

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, February 23, 1990.

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, as is custom I would like to issue the first flood forecast of the year. I will not read the document but make these available to Members opposite. Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources, are you tabling this document? The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, allow me to explain. It is traditional that the Minister of Natural Resources on or about this time gives some indication to the House as to the moisture conditions. It has been the practice, Sir, to simply provide the opposite Members copies of the projections for the coming year. That is all I am doing. I am tabling the document. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

* (1005)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Meech Lake Accord Parallel Agreement

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). On December 16, 1988, the Premier spoke for an hour in this House praising the Meech Lake Accord, and then on December 19 he dropped it like a hot potato. On August 23, 1989, he said the accord could be salvaged before the 1990 deadline if a parallel accord were accepted. Then in October, after the all-Party task force made public its report, the Premier absolutely ruled out a parallel accord and repeated the same comment as recently as January 25 in Toronto.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a headline in the Toronto Star which says: Filmon no longer rules out the parallel accord.

This Premier is all over the map. Is he or is he not in favour of a parallel accord?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, because the Member I know has not had a great deal of experience in dealing with journalists and their perspective in responding to questions in a scrum, in a discussion, I might tell him that I made the comments that resulted in that headline in a scrum here of about 10 or 15 minutes with all of the reporters that you see here in the gallery. Not one of them took that perspective on the story, because they heard me say what I have said over and over again, and that is that Meech Lake cannot pass in Manitoba without changes and that the changes are outlined in the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force Report.

That was the simple straightforward—and he said: are you ruling out a parallel accord? I said: I am not talking about the mechanics, I am not a constitutional lawyer, I am telling you the changes that must be made, and they are contained within our—he said: Filmon does not rule out parallel accord.

Mr. Speaker, if that is the kind of reporting that forms the basis of Liberal policy, Liberal questions and Liberal positions, we know why the—

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Senate Reform Committee Formation

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are increasingly concerned about Phase 2 of the Tory agenda, and they have every right to wonder if Phase 2 includes a re-embrace of the Meech Lake Accord from this Premier.

Now, only last week the Premier of this province said that Senate reform was a tangent to this Legislature, in spite of the fact that the Meech Lake Task Force has recommended that a committee be struck immediately. Their Premier is quoted sometime in October of 1989 saying that he would set up that committee soon. Why has the Premier of this province abandoned his commitment to Senate reform?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I at no time, in no circumstances, have suggested that we are abandoning Senate reform. I said that his proposal to forget everything that we were doing in the Legislature at the present time, to abandon all of our committee hearings, to abandon the process of all of these Bills that are listed here in our Order Paper and not to approve the Estimates of Expenditure that have still not been approved for March 31 of this year end—to do all of that was to take us on to a tangent, off the agenda of this Legislature. That is the tangent I was speaking about, the tangent that is in the mind of the Member for Fort Rouge.

* (1010)

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), a member of the Triple E committee, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), who was on the Meech Lake Task Force, can sit idly by listening to the kind of malarkey we are hearing from the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon). I am sure they are feeling awfully uncomfortable right now.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Meech Lake Accord Parallel Agreement

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): I have a very simple supplementary question to the Premier. Will he once and for all rule out a parallel accord?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are getting heckling from the New Democratic Party, whose Leader and Premier signed the Meech Lake Accord. They are talking about change of position.

Mr. Speaker, what I will assure the Member for Fort Rouge—and he can go and have interviews with anybody he wants and try and discuss all of the various permutations and combinations—what I will assure him is that the Meech Lake Accord will not pass in this Legislature without substantive changes. Those changes that we believe in and are committed to are the changes that are laid out in the task force report that was adopted by all three Parties in this Legislature, that reflects firmly the position of the people of Manitoba. Those are the changes that we seek in the Meech Lake Accord in order to make it acceptable to the people of Manitoba.

Quebec Consultations

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr), with a new question.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, when we hear the Premier and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) debating the Meech Lake Accord, we have the vision of, mirror, mirror on the wall, who changed the most of all? They can fight it out with each other. A final supplementary—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. Carr: At least some of us on this side of the House make a declaration who we are supporting in a Leadership convention, unlike the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer), who sat on the fence until the zero hour, Mr. Speaker. With a supplementary question—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please, order, please. This postamble, has it something to do with your supplementary question? It had better, otherwise it is out of order. The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. Carr: I have a supplementary question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). We understand that M. Remillard, the Quebec Intergovernmental Affairs Minister, will be in Manitoba in the next 10 days or so. Does the Premier intend to meet with him, and what discussions and what decisions does he expect may result of these discussions with the Quebec Intergovernmental Affairs Minister?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): The answer to the first part of the question is, yes. I have confirmed my willingness to meet with Mr. Remillard. The answer to the second question is: since I do not have any agenda or any indication of what he wants to discuss, how can I tell him what decisions we may make as a result of that discussion of which I do not know what it is about.

Mr. Carr: That was clear, I think, Mr. Speaker.

* (1015)

Centre for Disease Control Construction Delay

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): I have a new question to the Premier. After months of questioning in this House, the Premier finally took a position and lobbied members of City Council to push for a downtown site for the virology lab. I do not know how effective the lobby was. I do not know how many calls he made, but at least he agreed that he would make some phone calls on behalf of the downtown site. Now we hear that the federal Government, the Mulroney Tories, are imposing a two-year delay in the construction of the virology lab.

Can the Premier report to the House what action he intends to take to make sure that this important project for the people of Manitoba is not delayed two years by the Mulroney Tories?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): While I have been listening to the Leader—sorry, the would-be Leader of the Liberal Party, I want him to just know about headlines and how information can be presented in newspaper articles.

This article is from the Winnipeg Sun of May 16, 1989. It is entitled Accord Discord, and it says: Chretien stuns Carstairs with flip-flop on Meech. It says: say it is not so, Jean. The Liberal Leader Sharon Carstairs will plead with her good friend, Jean Chretien, at lunch today in Ottawa. Chretien said last week—

Mr. Speaker: Order; please, order, please. I will remind the Honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon) that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should not provoke debate, and should deal with the matter raised.

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The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, we are hoping that the Premier will address the very important subject of the virology lab. Only over the last couple of days the federal Department of Health and Welfare has published a brochure inviting members of the community to talk with officials from national Health and Welfare about the lab and the site.

Now we hear that there is a delay of two years. Is the Premier prepared to take any action at all on behalf of the Government of Manitoba to see what can be done to make sure that two-year delay is collapsed into something much less than that?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we are very, very concerned about that report. In fact we would be very upset if the federal Government did indeed delay that lab for two years.

As a result, I have asked my Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) to write immediately to the Honourable Perrin Beatty. That letter is being drafted at this very moment, while we sit here, asking Mr. Beatty for an immediate clarification of what will be done with respect to that lab so that we do not have to suffer that kind of delay for the construction.

Centre for Disease Control Opening Date

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): I hope all Manitobans, in whatever accord is finally arrived at, will never agree to the veto for Quebec that Jean Chretien is proposing in his constitutional document.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Veto for Ontario as well, Mr. Speaker. Eastern Canadian interests are at it again.

My question is to the Premier. There is a great deal of confusion in terms of the virology lab in Manitoba. The Members of the Legislature are receiving letters from Health and Welfare Canada calling them to a meeting. There are ads in the Free Press and Winnipeg Sun talking to citizens about an immediate meeting about the virology lab. There are brochures out, as the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) has indicated, from Health and Welfare Canada, and yet we get conflicting reports today about the lab being delayed for two years.

Can the Premier please tell us: what specific date does his Government expect this lab to be opened on, and how does that fit with the information we have from Ottawa today?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Prior to recognizing the Honourable First Minister, I would have to tell the Honourable Member for Concordia, your postamble had absolutely nothing to do with your question. Therefore, that part was out of order. The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know, this is the difficulty that we face when we get rumours and innuendo and sometimes even fabricated reports as we had yesterday from the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) with respect to frightening people into believing that there were layoffs impending at Burns when in fact they were taking back 18 workers. We do not want to deal with rumour and innuendo. What we are dealing with is a report in the news media that alleges that there has been a delay.

We have had no information from the federal Government. We have phoned the mayor who has had no information from the federal Government on that. In order to clarify it immediately, the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) is sending a letter today to the Minister of Health federally, the Honourable Perrin Beatty, to clarify that matter, because we do not believe it is tolerable to have a delay of two years in the construction of that lab, which we believe would be very important to Manitoba's future.

* (1020)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is: What is the date that they are operating now in terms of doing business with Ottawa and the city Government? What is the date that this lab is scheduled to be open on, so that we are not reacting to information that is extraneous to that date? What is the specific date that the specific lab will be opened in terms of the specific agreement with the federal Government, with the provincial Government and the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we do not have a specific agreement of tripartite on this land. What we have is a federal Government initiative to build a lab in the City of Winnipeg, the laboratory centre for disease control and the animal health lab, both of which have been announced by the federal Government in conjunction. The extent of the development I believe has been well documented publicly. It is not a subject of federal-provincial-municipal agreement. There is not a signed agreement among us. There is an announcement that has been made and further discussions that outlined a table of events that would have to take place.

Health Industry Strategy Progress

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, under the Health Initiative Program developed by Manitoba earlier, there were two other projects that were being proposed by Manitoba to the federal Government, and take advantage of the health sector in its growing potential for jobs and economic development in Manitoba. One was the Aging and Rehabilitation Home Care Product Development Centre and another one was the Canadian Health Telematics centre of excellence. These two projects were on negotiations with the federal Government along with the virology lab.

Can the First Minister advise us whether there has been any success by his Government over the last two

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years in getting those agreements? If they have the agreements, when will they be announced, what dates will they start and how many jobs and economic development will spin from those?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, in I guess it was August or September of 1988, we signed an agreement with the federal Government dealing with the question of a health industry strategy for Manitoba. One of those, the Aging and Rehabilitation Product Development Corporation has been funded, has bought a building and is open.

Mr. Doer: The Minister did not indicate which one was funded. The third project, will it be funded by the federal Government or will it be cut back as a result of the federal budget announced two days ago?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, we have an agreement with the federal Government signed dealing with the funding of that Aging and Rehabilitation Product Development Centre, as I indicated earlier. The fact of the matter is, it is being funded at the present time, has purchased a building, is acquiring staff and is operating.

Hog Industry Labour Force Reduction

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, yesterday after I revealed that senior management at Burns had given a shakedown speech to all Burns workers—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Edwards: —last Monday and had stated specifically that the Government had put 200 to 300 jobs in the industry at risk in order to protect 60 at Springhill Farms, the Minister said I had been wrong and she said I should apologize. She should have taken a lesson from the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) before she dug the hole deeper, Mr. Speaker.

Today I want to table a list of five workers who were at those meetings at the Burns plant who confirmed that the information I brought to this House was accurate, including one worker who is a union steward, shop steward—

Mr. Speaker: Question please.

Mr. Edwards: In fact senior management did make these statements and I want this Minister to apologize. I ask this Minister to apologize to me, Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) should be apologizing to the families and the workers at Burns for creating stress and fear in the hearts of those families about a speculation of 200 or 300 jobs. I stand by what I said.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. James, with your supplementary question.

* (1025)

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, let us just get something straight. The workers are on our side on this issue. They are today, they were yesterday, they will be tomorrow, because the facts will speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), did the company senior management also deny to the Minister that they asked employees to cut back on breaks and sick days in order to help the company weather the storm? Did senior management deny that to her as well?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about are 200 or 300 jobs, and we are talking about jobs of workers in Manitoba. There are no sides in this. We are working for the people in Manitoba. We want them to keep their jobs.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hog Industry Labour Adjustment Strategy

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, finally for the Minister, one thing the Minister did not even deny yesterday was that this is a troubled industry.

My question for the Minister is, when is this Minister going to take the blinkers off and not wait like the NDP did with Canada Packers and take the Tory free trade threat to this industry seriously and get real and move beyond this blindness-is-bliss approach to labour adjustment in this province?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I just find it absolutely incredible that this Member would stand up and make those kind of statements. The hog industry in Manitoba has been a strong, growing and viable industry in the Province of Manitoba. The processing sector has been built on the basis of the hog supply that is in the Province of Manitoba. The allegations that Springhill had something to do with the fact that there are less hogs being produced right now than there was a month ago, on the farms of Manitoba, is absolutely ludicrous.

Mr. Speaker, that Member on Monday, February 19, this week, said we must attempt reasonably to stick to the facts. I find it absolutely incredible the kind of misinformation he is putting on the record right now.

Mr. Speaker, the hog industry has been managed well by the people in charge—

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

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Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. James, on a point of order.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for St. James, with a point of order.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I have been accused by that side a lot of times of misinformation. They have never been right, and they are not right this time. Let them tell the workers that they are wrong.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for St. James will take his seat. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Federal Budget Impact Child Care Services

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member for Ellice has the floor. Order. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture—order. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) and the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch) appear to want to have some kind of a debate. Honourable Members may do so outside the Chamber. Right now the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) has the floor. The Member for Ellice.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, as predicted, the federal budget will have a devastating effect on Canada's disadvantaged, and we know there will be cuts to programs and services. We know that this Government here in Manitoba is in the middle of preparations for the 1990-91 budget.

My question to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) is: can she tell this House if her financial division has conducted an analysis of the impact of the \$1.75 million cut from the national child care strategy and the cuts to services to battered women? Will she share that analysis with the House today?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, all those matters are being considered by the staff, and analyses are being done in preparation for next year's budget.

* (1030)

Federal Budget Impact Seniors' Programs

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, with a supplementary question, can the Minister responsible

for Seniors (Mr. Downey) share the analysis from his department of the impact of the \$8 million cuts to programs, or the \$3.5 million cut to programs, for seniors' initiatives? Can he share that analysis with the House?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): I thank the Member for that question, and any information that we can make available we will make available to the Members opposite.

Federal Budget Impact Northern/Native People

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, with a final supplementary to the Minister responsible for Seniors, there will be \$8 million worth of cuts to services to our aboriginal people. Can the Minister responsible for Native and Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) tell this House what will be the impact of that \$8 million cut? Can he tell us if his department is currently doing an analysis, and is he prepared to share that report when it is available to this House?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are doing an analysis. I think it is very appropriate for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to relay to the federal Minister of Finance at a meeting, which I understand possibly may be held, that those kinds of detailed pieces of information are made available through our Minister of Finance.

Bill No. 42 Standing Committee Referral

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme). With every day that passes and every issue that arises, the needs of inner city residents, of low-income citizens, of urban Native members in our communities continue to be ignored by this Government. It is clear this Government is siding with developers, with landlords and with all those who are not heeding the needs of inner city residents. Today again the arbitrary lists of committee meetings does not include Bill No. 42, The Residential Tenancies Act. I want to ask the Minister of Housing, given that he received a letter yesterday from the Winnipeg housing urbans group—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Member for St. Johns.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: —given that he received a clear statement yesterday from the Winnipeg housing urbans group which clearly says that the Bill now before the House in committee represents a consensus of landlords and tenants and concerned citizens in Manitoba, will he now stop making excuses and blaming it on tenants and suggesting he needs more time to consult, call this Bill to committee, urge his Minister of Housing to do that—

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

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Housing): The Member from across the way has been long enough in this House, knows the process. She is the one who stands up in this House and blames the tenants. Mr. Speaker, my administration and I are still going through many—it is not just one particular group. The House Leader (Mr. McCrae) has replied to the particular letter that the Member has a copy of explaining the process. When we have dealt with all the concerns of all the groups, the tenants specifically, who had in the neighbourhood of 50 or 60 different changes they would like, and we would like to go through all those changes, and the landlord groups, who have their specific changes, with all the groups, we will come forward with that particular Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, there is no basis in fact for that kind of argument and those kinds of delays, given that yesterday the group that it represents, the concerned groups and tenants in this province, around progressive tenants legislation, stated that there is a consensus, there is no need for further consultation. Will this Government call Bill No. 42 to committee immediately so we can get on and pass one of the most important pieces of legislation for inner city residents and tenants in this province?

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, for the amount of time that that Government was in power, it is because of their lack of consultation with the tenants, their lack of consultation with the landlords that is causing the consultation that is very necessary. Is that particular Member saying that this particular Government should not consult with those very interested groups that will be affected by this very, very important Bill No. 42?

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I hope he reads his mail and appreciates the fact that the housing concern groups and the tenants have said they have been consulted enough and they want to get on with this Bill.

Urban Futures Group White Paper Request

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I want to ask the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ducharme) a question on a related matter. Since it is clear on other fronts inner city residents are being shafted and not receiving fairness through our core area strategies—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I have recognized the Honourable Member for St. Johns with her third supplementary question, but it appears that the Honourable Member's postamble has absolutely nothing to do with her third question. Therefore, that part would be out of order. The Honourable Member for St. Johns, put her question now, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is related. It is based on yesterday's press release from the Urban Futures Group, which has called for progressive housing policies and progressive urban strategies. My question to the Minister is, will he accept as reasonable the creative suggestion of the Urban

Futures Group for a White Paper from this Government on future inner city revitalization strategies that address the needs of inner city residents as opposed to the wants of private developers?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we just do not have one particular group. We have an area that takes in 10 square miles. It has 100,000 people in the core area that we have been servicing by this particular agreement.

If the Member from across the way would read some of the press releases that have just gone out recently from the core area, one of them specifically discussed a housing project in the core area to the tune of \$2.5 million to \$3 million that is going to be devised and set aside by MHRC and CMHC. Details will be announced shortly.

Water Pollution Low Water Level Warning

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all Manitobans, including the Members of this House, wish that we have a very nice gentle-raining spring this season so that we can bring up the water supplies for all of Manitoba.

The Minister of Natural Resources' report that he tabled today, however, paints the worst scenario, which we hope not to see the case of being. However, should this come true, and as indicated that the Red River and the Souris River could be so impacted by low water quantity that the quality will become less than perfect, and indeed even worse than it is now, if that case develops, will the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) ensure that the Red River in particular will be posted for the dangerous situation of the degree of pollution which now exists and which will be more horrendous come a low quantity level in this summer?

An Honourable Member: That is the most hypothetical question I have ever

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think I am hearing advice that is a fairly hypothetical question and you, Sir, know that hypothetical questions are out of order.

I think I will anticipate your ruling by suggesting that I hope indeed that we do get that gentle rain that she referred to, and help alleviate the situation.—(interjection)—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I believe the question was based on the report tabled by the Honourable Minister.

Fishing Industry Impact Low Water Levels

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Selkirk, with a supplementary question.

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Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): The report goes on to state that low levels on lakes could have a serious impact on recreation and fisheries. Can the Minister of Natural Resources indicate what possible restrictions would be put on fishing and recreation industries for this summer if this report proves accurate?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, these reports are issued at this time of the year, and a great number of the communities throughout Manitoba await them for purposes of information.

Quite frankly, there is not a great deal that can be done with respect to the water levels that may or may not be in certain of our lakes, rivers and streams.

I can assure the Honourable Member that we will take the appropriate management decisions that would be applicable under any given circumstances. We are, however, despite the fact that the report indicates below normal levels of overall precipitation at this point in most of the province, hopeful that as often is the case that spring rains, spring snowfalls, will enable us to look forward to a more normal season. The bright aspect in the report is that we have had substantial snowfalls in the North which should at least get us off to a better start in terms of not repeating the kind of devastating firefighting season that we had last year.

Morden Reservoir Low Water Levels

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): We are in a drought cycle and the report goes on to predict that unless precipitation patterns revert to above average, farm water supplies will be critically low this summer and the provincial reservoir at Morden will become empty by the fall.

Can the Minister tell us whether he is just going to wait for God to act or whether he is planning to put in place some action plans in case this comes about?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Of one thing I am sure, God will act in his own way with or without any intervention on the part of this Government or indeed any other Government. We have done many things, including during this winter period. We have provided additional aeration equipment in such lakes that have traditional problems with levels to help save fish stocks, lakes such as the Pelican Lake and others. Our department has actively worked with volunteer organizations in trying to do the very best under these circumstances. I want to assure communities, Mr. Speaker, that they can expect that kind of proactive action on the part of this Government.

* (1040)

Dauphin General Hospital Quick-Response Team

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I have a question to the Acting Minister of Health. Before placing my question I would like to ask the Acting Minister of Health to pass on our best wishes to the Minister of Health

(Mr. Orchard) for a speedy recovery. I am not saying that we miss the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, do not get me wrong, but we do wish him a recovery in his very unfortunate accident.

My question to the Acting Minister of Health is in regard to the recently announced crisis team that has been appointed by the Government that we had indicated by tabling the document, the speech given to the MMA several months ago.

My first question is to the Acting Minister of Health. Will the quick-response team, the crisis management team, be looking at the situation in Dauphin that was revealed once again with public hearings in that community? Concerns have been expressed by the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) in 1988 and '89 about overcrowding in the chemotherapy room in that area, a very serious situation in the Dauphin Hospital. Will the quick-response team be looking at that particular question?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): May I first of all say that I will be happy to pass along the good wishes of the Legislature and the Members opposite to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). I can report that the Minister is recovering very nicely and looks forward to being back in the House and doing his work.

With regard to the question, I would like to indicate that the quick-response team has been established to deal with all kinds of emergency situations so that we can address those situations very quickly and to the satisfaction of the people who are involved.

With regard to the situation in Dauphin, the Manitoba Health Services Commission acknowledges that there is a problem in the space that has been made available for the chemotherapy treatment and that there needs to be a solution to it. Manitoba Health Services Commission is presently working with the Dauphin unit to ensure that an interim solution can be found and that a longer term solution will be found in the new proposed development of the health services building in Dauphin.

Mr. Ashton: This quick-response team should have no shortage of projects, given the record of health crisis under this Government.

Thompson General Hospital Quick-Response Team

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My next question is, will this quick-response team also be looking at the situation in the Thompson General Hospital, which apparently is now faced with receiving only one year of accreditation because of maintenance problems, maintenance problems that were identified to the Minister by myself, by other Members of our caucus last year which have not been responded to? Will the quick-response team be looking at the very serious situation the Thompson Hospital could face with potentially receiving only one year in terms of accreditation instead of the normal two-year period?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate to the

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Member opposite that indeed some of the situations that we have in our health care system in Manitoba are the result of neglect by the former administration. I have to indicate that this Government and our Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) have indeed addressed many of the situations that we have in this province very effectively. An example of that is the capital program that he announced very recently of some \$250 million. The crisis team is designed to deal with those crisis situations that have to be dealt with very quickly and very effectively. Whether those situations are here in the City of Winnipeg or anywhere else in the province, the crisis team will be able to handle those and be able to respond very quickly to ensure that everyone involved is dealt with very fairly and very quickly.

Mr. Ashton: The crises are because of the inaction of this Government, and the Acting Minister of Health should know that.

Northern Health Care Quick-Response Team

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My final question is once again in regard to another crisis situation that is developing, especially in rural and northern communities, because of the shortage of doctors and nurses. I would like to ask, will the Quick Response Team be looking at the very serious shortage of both nurses and doctors in northern and rural communities which is leading to a crisis situation in a number of communities including Thompson, where proper medical services are being threatened by the lack of availability of professional staff in those particular hospitals, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate to the House that if this Member thinks that there is a quick and easy answer to the shortage of doctors and that we can have a Quick Response Team all of a sudden cure all of these situations, he is very naive. I have to indicate that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has been working very aggressively at ensuring that we will have adequate nurses and adequate doctors, but that is not an overnight solution. That is one that has to be developed over time and the Minister of Health is working very diligently at ensuring that in the future we will have a better supply of qualified nurses and qualified doctors for all of this province.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY HOUSE BUSINESS

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am announcing that the Private Bills Committee will sit on Tuesday, February 27, at 9:30 in the morning to consider Bill No. 89.

The Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee will sit on Tuesday, February 27, at 8 p.m. to consider Bills No. 18, 19, and 35.

The Law Amendments Committee will sit on Wednesday, February 28, 1990, at 8 p.m. to consider Bill No. 63.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call the Order for Return? I was going to ask you to call the Order for Return standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko). I can do that Monday if that is okay?

Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Bills in the following order.- (interjection)- I see the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) is prepared to move his Order for Return, so would you call the Order for Return standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks?

ORDER FOR RETURN NO. 13

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak),

THAT an Order of the House do issue for the return of the following information:

- (a) the total costs for the establishment of the new Manitoba office in Ottawa; and
- (b) the length and rate of the lease for the new Manitoba office in Ottawa; and
- (c) the total costs for the party/reception held for the opening of the new Manitoba office in Ottawa; and
- (d) the total costs for the attendance of staff at the opening party of the new Manitoba office in Ottawa.

MOTION presented.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): This Order for Return is acceptable to the Government.

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

HOUSE BUSINESS

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Bills in the following order: 98, 59, 60, 56, 84, 50, 51, 52, 57, 47, 48 and the remainder as listed on today's Order Paper.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

BILL NO. 98—THE MANITOBA DATA SERVICES DISPOSITION AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Bill No. 98, The Manitoba Data Services Disposition and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur l'aliénation de la Commission des services d'informatique du Manitoba et modifications corrélatives, standing in the name of

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the Honourable Member for Flin Flon, the Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

* (1050)

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Before I begin my remarks, we are glad to see that the Government House Leader has finally screwed up his courage and decided to call some of the committees so that we can actually get on with some of the business of this Legislature.

I have certainly been frustrated to hear the First Minister and other Members of the Government suggesting we have been obstructing, when we have been debating willingly and often on virtually every piece of legislation this Government has introduced. On the other hand, the Government's intransigence several weeks ago has meant that there are Bills on the Order Paper that should have been in committee, that should have been dealt with by the public and could have been done simultaneously while we were debating the very serious matter of this Government's decision to repeal final offer selection.

So this Government has no one to blame but itself if it feels the Session is going too long. Certainly there has been no limiting of debate as far as the New Democratic Party is concerned. We have been there and we have been debating.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also say that for a Government that continues to complain about the length of the Session, that this Government has chosen to continue to introduce legislation months after they should have stopped introducing legislation and given the Legislature a chance to digest and debate the Bills that were on the Order Paper. This is a perfect example.

This piece of legislation was introduced into the Legislature only a few weeks ago and certainly creates a situation where debate is necessarily, and the Session is necessarily going to continue a little bit longer than it otherwise would have. The Government has handled the business of this House in an extremely incompetent manner. There has been no co-operation, despite the suggestion from the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) that has happened.

The fact the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) continues to say this is costing money to be here because of the additional staff that are required while the Legislature is sitting, the Government should have thought of that back in December when, if he had negotiated in an appropriate manner, we would have been out of this Chamber.

HOUSE BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I apologize to the Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and will not interrupt for very long.

I believe I announced the Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee to meet on Tuesday for a

reference of Bill, I believe I said 18. I am told I said 18. I should have said Bill No. 8, Bill No. 19 and No. 35. I am sorry to the Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Government House Leader for that clarification. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting counterpoint to my remarks because those Bills, 8, 19 and 35, were the ones that could have been passed several weeks ago. We offered their passage to the Government to proceed to committee.

An Honourable Member: Ah, shut up and speak, Jerry.

Mr. Storie: The Member for Emerson (Mr. Driedger) says, ah, shut up, because of course he knows that their own incompetence is what has created this lethargy in the House. The Minister is sitting there looking like something the cat dragged in because he is exhausted. He has only himself to blame and his Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) because they have been completely incompetent in managing the affairs of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to this piece of legislation. I am concerned because it was introduced so late in the Session, but I want to deal with the principles of the Bill. The principles really are somewhat obscured by the relative scanty nature of this piece of legislation.

It is not a very all-encompassing Bill. Its purposes are founded in the principles of this Government, to the extent that I can use that term with respect to this Government. There is clearly a rationale for this particular piece of legislation. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in his remarks on Monday, February 19, when the Bill was introduced for second reading, provides us with a somewhat cloudy vision of the Government's intent behind the Bill.

First of all, I think the main reason for this piece of legislation is a recognition, on the part of the Government, that the concerns that were raised by my colleague, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), are legitimate concerns. The Member for Brandon East suggested that the whole issue of confidentiality had to be addressed as a first order of business before Manitoba Data Services should be put on the chopping block, put up for auction.

Mr. Speaker, we raised the issue of confidentiality as a matter of concern without, in the first instance, extensive consultation with the many groups who are concerned about individual rights and freedoms and the maintenance of confidentiality. In fact, we raised the issue of confidentiality and registered our concern about the possible sale of Manitoba Data Services before the Winnipeg Sun, October 2, 1989, carried a story about the opinion of Manitobans when it comes to the divestiture of Manitoba Data Services. It is interesting to note that the majority of Manitobans are opposed to this sale.

An Honourable Member: You do not know that, Jerry.

Mr. Storie: Well, Mr. Speaker: "Keep gov't data service public: poll." The majority of Manitobans said, do not sell Manitoba Data Services. It has served us well. It is an asset for the Government. It has been profitable since its inception, and it is obviously easier to maintain confidentiality when Manitoba Data Services remains part of the records of the Government of Manitoba.-(interjection)-

The Member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) continues to suggest that is not so. Well, Mr. Speaker, any person who has ever given his name to a magazine company, signed an agreement with a private company, has found that their name and address suddenly appear on another list that has been sold by some particular division in that company as a part of a mailing list for another company. That is how people get their junk mail. Our names and addresses, our income levels, are circulated amongst the business community for other purposes. That happens, there is no doubt about it.

So the issue of confidentiality is very important because we are not just talking about names and addresses. We are talking about dental records, medical records, motor vehicle records, births and deaths, estates and thousands of other things—

An Honourable Member: And they may escape, right?

Mr. Storie: Well, we do not know how they may be transferred, but the fact is that confidentiality has to be addressed.

Now, I am not saying that the issues of confidentiality are so overwhelming that we should, on any grounds, oppose the Government's plan of action. I am not saying that. There may in fact be a rationale for divesting Manitoba Data Services. I do not deny the Government the right, if not the obligation, to look at proposals that come forward with respect to Manitoba Data Services.

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

What I want to do is put on the record the concerns that we have expressed. I want to deal with some of the arguments that the Government itself has presented to the people of Manitoba in support of its conclusion that Manitoba Data Services should be sold. Again, I will refer to the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) remarks on February 19, 1990. He is talking about divestiture as a tool designed to achieve broad economic policy goals, and it is not an end in itself.

I believe this is a somewhat distorted representation of the Conservative policy actually. Divestiture is an end in itself for the Conservative Government. Privatization is an end in itself for the Conservative Government. This is an attempt to whitewash the rationale for this divestiture for the public of Manitoba.

* (1100)

The Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) is sitting here, and I want to remind him of a discussion we had when the Manitoba Government promised to divest itself of Manitoba Oil and Gas. How did they do that? How did they attempt to divest themselves of Manitoba Oil and

Gas to make it look good? First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they talked about book value, they devalued the company. Then they assumed a worst case scenario in terms of that company's potential growth and its revenue projections and sold it on that basis. At the time, Manitoba Oil and Gas had a minimum value of \$14 million. Oil prices, of course, have subsequently raised and the value would have been closer to \$20 million. What did the Government get for an asset that should have been valued at \$20 million? They got \$3 million, they got \$3 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under no circumstances is that a reasonable or a responsible action on the part of the Government. It was divested because the Government ideologically said: We should not be in the oil industry. That is what they said. So I get a little suspicious when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) says: Well, divestiture is not an end in itself. With Conservative Governments it is. It is an end in itself.

I want to talk about the value, the book value, that the Minister of Finance has supposedly put on the table with respect to Manitoba Data Services. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba Data Services had a profit of something like \$3 million back in 1986 or '87. When I was Minister responsible for Manitoba Data Services, they had a profit of \$3 million. The fact is MDS has been profitable every year since its inception. On top of that, it has reduced rates on a per unit process basis to the Government of Manitoba, in some cases by 15 percent, 20 percent and 25 percent in a single year. So it has achieved two things for the people of Manitoba, or three things. It has provided a sense of security and confidentiality, it has provided revenue, and it has provided services at a more and more reasonable per unit cost. It has done those three things.

Now we find that the Minister of Finance is prepared (a) to sell the company—and we are only guessing here because the details have not been released—but he is saying that they are prepared to sell it roughly at book value. But that is not enough. The Government has to go—

An Honourable Member: What did you get for Flyer Industries?

Mr. Storie: Well, here is the bright light from Arthur, the Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) talking about what did we get for Flyer Industries. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a very interesting question because again, just like CFI, just like Manfor, it was a Conservative Government that mindlessly, carelessly, irresponsibly, got us into Western Flyer in 1966, for the Member for Arthur's information, 1966. After they sunk the first \$400,000 in a loan guarantee to Western Flyer, the Government was in, like it or not. Mr. Deputy Speaker, which Government had the courage to divest the province of Flyer Industries? The NDP Government, because in fact there was no future for a Crown-owned corporation in the bus industry without major market connections and market ties and international reputation.

We, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did divest the province of Flyer Industries, but it was a botched job by the Conservative Government and they, frankly, did not have

the political or intestinal fortitude to divest the province of it from 1977 to 1981. They did not do it and it should have been done. It took an act of courage to do it and it was done.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not talking about Flyer, we are talking about a company that has served Manitoba for more than a decade, has been profitable, provides confidentiality and provides a needed service to Government and many of its agencies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what concerns me about the Government's plans is that its ideological bent is to sell and divest the province of Crown-owned corporations. I would be pleased, I would be extremely pleased—

An Honourable Member: Do you want New Flyer back?

Mr. Storie: We did that, Harry. You are giving away the golden geese.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be pleased if this divestiture was in fact part of some economic policy.—(interjection)— I will deal with the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) and perhaps he will have enough courage to stand up and put on record why he thinks this should go ahead.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister raises some concern in his remarks when he is talking about the value. First of all, the company is undervalued. If you look at the track record of this company simply on a cash flow basis or on a net profit basis, this company is undervalued at \$9 million, without a doubt. The assets are considered, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) tells us, in the valuation, in the book value. What he does not tell you and should obviously be considered as part of a sale price of a company is the golden handshake. The company who purchases this is going to get a five-year monopoly.

There are very, very few circumstances when a corporation can come in or a company can come in, purchase another company and be guaranteed revenue and guaranteed profit in effect for a period of five years. That is what the Minister has done. There is something even more sinister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) remarks. I would really like to hear from the Minister of Finance when he closes debate on this Bill as to what is meant by the following.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a response to a question that was put to the Minister of Finance again on February 19, the Minister said that when he was talking about the book value, he said it is the hard assets, hardware, net of the amortization costs associated with them. This is when his argument gets a little bizarre and my concern for what the real book value of this place is starts to soar. He says, well, of course then you also have to consider the potential flow of stream of income that can be provided by the Government after that point in time. Then, even more interestingly, he says, I might add—the Minister of Finance, I do not know whether he intended to put this on the record or not, but I think it is an admission that is going to haunt the Minister of Finance—he says, I might add a dimension of that \$9 million is the value that the acquirers put

on the potential of that staff which is very highly regarded to generate additional profit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he is telling us in effect is that he asked somebody who wanted to purchase it, what do you think this company is worth, and the company said, well—I wish everyone I went to negotiate a contract with asked me what I thought and then took my word, because I would have gotten my last car for \$1.50. That is what this Government is doing. It is so anxious to sell, it says, well tell us what you will give us for it. The book value does not reflect the real value of this company.

I say if the Government's intention is to divest Manitobans of this company which has served us well and for which there is no obvious reason for divestiture, then at a minimum let us make sure that we get a good fair market value for this particular enterprise. That is all we believe is the prime requirement. We will have an opportunity if this company is ever actually divested to see whether the confidentiality can be maintained, whether the cost of a per unit processed data transaction actually decreases. We will have a chance to see that. We believe that this Government has failed rather miserably, when it comes to the question of protecting the interests of Manitobans from being abused when our assets are being sold.

The Manitoba Government chose at a time when oil prices were extremely low to sell Manitoba Oil and Gas. They entered into what I would call a fire sale deal with another Manitoba company. It appears that, because of their political agenda, they may be setting the groundwork to enter into another deal that is going to not return to Manitobans what is deserved, what is owed, in fact what would be a fair-market value.

I want to deal with the other argument. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) also talked about this in terms of creating spinoffs and additional benefits. The Minister likes to believe that he and his Government are the first group of people who have come to appreciate that the information age is upon us; that in fact the transfer of information, the transfer of business data, personal data, the exchange of records between companies and amongst Governments and agencies is a business in itself; that there is tremendous potential for not only the development of hardware to service the information age, but the development of software and programming technicians, personnel associated with hardware maintenance, et cetera. All of those jobs, those spinoff jobs, are becoming important to the world and to industrialized nations, and hopefully to Manitoba.

* (1110)

I remind the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that it was the previous Government that developed the InfoTech centre, which brought together five of North America's, if not the world's, largest computer and information companies together; groups like Commodore, IBM and Apple. We created a network of activity in the province to support the development of information age technology in Manitoba. We were the Government that supported the purchase of Burroughs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We recognized that

Manitoba also had to exhibit some interest in the information age and in information technology, and that was done.

If the Minister believes that the divestiture of Manitoba Data Services can assist in that, if he believes then—

An Honourable Member: It seems like a good move to me.

Mr. Storie: Perhaps, as the Minister for Arthur says, it may in fact be a good move—the Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey), I should say. What we have seen, however, is: (a) an indication that the Government is prepared to sell MDS at fire sale prices; (b) to ignore the book value; and (c) I am not convinced that this corporation has to be sold to achieve the goals of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

The Minister of Finance says he wants to use the Manitoba Data Services as a base to attract others into the province to create additional opportunity. For the Minister of Finance's information, that can be done without divesting the province of an asset. It can certainly be done without giving away the farm. It can certainly be done at the same time we get a decent return for the asset that we have in place, which is Manitoba Data Services.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

My question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is: Has he considered a joint venture? Is it possible for us to maintain the asset and attract additional investment? Is it possible for us to become partners with another company so that in effect we can have it both ways? Is it possible?

I remember only too well the last time we had a Conservative Government in this province, 1977 to 1981, the infamous Lyon Government—(interjection)—and the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) says, the good years. Yes, the good years, that was when 30,000 Manitobans voted with their feet, picked up and left this province en masse, created at the time the highest unemployment rate the province had seen, created unemployment on an unprecedented scale, created a recession, good Conservative economics.

We are only 22 months—23 months into a new Conservative administration and we are into it—

An Honourable Member: Yeah, Saudi Arabia joint ventures.

Mr. Storie: The Member mentions Saudi Arabia, his favourite saw. I would put the \$27 million that was lost in MTX by Donny Orchard, the Member for Pembina, who started it with his colleagues in Ottawa, compared to the money that this Government put into CFI—the \$77 million boondoggle that the Weir administration got into, and Duff Roblin administration, the Sterling Lyon sign. I would compare that to the record of a Government who sold a \$20 million asset for \$3 million and call themselves business people or good managers. What a joke, Mr. Speaker—(interjection)—well, he says we sold Flyer. That is because they did not have the political will in four years to do what should have been done.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is—(interjection)—need political will, too. The fact of the matter is that if the Government needs an example of where a Crown corporation can work with private sector in a joint-venture fashion and be successful it need not look farther than the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld)—Manitoba Mineral Resources.

Manitoba Mineral Resources has operated in the province now for about 16 or 17 years, something like that I believe—(interjection)—and they are doing a good job, the Minister of Energy and Mines says, and they have.

It is interesting to note that the development of mines and mineral exploration have been the work of Manitoba Mineral Resources. They have done that in co-operation with literally dozens of companies over the last couple of decades. They have worked in partnership with private industry to do things for Manitoba.

Yes, they bring a unique provincial public view to their work. That is why I believe that the Member for Morris, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), should be looking more seriously at some form of joint venture, if in fact he believes that the spin-off benefits to the Manitoba Mineral Resources has been a very good model.

The Minister of Finance may not recognize that Manitoba Mineral Resources is currently in partnership with Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting in Flin Flon. Last year Manitoba Mineral Resources made something like \$6 million from that partnership, and there are clearly other opportunities. They have done those kinds of things for many years.

Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to say is that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) wants us to believe that somehow this divestiture is going to create a miracle in Manitoba's economy. What I was beginning to say, when I was referencing the Lyon years, is that I recall the same mentality being exhibited by the Lyon Government Executive Council Members. They told us that if they sold off the Crown corporations, the riverboat, the housing corporation, and the food company that was provincially operated for a time, again, it was a matter of good intentions, but somehow these were going to turn into economic private sector miracles.

Well, what happened to those companies? They disappeared. The Government took the assets of the province, sold them at fire sale, ridiculous prices, and the enterprises still fail. There was no miracle. That is the concern that I have today with the Minister's proposal for MDS.

So I say, why not a partnership, so that our interests, as a Government with tremendous data needs, data processing needs, can be protected at the same time? While the Minister may say we are going to have an agreement and we are going to ensure—and he gives us those assurances in his speech. He says that we have got an agreement that they are going to continue to reduce the unit costs of processing. He says that. Manitoba Data Services have been doing it for more years than five, but the fact of the matter is that the

guarantee that he says he is going to get is still only going to be for five years.

What is to happen after that? What is to happen when you give a private corporation a monopoly in the Province of Manitoba, give them access to our system, give them five years to exclude virtually everyone else who might potentially provide the same kinds of services to the Government? If the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is naive enough to believe that a private sector company who has a five-year monopoly is not going to be a predator in the marketplace, is not going to try and eliminate competition, he is also dreaming.

After five years, then what does the Government do? Does it re-arm itself with data processing equipment? Does it start again to redevelop a data processing arm, a Crown corporation to serve its own needs? We have been through these cycles before. There is no need to divest MDS at this point. If a joint venture will accomplish the same thing, then I encourage the Minister to explore the opportunities for joint venture. Let us be partners in this new economic miracle that the Minister feels is at hand with the divestiture discussions that he is having at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, the example that I have given you of successes I think should give the Minister pause to reflect on the need for this particular course of action. I want to make it clear, no one—I do not want to stand in the way. I have been the Minister responsible for MDS. I have been the Minister responsible for Manfor, and I was looking for divestiture options with Manfor. I made no bones about that. I do not see that as inconsistent with what the Minister is planning.

* (1120)

If divestiture will in fact be better for Manitoba, then I believe that we, as legislators, should support it, but the Minister has to make the case to this Legislature, and to the people of Manitoba, that is actually going to happen. I do not think we had any difficulty in making that case, with respect to the divestiture of Manfor. I do not think we did. They were totally different circumstances, as was Flyer. Manitoba Data Services, on the other hand, is a corporation that is working, has been working, will work for the Province of Manitoba - (interjection) - will work.

If the Minister believes—and it is interesting to note the Minister's opening comments, but he says to those doubters in our midst, and perhaps I may be called one of those doubters, he says, I would say allow your mind to open just a little bit so you can see the potential that Manitoba Data Services has in creating new economic development within this province.

Well, if we are going to take a service that is working, that is creating money, that is creating jobs, that is creating lower and lower rates for Manitoba Government agencies and the Manitoba Government itself, if we are going to take that and we are going to say, let us privatize that on the hope that some other things happen, then is the Minister also opening his mind to the possibilities of privatizing health care, and privatizing other services like home care? Has the Minister got some new potential ideas when it comes

to those services? Is that the new agenda that the president of the Conservative Party was talking about in getting ready for the next election? Is that what he is talking about, the new agenda?

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the sale of Manitoba Data Services is a serious, serious undertaking. If the Minister can show myself and Members opposite that this is in fact in the long-term interest of Manitoba, then clearly we will support it, we will support this piece of legislation.

I should say that all this legislation does is attempt, and the Government is responding here to criticism made by my colleague, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), and our Leader, about the concern over confidentiality, that is what this legislation is doing, it is getting around a little flaw in the Minister's plan that he overlooked when he introduced the notion of divestiture of MDS. He is getting around The Library Act by this piece of legislation.

He is also trying to assure us—well, the Minister in his own remarks said he was introducing this, so he did not want anything to foul up a potential divestiture. I am simply repeating what the Minister himself said. I also know that the Minister has said in his remarks that he is attempting to set aside the concerns, I think, legitimate concerns, of many about the confidentiality of our records. He has done this by introducing this piece of legislation. As the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) said, I am not sure that this covers all of those concerns, but it is an attempt.

The Bill that we have before us is not about the economic miracle that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is promising us. It does not give us any guarantees about the benefit to Manitoba, the long-term benefit, to the economy, or the provincial Government, as a result of divestiture. All we have at this point is some fuzzy words of assurance from the Minister of Finance.

An Honourable Member: I will stake my future on it.

Mr. Storie: The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) says, he will stake his future on it. Well, Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate fact of the matter is that in politics it is very unlikely that the Minister will have any future which to stake. That is partly a reflection of the nature of Legislatures more than it is on the character of the Minister of Finance, although Ministers of Finance tend not to last that long in the Province of Manitoba. The unfortunate fact of the matter for Manitobans is that they will not be able to take the Minister of Finance up on his offer because in all likelihood the real impact for the Government is clearly going to be more than five years down the road.

We have a guarantee supposedly in writing from the companies interested in purchasing MDS that they will give us reduced rates for the next five years. There will be no attempt on the part of any company purchasing MDS to shaft the Government in the first five years. What will happen over the next five, Mr. Speaker, becomes a matter of conjecture, and it is the next five years where the people of Manitoba may want

to call the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) on his offer to have his reputation on the line.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's apparent willingness to sacrifice himself on the basis of this decision, but he knows, and I know, that it is very likely at the moment when the people of Manitoba wake up and say, yes, we have made a mistake, that the Minister of Finance will be here to accept the accolades or the punishment. It is an interesting offer, nonetheless.

Unfortunately, it leads me back to the Minister's remarks when he addressed second reading. That is that what he has been giving us are vague assurances. Vague assurances, somehow, that a corporation that is going to sign a deal to get a company at fire sale prices with a revenue guarantee for five years, a monopoly in Manitoba to root out other companies who might compete for five years, what he is guaranteeing us that this is going to be good for, that is what he is guaranteeing us.

I challenge the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to find another one. Do not be in such a rush to divest ourselves of a company that served us well and is making money. Find a way to achieve the objectives that we all want and that is diversifying our economy, moving us and moving part of our economy at least into the information age and giving us a base upon which to build our expertise in this very important economic area. It does not have to be done at the expense of Manitoba Data Services. I do not believe for a minute that is the only way that can be done. I have to believe there is another way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend the last—how much time do I have remaining?—(interjection)—A few minutes. I want to spend the last few minutes on the assurances the Minister has given us about confidentiality. The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) says the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) word is his bond, and I believe that. I believe that the Minister of Finance is an honourable gentleman. I believe that when he says—(interjection)—if the Minister would just give me time to finish perhaps he would not be blushing with embarrassment at such praise.

The fact of the matter is that the Minister is only as good as the information he is given. The Minister is as prone to human error as anyone else. The Minister's assurance and the Minister's word may not be good enough in a final analysis for the people of Manitoba, because the Minister of Finance has made mistakes in the past and this may be one of them.

I ask him to consider the possibility that he is making a mistake. Look at the possibility of joint venture to accomplish the same things. I ask him as well to table as quickly as possible, and as fully as possible, any information that he has, any techniques, criteria, he is using to ensure that the confidentiality is maintained, because we have received from other groups outside of this Chamber, the Manitoba Health Records Association is an example, calls and letters from other people who are concerned about confidentiality.

Before we finally proceed to passing this legislation into law, I believe that we need to make sure that the

Minister has done all he can, that he will continue to be forthright about those guarantees that he has gotten or will be getting so that we can assure ourselves that is covered, because I accept that the Minister believes and the Government believes that this divestiture will have some good spin-off effects. I know that there is that potential.

I believe that there is another way to approach the problem and I would recommend that they consider it, and that is a joint venture, but having said that, the real pitfall in this agreement may in fact be the confidentiality issue. If the Minister can satisfy myself at least that those have been covered adequately, that the guarantees are as ironclad as guarantees can be, if they cover the series of points that have been raised by other groups, then I think that the Bill may in fact, while not receiving the approval of this side, would not receive the outright censure from this side. My own point of view is that we cannot afford as a province to overlook any opportunity, but on the other hand we cannot be foolish or cavalier, particularly when we are selling assets that are of value and have been of value for many years to Manitobans. Thank you.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Gimli, with a committee change.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Swan River (Mr. Burrell), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations for the Monday morning, 10 a.m. session, be amended as follows: Praznik for Ducharme; Oleson for Ernst.

* (1130)

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed. The Honourable Member for Thompson, committee changes.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I move, seconded by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations for Friday, February 23, two o'clock, be amended as follows: the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill) for the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak).

Further that the same committee, Mr. Speaker, be amended, on Saturday at ten o'clock, February 24: the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) for the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill); the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Further amendment for the Saturday, February 24, two o'clock sitting of the same committee, which would be amended as follows: the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) for the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman).

A further amendment to come into effect for Monday's ten o'clock meeting on February 26 at the same committee: the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie); and the Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak) substituting for the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

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Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): I move, seconded by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that the debate on the Bill be adjourned.

MOTION presented and carried.

BILL NO. 59—THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach), Bill No. 59, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), the Honourable Member for Dauphin.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak on Bill No. 59, The Public Schools Amendment Act, at this time. There are a number of changes in this Act, to The Public Schools Act, that I feel are long overdue and certainly are positive. There are others that certainly not only the Manitoba Association of School Trustees but also the Manitoba Teachers' Society would have some suggestions to improve. I think that the Government could well be advised to consider some of the suggestions that have been made by MAST and MTS on those areas.

Let me just say initially I think it is important that the Minister consider further autonomy for our northern school division, the Frontier School Division. In speaking with people in my constituency who are included in the Frontier School Division, there certainly is a lot of desire for more autonomy, more action being taken, decision-making being taken at the local level and not so much being put onto them by big brother, by the Government, by the official trustees that are appointed as opposed to elected people who could be undertaking decision-making more at the community level.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

I think that is an area that the Government should be moving forward with. I notice that they still do have some differences in the way, in this Act, the way that they are treating any northern school division that would be established, such as appointing an official trustee even though provisions are made in other sections of The Public Schools Act to appoint an official trustee if it is necessary at any particular time. It is redundant to have a section of that nature allowing for different treatment for northern divisions and for the rest of the school divisions in Manitoba.

I think one of the issues that I am most interested in in this Act of course is for a potential candidate seeking election either at the provincial or municipal or federal level. I had the opportunity of doing that in 1981 as a teacher in the Dauphin Ochre School Division. I can tell this House that it was a source of disillusionment for me to find that the school division

was not interested in providing a leave of absence, would not be convinced that that was a wise thing to do or a just thing to do when I was successful after the 1981 election.

I felt at that time, I did make a presentation to the school board, and I felt that politics played some role in the decision that was made not to give me a leave of absence. I cited a number of cases where school divisions did indeed give leaves of absence and I even told the chairman of the board at the time, who was a civil servant, that he had the right to seek political office and have a leave of absence for five years, under the chairman of the board as a civil servant, under the Civil Service provisions. School division employees including teachers did not have that right. What he was doing was sitting in judgment of a double standard as a member of the school board who happened to be the chairman at that time and also as a civil servant had access to that right or that privilege, if you want to call it that, and a teacher not having it. So I appealed to him and the members of the board at that time to consider that they should be encouraging their employees to participate in seeking public office in the democratic process and that it was a positive thing for their employees.

In fact, from the experiences that teachers would have in elected positions, they would be able to bring back to the classroom if they were to return as teachers a much wider, broader perspective on the world than they would have not had that experience. I feel that way today, as a matter of fact, that after eight and a half, nine, years, actually longer than that, because I was elected to the council of the Town of Dauphin prior to that, that I think it would be a tremendous asset for me as a teacher now to be able to reflect with students on our democratic system in this province, and issues, a much better understanding grasp of issues that affect people.—(interjection)— Well, I think that it is important.

The Member for Gladstone (Mrs. Oleson) seems to be a little confused because she jumps to conclusions. I did not say that I thought that teachers should have a leave of absence forever as long as they happen to be elected. I am saying that the provisions in this Act, which allow for five years, are reasonable, and that if an individual is elected a second time, that he or she is embarking on what you might call a political career. That would be somewhat different.

(Mr. Harold Taylor, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I do think that the five years is necessary because one never knows what will happen after one term. One may decide that they are not interested in pursuing politics further, a political life, public life. They may find that due to other circumstances, they want to go back to their previous position. I think that the five years is reasonable. I think it is long overdue. I give the Government credit for bringing forward that amendment at this time.

I felt that we should have brought that forward when I was a Minister, but I felt that I would be in a conflict of interest with that particular amendment during the first, at least, few years that I was in this Legislature. I was very sensitive about even suggesting it to my

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caucus, because I felt it would be self-serving or perceived as that, yet I felt that a terrible injustice had been done when I did go to the school board and asked as a delegation—they gave me a hearing—and asked them to consider extending my leave of absence on a year-by-year basis, and that I was in no way asking for the same position back, but merely asking for a position that I was qualified for, which was pretty well any position in the junior high system because of my qualifications. It would not tie their hands and bind them to a particular position and perhaps having to dismiss another teacher that assumed that position following my leave.

* (1140)

They refused to consider it. They denied it. The following September, about 10 months after my election, they terminated my position on the basis that I did not show up for work. I refused to resign. I felt that it was an injustice, and that is why I refused to resign. They sent me a letter terminating my position, because I had not been showing up at the school for teaching purposes. I felt that was wrongful dismissal. I felt that it was a punitive way to deal with an employee. I did not take it any further to court or through The Manitoba Teachers' Society to represent me, because I did not feel that it was in my best political interest to pursue it that far. I did feel that there was an injustice done.

I, therefore, want to advise the Government today that I support the section, and I think it is long overdue. I feel that it is very positive. It gives an opportunity for employees of school divisions to seek public office without the threat of losing the security of their position for at least that five-year period. I think that is very important because an individual makes a very big decision in entering public life. It is a very risky business.

Any of us in here know that when we look at what happened over the last number of years on people who have given up careers of one sort or another to enter political life, and then at that time, once their political life is over, for reasons beyond their control in many instances, they find that they have nothing to go back to. It is very difficult, very hard on families and on the individuals who enter that position.

I think that we discourage a lot of people from getting into political life, a lot of working people, in this case teachers, and other employees of school divisions, from getting into public life when we do not provide some security for them for a short period of time, which in this case five years, which seems to be reasonable.

I think the other provision dealing with leave of absence is for the actual campaign itself. I was given leave, but having served on town council prior to that I had a very difficult time getting leave for anything from the school division. They just felt that it was not a very important role to be serving on the council in elected capacity and it was made very difficult for me. As a matter of fact, if I was ever granted any leave, they would deduct 1/200 of my salary as opposed to the cost of a substitute, for example, which is all the cost that the school division was out. They would not do it on that basis even though I was not going off

running a private business or making money for myself in some other undertaking. I was serving the public through my elected position.

They refused to consider that as any unusual circumstances. They said if we do it for you, well, then we will have to do it for everyone who wants to be away for whatever reason, as if it would establish a precedence. My argument was, no it would not be, if a person is elected it would be very unusual that a person seeks public office in the first place, maybe only one or two people in a five-year period in a community like Dauphin. What are they worried about in this precedent thing? Why not encourage?

But they refused to do that so I think it is very important that in this Bill there is a provision for leave of absence for the campaign. That is a positive thing, but I fail to understand why the Government feels that it was necessary to instruct in this Act that a school division would have to reinstate the teacher to the same position even if they did not apply for reinstatement for up to 90 days, that is three months, after the election decision was announced. I find that rather a long period of time. I think it is perhaps unnecessary to have a 90-day period, perhaps within a 30-day period after the election would be sufficient.

I do not know why the Government went with 90 days because surely a defeated candidate who wants to go to make some decisions about his or her future can decide within that 30-day period whether they want to go back teaching or back with their employer, with the school division in whatever capacity they were, within a 30-day period. Surely after they have not been successful in running for public office, they do not need 90 days to make that decision as to whether they want to go back again.

Maybe the Minister of Highways or some of his colleagues will know why they felt a 90-day period was necessary in this Act.—(interjection)—The problem with it is it makes it difficult for the school division to hold that position that long. If you look through the period of a campaign, say 35 or 40 days and then another 90 days, you are talking now upwards of five months. They can hire a person on term, say a teacher for a term position for that time, but in some instances it may be difficult in a specialized area. They may have to offer a contract, and then they are in a little bit of a bind in terms of placing that teacher back in that same position.

Now MAST, Manitoba Association of School Trustees, recommends that instead of guaranteeing that same position, a comparable position should be guaranteed. I do not think that that for the campaign purposes is necessary. I do not think they have to go so far as to put the teacher's position in jeopardy, specific position in jeopardy, by saying a comparable position. I think that position should be available but only if it is not too long a period of time. I find, as I said, the 90 days quite lengthy and therefore makes it difficult for small school divisions to comply with this Act.

Rather than seeing the Government move to the MAST position, which would be a comparable position within the school division, I would like to see them

perhaps shorten that period of 90 days down to 60 or 30, making it easier for school divisions to reinstate that unsuccessful candidate back into their employ. I feel that is one area that the Government could look at. I do in summarizing that area of amendment to The Public Schools Act just want to say that I have full support for these sections of the Act. I think they are long overdue. I want to congratulate the Government for bringing them forward, and the Minister insofar as leaves of absences for political purposes.- (interjection)-

Well, the Minister has just acknowledged that we are speaking on The Public Schools Act dealing with the leaves of absence. I wanted the Minister to know that I felt it was a positive amendment to bring in a leave of absence for political purposes for employees who want to seek public office. I disagree strongly with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees who believe that should be left to the bargaining process at the local level, because I can tell you from experiences that I have reviewed here, my personal experiences in this area over the early '80s period, that in fact it would not happen, very seldom would it happen that the school division would agree to a leave of absence for an individual to run for public office.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

I think it is just a general feeling that even though trustees are public servants, they have sought public office and they know what is involved in doing so, although there is never that much competition at that level. Sometimes there is very little competition for those positions. I thought that school board members would understand the predicament and the risk involved by an individual employee when they take the step to go into public office, that they would be sympathetic to that, but it seems that they are not. They think teachers primarily, and other employees of the school division, who wish to take that leave that in fact that is their tough luck if things do not work out for them and they can take the risk. I appreciate the fact that the Minister does not share that position, therefore has brought this amendment forward. It is a positive amendment.

* (1150)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to touch on a few other areas in this Bill. The section dealing with grants to private schools—again the Minister has left in the clause dealing with the minimum requirements for a school operating as a private school and receiving public funds, the minimum requirements being that a sufficient number of courses under The Education Administration Act be included.

I think the Minister could have tightened that up a little bit to ensure that all the basic curriculum was taught by the private school before it would be eligible for public funding. The Minister had an opportunity to tighten up those provisions and chose not to, and retained the word sufficient, which is a very vague term and which just is not strong enough, I do not think, in terms of protecting the public funds when they are being used to fund private schools.

There is another provision in the amendments that allows the Minister broader powers to inquire into

circumstances involved in the operation of a private school. I think that is a positive matter although it may be that it again, once the Minister received certain kinds of information, would be a requirement as simply enabling, allowing, him or her to investigate or inquire into the Act. It may be that it could have been stronger, that it would be a requirement that the Minister would investigate. Again, a suggestion made by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees that the Minister may want to consider.

The provision for home schooling is a controversial one in that the Government is now proposing, in this Act, that the individual school division would now be responsible, as opposed to the Minister, and the department be responsible for the quality of education being offered through a home-schooling program. I think that is a very controversial area because—and onerous for school divisions now to be responsible for that particular area that has previously not been their responsibility. It also places the onus on them to share information with the parents or guardians involved and all records with them at home.

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees has looked at this as an onerous task, and perhaps one that should be reconsidered in light of other things that might arise during home schooling, including incidents of child abuse or other such activities that would have to be reported to the home by the school.

I think that some of the suggestions that they made would be the subject of further discussion. They mention that situations involving child abuse, family breakdown, or psychiatric treatment may require the maintenance of confidential records. The department should consider this potential conflict and include a notwithstanding clause to identify situations in which other legislation may take precedence. That I think is a good suggestion that the Minister should consider at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also note the sections dealing with The Highway Traffic Act, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees is suggesting that it is time for the Government to reintroduce regulations similar to those that were repealed in '81, that the school board may suspend or discharge a driver at any time for breach of any provision of The Highway Traffic Act or regulations thereunder, or of this regulation. Now I think that is highly punitive and double jeopardy is certainly evident if that was the case at this particular time in the Province of Manitoba. That was repealed, that regulation that would allow the suspension or discharge of a driver, a school bus driver, for any reason, for any breach of The Highway Traffic Act.

Now there are many minor breaches of The Highway Traffic Act which I do not believe should warrant those kinds of powers being in the hands of a school division to use for discharging a driver. Therefore I agree that regulation was repealed. I certainly do not agree with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees in their desire to have that provision reinstated. It is open to abuse and to punitive actions and I do not believe should be considered by the Minister when he is considering the advice from the Manitoba Association of School Trustees.

Although, as I have mentioned earlier, there are a lot of areas that the Manitoba Association of School

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Trustees does have excellent suggestions in this Act, as well as the Manitoba Teachers' Society, I am sure that the Minister will be considering those further even as we go to committee, to in fact consider whether he would want to have them included in the Act at some time before it comes through for report stage and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the whole issue of funding for private schools is one that the Minister is going to have to deal with in the next while. It is one of a great deal of controversy. While he is taking some steps to ensure the reporting mechanisms and accountability of those schools are tightened up in this Act he has to deal with the whole issue of whether in fact it is desirable to increase Government support and public support for private schools at a time when the public school system is under a great deal of stress in terms of meeting the needs.

I can look at some of the smaller school divisions—and I have suggested to the Minister during the debate on the private Bill, a private resolution that was introduced in this House dealing with a review of school boundaries, of school division boundaries, that in fact there are many school divisions at the present time that are having a very difficult time offering a basic level of education, a quality of education that is in any way comparable to some of the wealthier school divisions in the province, that equality has not fully been reached.

As a matter of fact, in some instances I think we are moving away from equality of educational opportunities because the equalization funding formulas just have not done the job for the poorer school divisions. I can reference some of those in my area of the province, in the area that I represent in the Parkland, the Duck Mountain School Division, for example, that has had to increase its mill rate so much each year just to maintain a standard of education that is even close to being what we might term basic education.

They are not able to offer other essential areas of instruction in their schools. They have had to cut back on second language instruction, home economics, industrial arts, computers and so on, and equipment. They just have not been able to deal with these. They are all fundamentally important in our society I believe, and yet they are not able to offer the kinds of standards of education that school divisions in many cases in the City of Winnipeg can offer because of the wealthier tax base that they have.

I think it is important that the Minister and this Government look at that whole issue when they are dealing with the funding of private schools. There are the Liberals who have taken a position that the private school system should be funded I believe to 80 percent of the public school system. I do not think that is a responsible position to take while we are facing a crisis in terms of providing the necessary education, a universal education, that is accessible to all.

It is important that we maintain that principle; that we maintain the accessibility of a quality education system throughout the province for all of our citizens and enhance it, not see it being chipped away as the

inability to afford it takes hold. Particularly in light of federal cutbacks in post-secondary education funding and in transfer payments putting an even greater burden on the public school system, because there is the tendency by the Government to look at areas where it can reduce funding to make up for that federal shortfall.

So they will tend to instead of providing a 5 percent increase in education provide a three or four. Every time that happens, and if it is necessary to have five to just maintain the educational programs that were there the previous year, and not even to build on those—because there is always greater pressures being put on the public school system for undertaking educational programs that previously were not their responsibility. Family life education, for example, being of so much importance, particularly now in light of the AIDS crisis and so on. It has been an area that all school divisions are adopting.

* (1200)

Just one example of where the school system is having to pick up a major area of additional responsibility. They are having to do that without additional funding in many cases or having to raise the taxes at the local level in order to provide. At some points in some areas it is getting to the point where school divisions, school boards, are no longer able to go to that well for additional funds so they can offer some of these fundamentally important areas of instruction. They just cannot go back to those taxpayers.

I have talked with the people elected at those local levels in the Duck Mountain School Division, in the village in the Rural Municipality of Ethelbert, Winnipegosis, and Mossey River, and they feel very badly that they have to increase that mill rate every year. They know that it is beyond what the people are able to pay, particularly during this farm crisis where it is an agriculturally-based economy there where the people are not even able to make their own payments because of the low commodity prices and high interest rates and many farm foreclosures taking place.

They are not even able to make their own payments to operate their farm, never mind continuing to face a greater and greater burden of taxation for school purposes. They feel very apologetic and very sympathetic, very empathetic with the people that they are having to charge these greater amounts to each year. They are crying for some type of equalization and fairness that would ensure that they could continue, or for the first time in many instances, to offer what some would call an equitable standard of education in those areas.

I, when saying that maybe for the first time they would be offering it, in no way am I reflecting on the staff in those school divisions who worked very hard to try and overcome the limitations of funding, spend additional time preparing and improvising and doing so much to give their students the widest possible experience. In many cases their ingenuity can overcome the lack of funding. There is a limit to it. There is certain equipment, when you are dealing with word processing equipment

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and computers you cannot improvise on that, you need that equipment in order to teach it. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to go past a certain point.

I say that the Minister should be taking this opportunity with The Public Schools Act to consider how far he is going to go with the private school system. He should ensure that, indeed, the regulations applied are very stringent and that the amount of monies are limited so that those dollars are available to fund a high quality public school system that is available to everyone regardless of their religious beliefs, regardless of their status in terms of their intelligence and how gifted they are in learning. There should not be elitest schools promoted in any way, shape or form in our society.

I think there is an opportunity in a good public school system for all students to thrive and to develop to their potential. I think with proper funding we can ensure that those students with learning disabilities get the attention that they need to develop to their full potential. Those students that are commonly known as gifted students, who have a very high ability level, are indeed challenged to the extent that is necessary to ensure that they develop to their full potential. Those things can all take place within the public school system. We do not need an elitest school system to provide those kinds of experiences. We do need necessary funding to maintain the level of funding, even in the face of the federal Government cutbacks in health and post-secondary education, which will place a greater and greater burden on the provincial system.

If that is going to be placed on the provincial taxpayers then it should be placed on all the provincial taxpayers, not just on a certain areas within the province, that as I mentioned earlier are facing such a great burden that they have reached the limits. They no longer can pay a greater amount to educate the children in their area. I think that is something the Minister should be dealing with. He should be looking at the division boundaries. He should be looking and reviewing those in a non-confrontationist atmosphere, as I have said in the past during speeches in this House.

I believe he should also be capping the amount of funding that is made available to the private school system in this province to ensure that the public school system is protected adequately. It is a difficult issue, it is one that many Governments have grappled with, certainly one that this Government must come to grips with if they hope to leave any legacy of responsibility in the provision of quality education in this province. They must come to grips with this. It may be that they do not have time to deal with it. They may have very short tenure remaining in Government in this province, but they still want to leave that legacy of responsibility even if it was for a short time.

The Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) could initiate the first moves that are required to undertake the review of the boundaries. He could also initiate the proposals to Cabinet, to his caucus and to the Legislature on capping of funds for private schools so that he could be seen as being responsible to the public school system. I think he has work to do in that area.

There are some other areas in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that certainly were not commented on, and

my colleagues have raised a number of them during their speeches in this House. I want to just mention the area of expropriation powers that school boards have -(interjection)- It is an important area, and one that was somewhat ambiguous in the Act prior to the amendments that are coming forward. That is, that even though the expropriation powers existed, there were no specific guidelines that had to be followed. With the amendments here today, being considered by the House at this time, there will be an assurance that they must follow The Expropriation Act and the expropriation procedures that are identified there. I think that is an important development to ensure the safeguard of the public interest. As we know, the expropriation process is never a pleasant one for the person. In rare occasions it may be, but in most cases it is not a pleasant one for the individual who is being expropriated.

In fact, in many cases people are uprooted from a location, a home, property that they have held that has been in their family for many years. It is very traumatic for people to be uprooted and told they have to go by the state, by Government. In some cases they feel this is ruthlessly done and not with any degree of fairness in the system.

The Expropriation Act that is in place in this province tries to provide a certain amount of fairness to ensure that there is adequate compensation, that there are advanced payments made and that people will suffer the least possible when an expropriation is required. I think that by ensuring that clause is included in this Act in fact there will be very little incidence of abuse of the system. There cannot be under that system. I think that is a positive issue, and one that again the Government should be congratulated for including in the Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to at this time just indicate that we will be following with interest a number of changes to this Act at the committee stage, listening to the public presentations. I am sure MTS and MAST will be anxious to appear and make their concerns known. It is something that in many cases is long overdue. They have suggestions for other changes and it may be that since we have The Public Schools Act open at this time, it may be an opportune time to consider those additional changes that are being suggested at this time as well.

With those remarks, I will leave this for the debate of other Members in this House.

* (1210)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that debate be adjourned.

MOTION presented and carried.

BILL NO. 60—THE EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), Bill

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No. 60, The Education Administration Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), the Honourable Member for Brandon East.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): On a point of order, I am quite prepared to speak on it, but I understand some Members were suggesting we call it

12:30, inasmuch as we would only have 15 minutes to debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it now 12:30? Agreed.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday.