may be transformed, becoming more participatory and democratic, expanding rights and bringing to the forefront values related to humanity and compassion.

If we can do anything in this debate, we want to convince Members of the Conservative and Liberal Parties to listen to the voices of working men and women in this province and particularly to be in tune to the message that the women's movement is delivering to the Government and to the Liberal Party today. That message is to take every possible measure and step to build a more co-operative, caring, compassionate society.

One way we can achieve that is through giving final offer selection a chance. Another way we can achieve it is improving the way in which we operate here in this Chamber and avoiding the kind of macho, competitive, backbiting environment that this place became this morning. Perhaps if we listen to those voices of women and we apply that model to the way in which we act ourselves on a day-to-day basis, perhaps we will be one step closer to a caring, compassionate, co-operative society.

I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by asking all Members in this House to pass this motion, to delay their hasty ill thought-out action, to give final offer selection and in the process to seize the good that is within our reach. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am pleased to rise today to debate the motion put forward by the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan). First of all, I would like to begin my comments by congratulating the Member for Churchill on what I thought was an excellent speech. It showed truly—

An Honourable Member: Long.

Mr. Ashton: Long, says the Member for Churchill. It could have been longer. I notice that at the end of his speech, the Member for Churchill had a considerable part of his notes still available. I believe he could have continued because his eloquence, Mr. Speaker, and his commitment on this particular issue I think is clear. I believe he showed truly his experience. He did speak for unlimited time on that, something I know I have been designated by our Leader on this particular issue. I know I could not match not just the length, but the eloquence, the experience, the breadth of knowledge shown by the Member for Churchill. I really commend him for that particular speech.

I also commend him for bringing forth the motion that we are dealing with now, "that this Bill be now not read a second time until six months hence." It is a traditional parliamentary motion. I believe in this case it is particularly appropriate because if this debate, if one can call it that, has shown anything, it is to my mind just how little the Conservative Government and the Liberal Party have put forward to justify what I feel is a totally unjustifiable position.

* (1100)

I have been a Member of this House for some nine years. There are others; the Member for Emerson (Mr. Albert Driedger), 12.5 years; the Members on our side of the House, the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), who has been here for 12.5 years. I cannot remember when as important an issue as final offer selection has been treated with such disdain by the Government and, in this case, the Liberal Opposition.

To this point, the Conservative Government has only had one speaker, the Minister who spoke for I believe around 10 minutes in debate despite the fact that we have raised repeated arguments against their Bill. We have pointed out the folly of their position. They have not put up one speaker, whether it was on debate on the main motion or whether it has been on debate on the six-month hoist we are dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are not much better. The Liberals have put forward two speakers on this particular Bill. They have not put one speaker up in terms of the six-month hoist. I ask myself, are they so poorly prepared in terms of their arguments? Are their arguments so weak that they do not even have the courage to stand on their feet and defend their attempt to ram through Bill No. 31. I ask that question because it has been tradition, whether it be in this House or whether it be in any other House, that people who are putting forward Bills as contentious as Bill No. 31 will at least respond to some of the legitimate points that have been raised in debate. That is after all why we have debate. That is why we as Members of the Legislature have the 40 minutes that we are allocated on each and every Bill or motion or in this case in terms of at least one speaker from each Party being designated unlimited time. We have a responsibility, not just a right, but a responsibility to debate—

An Honourable Member: An obligation.

Mr. Ashton: —an obligation, says the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), to debate important public issues. I must say I am shocked as I sit and look at the Conservative benches. The Minister for Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) who did speak on the previous Bill introduced by the former Minister of Labour, the Member for Portage in the 1988 Session, Mr. Speaker, has been silent on this Bill, has not said a word. The Member for Portage (Mr. Connery), the former Minister of Labour, has been silent on this Bill.

I look through the Conservative benches and I see Member after Member after Member who has been silent on this Bill. Mr. Speaker, are they so unsure of their position? Do they finally recognize how weak their arguments are? Is that why they have been unable or unwilling to debate this? Even the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), who can get up and say nothing on virtually anything for 40 minutes, has been silent on this issue.

Well, I turn my attention to the Liberal benches for a moment, because the Liberals have perhaps been more clear on their agenda on this particular Bill than any other Party in this House, because they have had two speakers, the Labour Critic and the previous Labour Critic. In his speech, the Labour Critic, the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), rose and at the end of his rather brief and disjointed contribution in this debate said the Liberal Party was seeking speedy passage through to committee of Bill No. 31.

I think that comment gave away the true agenda, not only of the Liberal Party, but of the Conservative Party as well, because I believe that the Liberals back in September and October, which is the last time they had speakers on this particular debate, the last time, recognized that they could not defend their position in this Chamber to the people of Manitoba, that their position was indefensible. They recognized that.

In a brief moment I would suggest it was probably a mistake on the part of the Member for St. James. I do not believe he meant to say what he said. It was true, but what he was attempting to do was to say exactly what we in the New Democratic Party had been saying, that they could not stand the scrutiny of debate. They could not contribute in the debate because so many of their arguments are absolutely indefensible, absolutely.

I asked the question, Mr. Speaker, how the Minister responsible for Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) - (interjection)- well the Minister responsible for Natural Resources is asking questions too. I would ask the question why the Conservatives have allowed themselves to be muzzled on this issue. Why have they been muzzled? Even the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has been muzzled on this issue.

I look at the Liberal benches, and I ask the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), Mr. Speaker, through you, how could he allow himself in a constituency where he represents so many working people, so many working people, to be muzzled, to not contribute in this debate?

I ask the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the Member for Inkster again, the Whip, perhaps he is

responsible. I am not sure, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps he is responsible. But why has the Member for Inkster been muzzled? Why has he not had the courage to stand on his feet and defend his position in this Legislature? I ask the Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans), the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), why they too have been so silent?

Throughout this debate we have repeatedly destroyed, we have repeatedly pulled apart the flimsy and pathetic arguments that have been put forward. In fact we have seen an interesting scenario develop. We have seen virtually no debate by the Liberal and Conservative coalition on this anti-labour move in this Chamber.

What we have seen is the Attorney General, the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae), or the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), the Liberal Labour Critic, they are quite willing to go out in the hallway and debate this Bill. They will talk to the press about it. I do not know if I would say they are exactly contributing much, Mr. Speaker, but this is a unique development. Instead of standing in their place in this House and on the public record defending their indefensible action, they are out in the hallways.

Well, let us deal with what would have happened with the Conservative and Liberals in this debate if they had risen in their place in an attempt to defend their position. Well, the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) challenges the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to stand in his place now and defend his position, to speak. We, I am sure in this House, would be more than glad to accommodate the Member, more than glad to accommodate that Member to speak, or any of the Liberal Members in this House so they can truthfully put their position on the record instead of hiding behind their Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) in the case of the Conservative benches, or their Labour Critic in the case of the Liberal Party.

* (1110)

But let us look at what they have suggested. Let us deal with one of the first arguments that was put forward in this Chamber by both the Conservatives and the Liberals. There was a suggestion that somehow they were standing up for the interests of working people, suggestions that were made by both the Minister of Labour and the Labour Critic.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let us look at what has happened since this debate began in this Legislature and what the position of the labour movement has been, and let us reference that in comparison to the position of the labour movement a number of years ago when this matter was introduced. I was at committee. The majority of unions that made presentations on behalf of the people they represented supported final offer selection, but I will be the first to say that there were many unions that had reservations about final offer selection, and those were expressed at the committee.

Mr. Speaker, that was before final offer selection was introduced. What has happened since then? What has happened is that final offer selection has had the opportunity to show in practice that it works, and I will

get into those questions later in terms of the facts on final offer selection.

But something else has happened and it is undeniable. If anyone attempts to deny it, they should look only at what happened earlier this week. A coalition held a news conference, a coalition of labour groups, women's groups, Mr. Speaker. There were 14 different organizations represented at that new conference, 14 different organizations, for the Minister responsible for Natural Resources (Mr. Enns). Included were the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the largest federation of labour representing the majority of organized workers in this province; also represented was the Canadian Federation of Labour, which is the second largest federation representing workers in this province. In fact, the combined strength of those two federations is in excess of 90 percent of organized workers in this province.

I would ask Members to look at the list of unions that endorsed the position and the fact that even unions such as the Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE, which opposed final offer selection in 1987 when it was introduced, has indicated now, indicated in writing, that it is opposed to the repeal of final offer selection. I remember this because the Government House Leader, at one point in time from his seat said—and he mentioned one of the prominent Members of CUPE—where does he stand? Well, the fact is that he has indicated, and his union has indicated, they oppose the repeal of final offer selection.

So the argument of the Conservatives, if anyone could ever believe that the Conservatives would stand for anything that will be in the interest of working people, has been totally demolished by developments as this debate has taken place. Where are the Liberals who have more experience, Mr. Speaker, in terms of trying to present themselves as representing the interests of working people?

Their whole suggestion that somehow the labour movement is divided on this has been proven to be patently false because what has happened is, as unions have had the opportunity, as organized workers have had the opportunity to see final offer selection in practice, the original scenario, where the majority of unions supported and others expressed reservations about final offer selection, has changed to the point where the vast majority of unions representing the working people of this province support our position, which is that we want Bill No. 31 defeated.

Let that be abundantly clear so that we can deal with what the true agendas of the Parties are. The fact is, the labour movement is united in its fight against Bill No. 31, the attempt to repeal final offer selection.

Well, we have dealt with one of the so-called arguments put forward by the combined Liberal-Conservative coalition on this Bill. Let us deal with some of the other arguments. Some of this was dealt with by the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) in his speech. There has been a suggestion by the two coalition partners on this Bill, the Conservatives and Liberals, that final offer selection has in fact increased the length of strikes in Manitoba, that it has worsened the strike

situation. Let us deal with that for a moment. Has that been the case? Has that in practice been shown to be the case in Manitoba? Well, the answer is very clearly no.

If one looks at the statistics that were released just recently in Manitoba, the facts are as follows: Last year, 1989, we had the lowest incidence of work stoppages, the fewest days lost in Manitoba in more than 17 years. There were only seven work stoppages, Mr. Speaker, none of which involved final offer selection. In fact, we currently have the second lowest number of strikes and incidence of days lost to work stoppages in the entire country.

Well, I ask how anyone with any intellectual integrity in any sort of debate could suggest that statistics such as that could be used to support this facetious argument that somehow final offer selection has contributed to strikes?

The evidence is quite to the contrary. We have had 72 applications. In the majority of cases, the bargaining continued as it should and will always under a final offer selection scenario. Only five have gone to the final stage. Three have gone in favour of the employees and two in the case of employers. Those are the facts.

You know what I find most offensive about this argument is that the real argument that develops is this—it is not out of the statistics, statistics do not show that to be the case. The argument is as follows; there are essentially two. I am trying to represent what I assume is the argument because once again the Liberals, who have been the leading proponent of this argument and debate have not had the intestinal fortitude to rise and raise this matter during the debate. The argument is as follows: There are two different windows in which you can apply final offer selection, prior to a work stoppage or 60 days into a work stoppage.

The suggestion of the Liberals is that employees recognizing the fact that they can apply for final offer selection after 60 days will vote for a strike, will wait out 60 days knowing that they can after 60 days apply for final offer selection.

Well, to the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), who has been the proponent of this argument, I would like to ask the Member for St. James a number of questions through you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, has he ever been through a strike? Has he ever been through a strike himself? I raise that question, because in my community we have had many strikes over the years.

I personally have been involved in two strikes. In 1976, I was a member of the United Steelworkers of America, Local 6166, when we went on strike against the federal Government and their anti-inflation board policies, the then Liberal Government. In 1981, I was a member of the United Steelworkers of America, Local 6166, again, when we went on strike against Inco. In the one case, it was a strike of a few weeks, in 1976; in another case, in 1981, it was a strike of three months.

I can tell you in all honesty that in one case I voted for the strike, and in one case I voted against the strike. I have been through it.

An Honourable Member: What are you, a Liberal?

* (1120)

Mr. Ashton: Well, I voted—in 1976, I did not think we could fight the Liberal Government which was bringing in its anti-inflation board policies—for the Member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst). I did so, and in the end we won that strike. In 1981, I supported the strike because I felt that Inco had not provided a fair offer to employees at the time.

I raise that because that decision I made was a very difficult decision in both cases. I was single at the time in both situations. The consequences for myself were less than they were for the many employees with dependants.

I find it absolutely absurd that the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) would suggest that people would vote to go on strike, to sit out for 60 days so they could bring in final offer selection. It is just so absurd, Mr. Speaker. That is why I asked the question whether the Member for St. James has ever been through a strike situation, has ever had to go without a salary for weeks or even months on end.

In Thompson, in 1981, the workers went without salaries for three months, survived on strike pay and savings. Those are the consequences of a strike, and no one ever takes those consequences lightly, no one. No one is ever going to go on strike for 60 days so they can apply for a mechanism that is available prior to the strike. It is just so absurd, illogical and irrational. It is just beyond belief.

I put this to the Liberals. If their argument—if they still stick, they cling to their argument, I ask this question. If they have a problem with the 60-day window, would they have less of a problem with a 50-day window or a 40-day window or a 30-day window? I ask the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), who I believe likes to suggest that he has an open mind on issues, even issues such as final offer selection, would he support a 30-day window or a 20-day window? Because if you take the logic of the Liberal argument that would reduce the length of strikes, it would prevent the 60-day strike scenario, final offer selection being provided.

No, I do not accept that scenario, but would the Liberal Party support that, a 30-day window, or a 20-day window, whatever window they feel resolves this kind of concern? I throw that out because if that is their real concern with final offer selection, let us deal with it. Let us deal with it in committee.

I will say, as Labour Critic, that I believe final offer selection is important enough to say that I am willing to look at any such suggestions. I make that suggestion now to the Liberals because I suspect the Conservatives are more interested in ideologies, but I will even make it to them as well.

If the arguments put forward by the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) and the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) are to be taken at any level of sincerity, what is their suggestion to deal with that? Are they willing at looking at a reduction in the strike window

to 30 days? Let us deal with that, 30 days. In that scenario you would not end up with anyone being able to go to 60 days and then apply for it. FOS would come in at 30 days. You could have a 10-day window, between 30 and 40 days could be applied for.

In the case of the Thompson strike in 1981, it might have allowed for the strike to be resolved after one month instead of three, but it destroys the suggestion on the part of the Liberals and the Tories that somehow people go until 60 days to resolve the matter, 60 days, Mr. Speaker. I have raised that because they are going to cling to their argument. I do not know. We have not heard them in debate. Perhaps they have realized just how facetious the argument is. But if they are clinging to the argument, what is their proposed resolution?

Let us deal with that, Mr. Speaker. Let us deal with another argument. Well, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) is speaking. Is he willing to look at the changes that would deal with the arguments put forward by his Labour Critic? Is he? I ask him that question because I believe there is still room on this Bill to break down the solitudes, to look at some way of saving what I feel is a valid and important mechanism in terms of labour relations in this province.

So I am just trying to deal with the arguments and come up with possible ways of resolving it, which after all is the intent of debate in this Legislature. Debate is not for strictly suggesting one's own personal views or the views of one's Party. Debate is to allow full public discussion of any matter that is being considered. In many cases it is intended, especially in the parliamentary system, to allow the possibility of changes.

We, on many occasions, have had amendments to Bills before. Why not final offer selection? Are there not ways of amending final offer selection to keep it in place, Mr. Speaker, that can deal with some of these arguments?

Let us deal with some of the other arguments that have been raised. I have talked about this lengthening strikes. That clearly is not the case. Another argument that has been raised by Members of this House in terms of final offer selection, Mr. Speaker, is to suggest that somehow it is not working and therefore should be taken out. I assume that is the argument. It is not an argument that is defended so much in terms of factual analysis. As I indicated before, the facts do not indicate that. The facts indicate that final offer selection is working.

But I ask this question, are Members of this House not aware that when this was introduced it was introduced with a sunset clause? Are Members of the Liberal and Conservative Parties not aware that sunset clause means that final offer selection is in place until 1993? Are Members who are opposing final offer selection not aware that in 1993 it will not require Bill 31? It will not require extensive debate. It will not require committee hearings to throw out final offer selection. In 1993 final offer selection will die a natural death.

* (1130)

The reason for that, the reason the previous New Democratic Party Government put that in place was

because we recognized it was new and innovative. It was not a new mechanism for resolving labour management disputes, but it was new in the sense that it was put in at the provincial level in the form that it was. We felt that the evidence would be self-supporting, that it would be shown to be working after five years, and that there would be a strong public case put forward in 1993 to maintain final offer selection.

But you know we recognized at the time there could be problems with final offer selection. It was new and innovative and perhaps it would not work. So I ask the Conservatives and I ask the Liberals, the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor), the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), the Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans), the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), why are they digging in their heels in this ideological support of the Conservatives? Why are they standing with the Conservatives against the interests of working people? Why are they not willing to allow it to go until 1993 as is the current situation with the legislation?

There is one thing they can do to assure that, support our six-month hoist. If the Liberals support our six-month hoist on second reading essentially it will table the Bill. It will prevent the Bill from being passed. They will be able to go to their business supporters and say, I think in good conscience that they are still against final offer selection.

We know that, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that they have changed their position on that. Is that not a logical way of dealing with the impasse that we are in, the major controversy on this Bill?

I want to make another suggestion. If five years is too long for a sunset clause how about four—1992 would then become the expiry date, allows final offer selection to have two more years. It currently has two years worth of experience. I can say in 1992, based on the experience that has taken place up until now, that I will be out there fighting to maintain final offer selection in this province.

I make a suggestion to Members of the Legislature, what about a four year sunset clause. Is that what they are suggesting or thinking? I raise this because that is the purpose of debate. We have reached an impasse. The Conservatives and Liberals are on one side of this issue, we are on the other.

I will make my agenda very clear, Mr. Speaker. I will make our Party's agenda very clear. Our prime consideration in this debate has been, right from the start and always will be, to maintain final offer selection in this province.

I ask the Liberals and Conservatives, are there not ways of dealing with their concerns that also provide for final offer selection to have that chance for another two years? That is their arguments after all.

Let us deal with further arguments that they have put forward. The suggestion has been made by the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), the suggestion has been made by the Liberal Labour Critic (Mr. Edwards), that somehow final offer selection has contributed to problems in terms of labour relations in this province and somehow that has impacted on our ability to attract new businesses in to this province.

I want to deal with that. I raised this in Question Period just a few days ago. I tabled a copy of an advertisement that had been placed by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst), who is I know here today and listening intently to my comments. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, in November, had his name on the bottom, had an advertisement that went out to business groups across western Canada pointing to the fact that we have one of the best records of labour relations in the country.

I asked you this question, and this was something that was dealt with very effectively by the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) in his contribution on this debate, whenever New Democratic Party Governments have spearheaded new labour relations legislation, whether it be in 1972, whether it be under the Pawley Government in 1983, once again in 1987, the response of the Conservatives and the Liberals as well has always been to suggest that somehow this was going to have dire consequences for Manitoba's economy.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to review the comments of the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), who pointed out quite accurately that at each and every stage that there was progressive labour legislation introduced, what happened? The Conservatives said it was a dark day for Manitoba, it was a dark cloud over Manitoba. It was going to have dire consequences. In each and every case it was proven to be wrong, and nothing could be more clear.

To the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), it is okay if he does not wish to make notes, he can follow my comments in Hansard. I appreciate his intent following of my comments, because I hope he will listen.

This argument that it has damaged the Manitoba economy has proven to be fundamentally flawed, because the statistics for 1989, once again I repeat them, show that we had only seven work stoppages, a dramatic drop in terms of days lost to strikes, one of the best records in Canada, the lowest level of work stoppages in 17 years. If you were to accept this argument that has been put forward that somehow final offer selection has contributed to labour unrest or increased the numbers of days lost to strike, it is just patently untrue. That is why I ask once again, what really are the Conservatives and Liberals seeking throughout this long, protracted debate?

An Honourable Member: It is like talking to a brick wall.

* (1140)

Mr. Ashton: It is like talking to a brick wall, as the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) says, because it is frustrating. It is frustrating, Mr. Speaker, and the Member for Portage, who has not had the courtesy to rise in in this debate and contribute in this debate is talking from his seat. I would urge him, if he has comments to make on final offer selection, that he stand and have the courage to debate, because it is an important issue and it is important to be dealt with. As I said, the facts demolish yet another argument. I could go through the so-called arguments that have

been put forward by the Conservatives for a considerable length of time, because in each and every case they can be demolished.

Let us talk about collective bargaining. One of the arguments that has been put forward by the Conservatives and the Liberals, and I do not wish to be unfair or misstate the argument, is that somehow final offer selection takes away from the process of free collective bargaining. I think that is a fair summation of their statement.

Free collective bargaining—well, Mr. Speaker, what has happened? Just analyze the statistics once again. The fact is that out of 72 applications for final offer selection, only five had gone to the final offer selection stage. Why is that the case? Why have only five gone to the final offer selection stage? That is because, and if one reads the debates, 1987 when this Bill was introduced and passed through the Legislature, if one looks at the contributions in committee, it was indicated at the time that one of the purposes of final offer selection was to continue the bargaining process.

It is fundamentally different, and I do give the Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson) credit in this, because in his contribution he did indicate, and I know he has indicated on a number of occasions, that unlike conventional arbitration, where you end up with both parties putting in extreme positions and bargaining for all intents and purposes stopping, final offer selection has the opposite effect.

If final offer selection was not working, out of 72 applications for final offer selection, 72 would have been settled by the selector. That would have been showing the fact that continued bargaining was not taking place. Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask you the question, five out of 72. Is that not, anybody with a fair and open mind on this support our argument, the New Democratic Party's argument that final offer selection contributes toward collective bargaining and resolution of disputes?

I raise the other statistic again, the low level of work stoppages once again, the fact that in 1989 none of the seven work stoppages involved final offer selection. How can one suggest that final offer selection has prevented settlements? How can one suggest that when the evidence is quite to the contrary?

Well, we can continue with their arguments. I find it frustrating that on issue after issue, even though we have quite literally demolished their arguments, as did the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) in his speech in particular, that there has been no response from the Conservatives and no response from the Liberals.

You know, what I found particularly frustrating is the fact that they do respond in the hallway, but a lot of times they do not address the issue. I consider one of the most offensive comments throughout this entire debate to have been made by the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae), who, in the hallway—not in this House—told the media that taxpayers' money was being wasted, \$6,600 a day was being spent to run this Legislature, because of the debate on final offer selection.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most offensive comments that I have heard from any Member of the

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Legislature.- (interjection)- Well, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay)—I do not know if his parachute has unfolded yet—the soon to be candidate in Springfield, but I hope he will look at what is happening in eastern Europe where the price is never too high to fight for democracy.

The logical extension of the argument of your House Leader would be to shut this place down entirely because it costs money. The price of democracy will never be measured by \$6,600 a day when people are, at this very moment, fighting for democracy. People pay for democracy with their lives, and the fact is the Conservatives will never silence the New Democratic Party on this, or any other Bill, by talking about the cost of democracy, because \$6,600 is a small price to pay for the free and open exchange of ideas, which is what democracy is all about.

If they want a different system let them put it in their place, let them stand on their feet and deal with the fact that it is a pathetic response to an Opposition Party that, within the Rules, within the parliamentary traditions of this House—the hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition—has had the courage to stand in its place and fight for something it believes in, something the Conservative Party, despite all their efforts to ram this Bill through, has shown a complete inability to do so.

Let them talk about the cost of democracy, when they do not even have the courtesy to stand on this Bill and debate and acknowledge the fact that their arguments are indefensible, that their whole approach has been to try and ram this through without full debate, without full consideration. Let them talk about \$6,600 a day, and I will say to anyone in the Conservative benches who thinks that we should somehow not be dealing with final offer selection, or any Bill, because it costs the people of Manitoba \$6,600 a day to run this Legislature, that is pathetic, it is absurd.

The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) knows that, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), and I hope that they would talk to some of their other colleagues, particularly their Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae), who I believe insulted not only Members of this House but also the parliamentary traditions which we abide in, by suggesting that somehow we, in the New Democratic Party, did not have the right or the responsibility to debate this Bill, because it costs \$6,600 a day to run this Legislature.

* (1150)

(Mr. William Chornopyski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

I do not want to ever hear that again from someone in the position of the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) who is supposed to be fully aware of the parliamentary traditions of this House and defending those parliamentary traditions. I particularly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not want to hear those comments by that Member outside of this Chamber. If he wants to put that on the record in this Chamber let him do so and we will deal with those comments, but the fact that the

Member went outside afterwards is absolutely unacceptable, shows just how little concern I believe that this Government is showing for the parliamentary process and tradition in this House; \$6,600 a day is too high a price for democracy, they say.

I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not true and that every day that is spent on this Bill trying to talk the Conservative Government and their Liberal coalition partners into some sense on this Bill is well worth it. It is well worth every last penny, because that is what democracy is all about. It is not about a Government bringing in a Bill that it cannot even have the courage, does not even have the intellectual integrity to debate and then ramming through, that is not democracy. That is what the people of eastern Europe are saying now. What do they want? They want full and open debate, freedom of speech, freedom of expression.

What do we have in Manitoba? We have that because of centuries of parliamentary tradition. We have it because people throughout the years, throughout the centuries of development of the parliamentary tradition, have said to people such as the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) that to suggest that \$6,600 a day or whatever figure is too high a price for democracy, is absolutely wrong and absurd.

If we had those types of arguments in the days of the Magna Charta we would have had those types of arguments during the 16th Century which was one of the major centuries, major turning points, in terms of the development of the parliamentary system that we are the inheritors of today. We would still have an absolute monarchy in this country, an absolute monarchy or a dictatorship, one of the two, and neither of those is acceptable.

I would ask that sometime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government House Leader have the courtesy to stand in his place, perhaps on this debate or another debate, and withdraw those comments that he made, because I do not take offence personally to those comments; I believe they offended our traditions of this House, our parliamentary system. I think they were offensive to the people of Manitoba. I just want to put that clearly on the record.

I want to indicate too that throughout this debate we have essentially debated fully. We said we would debate fully. We have debated the main Bill. We have debated this six-month hoist. It has been the Government that has chosen the course that it did of calling only final offer selection out of the total of 29 Bills waiting to be debated on second reading. We had offered to debate other Bills. We have never said that this is the one and only Bill that should be dealt with. It is the Government that has decided that.

You know what I find frustrating, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that if they had wished to debate this, they wished to have this considered, why have they not put speakers up? Why have they not responded to some of our points? That as well, I believe, violates our parliamentary tradition. I mean debate requires two people, minimum, two people expressing ideas. What we have in this Legislature on final offer selection is a stonewall on the part of the Conservatives, a wall of silence that is being echoed by the Liberals.

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In fact in this House we have a silent majority of 45 on this issue, a silent majority. They have the majority of votes. We recognize that, but they cannot somehow find the intestinal fortitude to rise in their place and express it. I wonder why. I am suggesting that once in here—and I have dealt with some of their arguments. Is it because they cannot defend their position? I suspect it is. Is it perhaps something else as well? I think it is too.

I think it is particularly the case with the Liberal Party. They are embarrassed, not I think by their position. I think they find some comfort in their position. It was committed to the Chamber of Commerce by the Leader of the Liberal Party that they would drop final offer selection. For them it is just continuing that policy. It has been expressed by the Liberal Labour Critic who said quite clearly in committee, and I quote, that he speaks for his caucus. The critic speaks for his caucus. His comments reminded me of Alexander Haig's "I am in charge here" a number of years ago. We will see how much the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) speaks for his caucus.

Is it strictly because they cannot defend themselves in terms of the debate, their arguments? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe there is another reason why the Liberals have been silent. That is they know politically they are in a very precarious situation because the dividing lines on this issue have never been more clear in comparison to any other issue we are dealing with.

On the one side you have the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Chamber of Commerce, the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Chamber of Commerce representing the big business position. On the other side, you have women's groups, labour groups, (interjection)- some unions, says the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). He knows and if he would check—obviously he has been in hibernation for the last number of years. As I said before, even unions such as CUPE which had opposed final offer selection, had indicated they were opposed to the repeal of final offer selection. They have indicated that to their Members, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He should take the time to check that out.

The fact that the Manitoba Federation of Labour and the Canadian Federation of Labour which represent more than 90 percent of the organized workers in this province are opposed to Bill 31. I do not want to be sidetracked by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who is great at talking from his seat but does not find the courage to stand on his feet.

An Honourable Member: We are going to put that on the doorstep.

* (1200)

Mr. Ashton: The Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) points out quite accurately that we are going to put that out on the doorstep. If they are not willing to let people know where they stand we will let them know where they stand. As I said, I think I know the reason why the dividing lines are clear. Only the New Democratic Party on this issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

is speaking out on behalf of working men and women and their families, only the New Democratic Party.

The Liberals, who are masters of the art, during elections of sounding like New Democrats, and who can forget the last federal election? The Liberal Caucus fundamentally split on free trade, all of a sudden became the saviours of Canada's future in their own mind. All of a sudden, John Turner, the corporate Liberal Leader was out there on the cause of his life, fighting free trade. Who can forget that? What happened after the election?

We are seeing now the new contenders for the Liberal Leadership. The mass majority of them are saying, well, perhaps we should not be trying to scrap the free trade deal. I use that as an analogy because it is only the New Democratic Party on free trade that is continuing the fight of free trade. Only Audrey McLaughlin has said that will be an issue in the next election, not the Liberals. It proves fundamentally that what the Liberals are masters of the art at doing is during elections sounding like they are New Democrats. Then after the election, you do not even have to put them in Government to see. Here in Manitoba, they are in Opposition. They are sounding just like Tories. How absurd can you get? I know the Conservatives find some amusement in this. I can sympathize with them.

I know what message they are probably going to be saying to the people of Manitoba from their perspective, to Chambers of Commerce, the big business in this province, if you want a real Tory Party vote for the Tories. Well, perhaps they should, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My message to the Liberals and perhaps some of the people who voted Liberal in the last election, if you want real New Democrats, vote for the NDP, not for the Liberals who are going to stand for working people only at election time and in between elections are right on with the Tories on issue after issue after issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Thompson has the floor.

Mr. Ashton: It is interesting, but when one gets home the point to the Liberals and the Tories, they start getting agitated, they start talking in great volumes from their seats. But where are they in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Where are they in this debate? Whether it be a committee or whether it be on third reading, are they ever going to stand up and have the courage to defend their position? But I get back to the Liberals once again. I have a suggestion for you. I am not suggesting that the Liberals in this province can throw away 123 years of the tradition of their Party since Confederation. This is not a new phenomenon, the Liberals, the Tories, standing against working people.

It is not a new phenomenon, but I ask you this question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you, to the Liberals: at least on this one Bill, can you not find it in the heart, even for political expediency? I know in your heart you support the Tories, but for political

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expediency—I do not care, you are masters at that. I say to the Liberal Party, can you not, for political expediency? They say, well, you know, it is maybe not that good if we appear to be too much against the interests of working people. Can you not come up with something? I have suggested ways in which we can save final offer selection, an important development for working people. But for political expediency, can you not—I will give you some alternatives here—support the six-month hoist.

If you support the six-month hoist, you are not voting against the Bill, you are voting to table the Bill. Okay? I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you to the Liberals once again, is this not the kind of face-saving, hedging, fence-sitting tactic that the Liberals are experts at? It is like what they did on the budget. They voted against the budget, but they voted for the tax Bill. Of course, if they would vote against the budget and the Government had fallen on the budget, there would have been no tax Bill. It satisfied only the Liberals. No one else outside of this Chamber, out of the 21 Liberals, saw any validity in that, but okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you, through you to the Liberals again, can you not do it on final offer selection as well?

If you can twist yourselves around like pretzels on tax cuts for working people, can you not twist yourselves around like pretzels on final offer selection, which is an important Bill in the interest of working people? I am trying to be reasonable. It is difficult in dealing with the Liberals, because when dealing with the Tories, it is easy; we know where they are coming from. We do not expect much out of them when it comes to Bills such as this, but at least we know where they are coming from. With the Liberals, I am not too sure. It depends on which month it is, which day it is, which hour it is—(interjection)—

Well, the Premier should not talk too loudly; we remember his weekend on Meech Lake. But still, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you, could not the Liberal Party—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ashton: I love the Liberals now. They are speaking. The Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), is he talking about working people? No it is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I am glad my speech has woken the Conservative and Liberal benches up. I just wish they would address final offer selection rather than Meech Lake. But anyway, in all seriousness, in the spirit of parliamentary debate, I am asking, is there not a better way?

* (1210)

We have debated this extensively on second reading. We could have done many other things on second reading. We could have brought in recent amendments. Surely there could have been enough amendments to this poorly drafted, poorly thought-out Bill. We have

not chosen that. We have debated the Bill. We have debated it, at our request, since prior to Christmas. We have had each and every Member of our caucus with the exception of the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), who was unable to speak on the main motion, speak according to the Rules, on this debate, on the main motion, the motion of second reading and on the six-month hoist. We could have done lots more to fight this Bill at the second reading stage and we may well do more at the report stage and on third reading. This is just the beginning of this debate.

An Honourable Member: We have only just begun to fight.

Mr. Ashton: As the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) says, we have only just begun to fight because at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want the next message to come not from our caucus, although certainly it has been coming loudly and clearly, we want it to come from the people of Manitoba, the working people of Manitoba in particular. That is why we want this to go to committee. We do want this to go to committee.

The only reason we brought in a six-month hoist is to give—I am not sure if the Conservatives will listen—the Liberals perhaps one more chance to stop this now, stop this insanity of repealing a final offer selection that will die a natural death in 1993 if it does not work. Why are they so obstinate? Why will they not rise? Why will they not respond to some of the suggestions I have made on ways to preserve final offer selection? Why can they not do a flip-flop? They do it on issues regularly—

An Honourable Member: Why can they not be open-minded?

Mr. Ashton: —open-minded, pardon me, sorry, I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Liberals will say open mind, they will say it is because of their open mind, some would suggest because of their lack of consistent principles, but I do not want to prejudice that. Let us say in the spirit of open-mindedness.

An Honourable Member: Open mind, is that like an empty head?

Mr. Ashton: The First Minister (Mr. Filmon) says, an open mind, is that like an empty head? Well, we will find out as this debate continues.

I am waiting to hear from the Liberals. They have one more opportunity now. I realize that perhaps the Labour Critic is unable to respond, but there are other Liberal Members who can respond. Why will they not rise up on their feet and say that after this extensive debate that they have learned the error of their ways, that their initial position was wrong? Why can they not support us in our efforts to maintain final offer selection? I ask that question now. I am going to be asking that question, as are all Members of our caucus, in committee. We are going to be asking that question at the report stage, we will be asking that question at the third reading.

If the Conservatives and Liberals do not respond to that very legitimate suggestion, and we will keep

repeating it, we will be taking another question and the question will be to the people of Manitoba. The question will be, who stands for the interests of working men and women and their families in this province?

I say to you, it is not the Conservatives who stand for the interests of the Chambers of Commerce and particularly not even the small business, but the big businesses of this province. I will say as well that it is not the Liberals as well. Final offer selection is not an isolated example. On final offer selection, where do they stand, the Conservatives and big business? On plant closure legislation, where do they stand, the Conservatives and big business?

In fact the fundamental issues that we are dealing with, with this Legislature, as part of this Legislature, the Thirty-Fourth Legislature of Manitoba, are issues affecting working people. In each and every case the Liberals and Conservatives are showing their true colours, they do not speak for working people in this province.

They have a choice, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Their first choice starts in a few minutes on the six-month hoist. Thus far the Liberals have supported the Conservatives on each and every vote involving final offer selection. They have a chance on the vote that will take place in a few minutes to vote to table this Bill, to kill this Bill. They have the chance. They will have the chance on second reading. We will be looking at possible amendments in terms of the Bill to deal with some of the concerns. They will have the chance. They will have the chance once again at the report stage to deal with amendments that will save final offer selection. Well, I already reference the committee, they will have a chance at third reading to come up with some pretext.

Let us submit, we know where their hearts are on this. We know where their hearts are, but if they do not deal with it now they are going to have to deal with it on the doorstep, and not just during the next election. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the day that this Bill is rammed through they are going to hear not just from the New Democratic Party, not just from the labour movement, not just from women's organizations, they are going to hear from the many people I believe who are going to say final offer selection, it was working, it provided an alternative to the strike situation without taking away the right to strike; why did you vote to kill it?

* (1220)

The answer, I am sure, that the Liberals and Conservatives are going to receive is going to be quite clear from the people of Manitoba. The answer is going to be abundantly clear. On the question, who speaks for the working people of this province? It is not the Conservatives; it is not the Liberals; it is only the New Democratic Party. That is why we have stood in our place and why we have debated this stone wall of silence from the Conservatives and Liberals who are afraid to defend their position, that is why we have only just begun. This debate is far from over.

This debate will continue so long as we have one Member left to speak. We will speak whether we have

12 Members or 22 Members or 32 Members or 42 Members. We will rise above the heckling. We will rise above the comments of the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) who says that \$6,600 is too high a price to pay for democracy. We will do that because our fundamental principle as a Party, one of our fundamental principles is to fight for the interests of working people. That is why this bill is important to us. That is why we are willing to deal with it, why we will debate it extensively, because this is of fundamental importance to us.

I have on many occasions reminded people of the quote, and I know the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) used this as well. It is one of my favourite quotations to tell people what the New Democratic Party is all about. J. S. Woodsworth from the 1920s I believe said, what we desire for ourselves we wish for all. That is what we are fighting for on final offer selection. We do not want the women of Manitoba, the working people of Manitoba, to be subjected to the Adam Smith, dog-eat-dog capitalist vision of the Conservatives and Liberals that would rather see people out on picket lines than give them another option to resolve a settlement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the right to strike is an important one, and there will be strikes. There will always be strikes so long as there are employers who do not recognize unions or employers that do not wish to pay decent wages or provide decent working conditions. But it should not require one- or two- or three-month strikes in each and every case for them to have to deal with it. That is all we are asking for. That is the fundamental principle in final offer selection, rights for working people.

We are going to fight this all the way through. I say the fight is only just beginning now on this vote. I want to see where the Liberals stand. I want to see where the Conservatives stand. We know where we stand—with the working people, with the women of Manitoba, with the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is on a motion by the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), Bill No. 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, be not now read a second time, but be read this day six months hence. Is the House ready for the question? Agreed? All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. We will try it again. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. All those against the motion, please say nay. In my opinion the nays have it.

The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please call in the Members.

The question before the House is that Bill No. 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, be not now read a second time, but be read this day six months hence.

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

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YEAS

Ashton, Cowan, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Harper, Hemphill, Maloway, Plohman, Storie, Uruski, Wasylcia-Leis.

NAYS

Alcock, Burrell, Carr, Carstairs, Cheema, Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Niakwa), Ducharme, Enns, Ernst, Evans (Fort Garry), Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Gray, Hammond, Helwer, Kozak, Lamoureux, Mandrake, McCrae, Minenko, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Oleson, Orchard, Patterson, Penner, Praznik, Roch, Rose, Taylor, Yeo.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas, 11; Nays, 35.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the Nays have it.

The question before the House is the motion of the Honourable Minister of Labour that Bill 31, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail) be now read for the second time. Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

All those in favour, say aye, please. All those against, say nay. In my opinion, the Yeas have it. The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Mr. Deputy Speaker -(interjection)-

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Call in the Members.

The question before the House is the second reading of Bill No. 31.

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

YEAS

Alcock, Burrell, Carr, Carstairs, Cheema, Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Niakwa), Ducharme, Enns, Ernst, Evans (Fort Garry), Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Gray, Hammond, Helwer, Kozak, Lamoureux, Mandrake, McCrae, Minenko, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Oleson, Orchard, Patterson, Penner, Praznik, Roch, Rose, Taylor, Yeo.

NAYS

Ashton, Cowan, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Harper, Hemphill, Maloway, Plohman, Storie, Uruski.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas, 35; Nays, 10.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the Nays have it. I declare the motion carried.

The hour being after 12:30 p.m., I declare this House adjourned and it remains adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday.