



Third Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 4, 1992

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Wayne Arthur, Marika Sokulski, Catherine Collins and others requesting the government reconsider its decisions and return the Manitoba Heritage Federation's granting authority.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Raymond T. Pepper, Rosa L. Dutka, Susan Dutka and others requesting the government consider reviewing the funding of the Brandon General Hospital to avoid layoffs and cutbacks to vital services.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Derek Sanderson, Wayne McKay, Fabian Houle and others requesting the government show its commitment to aboriginal self-government by considering reversing its position on the AJI by supporting the recommendations within its jurisdiction and implementing a separate and parallel justice system.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs). It complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned residents of the Province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba announced that it would establish an Office of the Children's Advocate in its most recent throne speech and allocated funds for this Office in its March '92 budget; and

WHEREAS the Kimelman Report (1983), the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (1991) and the Suche Report (1992) recommended that the province establish such an office reporting directly to the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, in a manner similar to that of the Office of the Ombudsman; and

WHEREAS pursuant to the Child and Family Services Act Standards, the agency worker is to be the advocate for a child in care; and

WHEREAS there is a major concern that child welfare workers, due to their vested interest as employees within the service system, cannot perform an independent advocacy role; and

WHEREAS pure advocacy will only be obtained through an independent and external agency; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) has unsatisfactorily dealt with complaints lodged against child welfare agencies; and now

THEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly urge the provincial government to consider establishing an Office of the Children's Advocate which will be independent of cabinet and report directly to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

* * *

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the Dutch elm disease control program is of primary importance to the protection of the city's many elm trees; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Natural Resources himself stated that, "It is vital that we continue our active fight against Dutch elm disease in Manitoba," and

WHEREAS, despite that verbal commitment, the government of Manitoba has cut its funding to the city's DED control program by half of the 1990 level, a move that will jeopardize the survival of Winnipeg's elm trees.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the government of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to consider restoring the full funding of the Dutch elm disease control program to the previous level of 1990.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

* * *

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT child abuse is a crime abhorred by all good citizens of our society, but nonetheless it exists in today's world; and

It is the responsibility of the government to recognize and deal with this most vicious of crimes; and

Programs like the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign raise public awareness and necessary funds to deal with crime; and

The decision to terminate the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign will hamper the efforts of all good citizens to help abused children.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the government of Manitoba show a strong commitment to deal with Child Abuse by considering restoring the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign.

* (1335)

* * *

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was launched in April of 1988 to conduct an examination of the relationship between the justice system and aboriginal people; and

The AJI delivered its report in August of 1991 and concluded that the justice system has been a massive failure for aboriginal people; and

The AJI report endorsed the inherent right of aboriginal self-government and the right of aboriginal communities to establish an aboriginal justice system; and

The Canadian Bar Association, The Law Reform Commission of Canada, among many others, also recommend both aboriginal self-government and a separate and parallel justice system; and

On January 28, 1992, five months after releasing the report, the provincial government announced it was not prepared to proceed with the majority of the recommendations; and

Despite the All-Party Task Force Report which endorsed aboriginal self-government, the provincial government now rejects a separate and parallel justice system, an Aboriginal Justice Commission and many other key recommendations which are solely within provincial jurisdiction.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the government of Manitoba show a strong commitment to aboriginal self-government by considering reversing its position on the AJI by supporting the recommendations within its jurisdiction and implementing a separate and parallel justice system.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the 1992-1993 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table today the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1992-1993 Departmental Expenditure Estimates of the Manitoba Civil Service Commission Employee Benefits.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1992-1993 Departmental Expenditures for the Department of Environment.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the 1990-91 Annual Report of the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation and the 1991 Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of Manitoba Pork est.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 97—The Winnipeg Bible College and Theological Seminary Incorporation Amendment Act

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that Bill 97, The Winnipeg Bible College and Theological Seminary Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le "Winnipeg Bible College and Theological Seminary", be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery where we have with us this afternoon, from the Riverton School, forty-three Grades 4 and 5 students under the direction of Mr. Doug Anderson and Mr. Brian Thordarson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mental Health Care System Reform Government Strategy

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): The report released yesterday by provincial Judge John Guy into the inquest of Robert Russick clearly indicates that his death was preventable. Judge Guy in this report makes a number of recommendations for regional resources, crisis prevention, better co-ordination of services, something that is not new.

Those recommendations, or the spirit of those recommendations, are contained in the minister's paper of 1988 entitled A New Partnership for Mental Health; they are contained in his December 1990 paper on a vision for the future; they are contained in his press release of October 16 setting up a committee; contained in his January 19, 1992,

paper on Building the Future of Mental Health Services; and contained again in his most recent Action Plan of May 1992.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health, given the seriousness of the situation we are dealing with, if he is now prepared to follow the advice of Judge John Guy, who calls now for action rather than for words and for the authorities to take concrete steps to increase the more humane treatment of schizophrenia and hopefully to prevent future loss of life.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as my honourable friend well knows, that tragic death has been subject to an inquiry report which I believe was delivered yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why this government, in 1988, embarked upon a very significant change in the approach to mental health service delivery in the province of Manitoba, reinforced by the action plan and document tabled in January of this year, for which many plans to accomplish what Judge Guy has indicated are in the process of formulation and implementation.

* (1340)

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to provide some information, lest my honourable friend's preamble would leave doubt around Judge Guy's conclusion. Page 5 of his statement says: "Finally, at first glance one might question the lack of security at the Selkirk Mental Health Complex. One would think that a mental hospital, would be as free from areas of danger as any institution. The manner in which Mr. Russick apparently achieved his tragic end was a combination of planning, foresight and a window of opportunity. Once again I am not convinced that it was completely avoidable in light of his obvious determination and the manner in which it was carried out."

Mr. Speaker, I think that indicates that this is an unfortunate and tragic instance, but that the staff at Selkirk Mental Health Centre did all which was possible to avoid such a tragic end, Sir.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The issue for all of us today, is to work to ensure that deaths like Robert Russick's are avoided. Although I do not want to argue about semantics, Judge Guy clearly says that here are six recommendations that will hopefully aid in the prevention of similar tragic deaths.

So all I want to ask the Minister of Health today is: What specific steps has he taken, after all of these

reports, to address the kind of recommendations that are in this report, so that we can at least assure ourselves that we have taken every measure possible to avoid any kind of death like this happening in the future?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to indicate the steps taken.

The steps taken to attempt to provide the support in the community that have been recommended as a result of this inquest were initiated by recommendations from this political party when in opposition to the then government, and followed through in 1988 when we became government with undertaking the first very direct and very productive reform of the way we plan and deliver services to those requiring mental health services in the province of Manitoba.

We started a discussion process in 1988, reinforced that discussion process with the establishment of regional mental health councils involving consumers, family members, professionals and citizens at large in all regions of the province of Manitoba who are now, as a result of the January 1992 document on mental health reform and the change that we will implement over the next four to five years, developing actions plans, region by region, to be submitted to government to accomplish the change of resource from institution to community-based services, just exactly to provide the kind of supports that have been recommended in this inquest.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: All of us must share in the blame and the guilt around this death. No government is free from guilt on this issue.

The question today, and we owe it to Sandra Russick and other mothers and fathers out there dealing with difficult situations is: After four years of making specific recommendations and statements, where are the designated hospital beds in the different regions? Where are the psychiatrically trained assessment personnel? Where is the 24-hour—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that my honourable friend wants to approach this and accept blame by all parties in the House, because those recommendations, Sir, were made to a government in 1972. That is 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, we have the action plan January 1992, which has those sorts of very planning vehicles being developed now for implementation within the next several years, and there will be priority action in each region of the province of Manitoba based on recommendations made to a government as early as 1972.

The process now, Sir, will go through and will be completed, because this government has taken the issue seriously, and we have provided the opportunity for input, not only of professionals, but of families and consumers of mental health services throughout the length and breadth of this province to make it happen.

* (1345)

Port of Churchill Grain Export Commitment

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, the economic situation at Churchill is approaching critical. The bins at the port are near empty, and the majority of the employees who are normally employed at this port are still on laid-off status. Reports from this province indicate yesterday that the Port of Churchill's future has been secured for at least another five years.

I want to ask the Minister of Highways and Transportation: Will this Minister of Highways and Transportation confirm that the involved federal government agencies have agreed to export grain through Churchill, or is this another ploy and will the hopes of northern Manitobans be once again dashed?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, no, I cannot confirm that.

Government Communications

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I want to ask the same minister, Mr. Speaker, because the reports do come from within the province.

Has this minister or this government communicated with Mr. Tom Henley, Chairman of the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission, to provide or confirm information relating to the 1 million metric tonnes per year grain export target for Churchill? Has this government communicated that or been in discussions with this individual?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, yes, we have. All kinds of communication has taken place over the last three or four months.

I want to indicate that possibly, to my recollection at least, the involvement of our Premier (Mr. Filmon) has never been as extensive by any Premier in the past as it has been by our Premier in terms of trying to get grain movement through the Port of Churchill from the point that he raised it with the Western Premiers' Conference.

He has also been personally in touch with the Wheat Board. He has been in touch with the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board, and he has communicated directly with the Russian people in terms of hoping that they would demand and request that grain be moved via Churchill to Russia.

Mr. Speaker, all kinds of activities have taken place. Unfortunately, to date, I and this government do not have any commitment about grain movement through Churchill for this year, and I think it is very crucial.

Agreement Tabling Request

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Since there is no commitment of grain exports through the Port of Churchill, and since this Minister of Highways and Transportation has reported an agreement between Russia and the Canadian Wheat Board to export grain through Churchill, will this minister provide copies or table any correspondence that he or his government has to indicate that there was an agreement between Russia and the Canadian Wheat Board?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I will go through my file here, and I will try and make available all the correspondence that basically is pertinent to the issue and that the member will be interested in.

Constitutional Proposal Senate Reform

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

We have been told that the reason for the present pause in the ministerial negotiations on the Constitution is to allow some time for reflection and consultation, although, if one is to listen to Mr. Clark's statements of yesterday, one would think the

reason for the pause was to force those of us who believe in a Triple-E Senate model to back off of our position.

I fully appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that no final agreements have been made, as the minister has informed us, but certainly there are patterns that are emerging and that must be considered before this package is carved in stone and becomes, as Meech did, some part of a seamless web.

Mr. Speaker, there appears to be two different thoughts with regard to Senate reform. One is that this new upper Chamber should be a watchdog at the service of provincial governments. The other is that the Senate must act as a second Chamber to ensure the presence and activity of a strong central government in Canada, which certainly would be in keeping with the position that we took here in the province of Manitoba.

My question is: Since the minister is committed to the maintenance of a strong central government, what arguments is this government putting forward so that the Senate does not emerge as simply a provincial watchdog, but is in fact a Senate with real powers to ensure the preservation of a strong central government?

* (1350)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): I believe what I heard from the honourable Leader of the Liberal Party is all on my agenda and part of the arguments that Manitoba is making at these discussions.

We are very interested in seeing an appropriate balance between the power represented in the House of Commons, that power held in the hands of the electors of Canada as individuals, most of whom happen to live in the centre of the country. We also think that a Senate ought to be there to balance those interests and those powers with provincial representation, so that the concerns of provinces and regions can be part of that balance, so that central Canada cannot just run roughshod over the wishes of those other parts of Canada. That is basically the kind of arguments we are putting forward.

The honourable member also referred to actions taken this week and words spoken this week that are perhaps designed to break up the so-called coalition, a group of people who believe in equality in the Senate. I can tell the honourable member that we will not allow that to happen.

Delegation of Powers

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we know that the ministers have been discussing the withdrawal of federal participation in a variety of fields, fields such as housing, tourism, forestry, mining, recreation, urban and municipal affairs, job training, culture and on and on.

Can the minister tell this House if the government of the province of Manitoba is supporting or resisting such transfers, and what guarantees are they being given, if those transfers are to take place, that money will come with those transfers in order to ensure that we are not constitutionalizing offloading by the federal government?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Manitoba approaches these talks with the concerns of so-called smaller provinces very much on our agenda. We have made it clear that Manitoba does not come to these talks jurisdiction shopping. We are not there to see for purposes of power only, powers devolved to the province of Manitoba. We are there to see that any changes in the power structure are offset with appropriate safeguards so that provinces like Manitoba and others are not negatively impacted. All of these discussions hinge on a discussion about levelling the playing field. The principle of equalization and cost-shared programs is very, very much part of these discussions.

Every time we deal with issues related to changes in powers, we go back and look at whether we are getting the kinds of movement we need on the equalization front to ensure that the safeguards are there, and that any devolution of powers does not weaken the strength of the central government to deliver programs that are important to people in every part of this country.

Provincial Referendum

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that in all the media accounts, we keep hearing about the offloading of programs, but we never hear anything about any monies which would flow from the federal government to the provinces to operate those programs to maintain a sense of equality of programming across the nation. It is equally clear that that is exactly what Manitobans want. They have always felt the need for that strong central

government, because without the presence of that strong central government and the funds from that strong central government, then there is not equality of opportunity and programming in this nation.

Can the government tell the House today if they have given any further consideration to the referendum option which, in our opinion, would give Manitobans the opportunity to say—as they are not going to be given the opportunity to say nationally—that this province fully supports a strong central government?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): I can only repeat some of the things that I said in my previous answer about maintaining a balance that will ensure that Canadians living in every part of this country can feel that they are equal Canadians to Canadians in every other part of the country.

The honourable member and I, I do not believe, have any disagreement on these points respecting strong central government, the so-called six siblings, the powers referred to by the honourable member, and jobs and culture. All of those things, changes that happen, have to be accompanied by safeguards and have to be accompanied by a strengthening of the equalization provisions of the Constitution, so that Manitoba can go forward into the future with potentials and opportunities, so that we can take a greater part in our national arrangements, constitutional arrangements.

I answered the questions and the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) answered questions about referendums earlier this week.

* (1355)

Municipal Assessments Delays

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Rural Development.

Since the introduction of Bill 20, we on this side of the House have raised many concerns, particularly with the delay in reassessment and the right for farmers to appeal. We have also raised the problem of business values decreasing because of closures. The minister has finally realized that there is a problem and has indicated that his government is going to look at the current assessment rules and make changes to ease the businesses that had

closures, something that has been suggested by people on this side of the House.

I want to ask the minister: What changes is he proposing to make to ease the burden on businesses that have been forced to close?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Well, Mr. Speaker, in her question, the member for Swan River again erroneously points to the fact that farmers will lose their right to appeal. That is false. We have indicated on several occasions, when questioned by the member for Dauphin, the member for Swan River that indeed farmers will continue to have the right to appeal as they did in the past.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a situation, a very unique situation developed in terms of assessment and that has to do with businesses that have closed and the assessment on those businesses. We have come a long way through reforming assessment in this province, and indeed we are not where we would like to be in the future, but there are steps that have to be taken. Because of this unique circumstance, I have indicated very publicly that I am prepared to examine it and look at whether or not we can address it through our assessment process.

Right to Appeal

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): The minister says that farmers have not lost their right to appeal, yet he is quoted as saying that it would cause chaos if the right to appeal was extended to business and farmers. I am not sure where he is coming—which way is it? I want to ask the minister: Is he prepared to extend the same consideration to farmers that he is prepared to extend to businesses? Is he now looking at allowing farmers the right to appeal when he says in the paper that it would cause chaos? He says here—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put her question.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, let it be made very clear that under the present legislation, farmers do have the right to appeal their assessment if there are extenuating circumstances which affect the value of their property. Farmers cannot appeal their assessment based on the market values that broadly affect the property in the whole province. That is what I was speaking about when I was asked by the reporter whether or not we would allow for the

appeal based on market value. That is simply not allowable because it would simply mean the reassessment based on reference years would have no value whatsoever. That is something that the opposition should become familiar with and get an understanding of.

Delays

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): In light of the fact that the decision today to delay reassessment to 1994 is causing severe hardship in some cases, will the minister reconsider this issue and proceed with the reassessment in 1993 as was promised by this government in Bill 79?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, as we have said before, the delay of reassessment by one year does not affect the right of farmers to appeal their taxes as was previously the norm. If there is something that affects the value of a certain property, an extenuating situation, that farmer may appeal his assessment as he was able to under the former legislation. Bill 20 does not in any way affect that right whatsoever.

Domtar Site Soil Testing Costs

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, this government claims to subscribe to the polluter-pay principle, and they have an opportunity to apply and live by that principle with the cleanup of the former Domtar site in Transcona.

My question is for the Minister of Environment. Has there, or will there be an application to the taxpayer-supported Green Plan orphan site program to pay for the testing of the soil from the old Domtar site?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, certainly not for the testing of the soil. The member is wondering whether any Manitoba taxpayers' dollars would flow to support Domtar in any way. The answer is no.

Ms. Cerilli: Will Domtar then be paying for the entire research and testing and the remediation for the site at the end of Devonshire Drive?

* (1400)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, there has been a proposal put forward from departmental officials to access research development dollars to examine the possibility of expanding the technology that may

be used in the Domtar site. There are a number of reasons why that is useful. Technology may well be possible to be used to remove PCBs and similarly contaminated soil. We do not presently have that capability. The alternative that we have, in many cases, is simply storage.

This technology is being tested in shale. It has been tested in some sandy soils. It has never been known to work in heavy clay such as we are wishing to gain that knowledge on. If the member is critical of Manitoba—obtaining at no cost to Manitoba additional technology, an opportunity that will flow from that benefit—then I would suggest that they are sincerely out of touch.

Ms. Cerlill: Mr. Speaker, I think it was the Conservatives that coined the phrase "there is only one taxpayer."

Mr. Speaker: And your question is.

Ms. Cerlill: There is also concern, Mr. Speaker, about the effectiveness of this method of decontaminating soil. Does the minister have information about the anticipated success of this procedure? If it is not successful with the test being done in Calgary, then how much longer do these people have to live next to this contaminated site? How long will the delay of the cleanup be?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, when I stand here and think of the hypocrisy coming from that side and there is potentially \$14 million worth of Manitoba taxpayers' dollars that could be expended to clean up the Manfor site, and they are opposed to developing technology here so that we can clean up the contaminations that are presently existing or potentially in this province, they have the blinkers on.

Mr. Speaker, specifically, regarding the site where these tests are to take place, the technology will be tested—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister to finish his response.

Mr. Cummings: Domtar will be taking a number of truckloads from the Winnipeg site to the equipment where it is presently located. If there appears to be some success, then the equipment will be located here to deal with the contamination and the contaminated soil.

There are a number of issues that are referenced in the paper which I imagine the members now have

access to. Frankly, one of the things that they are concerned about is the ability of any technology to work successfully in close proximity to dwellings. That will be one of the first tests that this will be put to and will lead to further decisions. If this technology does not work, Domtar wishes to be able to bring other technologies in to deal with it.

Human Rights Case Government Involvement

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier.

We are privileged to live in a free and democratic society where the rights for human beings and due process are accepted as given. On April 3 of this year, the chairperson of the Punjab Human Rights Commission, Justice Bains, was arrested by the Indian government for an alleged speech. He has, since then, been held without being charged.

Human rights organizations around the world have taken up his cause and have called for his release. Mr. Justice Bains is a man who has earned the respect of cross sections of global society around this world.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. Will he contact the federal government and ask them to step up their pressure on the Indian government to release Justice Bains who is being held without due process of the law?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under consideration.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I will be willing to provide the information on Mr. Justice Bains.

I have always tried to keep myself away from any issue which is not within the boundary of this country, but I am forced to speak on this issue, because it is an issue which crosses all the boundary lines, the human rights issue.

I will ask the Deputy Premier: Given the medical condition of Justice Bains who has been very well respected among you and the members here, can he also convey to the Prime Minister of this country to convey to the Indian prime minister to make sure that proper treatment is being given to this individual who has worked for the last 51 years on behalf of many organizations which cross all factions of the community?

It is not a racial issue, Mr. Speaker. It is a justice issue, and we must speak when there are violations of justice in any part of the world.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the forwarding of the information that was committed to by the member and, as well, I will take under consideration his request.

Policing Services Fee-For-Service Costs

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

During the Estimates process, we discussed the policing contract entered into between the province and the federal government, and it is clear that many aspects of that contract are up in the air. We have heard reports in our office and have been contacted and advised that many police services that are now offered for free will be charged on a fee-for-service basis to police forces in the province of Manitoba.

Given the effect this could have on delivery of police services, can the minister confirm in fact if that is the case?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Over a long period of time the contracting provinces negotiated with the federal government the successful conclusion of a new 20-year contract guaranteeing RCMP services in those contracting provinces.

That contract maintains the ratios that were in effect previous to the expiration of the previous contract, a matter of major importance to all contracting jurisdictions, including municipalities. I understand the city of Thompson is also a major benefactor of the latest census and also the fact that we negotiated this agreement in this way.

This agreement also allows an unprecedented level of program and financial accountability to the contracting jurisdictions, another major step forward, so that we can monitor these contracts much more closely than we were able to previously.

The third part of this contract which was of major importance was a clarification of the items that form part of the cost base. It must be in the area of the cost-base arrangements that the honourable member is referring to, and if he could be more specific about the concerns that he thinks that there are out there with respect to items being up in the air, I would be very happy to know about that and very happy to deal directly with those.

Mr. Chomlak: Therefore, will the minister confirm that lab tests, computer checks and other aspects relating to homicide and other investigations carried out by national and federal testing labs will not be part of a fee-for-service basis for police services and police departments across the province?

Mr. McCrae: The best way for me to deal with the specifics of the honourable member's question is to—now I cannot remember. Did we get through that part in the Estimates?

So we are already finished that in the Estimates review—but for me to consult with the director of Law Enforcement Services and deal with the question directly asked by the honourable member and get him a response to the question of lab tests and computer checks.

* (1410)

Mr. Chomlak: My final supplementary. Will the minister contact police departments and agencies across the province, because they are concerned that these fee-for-service costs will be included and they will be forced to pay for them? Will he undertake to contact these agencies to advise them that if in fact it is not the case, it is not the case?

Mr. McCrae: Well, if what the honourable member is asking is not the case, I do not see any reason to advise anybody. On the other hand, if the honourable member is being asked about this and he is putting this forward as a question that requires clarification, I too would like to know the answer to that question as a result of the negotiations, these lab tests and computer checks, whether that was part of our negotiated settlement and how that works under the new arrangement. So I will be sure to respond to the honourable member at a subsequent time on the specifics of his question.

The Diviners Government Support

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): My question is directed to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

Yesterday, here in the Legislature, there was a fair bit of action going on. The bells were ringing here in the House, and in the Legislative Reading Room, the cameras were rolling. A film called "The Diviners" was being shot. I wonder if the minister could tell us whether the government supported that particular project.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): I am pleased to say that we have very vibrant cultural industries in the province of Manitoba that do contribute to the quality of life and to the well-being economically and culturally of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that there was \$400,000 provided through CIDO, through our cultural industries, for the film "The Diviners" and that in fact we were able to increase, through this year's budget process, our commitment to cultural industries by \$400,000.

Recycling Programs Distributor's Costs

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. I received today a copy of a letter dated June 1 from the City of Brandon City Council, which says in part that the solid management waste subcommittee of Brandon City Council feels that the distributors of newspapers and advertising flyers should be contributing more financially and in other ways, such as promotion, to the recycling efforts now underway. They say that this would be consistent with the WRAP Act and they go on to say, we urge the provincial government to accelerate the pace of the WRAP process to increase the contribution of distributors.

My question is for the Minister of Environment. Mr. Speaker, we have been saying this for some time. It is now being said by the City of Brandon. Why will the Minister of Environment not make good on his commitment to make distributors share in the cost and responsibility of recycling?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what is occurring under the WRAP Act. Discussions have taken place with four targeted waste streams, one of them is the newspaper stream, and one of the things that is coming along very well is that we are now starting to have in rural Manitoba, a very well-developed recycling network. We set aside \$100,000 to assist rural Manitoba and another \$100,000 to assist the City of Winnipeg in setting up newsprint recycling capability. Following that, the capacity is now developing to collect and the capacity for markets is growing rapidly. We now have recyclers beginning to look to the market for newsprint, and I will be meeting with the publishers shortly to discuss the WRAP Act.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that after three and a half years this government has done a rap on the WRAP Act. The fact is there is nothing that has happened in Brandon. There is nothing that has happened—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James, kindly put your question now, please.

Mr. Edwards: My question for the minister. He talks about discussions. Those discussions have been going for years. When is this minister going to turn discussions into action and do what the City of Brandon is asking him to do, and that is to sit down and discuss with distributors their responsibility to deal with recycling costs and responsibility in this province?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I am more than pleased to say that I agree with the member that the time is opportune to proceed in this direction. As a matter of fact, I am meeting with my staff this afternoon in the ongoing process of preparing for implementation of WRAP regulations regarding wastepaper in this province.

Abitibi-Price - Pine Falls De-Inking Plant

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, finally, for the same minister.

Can the minister indicate why, in his recent granting of the licence to Abitibi-Price, he included no statement about the contribution of this government towards a recycling de-inking plant out at Abitibi-Price, also an issue raised by the City of Brandon in their letter to him of this week? Why did the minister not deal with the recycling at the same time that he granted the new licences in—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting point, but I do not think the member would suggest that the director of the department should be directing the financial approach that Abitibi takes for redevelopment of the plant.

I can say very clearly that Abitibi, in putting forward its business plan, is contemplating and intends to pursue recycling capability, and we will continue to work with them to develop that.

Mr. Speaker, it is on the basis of recycling that Abitibi has been doing up to this point that we have a local market of much magnitude in this province. That is one of the issues that we have been dealing with, is the freight, dealing with the volumes of newsprint, and that is now very much in sight in terms of how Abitibi will redevelop.

Manitoba Blue Cross Tax Increase

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Speaker, when the honourable Minister of Finance admitted in this House that he is slapping a 2 percent tax on Blue Cross, I was tempted to sing a new song, "Manitoba, Deep in the Heart of Taxes".

My question to the honourable Minister of Finance is: On what profit of Blue Cross is he imposing this 2 percent tax, which would yield almost \$750,000 to \$1.5 million annual additional revenue? On what profit of Blue Cross is he imposing this?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): The member is really striking into some old melodies in his preambles to his questions.

I will certainly be prepared to give full response to that question in consideration of the bill on statute law and taxation.

But, Mr. Speaker, when the member talks about being in the "heart of taxes", I would just have to remind him, [interjection] and obviously with the agreement of all of his colleagues, I would just remind him that in the years 1982-1987, there was an imposition of \$800 million of taxes imposed by the NDP government of Manitoba and an annual increase of \$250 million.

Since we have been in government, Mr. Speaker, our rates of taxation have amounted to a \$150-million reduction on an annual basis, not an \$800-million increase in the "heart of taxes" during the period 1982-87.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before I move the motion to go into Supply, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will meet on Thursday, June 11, at 10 a.m., to consider the operations of The Freedom of Information Act.

Also, I am calling the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for Tuesday, June 16, at 10 a.m., to consider—Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw that announcement and ask for the leave of the House, if I might, Mr. Speaker, to move a motion. It is to do with the Judicial Compensation Committee. I would like leave of the House to introduce this motion. It is a referral motion referring the Report of the Judicial Compensation Committee, tabled in the House July 4, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for consideration and report back to the House. That is the motion, but I have to have leave to move it.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: He does.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that motion, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Manness: Again, before I move the motion, I would ask leave of the House to make one change in the Estimates list. I apologize to the House leaders for not having given them prior notice to this. I am wondering whether or not, seeing that the Minister of Labour's (Mr. Praznik) Estimates are to be considered shortly, one small item on the list, namely Employee Benefits and Other Payments, could be brought in right under the Civil Service Commission so that they could be dealt with at the same time.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave to alter the sequence in the manner that he has so indicated?

* (1420)

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, he has leave. Leave has been agreed to.

Mr. Manness: Then with that change, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that Mr. Speaker do now leave—

Well, Mr. Speaker, I will ask, again, whether there is a willingness to waive private members' hour.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave to waive private members' hour? Leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that Mr. Speaker now leave the Chair, and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Justice; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Labour.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

LABOUR

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Labour.

Does the honourable Minister of Labour have an opening statement?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Yes, I do, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased to present the 1992-1993 Estimates for the Department of Labour. The Department of Labour is composed of three divisions. The first division is the Labour Services Division, whose mandate is to provide services to a broad range of individuals and organizations focusing on public safety through the Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Mechanical and Engineering branch, assurance of the technical competence of tradespersons through the Apprenticeship & Training branch and through Mechanical & Engineering, and thirdly, promotion of fair employment practices through the Pension Commission, Conciliation and Mediation Services and through the Pay Equity Bureau.

The second division of the department is the Workplace Safety, Health and Support Services Division, whose mandate is to administer those acts

and regulations within the Department of Labour that relate to the protection of the health, safety and economic well-being of Manitobans. This division also serves a very broad range of our public. The division is composed of six branches—Field Inspection and Education Services, Mines Inspection, Occupational Health, Employment Standards, Labour Adjustment and the office of the Worker Advisor.

The third division of the Department of Labour is Management Services. This division provides the financial and human resource management support to the entire department, as well as information system support. The division is also responsible for research legislation and policy co-ordination for the department and provides essential support to the many advisory committees on whom the department relies and consults. It is the goal of all members of the three divisions of the Department of Labour to provide the highest quality of service that we can to the Manitobans that we serve.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my own thanks and appreciation to the members of the Labour department for their hard work over the past year. The mandate of the Labour department is an important one, and while the times we are experiencing are extremely difficult for all jurisdictions, I am pleased to indicate that the spending Estimates for the Department of Labour, on an adjusted vote, represent an increase of 5.6 percent over the 1991-92 budget, I would suspect one of the highest increases for any Department of Labour in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in introducing the spending Estimates of the Department of Labour, I will just touch briefly on a few of the major issues. It is critical to the economic well-being of the province that we operate in a way which reflects respect for all of our citizens. The Labour department is not large, but is nevertheless charged with a number of important matters. We are responsible for the administration of our 20 statutes and numerous regulations aimed at ensuring fair play in critical areas of workplace safety, labour relations, public safety, to name a few.

It is also critical that in order to ensure fair play, that our legal framework reflect the balanced interests of a wide variety of parties. It is not possible, I realize, to satisfy every concern or every interest which comes before me as Minister of Labour. This would not be possible, I am sure

members would agree. I am satisfied, however, that through the consultations in which we engage, both formal and informal, the mandate of the Labour department is well served and that the balance which is so essential to the interests of fair play and competitiveness as a province is maintained.

The Department of Labour is into its second year of a long-term initiative to improve the quality of service deliverance to our clients. In this fiscal year, managers have been delegated various administrative responsibilities and will be more accountable for the results and service given by their branches. All staff have participated in workshops designed to familiarize them with service quality concepts and the progress we are making as a department. Staff-driven quality improvement teams will soon be reality, and more training of our employees will occur over the next few years. Our department is very excited about the leadership it has demonstrated in the initiative, and we hope it will not be long before our clients actually experience improvement in the way our multitude of services are delivered.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am prepared to defer some of my remarks regarding the other accomplishments of the department over the past year to the detailed review process. Those are many and varied, and while I look forward to sharing the information with members of the committee, I believe that this can be done more efficiently as we proceed.

On that note, I look forward to the questions which members opposite may wish to put to me. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the honourable Minister of Labour for those comments. Does the critic from the official opposition party, the honourable member for Thompson have an opening statement?

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I welcome the opportunity once again, as Labour critic for the New Democratic Party, to open this discussion of the Estimates for the current fiscal year. I want to indicate that our view is that while this is a relatively small department in terms of budget in comparison to other departments of government, it is a critical department.

It is indicative in many ways of the policies and programs of governments, and I think in the context of the last number of years that I have had the

opportunity to participate in these discussions in Estimates, I think we have seen, probably more clearly in this department than any other, the kinds of policies and programs of this government.

I want to indicate that I continue to have great difficulty with the direction that this government is taking in a whole series of Labour issues, whether it be in terms of labour relations, whether it be in terms of the whole question of apprenticeship training, whether it be in terms of the question of pay equity, whether it be in terms of the question of the Worker Advisor Office and Workers Compensation which we will be dealing with separately but which is certainly related, all that is dealt with by this particular department, amongst others.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, while I credit the many fine staff people in the department and the different sections, and the work they do on an ongoing basis, I must again indicate at the beginning of these comments my concern about the directions which this government has been taking in the last five years now. This is the fifth year this government has been in office.

I do so by looking at the statement of purpose of this department, because I really believe that this government is embarking on a course, and has been the last five years, that is not in keeping with its own statement of purpose, the statement of purpose for the Department of Labour, of which one statement of purpose is the promotion of safety, health and fair and equitable treatment in the workplace.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this government has brought in changes to labour legislation every single year that it has been in office, brought in changes to labour legislation five sessions in a row, and not only has in each session brought in one bill, but has brought in some cases more than one bill that has impacted negatively, in our view, on the equitable treatment of workers in the workplace.

We had the bill to delete final offer selection. We had the bill to freeze wages in the public sector last year. We had Bill 59, the Workers Compensation bill, and we currently have a number of acts, including bills related to pensions that we feel are not moving in the direction that is in the best interests of working people, and perhaps most significant in this session, changes to The Labour Relations Act.

We do not believe this government understands what equitable is in the workplace. We believe that implementing the Chamber of Commerce agenda, which the government has done every session it has been in government, which it is doing now in Bill 85 which is taken right out of the Chamber of Commerce brief to government, implementing the Chamber of Commerce agenda for this province is not serving the interests of providing equitable treatment in the workplace.

Similarly, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would note in terms of the fostering of a stable labour relations climate, another statement of purpose of this government, this government has done anything but promote stable labour relations. We saw that last year in terms of the public sector wage freeze. We have seen, in terms of this government, that it is following the pattern of previous Conservative governments.

Almost without fail, there have been increased incidences of days lost to strikes when we have had Conservative governments largely because, I continue to believe, many people in this government do not understand labour relations and do not understand the consequences of their actions when they bring in the kinds of changes to labour relations and do not understand the consequences of their actions when they bring in the kind of changes to labour relations legislation that we have seen.

* (1440)

I say that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson—and I know we will be continuing this debate in terms of Bill 85—because I am concerned at a time when we are in a deep recession that we are seeing a worsening of the labour relations climate. Similarly, one of the other stated purposes of the Department of Labour, which I certainly subscribe to and our caucus does, is support workplace training.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this is the government that has cut back overall in terms of community college training. It has cut back in terms of apprenticeship and training, particularly in northern Manitoba. While there has been some reinstatement of those programs in this current fiscal year, it still has not brought it up to par with the previous level of training that was provided.

We have seen this government turn a cold shoulder to the Labour Education Centre which provides badly needed education and training, which is pioneering, by the way, in conjunction with

management groups right now in a whole series of projects. This government has not seen fit because of ideological reasons to support the work of the Labour Education Centre. The government not only has gone that far, it has eliminated a scholarship to the Labour College that is offered every year, a scholarship that has existed since 1963.

I say to you that I believe here, once again, the government does not see or does not admit perhaps to the true agenda here. Why is it afraid of providing support and funding to organizations such as the Labour Education Centre? Why is it afraid of providing this scholarship? Is it afraid of workers who are aware of their rights, workers who are able to educate themselves about current issues, whether it be in terms of workplace safety and health or labour relations? I say that because these cuts have been particularly negative.

I point again to the concerns that were expressed about the Unemployed Help Centre. The minister of this government had the opportunity to reinstate funding for the Unemployed Help Centre which provides assistance to the unemployed. We have seen proof the last period of time that the average person on unemployment insurance in this province is not receiving the full benefits to which they are due. Even though those benefits, by the way, have been significantly cut, even though it has become more difficult to obtain unemployment insurance, these people are still receiving less than they are entitled to. The minister said, and previous ministers have said, that this is a matter of federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, unemployed Manitobans are Manitobans. Unemployed Manitobans who are not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled to are citizens of this province. This government should be supporting them in receiving the kind of assistance to which they are entitled. It could have done that. The government was doing that through support to the Unemployed Help Centre, but they have chosen instead to turn a blind eye to the plight of the unemployed.

The result has been more people on welfare. We have seen proof of that just today. I know in my own constituency of Thompson the welfare rolls have increased from 5,200 applications to an estimated 6,800 this year, in one year alone. The most significant cause has been in terms of people who

have run out of UIC. It is people who have gone from UIC to welfare. It is the same situation in the city of Winnipeg. It is the same situation across this province. We have more and more people who are falling through the cracks.

More and more people who never would have ever contemplated ending up on welfare, who now because of the changes in the unemployment insurance system—and no thanks to this government which has cut funding to the Unemployed Help Centre which was able to help individuals significantly and still works without the support of this government to help unemployed Manitobans—we are seeing more and more people fall into that trap, the welfare trap.

I say, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this department, the funding that is allocated in this department, and in particular the kind of cuts we have seen in the past four, five years are indicative of a government—and I have said this before and I remember my first Estimates expressing my concern about the direction the government would go in terms of dealing with matters related to labour issues, in terms of working people. I really believe this government has shown its shortsighted agenda in this department more than any other.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the brief time that we will have available to discuss Estimates, I will be asking questions about these and other issues, but more importantly, I will be putting forward another way in which this government can go, because there is another alternative. There is an alternative to the kind of petty cuts we have seen because I really believe they have been motivated by petty politics.

There is an alternative to the blind implementation of the Chamber of Commerce agenda in this province. There is an alternative to this continual effort on behalf of the government to end up in confrontation with the labour movement and the working people it represents.

There is another alternative, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and particularly now, I believe that alternative should be put on the record. We are in the worst economic circumstances in 30 years, 40 years, 50 years. We are in the longest recession in living memory. Only those who went through the depression, really, can think of similar circumstances.

We need co-operation in this province right now to deal with the economic circumstances. I guess

what I am asking from this government, if anything, is a cease fire. We know this war on the labour movement will continue in the future. I have no doubt about that. We indeed will be continuing the fight for more fairness for working people.

I said that on final offer selection, and we will say that again in debate on Bill 85, that whatever this government thinks it can do in the short term, it should be reminded of the words, in fact, of Sterling Lyon who just recently spoke to many Manitobans at a tribute to the six Premiers, who said there were only temporary governments.

Any government is only a temporary government. This government is indeed a temporary government. In the future, many of the negative policies they have introduced can and will be turned around. In the meantime, now, after the fifth year in a row that they have brought in this antilabour agenda, would it not be better to call a cease fire, to work together, to have co-operation between business, labour and government on the economy?

I put that forward as the alternative idea, the alternative vision. I put it forward in debate on the Labour Estimates, because this department and many fine staff people in this department, if given the mandate, could do a great deal to implement that. They have the ability. They have the dedicated, the trained staff. All it takes is policy direction from the government. I believe now is the time for a co-operative approach in terms of labour relations. Now is the time to put aside these petty political attacks the government has made on the labour movement and working people.

It is time to work together to get out of this terrible recession we are in and deal with the horrendous situation in terms of unemployment in this province. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the honourable member for Thompson for those comments. Does the critic from the second opposition party, the honourable member for Inkster have any opening comments?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I wanted to add a few words as we go into the Labour Estimates. This is my first experience in going through the Labour Estimates, as I was appointed just last year as the critic for Labour.

I must say right from the onset that to some degree I am disappointed. I am disappointed in the sense of the budget priorities, as I pointed out, when

we came back in the spring. I am somewhat disappointed with the minister not recognizing the importance of the Civil Service.

For both those particular lines, I would like to comment on, one, in terms of the question where we saw a virtual freeze put on the Labour Adjustment line, and we only go to the report on Adjusting to Win with respect to free trade.

* (1450)

There is a demand for programs of this nature. The government's priorities in that particular area are just not where we believe they should be, while at the same time, we see the increases in the support staff of the governments. We look at the Civil Service. On a few occasions, I have brought up to the minister's attention some hirings that we have called into question, and unfortunately the minister felt that it was not an appropriate thing to do.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we wanted to talk in terms of the Labour Management Review Committee. For far too long, we have had decisions being made based solely on the party that is in government. There seems to be some obligation, whether it is a Conservative government now or an NDP government in the past, that there needs to be amendments brought forward to The Labour Relations Act and others, whether it is in the best interest of the worker or not.

In fact, we have created a Labour Management Review Committee, and that particular committee is responsible to bring forward recommendations to the minister. Far too often, we see division on recommendations coming to the minister from that committee.

I am inclined to believe that if a committee is struck which has labour and management on the committee, if they cannot come up with a consensus, then it is not something that the government should be taking as a recommendation from the Review Committee.

I think that we need to depoliticize The Labour Relations Act a lot more than it currently is because, as I say, we see, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that the minister, both present and in the past, far too often brings in changes to The Labour Relations Act because, in this particular case, as the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) points out, of the Chamber of Commerce. Equally, the Conservatives will say that changes to The Labour Relations Act such as

final offer selection were brought in because of the NDP administration.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that they are both wrong, that the worker is the one whom we should be thinking of, not catering to a small but powerful group of individuals on each side, if you like.

In terms of the Civil Service, I will not be giving open remarks for the Civil Service, but I want to comment on the Civil Service and also Workers Compensation because they are two responsibilities of the minister that we will be dealing with.

We see that the Civil Service has a much larger role to play. There is a lot of public cynicism toward politicians in general, in part because of the amount of patronage that takes place. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we believe that the Civil Service has a major role and in fact should be broadened to once again, or at least attempt to try to restore some public faith in politicians.

In respect to their wages and the freeze on wages that we saw last year, we look at the ministerial support staff of all the different ministers, and you will see that there are substantial increases, while at the same time, the Civil Service, I was told, was for zero percent, and in fact brought in legislation.

Workers Compensation—there are a number of issues that we are wanting to address, some specific policy questions, and we are hoping to be able to get into Workers Compensation this time through. I know in the past we have not had very much debate or questions regarding Workers Compensation.

So with those few words, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to proceed.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the honourable member for those comments.

Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff present.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I was just going to suggest that in terms of proceeding, we proceed the way we have, certainly last year, and not deal strictly line by line, and deal with the

department perhaps generally at the first point. It will make it a lot easier, I think, in terms of dealing with them, particularly given the length of time that we have available.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I understand that there is a limited amount of time that our critics have allotted for this Estimates, and I gather that there is some desire to deal with them in a rather short time frame.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, just in terms of that, I know it is difficult to estimate the length of time that we spend on any department, especially once we get into some of the questions and answers back and forth, but I do believe we should be finished Labour today, and possibly may start Civil Service.

Mr. Praznik: I have no problem with that means of proceeding. All I would ask is if the critics could, just for the benefit of my staff in terms of moving people here for particular areas, follow generally the layout in the guide for pursuing our questions and work through them. That would probably save us some time and accommodate staff.

If I may, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, introduce my staff, I have the Deputy Minister, Roberta Ellis-Grunfeld, who is here with me, Jim Nykoluk, who is the Executive Director of Management Services, and Mr. Jim Wood, who is Director of Financial Services, and as we move through departments, we will move other staff in, and I will introduce them.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I would like to inform the members of the committee that the correct procedure for considering items in the Committee of Supply is line by line. In order to skip ahead or revert back to lines already passed, unanimous consent by the committee is required. Is there unanimous consent of the committee at this time to deal with the issues on a whole? [Agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I introduced the three, and as we move through departments and other staff come, I want to have everyone here so we can accommodate your questions today and move through with some speed, appreciating the time frames we are all working under.

Mr. Ashton: I have a number of questions on Apprenticeship and Training to begin with, and I can indicate we will have some questions on the Pay Equity Bureau a bit later, so we may go back on sort of what appears as the order here.

I know the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) will be asking other questions on that, and I have a number of other questions following down the lines. Depending on the time, I have some other questions further up, but we are short of time here.

In terms of Apprenticeship and Training, I wanted to ask the minister if it is possible in the future to get detailed responses because I realize some information may not be available.

I would like to ask the minister if it would be possible to obtain an indication of the number of apprentices enrolled since 1985, if that historic information could be available? Once again, we will be sitting in other departments which the minister reports back on, and if I could ask for the current year information if that is available.

* (1500)

Mr. Praznik: I will undertake to provide the member and the two critics with a historical listing of the number of apprentices by trade going back to 1985. Just give me a moment—we will have the current number in training.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would reference members to the annual report which should have a detailed outline of apprentices being dealt with. Yes, if I could provide a copy of the annual report, and I would reference page 66. I think that will give the honourable member a rundown of apprenticeships, registrations, completions, active at year end, breakdowns in terms of women, level testing, all of that information going back to the '88-'89 year.

Mr. Ashton: I would appreciate the information back to 1985 as well.

One of the key questions I have, one of the reasons for asking the question, is related to the Conawapa Hydro project. One of the most significant developments in the mid-'80s was in terms of apprenticeship training, particularly through the Limestone training authority. Many apprentices were enrolled. Many apprentices are currently at the second, third level in the system.

Conawapa will likely be under construction as early as next year, depending on the environmental review and other policy and political decisions by government and Hydro, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. But '93 seems to be a very likely start-up date according to the latest information—I have the minister sitting across from me so—depending on all those other factors.

The question I have is: What role has the Apprenticeship branch had in terms of development of training policies and programs, and when can we see the kind of programs put in place for Conawapa that were put in place for Limestone with whatever changes may be made by government?

In particular, I am wondering if the department has met at all with other departments, ministers met with other ministers, in regards to the significant cut that took place the previous year in the community college system, particularly in Thompson, in terms of apprenticeable trades training, because those were the courses that were eliminated, most particularly in Thompson, former Limestone training courses. So, I guess, the key question is: Where do we sit with training for Conawapa?

Mr. Praznik: I notice the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Downey) is at the table, and he had a very broad smile with the member's optimism on the Conawapa project. It is certainly appreciated. That kind of support to it, to a very important project for Manitobans, is certainly important, and I am sure that those thoughts will be shared with all members of the opposition.

To answer the member's question specifically, certainly the most important question for northern Manitobans and indeed all Manitobans: I see he recognizes that there is some difference between now and the Limestone period. One being, we have had a lot people who were in training, partially completed training, during the Limestone project, and we are starting at a very different base, obviously, than when Limestone was constructed. I can tell him that our department is working very closely with other departments that are involved in this project, particularly the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Downey). We are working along with them to ensure that we maximize the benefits to Manitoba and the North.

I can tell you now that our branch has a person assigned to this work. One of the parts of the job that he is undertaking currently is to do an assessment or an inventory of the people that we have from the Limestone training initiative to find out who may need extra time in order to complete their work, who is available, who have completed apprenticeships, et cetera. We will certainly, I can assure him, be working to maximize those benefits through the branch, and it is certainly a priority with the branch now.

Mr. Ashton: When I referred to the 1993 start-up date for Conawapa, I was basing it on the information the government itself has provided. You can call it optimistic. You can call it pessimistic. To my mind, it is realistic.

I mean, if that is the government's stated intention, I take them at their word. Once again that is dependent upon, obviously, the environmental hearings which are taking place. I do not think anybody is prejudging that. I assume the government has made the commitment in conjunction with Hydro for a '93 start-up date on the assumption that all the environmental hearings take place.

One of the main concerns I wanted to put on the record was the fact that I really believe it was a major mistake to cut some of the trades courses last year. I really believe that now is the time to be dealing in terms of training needs. It is time to deal with the continuing need to train northern and northern aboriginal people in terms of apprenticeships.

One of the key things, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that the Limestone training authority did do is get a lot of northerners, and in particular northern aboriginal people, into the apprenticeship system, some of whom were able to complete the program prior to the conclusion of Limestone, many of whom are still in the system.

By the way, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, my focus is strictly on Hydro. It is for the communities; it is for the North in general. Many of those people were able to finish. The carpenters, for example, who graduated through the Limestone Training Program received their ticket. They are now in the situation of working in the communities. So it has made a very significant impact on their own lives and on the lives of the communities.

So I want to identify that as a concern and ask the minister to take a lead role because I do not believe from the information we have received thus far, and we have asked this question of the MEA, we asked it of Manitoba Hydro, and it does not appear that there is anything now really going on other than co-ordination between various departments and the Crown corporation. So the concern I would have is, if it is going to be built, the training needs to start as soon as possible.

If there was one problem, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in terms of Limestone training, it was that if it could have started perhaps a year before,

perhaps on a more reduced scale. I think given the uncertainties that you can get into in terms of Hydro development, possibilities of delays that are reasonable, but if the training had been able to start a year earlier, we would have seen a significant increase in the number of people who actually completed their trades qualifications, because there are many now at the second and third level who are looking to Conawapa.

So I would like to ask the minister if he would undertake to ensure that the government puts those training programs into place now, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, rather than wait until 1993-1994, when it will probably be too late for many northerners, in particular, to take advantage of work opportunities in terms of Conawapa, since they will not complete their training until a number of years down the line.

Mr. Praznik: The member's concern is certainly a very valid one. Although this department has a very small, an important role, but a small role, the training piece of the package as I am sure you appreciate is carried to a large extent by the Department of Education, but we will certainly undertake today, with you, in co-operation I am sure with my colleagues, to review this situation.

We appreciate the concern you are putting on the table and we will try to work to fairly good time frames that will allow northerners and Manitobans to take full advantages of the opportunities related to Conawapa. His concern is certainly one that I recognize and as I have indicated before, we are in the process of doing the inventory out of the Limestone program to give us a sense of people who are there and some of the immediate needs that we can fulfill that were not completed under Limestone. I will note his comments and give an undertaking to pursue that in that particular area.

Mr. Ashton: Doing that inventory, I would hope that the government would give consideration to involving aboriginal organizations in that. There is really no inventory currently. I believe the Department of Education and Training has virtually no inventory in terms of northern Manitoba.

Aboriginal organizations, whether it be the MKO or the various tribal councils or the MMF, do have their own data bases. They have contacts in the communities. It is the same with the NACC; they have the ability to do it.

So I would perhaps suggest on the record, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that may be a priority area of

action for the government because I think that that inventory will be very useful, in fact will be vital in terms of the planning. Whatever is going on now in terms of planning really becomes an academic exercise unless you have a good inventory.

I do have a couple of other questions on apprenticeship in a more general sense. It relates from a couple of cases that have been brought to my attention. One in particular really concerned me, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. When the individual phoned me on the Saturday of the week, he was scheduled to go to Winnipeg, Red River Community College, for continuation of second level autobody training. He was scheduled to begin Monday, it was cancelled.

* (1510)

This individual had to rent an apartment, paid the money in advance, has now been faced with the difficulty, potentially, of having a delay in terms of the training. What had happened in that particular case was, the enrollment was a couple fewer than what was considered to be a proper enrollment. It puts people in a very difficult situation. I know the Apprenticeship branch was quite active in lobbying on behalf of this particular individual.

I am wondering if the minister can indicate whether he or his department will be dealing with these kinds of situations by asking the community colleges to be more reasonable. I think it is totally unreasonable to cancel a course on two or three days notice, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, particularly when the next course may not be available for a period of time.

This individual, by the way, had quit a part-time job as a result of going to this, was unable to get the part-time job back and ended up in the situation where his own employer was considering laying him off because he had budgeted for the period of time when the employee was supposed to be taking the trades training. It was a period where he was fairly slow in terms of business, so he was going to eliminate that position for a few months. So he ended up losing his part-time job, potentially losing his full-time job, losing six weeks worth of salary and having to wait another eight to 10 months to continue the program.

As I said, the Apprenticeship branch was very helpful in terms of this and was very supportive of the individual. I am wondering if the minister can undertake to ensure that this kind of situation does

not arise again, that there is at least some sort of reasonable notice put in place so that people do not end up in this difficult situation in the future.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the situation which the member raises is indeed a very unfortunate one. My staff have just advised me that the difficulty was that only eight people had applied for the course. But his point is extremely valid.

In fact, I can tell him today that our staff in Apprenticeship and Training have been in touch with the Department of Education because of this specific incident and have advised them that it is certainly unacceptable to have that kind of lead time in cancelling courses. We hope within the not-too-distant future that this policy will be changed in the education area and that we will be able to better accommodate those kinds of course changes.

So the matter he raises is very, very valid. I am pleased to say that our staff in the department have already been pursuing that, and I will undertake to review it to see that some conclusion is brought to it, and that this does not happen again.

Mr. Ashton: As I said, I appreciate the work the branch has been doing. I have indicated to the individual who contacted me that I would be raising this. I would really appreciate this matter being pursued, because it is a classic case of the little person, I guess, getting it in more ways than one in this case, losing two jobs, losing six weeks salary and losing a year in terms of training.

While it may be easy for Red River Community College, some of the officials, to sit back and say, well, what could we do, there were only eight people, I do not think it is acceptable whatsoever for it to be cancelled two days before it starts. If he had a week or two more notice, he would have probably saved the two jobs.

By the way, he may be fairly soon another one of the welfare statistics because that is what he indicated, that if he got laid off from his permanent job, that is where he would have to go, a very unfortunate situation.

I have another general issue to raise in terms of Apprenticeship and Training. I have had a significant number of concerns expressed to me in terms of testing. I have had individual cases. I know a number of members of our caucus have had further cases in terms of testing, relating to tests which, where some individuals were on the

borderline, some were allowed to rewrite, some were not, the ways in which that discretion is put forward; other concerns where virtually entire classes fail tests because some of the testing material did not relate to the course work that they had taken, and it is very key to people.

The bottom line is, the apprenticeship system is a difficult system for people to have to go through. You go through a period of being in school, often away from home. You go through a period of not making all that much money compared to what you could be making otherwise. When it comes to problems in terms of testing, it can really destroy people on a personal basis. I have seen that happen to people.

I would like to ask the minister whether he would review some of the testing procedures that are put in place to ensure a greater degree of fairness. I mentioned the case of people who—some people are allowed to rewrite, some others are not—I have a specific case of that, where it has been identified—and also in terms of the kinds of tests that are being used, as to whether they are appropriate because, as I said, I can provide information to the minister of virtually entire groups of people who have been failed for tests that are not really that relevant to the material they have taken or even necessarily to the trade itself.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member for Thompson has hit upon one of the great challenges and difficulties in the particular branch at this time. Just to put his concern into context and to give him one example, one of which I do not think any of us in the area are particularly proud, a new intraprovincial construction electrician's examination developed in Nova Scotia and validated by most provinces, including ours, was approved for use in April 1992. What it found across the country was, of the 520 who wrote the exam, only 148 had passed. I think the message that it was sending to us right across the country in this area was that our curriculum development is not keeping up, by and large, with the standards and changes due to technology in particular trades.

I should just tell again, by way of background, to the honourable member that when we came into power some years ago, we had a situation in the branch where many of our trades advisory committees, which developed the curriculum, had not met for long, long periods of time. The former director of the branch, with much effort, managed to

get those committees up and operating again. There were approximately 40-some committees—43 committees, I am advised. We still have some way to go, and one of our initiatives in this upcoming year will be to increase the work of those committees in order to ensure that our curriculum is being updated on a regular timely basis, though it is relevant to the trades that are being taught.

So he certainly identified a major area, and I can assure him today that it has come to our attention, at the management level, very strongly in the last six months, and our efforts to ensure our trades advisory committees are working fully and on a timely basis are being redoubled in order to ensure curriculum is meeting the standards that are required in particular trades. So I thank him for raising that particular matter, and over the next year, I hope we are going to have some major improvements.

Mr. Ashton: I appreciate that. I do not have any further questions on apprenticeship. Would the Liberal critic want to ask questions now, or I can proceed to other areas.

Mr. Lamoureux: I will go back to that.

Mr. Ashton: He may be coming back, I believe, on that. Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am just moving ahead in my book here. I have some general questions now in terms of labour relations, partly relating to the Labour Board and partly relating to Conciliation and Mediation Services.

I would just like to ask the minister if he could provide the latest information to the committee on days lost due to strikes in Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: If I could just have my staff come forward—Tom Bleasdale, who is our assistant deputy minister, joined us a few minutes ago. We also have Mr. John Korpesho, who is chair of the Manitoba Labour Board, and if Mr. Davage would come forward from Conciliation and Mediation.

In 1991, and I am not sure exactly what information the member for Thompson is looking for, there were 10 work stoppages in Manitoba involving 10,878 workers and 175,252 person days lost.

* (1520)

Mr. Ashton: How does that compare, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to previous years?

Mr. Praznik: It is somewhat higher, considerably higher, than in previous years.

Mr. Ashton: I was wondering if the minister perhaps at the next committee meeting could table some of the information for members of the committee in terms of comparison, if that information could be compiled.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if we could arrange to have a clerk make copies of this, I can table it right now.

Mr. Ashton: I hate to say I told you so, but I can recall being at previous committees in context of this department or in context of various Labour bills predicting that this would happen. As I said, this has been the historical trend in the province in the last 25 years. If one looks at it, I would hope that the government would recognize that its policies in terms of labour relations do lead to more confrontation in the workplace, higher days lost to strikes. Certainly the actions they have taken the last number of years in eliminating final offer selection, in terms of their actions of dealing with the public sector, have led to increased losses—a significant number of losses in terms of days lost to strikes.

I have a further question to the minister related to some of the impacts of the proposed Bill 85. I do not intend, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in any way, shape or form, to start that debate here. That would not be appropriate in terms of our rules and would certainly not, I think, be useful in terms of discussions.

I thank the minister for providing me the information. It does provide a rather staggering number of person-days lost. We have traditionally been second lowest in the country, and the minister has indicated last year we had 147,402 person-days lost to strikes in this province, we had 9,702 workers involved. The next closest year was 1987 in terms of 7,790 days lost. So we have literally gone up seven, eight, nine times in terms of that. That is a staggering number in terms of increases. While certainly there are various factors that go into that, I do believe there is clearly something that should be of concern to the government. I would point out, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that indeed one of the strikes itself was a strike which was a public sector strike where the government was directly involved.

But I had a further question on conciliation. If the minister wishes to comment on this, I am sure he will. If I could just place the question on conciliation, just to move things along a bit. Bill 85 introduces a

new role for conciliators, provisions that deal with conciliators' report prior to a contract going to first contract. I would like to ask the minister whether he has had any discussions with his department on his Conciliation section, because I know there is a fairly significant concern that puts conciliators in a new position.

Conciliators traditionally are in a very neutral situation. This now puts quite a bit of pressure on conciliators. They have to make a recommendation as to whether the matter proceeds to first contract, whether there has been good efforts to bargain. There is also no time restriction on that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. So presumably a conciliator could be in a position for quite a period of time of having to deal with a very important decision, rather than the traditional role of trying to bring the two parties together.

I would like to ask the minister whether he has discussed this and whether he is in any way concerned about the change in the role of the Conciliation division of his department.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to respond to the comments of the member for Thompson, because his "I told you so" I do not think is really warranted. When you look at the numbers for 1991, they are certainly large, but he has to appreciate, as I am sure he does, that over 80 percent of those numbers were represented by the strike with the Manitoba Nurses' Union. In fact, of the 10 work stoppages experience in Manitoba for 1991, it was below the 10-year average of 13 and substantially below the 21 disputes in 1985 and 17 disputes in 1986.

Why I particularly would like to make a comment about the Manitoba Nurses' Union strike, that strike took place in a time when final offer selection was still available. I remember the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) making a very long speech about final offer selection and how it would destroy the labour climate and cause strikes. Well, this most significant number of days lost in 1991 was in a labour dispute while final offer selection was available to that union but was not used by that union. So, quite frankly, the loss of final offer selection has not affected, I would argue, the number of days lost to strikes in the province.

I would like to point out to the honourable member as well that in the MNU dispute, the initial offer made by the government at that time in the settlement was

significantly higher than the two previous settlements negotiated with the Manitoba Nurses' Union while the party he is a member of was in government. In fact, I would even like to suggest to him that part of the frustration and why we had a strike at this particular time and what many nurses said during that strike, was they had been asked to take less on two previous occasions and at that particular time had very high expectations.

However, I would point out to him, we did manage to get an agreement through the collective bargaining process. I am sure he would agree, a strike lockout situation is a part of free collective bargaining. So we did manage to get an agreement in that case. It is one which everyone lives with.

But I do not think in any way the policies of the government in terms of labour relations or the removal of final offer selection in any way contributed to those numbers. In fact, I think 1991 was, over the last decade, sort of a middle-of-the-road year in terms of the number of disputes and the number of days lost when you exclude the Manitoba Nurses' Union.

The member refers to that, but I do not know what his alternative would have been other than just to open up the Brink's truck, as his Leader once chastised the Liberal Party for. So I think one has to put those numbers into context, and I do not think the I-told-you-so was certainly warranted, particularly if one references that comment in the member's speeches on the repeal of final offer selection.

Ultimately, we will have this debate every year, I am sure, and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and I will continue to dispute the end result. But in one year, I do not think one way or another, the evidence is certainly going to prove very much. I look forward to our debate on that particular issue over the next number of years that we both hold these particular responsibilities in our respective parties.

With respect to the specific question of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), on Bill 85, I am looking forward to the debate that we will, no doubt, have. The member and I have had an opportunity to discuss outside of committee and outside of the House some of the concerns and why this particular provision was brought in.

I am sure he would agree that it is important that when a conciliation officer is appointed that he has

the opportunity to try to conciliate between his parties. Our conciliation staff have a very high success rate in the disputes in which they are asked to provide their services. I think they are still running at over an 85 percent, or this year about 95 percent, success rate in resolving disputes.

The concern that he raises about putting our conciliation officers into a bit of a difficult position in these disputes I think has some validity. I certainly want to recognize that here today at committee as we have discussed privately.

* (1530)

Our main task is to provide some role for conciliation in the process of first contract disputes. To date, what has normally happened is a conciliation officer has been appointed as the act required. However, the conciliation officer really never had an opportunity to conciliate because once that step was completed, parties moved right away into the process or negotiated their own settlement with the use of first contract as a tool in negotiating that settlement.

So our intention in the bill is to give the conciliation officer an opportunity to try to bring the parties to an agreement and not use first contract as a negotiation tool. I think the member is suggesting some time limit, and I certainly would be prepared to have that discussion with the member on some other occasion. I think he recognizes what we are trying to achieve. If there is a way to achieve that goal, which I am sure he appreciates, we are certainly not adverse to discussing that.

Mr. Ashton: I will continue that discussion. I would like to indicate that if there was an award for the most creative answer in Estimates, I think the minister has won it for his last answer on the statistics. To call a year in which there are 20 times more person days lost to strikes than the highest other year in the first years of the last decade, going back to 1984, to call that a middle-of-the-road year, I think is being very creative on behalf of the minister.

I mean, the fact is, we had a horrendous year in 1991, and the exception he talks about was a public sector strike. He can try and blame it on previous governments, but the bottom line is, it was this government that was involved in the negotiations. The previous contracts were settled. This one was not. There was a lengthy strike. It is reflected in statistics.

Indeed, we will see what happens in terms of final offer selection, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in the future. We will see what happens in terms of the impact of other actions the government is taking in terms of labour relations and particularly with Bill 85. But the bottom line is, 1991 was a terrible year for the province of Manitoba in terms of person days lost. In fact, I do not know how far you would have to go back to find an equivalent number of days lost in strikes.

You would have to go back a long way, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, perhaps not to the 1919 General Strike, but you would not be far off having to go back that far because perhaps not since probably the mid-70s when, at that time, an anti-inflation board was a major issue. In fact, I remember walking a picket line myself in Thompson as part of the fight at that particular point in time.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if we could continue this discussion, if the minister considers 147,402 person days lost, 9,702 workers on strike, a middle-of-the-road year, I wonder what a bad year is going to look like in the future because this is a bad, bad situation in this province. We have traditionally had, if not the lowest, the second lowest number of days lost to strikes in the province. Usually, we are second only to Prince Edward Island in terms of the lowest number of days lost to strikes.

So I want to indicate that I am identifying this concern. We believe that the kind of labour relations climate that is being fostered by the government—and it is not strictly final offer selection or some of the things they have done or are doing in Bill 85, it is the whole attitude of this government and the way it deals with working people and the labour movement.

I mentioned in my opening comments the cuts that have taken place affecting the labour movement and working people, the kind of distrust that has developed as to the intentions of this government and culminating again in another bill this session, Bill 85, which targets labour, targets organizing, says that when people say yes to a union, well, maybe they do not really mean yes.

The bottom line is, it is time the government recognized that unions are democratically selected by the members. The leadership is democratically elected. It is time for them to sit down and recognize that. As I have said before, perhaps it is time for a

cease fire in terms of the kinds of things that we have seen back and forth.

When I look at this, if ever there was evidence of the need for that, the need for this government to reach out to the labour movement, to put aside the kind of legislative and funding attacks we have seen in the last period of time, surely it is now.

This, by the way, 1991, was also the year of one of the worst economic performances ever in this province, 10th out of 10, dead last in terms of GDP. We shrunk. Our province went back. We still actually have not even recovered to the level which this government took over in 1988. We did worse than any other province.

So this, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, came at a time when the economy was doing badly, as well, and that is why I say the No. 1 priority of this minister should not be to be bringing in another Chamber of Commerce inspired bill on The Labour Relations Act, picking yet another fight with the labour movement. The No. 1 priority of this minister should be to say, years like 1991 are bad years. There is a problem out there. Let us see if we can resolve those problems by working with labour and management, labour and the business community, and working together.

So as I said, I appreciate the creativity of the minister's answer. I am sure his colleagues—well, I think he went even beyond the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) so I know has had to stretch things just a little bit to make dead last good, that somehow when you are dead last, and we have the lowest growth of labour income in the country, that is good for the economy in the long run. I think the last time that kind of economic policy was tried was in the 1930s with Herbert Hoover and R.B. Bennett, and we saw how effective it was in those days.

Well, I think the same sort of creativity is being shown by the minister here, but I would say to the minister, please just recognize the fact it was a bad year, there is a problem out there and work with the labour movement and the business community to resolve it.

In terms of the conciliation, again, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, before we leave that section, I will indeed be raising committee concerns about the impact on conciliation of Bill 85. I think it compromises the neutrality of conciliators. I recognize the intent of that section of the bill, but it changes the role of the conciliator substantially. I

believe it will impact negatively on the ability of the Conciliation department to perform its services in other areas in terms of providing a neutral process that conciliation is all about. Conciliation is totally different from arbitration, and conciliators have a totally different role, and I know the minister recognizes this.

I realize it is a dilemma that he has put himself in with Bill 85, but I am extremely concerned about this. I would say in terms of the impact of that bill, this is one of the major concerns that we have over and above the principle of the shift to 65 percent instead of 55 percent, which are important principles. I think this is going to have one of the most negative impacts unless there is some way of changing the bill quite significantly. I would appreciate any attention the minister could provide, and I realize the minister may have a few further comments on conciliation or in terms of work stoppages in which case I would be prepared to obviously let him respond before we go on to the next part.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I had an opportunity, while the member was stopping. I think he put the challenge to me to identify some years in which we had such a large number of days lost, and, of course, he would not want me to compare apples to oranges. I think he would agree an apple-to-apple comparison is more fair, so in terms of person days lost per 1,000 of paid workers, in 1991 with 80 percent of that being accounted by the MNU dispute, we have 412. I can take him back to two years, 1974 and 1975, when we had 422 and 456 days lost. We also had periods in the '80s from time to time when we were above that particular number, both in absolute terms and in days per 1,000 of workers.

I should just tell him, going back through the 1980s in terms of numbers of disputes, the years in which we had more than 10 disputes that had a strike or lockout situation were 1988, 1987, 1986, 1985 and 1982. Only in 1983 and 1984 did we have less labour disputes having eight in each year, so I say to the member, and his experience with the steelworkers in Thompson knows that one dispute with thousands of workers throws those days up compared with one dispute with a small number of workers like we have had from time to time. I recognize fully that the MNU dispute threw our numbers way out into the large frame, but in those other years, even going back into the '70s, some of those were the result of a single dispute in one

particular large industry, whether it be Thompson Inco at Thompson, or some of the larger players, so it is really hard to get an argument.

* (1540)

One thing he did say that I will agree with and that is the need to bring the business community and the labour community together. I think, although we approached that particular issue from two different political parties, each of whom are noted to have different constituencies to some degree, and I would challenge that statement because I am not entirely convinced of it. I say this to him: He would appreciate sometimes the difficulty it is to do that when political agendas get in the way, and I just make the comment of some of the difficulties we had.

We had the Manitoba Federation of Labour make a brief to my colleagues in cabinet this winter. One appreciates that we will not always agree on everything, and that is fair ball, but I would just have him note, you know, a difficulty from our perspective in trying to bridge that gap. In that brief to cabinet, the MFL wanted to make a statement about the legislation we brought in last Christmas dealing with the City of Winnipeg and their business tax, a piece of legislation, I believe, by and large, the Assembly supported.

The MFL, who agreed with our position in their brief to cabinet, was not able even to say that they agreed with that position. The way they worded it was that they noted the government's position. They noted it. Well, what does that mean? It was so obvious, the difficulty it is for the MFL to even say one good word about a government which is not of their political stripe when they agree with them.

Now, on the other side of the coin, I know that we always have not agreed on everything, but I think that underlines the fact that it needs a lot of bridge building on everyone's part, and we will take our fair share of the responsibility in that particular area.

He talked in his opening remarks, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), about the Chamber of Commerce agenda. I think if he looks at proposals for legislative change that the Chamber made and he looks at the package we brought in, yes, there are very significant differences, certainly in the area of automatic vote, where the Chamber position was for an automatic vote in every certification situation.

I say to him, I accept it. In putting together the package, the argument that was made by the

Manitoba Federation of Labour and by others in the labour caucus at the Manitoba Labour Management Review Committee, is the argument that the purpose is to determine the will of the majority, and there are a variety of ways to do it. Where you sign up significant numbers of members by card, that is representative of the will of the majority.

I accepted that argument. There are other areas where obviously there is a great need in this province to bring parties together. I think the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would agree with me that strained labour-management relations in Manitoba go back over a long period of time, and it is going to be through various administrations. His party, when it is in power, tends to be the victim of its rhetoric as other parties do when they are in positions of government from time to time.

If there is one lesson for all of us, whether the Federation of Labour, Chambers of Commerce, CFIB, New Democrats or Conservatives or Liberals, it is that the time to get into the rhetoric in which we all engage from time to time is quickly slipping away on us as we face momentous economic difficulties in a quickly shrinking world.

The need for all of us to come to the table and appreciate each other's position—and I do not just say that for labour appreciating government or management's position, but for management recognizing the right of people to organize and bargain collectively is fundamental to building that relationship.

So I think in many ways the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and I would agree on some of those fundamentals. I would say to him today, I recognize we all have a long way to go to building those relationships. There is a long history in Manitoba of all of us getting caught up in our own rhetoric to some degree, including my party, and it is time that we start putting some of that aside in building those relationships.

I point no fingers at anyone in this process, because I think blame for that goes on everyone's shoulders, but it is time, as the member has rightly pointed out, that we start building better relationships.

I am ready for more questions, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would suggest dropping Bill 85 would go a long way towards building better relations with the MFL. I

hope the minister would also acknowledge as well, because he talked in terms of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the work that was done on the Crocus Fund, you know, the one example of where there has been some co-operation.

I am sure we will continue this debate on Bill 85. I do not want to extend it now, but I really think the minister should understand the frustration of the labour movement having had five sessions in a row of antilabour legislation, of having the Labour Education Centre funding cut, seeing the Unemployed Help Centre, with which it works very closely, having its funding cut, having seen the cut of a \$4,000 Labour College scholarship, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

I think, if the minister reflects on what has happened the last four, going on five years of Conservative government, he will recognize why it is a little bit difficult for the Manitoba Federation of Labour to sit down with cabinet and find very much good to say about the government, let alone in terms of the economic record of the government. So I will leave it at that, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. We can continue this debate if the minister wants, but believe you me, we will do it in Bill 85.

I have some other questions in terms of workplace safety and health next. There is a recent report—which I know I still have not had the opportunity to go through in terms of detail—which pointed to the continuing fact of problems in terms of safety and problems in terms of health in the workplace.

I would like to ask the minister if the minister has had the opportunity to review the report that came out just recently, some of the continuing problems we face in the workplace and what response his department will be putting into place to deal with the continuing fact of deaths and injuries in the workplace in Manitoba.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am looking for a bit of a clarification from the member for Thompson.

First of all, I would like to introduce, no stranger to the member for Thompson, Mr. Tom Farrell, who is the Director of our Workplace Safety and Health Division. Mr. Farrell wished me to advise the member for Thompson that it is snowing in his constituency at the present time.

If the member could just clarify for me, is he talking about the newspaper reports on Dr. Anna Lee Yassi's report?

Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, for the member's information, the particular report to which he refers was done by that particular unit. I think that the ongoing work of that unit was not done in consultation with the department or in accessing our information. I think it was a general, generic report that was done. We are in the process of analyzing that.

I can tell him, there is a fair bit of information floating around right now about accidents. Statistics Canada has done a major survey, I believe it was Statistics Canada, on accidents in the workplace and the cause of them. I do not know if I have that information with us.

Interestingly enough, that information was done with interviews of employees, workers, in the workplace. From that, information suggested that approximately 2 percent of accidents, all types of accidents, occur because of problems in the workplace, as opposed to a host of other factors. I am not trying to downplay that in any way, but I am just trying to demonstrate to him that we have a whole bunch of conflicting information in terms of extent of difficulties and where they are coming from, and we are in the process of analyzing that particular material.

* (1550)

There has not been, I would say to this member, a great deal of work, hard and fast work, and data that has been available to us. I say this to him as well, one of the innovations that we have made in the branch in the last year that I am particularly proud of is we now have a computer link with the Workers Compensation Board, where for the first time in the history of the branch, going back to the early '80s, we are beginning to get specific information on where our accident claims are coming from.

Obviously, one good source of information where there are accidents or diseases related to the workplace is when affected employees file claims with the Workers Compensation Board. Until this year, there was no flow of that information in a specific way to the Workplace Safety and Health branch. So to a large degree, they were both operating in isolation of one another. We are now in the process of building that kind of database that

will allow us to target the efforts of the branch, and I think the member would agree that is a significant improvement, and I believe we are one of the few places in Canada where that is actually taking place.

Mr. Ashton: I was wondering if the minister could provide information on the current situation in terms of injuries, both fatal and otherwise, and also indicate in terms of Workplace Safety and Health that one SY was eliminated from the professional and technical division. What position was that?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, with respect to inspections and accidents and stop work orders, I would refer him to page 69 of the Annual Report of the department where that is listed in some detail. If I could ask the member to please repeat his specific question with respect to the staff year.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, the professional/technical position in Workplace Safety and Health that was eliminated—one support position.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the specifics regarding this staff position had to do with an individual being moved into Workplace Safety and Health last year for some personnel reasons that I am sure the member would appreciate it would not be appropriate to discuss at this time. The individual did training in the Workplace Safety and Health area and has since been reassigned. So it was moving a position from one branch into Workplace Safety and Health for personnel reasons, and then that individual has moved out to another branch with that staff year.

Mr. Ashton: In terms of inspections, I was wondering if the minister could indicate some analysis as to why there has been a decrease in terms of the number of inspections in recent years. It has fluctuated somewhat, but I am wondering if there is some underlying reason for the decrease. Is that the work of health and safety committees? Is it a different type of inspection? But there certainly, since '87-88, has been a significant drop in terms of the number of inspections on an average basis, including last year.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, in this particular area the general reason why there has been that decline is because we have now started, even prior to this year, targeting our inspections. There had not been in the operations of the branch up to a few years ago a general policy to find out the areas where we were having the most

difficulty targeting our inspections and doing very thorough work when we did our inspections. There were accident investigations and just a general blanket inspection. So we were not really getting into the places where we are having the difficulty.

We started to analyze where we were having the greatest risks; the branch did a fair bit of work in deciding to target on areas where we were having reported accidents. That type of industry is getting into targeting it, and we will be refining that even more since we now have access to specific firm data from the Workers Compensation Board. So, although the number of inspections is reduced, we are targeting our inspections. We are also spending more time and effort when we do the inspections to ensure that we are not just walking out, but that there is appropriate follow-up, that we are working with Workplace Safety and Health committees in specific places to solve the problems and reduce injury and illness in the areas where there is greatest risk of injury and illness.

Mr. Ashton: I would indicate my concern—I note, for example, from the information that the minister referred to me earlier that essentially, for example, the number of investigations of fatalities has actually increased. I point in this case to the fact that obviously the degree of investigation be fairly significant. There is a shift, obviously as indicated by the statistics, in terms of more investigations of accidents.

Concern has been expressed to me, I know by people who work, in terms of workplace safety and health, in the workplace about the need for, if anything, additional inspection. That is why I raised the concern in the SYs. I realize that it was only one SY, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am not trying to make any big deal about that.

I accept the minister's explanation in terms of the personnel aspects, but the bottom line is that concern has been expressed by many people I have talked to, that if there was need for additional inspection, I would say particularly in the city of Winnipeg. I think part of the problem in terms of safety and health tends to be in the city.

I know Mr. Farrell, for example, I am sure will reflect on his experience with Inco in Thompson. When someone dies in Thompson or gets seriously injured, it is your neighbour, somebody you know, it hurts everybody. It does not matter what job you have, where you live, you know who it is.

I know in the case of Thompson over the years there has been a significant decrease in the number of fatal accidents, particularly serious accidents as well, particularly underground, because of some of the programs that have been put in place there, some initiated by the company, some by the union, some joint programs. I have seen that difference and I do have a very serious concern about the city.

I am not saying that it is deliberate, but I am saying it is a different mentality in some operations in the city, in the sense that there can be—I do not know how to phrase this, I do not want to seem to be unfair to everyone, I am not trying to cast aspersions on a whole group of people, but it is all too easy to say, oh, well, that is the risk of the job. I suppose that is what they said at Westray in Nova Scotia for many years, that is the risk of being a coal miner.

But there are many industrial plants in Winnipeg where it is a risk of the job, and if someone is hurt, or if someone does die, it is not your neighbour, it is not someone you know, and it does not impact the same way in terms of the company or people in the workplace generally. So I raise that concern. I realize inspections are only a small part of this, and I think that changing attitudes is the even bigger question.

I do not believe that changes in Workers Compensation rates, experienced rating and what not is in any way, shape or form going to do anything of that nature. In fact I would really put this on the record more of a concern. I am not, once again even criticizing the minister, but I really believe that particularly in the city there needs to be—perhaps using the example, and I do use Thompson as example, of what I have seen there.

I actually first worked at Inco 20 years ago, my first summer job when I was 16. I remember the attitudes towards safety and health in those days. I remember the big fight over whether to wear safety glasses or not. A lot of people viewed that as a major infringement on their personal freedom and liberty.

* (1600)

Believe you me, it caused as much commotion within the union when a lot of people found that the union was supporting that because it was safe. So it has come a long way from there to today where safety procedures are much greater. You have joint safety and health committees and you have an ongoing process of dealing with health and safety

issues on a joint basis, which is really partly legislative, but has predated that.

Inco and Local 6166 in Thompson have for many years sat down and discussed safety matters. So I would hope that there would some sort of learning from that experience. I think Mr. Farrell obviously can contribute quite a great deal on that since I know he was a forerunner of that, and pioneered many cases in Thompson from Inco's standpoint in improving health and safety.

I do not have any further comments unless the minister has perhaps some further comments.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I could not agree more with the member for Thompson, the importance of attitudes and the importance of people to buy into safety being important. I know we can have a whole debate about experience rating, et cetera, and that is really for another day. But I am sure the member for Thompson, just for his information, I found it a fascinating number when we started to get information from Workers Compensation Boards about firms and their experience with accidents.

We asked for a list of the best and the worst. We used, just for the information of the member for Thompson, the basic number. Those who were having benefits paid out two and a half times what they paid us in assessment being on the bad list, and those who were paying us two and a half times in assessment what we were paying out in benefits on the good list. We had 50 or so firms on each list, and what I am sure the member for Thompson would be totally fascinated by was the fact that they were people in exactly the same industry, doing exactly the same thing on the good list and the bad list.

It only proves, and I think reinforces the member for Thompson's point, that if you have safety as a priority in the workplace, you have the representatives of the employees, their union and their management working together. It is usually getting management wanting to buy into it. I admit that very, very freely here.

You have to get the people buying in. They are able to do something about it. Just one quick example, Fisons-Western, in my constituency and in La Verendrye constituency, in 1985, had 85 time-loss claims on 100 employees, or 80 time-loss claims on 100 employees. Their management finally decided they had to do something about it.

Their union always wanted to, that was UFCW. They got together, and they have now gone over two years with no time loss.

I think UFCW, in their recent magazine, highlighted this tremendous joint effort on safety. I think it reinforces the point made by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) in bringing people together, partly legislative, partly attitudinal. We see some success, so let us hope each year, as we go through these Estimates, we will see improvements in health and safety in our workplaces across Manitoba. I share that concern with him.

Mr. Ashton: I would like to move on to the Worker Advisor Office here and ask a number of questions.

One concern that has been expressed, I know, by many people that I have spoken too, injured workers in particular, in terms of the number of cases the Worker Advisor Office is currently handling, waiting lists, fairly lengthy delays in dealing with cases, which is not strictly the result of the Worker Advisor Office obviously, but obviously it has to be tied into Workers Compensation. I have brought some of the historical data from the annual report in terms of the number of cases.

I am wondering if the minister could indicate what the current number of cases is in terms of the number of active files currently under consideration?

Mr. Praznik: Yes. I should tell the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I think he will be very pleased to hear this comment. I think the Worker Advisor Office is one of the best branches that has ever been opened to assist people going through the Workers Compensation Board. They do some tremendous work there.

I give credit to his party when they were in power, it was an excellent innovation. I am very supportive of it as is this government. I am pleased to say, in this particular fiscal year, we have added significantly to the budget of that particular office. I think over the four years in which we have been in power, they have received a 53 percent increase from the '87-88 Estimates until now, so we have been putting dollars in there. With the increased funding for this year, we will be able to put two additional worker advisors into place.

I should just tell him, in terms of the numbers that he is seeking, we have—in fact, perhaps it would be best for me to share directly the information I have in terms of files open, carried over, cases handled,

etcetera. I think what he will see is that we are fairly consistent with 1990-91, although we are now handling a very significantly greater number of cases where we are just providing information to the employees or to the workers who call.

I am assured by staff over there, that some changes they have made in procedure and with the two additional staff, that we should be able to eliminate the waiting list for a worker advisor within the next number of months. So he has identified a problem, certainly we have, we are working with the additional staff to resolve that. We have spent a fair bit of time, in terms of training and working with our people over there, to ensure that office is running by and large like a small law office in order to handle the needs of workers dealing with the Workers Compensation Board.

If the member will give me some indulgence, if staff could just photocopy this list, we will provide it to our two critics.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I want to indicate, certainly I know in the past we have talked about the need for additional resources in terms of the Worker Advisor Office to identify problems with waiting lists. It is my view, incidentally too, that we are likely to see an increase in the number of appeals given some of the legislative changes that have taken place. So I would certainly welcome additional resources in this particular area, and I think it is important to recognize that we have to be cognizant of the real needs in this area in the future.

I want to also ask a question in regard to the Worker Advisor Office as to whether the minister is making changes currently in terms of allocation of staff. I know concern has been expressed in Brandon in terms of allocation of the staff there. I would like to ask if there are any changes that are being contemplated in terms of staffing of regional offices either in Brandon or elsewhere in the province.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I can assure the member today with respect to the office in Brandon, that although the current occupant will be leaving us, I believe, we will be trying to fill that on a speedy basis in order to ensure that service continues. In fact, even as we talk, I understand some work is being done to ensure that happens.

Mr. Ashton: I would certainly appreciate it, because I know it is a significant concern in Brandon, particularly given the number of people served in that area, in the Westman area. I think it is important to maintain that particular position.

I have other comments which probably will be more appropriate in terms of Workers Compensation and our critic will probably be raising areas in there. So I would like to move on to Employment Standards if I might.

I just have a couple of very brief questions and I have asked this of every Labour minister that I have had the opportunity to ask questions to in this committee. It is a very simple one. I understand there is a current review underway of Employment Standards. I think this review has been kicking around for quite some years.

I would like to ask the minister: Is the minister looking at any changes in terms of Employment Standards in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I would like to just clarify. I know we have had this exchange in the House in Question Period. When we did the review of labour legislation and we invited all of the members of Labour Management Review to put forward proposals, a number of the proposals that were put forward by the participants in that process involved changes that were outside of The Labour Relations Act and in the realm of The Employment Standards Act. At that particular time, what we thought best was to put those discussions over until the fall of next year, and if there are some areas where we can reach some mutual recommendation, then it would be up to me as minister to bring them forward to cabinet and my colleagues for consideration.

So that review, in essence, comes out of the general labour law discussions of the Labour Management Review Committee. In fact, my preliminary sense of the two caucuses when I had met with them was there were some specific areas where they could find some mutual agreement for change.

*(1610)

I would just point out to the member for Thompson, I know he has referenced before the various Labour bills that we have brought in the last five years to this House. I just point out to him, in addition to the Crocus Fund legislation which was labour legislation, labour-related legislation, we also

brought forward amendments to The Employment Standards Act and those amendments by and large came out of the Labour Management Review Committee and came with the unanimous consent of that committee and were welcomed by both parties. So it was built by that kind of process.

I would hope if we were to see any changes on employment standards that it would come out of that same particular process, and as I indicated earlier, my initial sense of the two caucuses were there were some areas that they wanted to explore in the fall, and I have no problem with them doing that.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I would hope that the minister would be looking at changes. I will perhaps repeat on the record some of the areas I would suggest be looked at, and I have mentioned this to previous ministers. I have mentioned in the House in terms of a situation affecting the disabled, removing some of the discriminatory provisions in the act. A recent report done by the MLPH pointed to the fact that they had, I think, very few incidences where employers had paid less than the minimum wage anyway. In terms of private employers, most pay at or higher than minimum wage. Private employers are generally quite happy with disabled employees, consider them a positive contribution to the workplace, so I would ask the minister to look at that. I know it is a major concern with the MLPH and other disabled individuals.

I would also ask if the minister would consider looking at the whole question of family leave, bereavement leave, et cetera. There was a recent report out that showed that there has been a significant increase in the number of days lost, supposedly to illness, but in many cases because of the pressure of two-income families, both parents working, where a child becomes sick, or there is a death or illness in the family. Right now people have to lie, basically. They have no right to that kind of leave outside of Quebec, I believe, which does have some provisions in terms of family bereavement leave.

I want to say, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I think that is important. I am currently, in fact in about five minutes, going to be going back to snowy Thompson because I have my own responsibilities to look after my children. My wife had to go to Ottawa for a meeting, and I can do that. I have the flexibility to do that. I know if there is an illness, it is difficult because of the commuting distance, but I

can go to Thompson because it is understood in this forum that is allowable. In many workplaces, people have to face the risk of losing their jobs to perform their family responsibilities.

I think surely this is one area where we can get some sort of nonpartisan agreement. I know Conservatives like to talk about family values. What could be more in keeping with family values than allowing for parental leave, sick leave and bereavement leave?

So I would throw those suggestions out because I know often we are criticized in the opposition for not making positive suggestions. I think those are just a few areas in terms of employment standards we could start. I have many other suggestions I could make in terms of employment standards, in terms of vacations for example. I know if you look at the situation in Saskatchewan, they have three weeks of vacation leave allowed under legislation. I believe that is something we should have moved to a long time ago in this province. There are many areas that we could be looking at.

I have a couple more questions just generally, and I would just like to ask a couple of questions on some of the funding cuts that I had mentioned earlier. I was wondering if the minister considered for this Estimates reinstating some of the funding cuts, whether it be in terms of the Labour Education Centre, which, by the way, is continuing and has been able to achieve some funding—I am not blaming the minister for these cuts; these were made by previous budget years—the Unemployed Help Centre where funding once again was phased out, whether the minister considered at all reinstating some of the funding that is necessary to keep those organizations operating on behalf of working people in the province.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, first of all, I have asked my staff to obtain another copy for the Liberal critic, but I would like to provide this to—I have one copy for Mr. Ashton and another one will be coming for Mr. Lamoureux. I just want to point out it is one of the projects we did in the department this year in the Employment Standards Branch, and Mr. Jim McFarlane who is the director of that branch has joined us. It is our employment standards law in, I am very proud to say, simple easy-to-read English.

Up until this particular point, going back over a number of decades, most of our material for information was simply references to statutes, very

hard to figure out. It sounds like common sense. It certainly is. We put together an easy-to-read pamphlet on employment standards law this year, and we found it very successful. I just wanted to provide that to my critics.

We have also done some work in the multicultural community, and I believe we have published our first employment standards pamphlet in the Filipino language and will be doing more of that in order to get that information, particularly into new immigrant communities where information on what people's rights and entitlements are not always available, so we are trying to provide that.

His comments on employment standards law I have certainly noted, and I think there is some room for agreement and we hope to use the—I know I am here to set government policy on the matter. Today I know Labour Management Review wanted to consider that further and look at some potential recommendations to government, so I hope that process will go on in the fall time.

With respect to specific grants, the Labour Education Centre that the member referred to, I believe their funding that they received from the province was reduced or eliminated prior to me becoming minister. I understand from staff that we did do a project with them some time ago, when Mrs. Hammond was the minister, for some \$60,000. So we continue to work with them, although we have not had the luxury of making ongoing annual grants.

You know, regrettably, we were not able to fund a student to the Labour College of Canada. We have all been asked to make some sacrifices, but we have in fact helped out in some other areas. The Workplace Innovation committee, we provided some printing for them and some other areas. So wherever we can help out in various areas with the resources that we do have, we try to. I do not know if that answers the member's question specifically but that is the information that I have.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I was not in any way, shape or form suggesting the minister had cut the funding. It was his government though. I guess what I was hoping was that the minister would be able to take a lead role in having it reinstated.

I mean, I just had the opportunity to visit the Labour Education Centre just a couple of weeks ago. To give you an idea of the kind of work they are doing, they are working on some very significant projects now in conjunction with management

people. I really think that, once again, the Labour Education Centre was the victim of some knee-jerk budgetary decisions a number of years ago, in the same way the Unemployed Help Centre has been the victim of some knee-jerk government decisions—that, because it is labour, this is an area the government can cut because, well, they do not support us anyway. That sort of mentality.

I really wish that the minister would take some of his colleagues, particularly the ones that sit on Treasury Board, down to the Union Centre to talk to the people operating the Unemployed Help Centre and the Labour Education Centre and talk to them about the work they are continuing to do, because the bottom line is, I cannot see the justification at all for not reinstating some form of support.

It was not major funding in the context of a government that spends billions of dollars, but it provided really significant improvement in the case of the Labour Education Centre in terms of education on workplace issues and in the case of the Unemployed Help Centre, assistance to the unemployed. I would really make a plea to the minister to look at reinstating this kind of funding. I am talking about core funding to both these organizations, along with the \$4,000 Labour scholarship. I really cannot seriously believe and accept that the \$4,000 item that has been in place since 1963 had to be cut because of the financial situation of the province.

It just happened to be the Labour College. I mean, let us be clear. It was cut because it was the Labour College. Let us not fool ourselves. The bottom line is, I am asking the minister, as Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), to go to bat for the Unemployed Help Centre, the labour college scholarship and the Labour Education Centre, and perhaps convince some of his colleagues that this kind of—and I call it petty budget cutting, politically motivated petty budget cutting—that it really was short-sighted, and the proper thing to do would be to reinstate at least some of the funding.

* (1620)

I do not mean program funding. I am talking about core funding that allows them to continue with the activities. You know, they have done a tremendous job despite the cuts, and they are determined to stick around. I find it really sad, because I have seen the work they do.

I really cannot believe the mentality of some of the cabinet ministers who must have made that decision sitting around the Treasury Board table, because they are ignorant of the work that those organizations have done. I would really throw that out as a suggestion, as a challenge to the minister. I am not criticizing the minister personally for these cuts. They were made before he became a minister, and now he has a chance to reinstate them, and if not in this fiscal year, in the upcoming year.

Mr. Praznik: I would like to just point out to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) that in total grant dollars that the Department of Labour provides from about \$270,000 in 1989-90, we now provide somewhere about \$576,000 in this particular vote.

The lion's share of that money has been going into labour adjustment grants to workforce adjustment committees. So we have had a tremendous draw on our resources in those particular areas, and we have had a fair bit of success with those committees. I think anyone who has been involved with them, they have been a most worthwhile exercise.

At the current time, that tends to be a priority of this department. I certainly will not rule out at any time the opportunity to look at some worthwhile work that other groups are doing, and I know, I have been a volunteer at the Unemployed Help Centre in my law school days. Although their work is primarily in a federal jurisdiction, we did manage to, as a volunteer there, help people secure benefits to which they were entitled. As an MLA, from time to time I have referred people there. So I certainly am aware of some good work that is going on in those areas. His comments about looking at them some other day, we are certainly prepared to do that.

But at this current time, I can appreciate the demand on the resources on the grant side for the departments has been in the area of the labour adjustment committee. So it is a matter of juggling and finding resources to do this work in some difficult times, when there are great demands on those resources. So I appreciate his comments.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we can get into a question of priorities of this government I am sure in some great detail. I know we could point to many other expenditures that the government has no difficulty in finding funds for which we would consider of lesser importance.

I look at the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) current trip to Rio, I wonder how much that is going to cost the taxpayer, probably considerably more than the Labour College scholarship of \$4,000. It would certainly have gone a long way, I know in the Labour Education Centre, would certainly have gone a long way at the Unemployed Help Centre. So we can get into the question of priorities, indeed, we probably will on concurrence, because we do question the priorities of the government.

But I just wanted to, on a more general note, complete my comments, because I do have to leave to get up to Thompson. I just wanted to indicate once again that we continue to have concerns in terms of the role of the government, in terms of a number of areas that I mentioned earlier, in terms of the labour relations climate, in terms of workplace safety and health, the need to continue to push ahead in that area.

I have referenced also a number of other concerns in terms of employment standards today that I will continue to raise throughout this period of time. I say to the minister, because he is in the position now of becoming a veteran minister, I suppose, as Ministers of Labour have been in the last few years. We have had a quite a turnover going back the last number of years that I look forward to him putting a stamp on this department that is different from the previous years.

I will say once again—and the minister, I know, can take this comment as a political comment, but I do not mean it as a political comment in the partisan sense. I believe there are going to be periods of time when governments change things in terms of labour relations. I know when we form government next, there are going to be changes, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson.

We are going to deal with some of the rollbacks that have taken place. I mean, believe you me, it is going to be very high on the agenda for the next New Democratic Party government. But I say to the minister that for every period of change, as I said, there is a cease-fire in the kind of back-and-forth nature we have in terms of labour relations, because it tends to be adversarial in Canada.

We have the highest or second highest strike rate in the world periodically. I say there has to be a breather, a gap, a time for the equilibrium to re-establish itself. Despite our ongoing political differences, there has to be a time.

I say to the minister, surely now is such a time, with the economy and the situation it is in, with the need for co-operation, economically, to put a stop to the kind of continuing fights over labour relations issues as we see with Bill 85, as we see with some of the funding cuts that have taken place.

I really say that, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, because I really believe in this province, that we are living in a bit of a fool's paradise. Because if we believe that it is just going to go away, that we are going to recover from the recession, that recovery is just around the corner, well, we may recover relatively, we may get back to where we were in 1988 in terms of growth after five years of lost growth and lost opportunities, but I am not so sure it is going to be as clear as that.

I think it is going to require the co-operation of everyone in this province, on the economic side, to get us to the point of growth, of sustainable development, with the kind of goals that I think we all share.

I really believe that the agenda of this government on labour relations for the fifth session in a row, focusing in on changes to The Labour Relations Act, changes that affect working people, I think that is wrong. I think it is wrong at any time, but it is particularly wrong at this time. So I hope that with some of the discussions we have had in Estimates today there will be opportunity for that kind of message to hopefully influence the minister and, perhaps more importantly, the ministers' colleagues.

I hope the minister is saying these things internally now. I hope he is, and I hope there will be a change in attitude because we just cannot afford the luxury of year in and year out having this kind of thing happen. We need right now to co-operate. We will have our debates over labour issues in the future, but the bottom line is let us put those aside for awhile and try and rebuild this province. Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Lamoureux: I have a number of specific questions that I would like to ask the minister, at the very least with the hopes of passing everything, so that we can have a bit of a philosophical discussion quite possibly on the ministerial salary. But I will at least attempt to pass everything up to the ministerial salary, if I can get in all the specific questions that I have before me.

I want to address four pieces of correspondence that I have received. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had made reference to the Manitoba League of Physically Handicapped Inc. that have sent letters, I believe, to all three parties.

It makes reference to the ministerial permission in allowing an employer to give less than the minimum wage, and is advocating that this be abolished because in reality it is just not necessarily needed.

My question to the minister is, does the minister have any groups or individuals who are suggesting to him at this time that in fact that power should remain with the minister?

* (1630)

Mr. Praznik: This, as I am sure the member can appreciate, is not a simple, clear-cut issue. I am advised by our staff in Employment Standards that there are approximately 130 sub-minimum wage situations in the province which we and the Department of Family Services are in the process of assessing.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

I think the member can appreciate currently, or the member is fully aware, that it requires a permit to pay someone under the minimum wage. Under my direction, our staff with the Department of Family Services are trying to assess those 130-plus situations and determine where and if, in fact, there are situations where a minimum wage payment would end the job opportunities. I am sure the member would not want to see a situation happen where by imposing a rule fully across the province that we ended up eliminating positions where people were employed in some way that they otherwise would not be. That is obviously the balance one has to maintain.

We are trying to get a handle at the current time on the reality out there. What are the true facts with respect to those situations? I can assure him that I would not want to issue any permits. I have not issued any permits since I have been minister, although we are in the process of doing a delegation to the appropriate staff in the Department of Family Services, but we would not want to issue those permits as a government unless they were truly in a situation where the positions would not otherwise exist.

We have to assess that, and I certainly note the report and appreciate the report that the member refers to. But, before one way or another that the

government would make a commitment to eliminate those situations, we would, and I am sure the member can appreciate this, want to have a handle on just what is out there and what the effects of that would be. I do not think any of us would want to see the situation where we would act with good intentions and end up at the end of the day removing some of those placements where people are finding an opportunity to do some meaningful work.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would concur with the minister in the sense that we all want to be sensitive to this particular issue, but I would ask the minister: How many permits have been issued specifically last year and the year previously?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am going to share with the member an experience that I became aware of in dealing with this particular issue. Some time ago I was on Peter Warren's or one of those programs, and someone from the organization to which he was referred called in and mentioned about these permits. I had been minister of the Crown for about eight or nine months at that stage of the game and had never issued one. He pointed out to me, well, my department did not issue them. I said, well, I think we do. So we went back and we found out that going back many years ago the Department of Family Services was issuing permits, and I think things had just been delegated. So we had to get a handle on where things were, and that is what we are in the process of doing at the current time.

We have now delegated that authority to the Department of Family Services because I am sure, as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will appreciate, staff in my department really are not in a position, the Employment Standards Branch, to assess the workplaces where these permits are being requested. Often they have a very special relationship with the Department of Family Services. Sometimes they are funded in part by the Department of Family Services. So the real expertise, and that is why I think you had that department issuing those permits some time ago, was in the Department of Family Services. So we have formally delegated that authority to them, and we are working very closely to assess those situations.

I understand currently that we are in the process with the Department of Family Services of drafting a set of guidelines for subminimum wages for

disabled workers when those applications come forward. They would have to be—and that is what we are trying to ensure that there are very, very strict guidelines. If there is no basic reason to have a subminimum wage other than the fact that the job would not exist without it, we would not issue that kind of permit. So we are trying to get a handle on the situation, as I have indicated, and deal with it, I think, in a responsible way. I am sure all members of this Legislature appreciate the situation and certainly do not want to see that abused in any way.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, all I would ask then of the minister is, if he can report back in some way through correspondence some time in the next few months in terms of how many permits, if in fact Family Services has issued some, have gone out in the last couple of years, and possibly maybe some sort of comment on the 130 permits that are currently out there.

Having said that, I wanted to go on to another issue, and what I did is that I, about a half hour ago, 45 minutes ago, had given his support staff a copy of two letters that I just wanted to get the minister's comments on the record for. One of them is from a welder, or both of them actually deal with welding, and this one particular individual is calling into question why it is that there is one particular awkward welding procedure that is needed in order to pass this test, yet the welding community at large does not necessarily use that particular weld at all or virtually at all, with very few exceptions, and makes—it is known as the F-4 weld, from what I understand. The suggestion that he is making here is that because that type of a weld is not used year round when it comes to doing the test, it jeopardizes, as the individual says in the letter, many livelihoods.

I would ask for the minister just to comment on that particular letter.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I understand that the difference of opinion originated in that our department was very strictly complying with the testing procedures that have been agreed upon nationally, where some other provinces were allowing some latitude for various ways in testing for that particular weld.

I am pleased to provide the member with a copy of my response to Mr. Hiebert, and I think that some accommodation has now been made with respect to this particular matter.

Mr. Lamoureux: Moving on to the next piece of correspondence I had, again, it was from Stony Mountain, in which there is reference, once again, being made to welding. I guess the biggest concern there is that there is a lot of first-hand experience doing welding, yet, there seems to be a problem in the sense that there is the shop theory or the classroom is really what is lacking.

I am wondering if the minister might be able to comment as to if the government is considering any movement to provide some sort of class opportunities, so that in fact they would be able to write the tests that are necessary upon leaving the institution.

Mr. Praznik: I am advised that our branch would like to determine exactly the training that goes on at Stony Mountain Penitentiary, if it is the same as Keewatin Community College, and this is demonstrated, there is no reason why a similar recognition cannot be given. However, I would point out that with respect to pressure welders licence, the test can only be given after three years of experience. As I am sure you can appreciate, that poses a little bit of a difficulty for someone in a penitentiary.

So we will have a look at that. I thank the member for bringing that to the branch's attention. I am sure they will move quickly to determine whether or not the training at Stony Mountain is similar to that which we do, and we will do the appropriate audit.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I know a number of months ago the minister, with the federal minister, made the announcement of the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, which was a considerable sum of money that dealt with Burns Meats. I have received one piece of correspondence that the individual met part of the criteria in the sense that, from what I understand, 180 consecutive months is required. In fact, this particular individual had 300 months of service. Now the problem was that this particular individual was not quite 55. I believe he was a year or two off from that.

I am wondering if the minister can comment in terms of the criteria. Is there any room for flexibility, or does he feel that there is a need for some sort of flexibility?

* (1640)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would be less than remiss if I did not say to the honourable

member that both myself and my predecessors Mrs. Hammond and Mr. Connery have shared concerns about the Program for Older Worker Adjustment.

As the member may not be aware, this particular program is funded 70 percent by the federal government. We only provide 30 cents of every dollar. The criteria was set in agreement with them, and as you can appreciate, to capture those 70-cent dollars we had to agree, by and large, to their criteria.

So it is a very strict criteria. It troubles me, somewhat, because you could have two factories, two employers, one in the RM of Rockwood on one side of the road and one in the city of Winnipeg on the other, both doing exactly the same thing with the same number of employees and both close down. The one in the RM of Rockwood may be eligible, and it is very unlikely the one in the city of Winnipeg will be. It just has to do with the make-up of the criteria of the program.

We have requested, and I think we will be doing with our federal counterparts a very thorough review of the criteria. But at this present time, because it is a joint program of which the federal government is the major funder and the criteria are there, there is not the ability to make the exceptions. I can assure him that his concern is well noted. It is something we have shared since we took advantage of this program, and we are in the process now where we will be getting shortly a review of POWA. As he can appreciate, though, it is a joint effort and there are two players.

Mr. Lamoureux: I thank the minister for that response. He is quite right in the sense that there are two players, and it is good to see that the player on this side in this particular case is suggesting or at least giving the opinion or expressing the opinion that in fact there needs to be some flexibility, that it should not be as clear cut as it is.

I wanted then to move a bit more into the Estimates book itself and comment on another issue that came up a number of months ago regarding the faulty gas furnaces. There were some problems there. I would ask the minister what the Department of Labour has done to rectify the problems?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to introduce Mr. William Mault who is the director of the Mechanical and Engineering branch. As the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) raises the issue of the Flame-Master furnaces, I should tell him

there are a variety of players involved in this particular process. Obviously, the Canadian Gas Association is the organization that has developed the standards for furnaces and like equipment.

They are an amalgam of a host of organizations and various provincial governments participate in that process of developing the standards for furnaces. As I am sure he can appreciate, the jurisdiction in this area lies within the provinces, but we work together on a national basis in order to have a set of standards that are applicable across the country. Obviously, it would be very difficult if we had various standards for furnaces across the country, although the standard for the product fit into certain amounts of federal jurisdiction. So we all work together in developing the standards through the Canadian Gas Association who is the agent for doing the testing.

They tested this particular product, gave it a seal of approval. Our department has responsibilities under certain legislation for the installations of this equipment where there was not a particular difficulty. Obviously, the manufacturer may have some liability if the product was faulty and they were negligent.

At the current time, a colleague of ours the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) had a meeting with myself and several of the people involved in which we laid out various responsibilities. Currently, we are in the process—I understand that there is work being done on trying to determine exactly what went wrong. Until we really know that—and there have been a variety of theories out there. We had a very thorough discussion with some of the people who were affected by this furnace, but until we know exactly what went wrong, we will not know where responsibility lies, if there is some way for those people to recoup their losses. From my perspective, as Minister of Labour, until we know truly what the problem was, then we can assess risk and ways of preventing it in the future and whether or not that is within our mandate. That is what we are in the process of doing.

Just hot off the press, I am pleased to tell the member for Inkster that I am advised today that the bankruptcy of Flame-Master would not relieve the product's liability insurers of their responsibility. If the policy was written on an occurrence basis, the underwriters that were on the policy at the time of the manufacture of the defective units would be expected to provide coverage. It is also possible

that the current insurers of Engel Manufacturing have agreed to provide coverage for the Flame-Master products on a claims-made basis.

I think this is important news. The member raises the question at a very important time, and we hope to ensure that information goes out to the people involved. If the member would like a copy of the minutes from our meeting with the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the people involved, I would be pleased to provide it to him.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I hope I did not destroy a back-bench question in the future. Again, because of the time, I am just going to express a concern that we are not going to advocate that every furnace in the city or the province should, in fact, be inspected at the expense of the department, but we would suggest that there might be something that the department can do for those especially on fixed incomes and so forth, to alleviate some of the concerns that they might have regarding their furnaces. I know, to some extent, that the gas company itself does some work.

I wanted to move on to Fire Prevention, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and ask the minister in terms of how we are making out with the code. There is a bit of a problem from what I understand. This is something that should have been done possibly a number of months ago, some might even have suggested a year ago or so. I am curious as to what is the holdup, why we have not seen the government ratify or sign the necessary papers.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this is another situation where the jurisdiction for the respective codes—building code, fire code, plumbing code, et cetera—by and large, lie within the provinces. There is some federal jurisdiction, but we work together through a national codes development committee that does on a five-year basis an update of the codes.

I can tell the member that the current recommendations are presently working their way through a system. I know there are some out there who await these changes very rapidly, but I am sure the member for Inkster can appreciate that it is important for us internally to have a thorough understanding of the implications of these recommendations with respect to Manitoba and ensure that they are appropriate for the Manitoba condition.

We, within government, have a variety of mechanisms that we use to assess these codes and make recommendations ultimately to cabinet and cabinet committees. So it is in that process currently and working its way through. I should mention as well that in this particular year, we combined our old building code committee, Building Standards committee and our Fire Code committee into a Building Standards committee with appropriate subcommittees. Mr. Gus Thorimbert is the new chairperson of that committee and they, appropriately so, needed an opportunity to review at least so the chairperson will be able to make recommendations to us and that has just recently been done.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I understand that Ottawa is already asking for input on the last codes that in fact have been passed down to the government, and the government has had a while to implement them. As a result of them not being implemented, I would ask the minister how is it that they would be able to comment on the changes from the last go around for this particular go around, because there seems to be a delay. I am not convinced that the delay is an appropriate one, that in fact we could be moving faster on this particular issue.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I say this to the member for Inkster that often when codes are developed, there are implications to them that are not always thought out with respect to all of the parties involved. They are technical concerns that are raised, how they affect the province. It is not unusual from time to time for certain national code recommendations to be altered, not accepted by various provinces depending on their specific conditions.

I can tell him now without going into great detail, there were some technical concerns that were raised with respect to some recommendations. We are in the process of working out those now in a satisfactory way. They affect various other elements. We want to make sure that we are doing the appropriate thing for the province of Manitoba, and it does take some time.

I would just say to the member, the fact that we are in June trying to wind up the session and my colleagues in cabinet and myself are busy, as the member for Inkster is, with so many House duties at this time. It makes it very difficult even just to schedule meetings.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, I am going to move on, but with a final note of saying that there are other provinces that do implement them virtually status quo without any amendments. If we are going to see these types of problems in the future, that one of the things that we might want to consider doing is implementing them and then if we are going to have some changes, make those as recommendations for the original go around, if you will.

I wanted to move on, and I had a number of questions on the apprenticeship program. I am going to try and keep this, too, brief. There are 44 trades, and there are always new trade designations. I know that in '90-91 there were three. Are there any new trade designations for the '91-92 fiscal years?

* (1650)

If additional staff is needed for that, I will just continue on. Another question that I had is in regard to the demand for the trades that are currently there. Is the government looking at any changes with the current trades, and what type of demand is out there for those that are there now?

A natural follow-up question to that would be what the minister has in terms of a future demand for these trades, the areas in particular that the government often talks about, and I too have talked about, that there are certain sectors in the economy that we need to concentrate a lot of effort.

I think the apprenticeship training program should reflect that. I use, for example, our aerospace industry, our garment industry. There are certain areas in which I think that we should be expanding some of our expenditures and programs to ensure that we have those sectors that we feel are an area that we have to have more resources allocated out to them.

Now, the minister, because of time, might not be able to and does not have to answer all of the questions today. He can maybe possibly send me some sort of correspondence, as I say, in the next couple of months, but he can comment now if he likes.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, the member's thrust is most appreciated, and I will undertake today to have my staff review Hansard and provide him with a detailed answer to all of those questions if that is acceptable to him. I think we have 15 requests currently for new trades.

Mr. Lamoureux: A question that I had, and I had asked the minister during Question Period, was in regard to the Labour Adjustment Program. I would preface it by saying that we have a situation where the government itself in Manitoba, our national government—and we have had reports such as the Adjusting to Win report, which talked about the free trade and talked about the importance of having labour adjustment programs that are going to be able to facilitate this rapidly changing economy.

Again, I would ask, if I can quote my colleague from Osborne (Mr. Alcock), a fairly simple question, and that is, why have we seen a virtual freeze on that particular program?

Mr. Praznik: In the interest of time, I would say to the member for Inkster I think the particular unit we have here is a very unique unit that does some great hands-on work that is one of the unknown secrets within government, and I take very little credit for that. The credit should all go to the staff who work there.

What I would like to say to the member for Inkster is, I am prepared to invite him today to meet Mr. Bob Moggey, who has joined us, who is the director of the branch. Mr. Hardial Suhkan, who is the acting director of apprenticeship training, has joined us as well.

I would extend him the invitation today to go down to the unit. We will provide him a list with all of the projects we have worked on, on what we have managed to accomplish, and I would, to both my critics, give them the opportunity to meet with staff there and go through the unit. It is really a very interesting unit, and I think that would give him some great insight into what is going on there. It is sort of an unsung secret, or unknown secret within government, to the credit of those staff.

Mr. Lamoureux: I likely will take the minister up on that. It will likely be in September, so maybe we can plan on booking something in September for it.

Another question was in regard to the Worker Advisor. I was pleased with the additional two staff years that were put there, and would only ask the minister—he tabled for me part of the question that I was going to ask but not quite as much as I was hoping to receive—in regard to the caseloads and the backlog and so forth that is out there.

I would ask if the minister could provide some sort of a history of the caseloads, let us say from '87 or '88, more so because there was a time when we first

came in back in '88 when there were tremendous backlogs at Workers Compensation. I want to get a better appreciation in terms of if the backlog itself has gone down. We have been led to believe it has. Then I would be interested in knowing if the Worker Advisor has also gone down significantly, or has it been increasing? I would just ask the minister if he could, in fact, bring us that type of information.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would be very pleased to provide him with that detailed information. The only caveat I put on to it is it will be an apple-to-apple comparison over the last number of years. A previous director at the branch had a policy of opening files even if they were just inquiries where there was no work to do, whereas our current policy is to deal with inquiries, not necessarily to open a file.

I would want that to be an apple-to-apple comparison where we are actually dealing with a file that our efforts are involved as opposed to just a phone inquiry. My staff is here and will undertake to provide that information. You may want to be more specific with the director of the branch as to what you want.

Mr. Lamoureux: Just before we leave that particular area, I know there were a number of calls; I think it was well into the thousands in terms of telephone calls that are received. I would appreciate some sort of breakdown in terms of what type of calls they actually are. So if that is possible, I would request that. That is all I will need the ministerial staff really for.

But I want to make one quick reference to the employment standards. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made reference to a number of initiatives. I know some of those initiatives that he made reference to, in terms of legislative three-week holidays, is something that we, too, in fact, had brought forward a private member's bill.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, next time when the Estimates are up, we will, no doubt, be able to get another opportunity to add a lot more time, because unfortunately this just was not quite enough time for my satisfaction. The next time we will likely have a number of hours, a couple of hours, allocated out to it anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(b) Executive Support: (1) Salaries \$341,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$79,500—pass.

2. Labour Programs, (a) Management Services: (1) Salaries \$1,352,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$164,000—pass.

2.(b) Labour Division Administration: (1) Salaries \$153,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$28,700—pass.

2.(c) Mechanical and Engineering: (1) Salaries \$1,493,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$281,400—pass.

2.(d) Fire Prevention: (1) Salaries \$1,509,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,251,200—pass.

2.(e) Conciliation and Mediation Services: (1) Salaries \$398,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$53,300—pass.

2.(f) Pension Commission: (1) Salaries \$262,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$55,700—pass.

2.(g) Pay Equity Bureau: (1) Salaries \$157,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$79,500—pass.

2.(h) Apprenticeship and Training: (1) Salaries \$1,041,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$124,400—pass.

2.(j) Manitoba Labour Board: (1) Salaries \$514,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$215,300—pass.

2.(k) Workplace Safety and Health: (1) Salaries \$2,934,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$690,700—pass.

2.(m) Worker Advisor Office: (1) Salaries \$502,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$50,500—pass.

2.(n) Employment Standards: (1) Salaries \$1,501,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$149,200—pass.

2.(p) Labour Adjustment: (1) Salaries \$302,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$402,000—pass.

Resolution 102: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,669,400 for Labour, Labour Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

3. Labour Special Programs: (a) Payment of Wages Fund \$570,000—pass.

Resolution 103: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$570,000 for Labour, Labour Special Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Labour is item 1. Minister's Salary. At this point, we request the minister's staff to leave the table for this consideration of this item 1.(a) Minister's Salary. At this point we request the minister's staff to leave the table for the consideration of this item.

Item 1.(a).

* (1700)

Mr. Lamoureux: Very quickly, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I did not enter into the great philosophical debate that the minister and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had, and I can assure both members that in fact on Bill 85 I will be making reference to the statement of purposes and so forth at that time.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Resolution 101: RESOLVED that there is to be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$442,000 for Labour, Labour Executive, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, have we completed the Estimates?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: This completes the Department of Labour. We will move on to the Civil Service Commission at our next sitting.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, just before you look at the clock, I would like to offer to my two critics, on loan basis, to try out with their children and in their constituency two of our recent products at the Fire Commissioner's office. This has become a bit of a tradition in these Estimates, and I would like to provide them to them.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The time being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

JUSTICE

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with

the Estimates for the Department of Justice. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on Item 3. Justice, page 114, (a) Administration and Special Programs: (1) Salaries \$113,000.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Pardon me, Madam Chairperson, can you refresh me as to where we are? I heard the page number, but I believe we have a different book. What is the appropriation number?

An Honourable Member: Page 48.

Mr. Edwards: Okay.

Madam Chairperson: Item 3.(a) Administration and Special Programs: (1) Salaries \$113,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$17,000—pass.

3.(b) Civil Legal Services: (1) Salaries \$1,693,000.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Chairperson, I just have a quick question.

From my reading of the Estimates, the department is now charging back all legal services to government departments. Would the minister have any idea of what appropriation each department would have for their justice services? Would they have a special line saying justice services, or would it be under some kind of an administrative appropriation?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): That expense would be shown by all the other departments in that "other" category as part of their operating expenses.

Madam Chairperson: Item 3.(b)(1) Salaries \$1,693,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$131,000—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$1,824,000—pass.

3.(c) Legislative Counsel: (1) Salaries \$1,270,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$342,100—pass.

3.(d) Manitoba Law Reform Commission: (1) Salaries \$276,500.

Mr. Edwards: Can the minister perhaps either give us now or undertake to give us a list of the current projects the Manitoba Law Reform Commission is looking at and a progress report on the projects it has been looking at for some time? In particular, I think of the one about the professions. Many years ago, there was a referral to the Law Reform

Commission on the issue of what to do about paraprofessionals and professionals asking for legislation. That is a particular instance, but generally, a list of the projects the Law Reform Commission is looking at and is going to look at in the near future would be useful.

Mr. McCrae: A lot of the information the honourable member is seeking, I suggest, is available in the annual report of the independent commission. We will make inquiries of the independent commission, and they will, I expect, make available to us the information the honourable member is seeking. We will pass it on to the honourable member.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I acknowledge that there is a listing of the projects. One of the things that is not there and that I would like to know in particular is the expected date that we might get the report on the issue of professions and what should be done generally in respect of right-to-title legislation, which so many of them are asking for currently.

* (1440)

Mr. McCrae: I understand that in the near future, the Law Reform Commission will put out its discussion paper and enter into that kind of dialogue with respect to professions in the province of Manitoba and that some time after that point, they will go to work and prepare their report. It is very hard for me to tell the honourable member how long that will take. It is a big project they are working on and may be some time, but I do not know exactly when we can expect a report. That information would probably more accurately come from the commission itself, but I know that we are very close to the point where their discussion paper will be out.

Mr. Edwards: Just one further question, just in terms of the relationship between this minister and the commission, I understand that the commission board does determine, on its own, things that should be looked into that should be reported upon by the Law Reform Commission, but does the minister as well have the ability to prioritize to indicate to them what he considers a priority, have them put particular issues at the forefront of their activity? Does he do that on occasion?

Mr. McCrae: I cannot unilaterally prioritize the work of the Law Reform Commission, but if I make a good case, I suggest, the Law Reform Commission listens. They set their own agenda, but they do their

work based on their own feelings about what kinds of issues need to be researched and reported. They also take referrals from myself, and the issue of professions was one of the ones that we requested the Law Reform Commission to work on. We also made a specific request a few years ago, for example, with respect to the Provincial Court, and they have done some very good work for us there, too.

If they see the wisdom of our priorities, then it is up to them to make a decision, and we are fortunate that they have seen their way clear to embark on this important work.

Madam Chairperson: Item 3.(d) Manitoba Law Reform Commission: (1) Salaries \$276,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$118,800—pass.

3.(e) Family Law: (1) Salaries \$462,400.

Mr. Edwards: Back some time ago, speaking to the Law Reform Commission, they issued a report on The Dower Act. Back two years ago in this House, we made substantial amendments to many of the marital pieces of legislation. At the time, there was a commitment from the minister to bring in a new Dower Act or a renewed piece of legislation in that area. That has not been forthcoming. I wonder where the research and development of that piece of legislation is at this point.

Mr. McCrae: If the honourable member looks at today's Order Paper, on page 8, he will see Bill 88 for second reading, The Homesteads, Marital Property Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. [interjection]

The honourable member asks if this represents our entire response to the Law Reform Commission of 1984, that report. The legislation put through three sessions ago, there were about five bills dealing with intestacy and various aspects.

That is, I suggest, very much associated with the present Bill 88, which does represent our response to the Law Reform Commission and other consultation that the government has undertaken.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, back about a month ago, I received a copy of correspondence which was sent to the minister about the Maintenance Enforcement program, and it was a complaint which was lodged by an individual whose name was Mr. Jeffrey Vincent.

He indicated that he had gotten into a situation where he was requested to pay maintenance

through the program, and he was accused of being in arrears of \$2,400, which he disputed. He was threatened with summons and garnishment, seizure of property. He felt unhappy that he had been threatened wrongfully. He goes on to say that he considered the response of the Maintenance Enforcement program to amount to harassment in this case.

Now, I acknowledge that we, of course, want the program to work and to get maintenance that is duly paid, including arrears. I wonder if the minister has had now a chance to review this particular complaint and the approach that was taken by the branch to determine whether or not in fact it was the harassment that was suggested in terms of the immediate moving of the branch to a summons, a garnishment, a seizure, and fine and imprisonment in fact was threatened, as well.

I wonder if the minister has a response to that correspondence at this time.

Mr. McCrae: The matter referred to by the honourable member is one the like of which we hear about from time to time in the manner of maintenance and enforcement. Sometimes difficulties arise in these areas where sometimes former spouses or separated spouses do not always agree on arrangements for the making of maintenance payments.

That is why we have a maintenance enforcement branch which does assist in every way legally and possibly that we can to ensure the other recipient spouse receives what is properly coming to him or her, mostly her.

This actually does come under the Courts appropriations, and if the honourable member wants me to get into the details of this matter, we can review our files and then we can get into a discussion about it in Courts, if that is what he wants. If he wants to talk about generalities, I can do that, but we could have assistance from staff from the Courts Division too, if the questions so indicate. So it is up to the honourable member what he wants.

Mr. Edwards: I do not think there is any need at this point. Perhaps the minister could send me a copy of his response to Mr. Vincent and that might assist. I assume he may have done that in any event seeing as I got a copy of the initial letter, but I would ask him to send me a copy of the letter to Mr. Vincent.

On this issue, as well, and we can deal with it under Courts, some time ago the Maintenance Enforcement branch was criticized by many individuals because they were not answering the phone. They had a tape recording on in the afternoons. As you know, there are many, many desperate people who call up regularly. When they do not get money, they want to complain. There was a lot of frustration. Has that been rectified? Is there in fact someone at the end of the phone every working day during working hours?

Mr. McCrae: Our usual practice is to make sure if a member of the Legislature is copied with a letter of complaint or otherwise, our responses are generally forwarded also to those members of the Legislature. We can undertake, if the honourable member wants, to review this situation and report to the honourable member about that. If we sent you a copy of correspondence and it has gone missing, we can always make another copy available if that is necessary, too.

With respect to the telephone answering again, I recall the issue. I recall our addressing the issue, but there again, it was done through the Courts Division. If the honourable member would like, I would be better advised to answer that question when we get to Courts.

* (1450)

Madam Chairperson: Item 3.(e) Family Law: (1) Salaries \$462,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$50,700—pass.

Item 3.(f) Constitutional Law: (1) Salaries \$592,600.

Mr. Edwards: I just have one question. It struck me as I was looking at these figures that under the Salaries section, there are less people but it has cost \$140,000 more. Why is that?

Mr. McCrae: Judging by the line in the Estimates, it is clear there has been someone added, and we do not have our constitutional staff sitting with us. I can undertake to clear that for the honourable member and let him know the staff complement and the increase in the staff complement that these numbers reflect.

Mr. Edwards: Just to be clear—and I do not mind the minister taking it under advisement, but what I am looking at is the Adjusted Vote '91-92, salary years 11, quantified at \$457,500, year ending March 31, 1993, salary years 9.18, almost two salary years less, cost \$595,700. That is a fairly dramatic

increase for the loss of almost two positions. That is the question. If the minister wants to address it later, that is fine.

Mr. McCrae: It is clear, Madam Chairperson, that these numbers do not paint a picture that is readily explainable. The honourable member does have a point in wanting to have that cleared up, and I do too, so we will get that information, and perhaps later this afternoon I could come back to this specific question.

Madam Chairperson: Item 3.(f) Constitutional Law: (1) Salaries \$592,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$86,700—pass.

Resolution 97: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,329,900 for Justice, Justice, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

Item 4. Corrections (a) Administration.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I just have a few questions in this area in the hopes that we can move onto other matters.

Can the minister perhaps table for us in this House statistics on the average daily inmate population in the province of Manitoba? I believe those had been provided at some time in the past, and I think it might be useful if we could have copies of those.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson: Item 4.(a) Administration: (1) Salaries \$561,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$165,900—pass.

4.(b) Adult Corrections: (1) Salaries \$26,007,700.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, the John Howard Society sent me some materials in April about restorative resolutions. They had a conference, and I know the minister and Mr. Demers are aware of it. They put out a position paper, the purpose of which was to educate people on restorative resolutions to provide innovative community-based responses to offences. They talked about a number of aspects: financial responsibility, accountability, compensation, cultural sensitivity and sentencing options. They came to a conclusion in their paper that the principles of accountability and responsibility hold implications for offenders, not just victims and the community at large. The steering committee of restorative resolutions indicate that they supported

those principles as the cornerstone of the position paper they put forward and proposed that the conference seriously consider community-based alternatives.

There was then a program description and structure segment of the conference, and I am told that there were some concrete discussions and some concrete proposals that came forward. I have not had the benefit of seeing those as yet. I wonder if the minister can indicate what research and discussion is going on in the Corrections department to expand the sentencing alternatives for our judges.

Mr. McCrae: The very last few words?

Mr. Edwards: The question was: What is going on in the Corrections branch in terms of research and drafting of legislation which might expand the sentencing options available to courts? I am looking specifically at measures in the area of restorative justice and the things John Howard Society has proposed. Is there in fact an ongoing research initiative to expand and build upon things like the fine option program and other programs, mediation, which have been successful in dealing with offenders other than in an adversarial court system?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, in spite of difficult times economically and financially for a provincial government, I believe we continue to enjoy a good working relationship with the John Howard Society. Indeed, the honourable member was present with me on a recent occasion when the new human justice facility was opened over on Ellice Avenue I think it was. We had a look around that place and visited with some of the people there.

Indeed, the honourable member's question is timely. I met this morning with Graham Reddoch, who is the executive director of the John Howard Society, and he made, during the course of our meeting this morning, a reference to restorative resolutions in the seminar or however you would call the dialogue that has been had. He made reference to that, and he will be in further touch with the government about that, perhaps to offer advice, perhaps to put forward a proposal of some kind. We always have the door open for Mr. Reddoch and his people.

The honourable member will also remember at the opening of that facility that I made the point that the John Howard Society, since its beginnings with

John Howard, has been able to remain true to the principles that started it all up, but it is also been able to make changes as society has changed. So the John Howard Society remains a perfectly relevant organization in today's world as it did back in the days of John Howard. They are talking about accountability and responsibility on the part of offenders. That is exactly what the rest of society is talking about, too. So I think we will continue to work together and go forward in various areas.

When we were talking about crime prevention yesterday and the day before, the John Howard Society name came up in those discussions and will continue to, because John Howard Society believes, as the honourable member does and as I do, in crime prevention. That is one way to keep a person out of correctional institutions: to have him or her not committing crimes in the first place. So the John Howard Society is committed to the principles behind crime prevention.

With regard to the specific question about different or intermediate sanctions, of course, the honourable member would know that sanctions are dealt within the Criminal Code for the most part, not to say that provincial authorities do not have input and say, because we do. We have these continuing committees of assistant deputies or continuing committees of officials responsible for corrections and probation and so on. I am told by Mr. Demers, our assistant deputy minister responsible for Corrections, that he is going to be involved very soon in further discussion about the federal plans for the future. That is going to happen on June 12, when he will be meeting with federal officials.

* (1500)

So, the work is going forward. At this point I cannot give the honourable member a detailed account of where they are at in those discussions, but these things have to be of necessity and for the most part when it comes to legislation—a matter of federal legislation. But that is not to say that we do not have our input. We do not always get what we want, but in some of the legislative initiatives brought in by the federal government in the last few years there are areas where we can see that our input has been a key part or an important part of the result.

Mr. Edwards: I appreciate that criminal law is a federal matter, and I appreciate that they have primary jurisdiction in the area, but it is clear that the

province has played a role and an important one in developing things and maintaining them, such as the Fine Option Program, mediation and in the young offenders area, such things as alternative measures and open-custody arrangements. In my view, all of them have been successful and have added to the range of options open to the courts and therefore have been positive additions. Sometimes there are problems but generally over time, they become very, very useful programs. I often hear from judges, frustrations that they would like as many options open to them as possible and certainly support that.

If the minister is saying that the department is actively pursuing that on a regular basis and listening to some of the ideas that are coming out of organizations like John Howard, then that is good. I encourage the department to do that, given the very obvious limitations of incarceration in dealing with offenders.

The increase under the Provincial Remand Centre line of some \$356,000 is explained in the notes as reflecting the higher operating costs within the institution, start-up costs and higher volume associated with the new Provincial Remand Centre. What is meant by higher volume at the Provincial Remand Centre? How did that increase the cost by some \$356,000?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, as the honourable member knows, with the present insufficient capacity at the present Remand Centre we have inmates staying at Headingley on a remand basis. He knows that, so he knows that some if not all of those people will be coming to the new centre. We cannot ignore, either, the so-called zero-tolerance policy with respect to domestic violence which is having its effect on our remand facilities.

So that would be the volume we are referring to. For the most part, I think we are talking about moving remand people from Headingley over to the new centre. That is what we are talking about when we are talking about increased volume.

Mr. Edwards: Well, that leads me to two quick questions about the Remand Centre: One, what is the new holding capacity of the Remand Centre; and secondly, when will it be anticipated that it will open?

Mr. McCrae: We expect the building to be completed mid-July. We expect to be able to move

in mid-September. Maximum capacity is 290. That is when you take into account double-bunking.

The Remand Centre project is very important to this government, to everyone who is interested in justice issues. It has been a long time coming—the honourable member agrees.

The point that I was about to make, though, was that plan was on the books long before we ever got here. There is no criticism coming from me here. This is an extremely big project and an important one. So in the four years we have been here a lot of time has been spent not only in making it happen in more recent years but in the planning before that. It would be wrong for me to make any apologies for that, because the department immediately sensed the urgency that the government felt was attached to this project, and a lot of work had to be done.

I know that when you are sort of following the progress in a peripheral kind of way that, you know, "what is the hold up?" sometimes come to mind. That is quite understandable, but a lot of planning goes into this kind of a project. When it is complete and ready to go later this year there will be a sigh of relief.

We will still have to be looking ahead, though, because demands never seem to let up. We are trying very hard, through alternate measures, as the honourable member has suggested, to find other ways to deal with offenders. We, like the federal government, do view offenders who offend against the person in a different way than other kinds of offenders, and I think that is for very good reason. I am talking about violent crime. There is a different psychology on my part on that, and we need to keep our eyes and our minds open for how best to achieve results. Simply warehousing people, I realize, is not ever, probably, the right way to deal with offenders.

So it is a constant challenge to try and be on top of the state of the art in the sense of kinds of programs that are available and the kinds of programs that we can afford as a province to put into place, so that we recognize that dollars spent on rehabilitative mechanisms are dollars well spent because of the obvious cost of running a justice system.

Mr. Edwards: The minister is quite correct that it has been on the books for a long time. By my estimation, 1982 was the first recording in this House. The minister at the time I think was Mr. Evans, the member for Brandon East. He is right, it

goes back a long time. It is nice to see a building there now. It has been on the books almost as long as the Brandon courthouse and other things that we have been talking about for many, many years.

In any event—[interjection] No, later on we can have an update on that, but it is very good to see a building. It has gone through its contortions, but there is obviously success at the end of the road and that is good.

There was one question I wanted to ask. There was a real concern about the air quality in that building because of the discovery that there had been a gas leak in the soil for 20-odd years. My question to the minister is: He came up with a plan to deal with that and vent it—and as I understand it in layman's terms essentially to vent it in a space between the ground and the start of the building. Fans were going to blow out the fumes.

Has that system been put in place? If it has, he says construction will be completed in July. Have air quality tests been taken in the building to ensure that system is working so that this is not a sick building, as it were, in which some of the fumes from that enormous amount of gas which leaked into the soil gets up into the building. That is our concern, I know of the MGEA whose workers will be in the building and should be for anyone having to be in the building. Are air quality tests going to be taken? Have they been taken to ensure that the system the minister chose has been successful?

* (1510)

Mr. McCrae: There will be a good deal of time spent between mid-July when the building is completed till mid-September when we actually move inmates in there. That time will be spent ensuring that all systems are working as they are supposed to be working. My recollection of it was that these fumes were found to be there. The design of the building had to be altered somewhat—I cannot remember the expense involved, but it was over \$100,000 to build a crawl space and a ventilation mechanism to get those fumes out. I am not an expert in gasoline fumes, but I guess over the years that there will come a time when those fumes will eventually dissipate but they will not dissipate immediately.

So we have to make sure that mitigation stuff that has been put in there will do the job and that, as I say, those two months are there to ensure that all systems are working. Of course, we will be making

sure that we meet all environmental requirements to ensure that there is safety in that building for the many, many years that we hope it will serve us.

Madam Chairperson: Item 4. Corrections (b) Adult Corrections: (1) Salaries \$26,007,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$5,758,200—pass; (3) External Agencies and Halfway Houses \$498,700—pass; (4) Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations \$170,700—pass.

4.(c) Correctional Youth Centres: (1) Salaries \$8,558,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,234,500—pass.

4.(d) Community Corrections: (1) Salaries \$6,406,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$839,700—pass; (3) Program Development \$1,502,700—pass.

Resolution 98: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$51,363,500 for Justice, Corrections \$51,363,500 for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

Item 5. Courts, (a) Court Services: (1) Salaries.

Mr. Edwards: Well, here we are at Court Services, Madam Chairperson, and I wonder if the minister might give us an update on a project close to his heart. I know the Brandon courthouse was a campaign issue for him, and I agree with him on the stance he took in the 1988 election on the Brandon courthouse and the need to improve services. It has become an important judicial centre in the province. It should be. The problem with the courts is legendary in the community.

I know that there was a consultant's report done. I know that the consultant's report was received and gave some options. I wonder if the minister is in a position to tell us which option he will be choosing, if any, and when something might be done. I might just add that the improvements in the courts are—it is my understanding, certainly some are directed to better accommodating the judges and the lawyers in a fashion which the city of Winnipeg has had for some time, but the real advantage of new courts in Winnipeg has been, in my experience, the ability to have interview rooms and other such accommodations of the citizens who come to court. Those are very important aspects of a modern courthouse which Brandon is, unfortunately, lacking.

Is the minister in a position to give us a status report on what is happening with respect to that project?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member agreed with me that it was necessary to build a new Remand Centre. He would probably agree with me and the Ombudsman that we need to upgrade facilities at the Agassiz centre for youth. [interjection] He said yes in both cases, Madam Chairperson. The honourable member, I assume, would agree with me that conditions at Headingley are in need of attention. The honourable member is only nodding his head this time.

Mr. Edwards: Yes.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, he is saying yes. The honourable member agrees with me and the City Council in Thompson and all the people in Thompson that they are ripe and ready for new remand facilities there. I am assuming the honourable member would agree with me on that point.

Mr. Edwards: I will give you a cumulative answer at the end.

Mr. McCrae: Now he is telling me, he is going to give us a cumulative answer at the end.

The honourable member will agree with me that there are probably a number of other areas of capital works, including the Brandon courthouse, that require attention and have not been given the attention they have needed over many, many years in this province. The honourable member will agree with me, I am sure, that only in the last few years have justice issues been given the kind of priority—or better priority. I will not ask him to agree that the kind of priority he would give it, but an increased priority in the overall spending of government budgets, and the honourable member has confirmed that.

So now I ask the honourable member to help me. He has been helping me—

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): That could be your first mistake, Mr. Minister.

Mr. McCrae: I do not know, Harry.

The honourable member has been very helpful in saying the same things I have about the Brandon courthouse. There is a recognition that the Brandon courthouse is in need of attention. But I have also listed a number of other capital needs of the Department of Justice, and I assume my colleagues on this side of the House can name capital needs in their various departments as well that we wish could be met more quickly.

We know that the chief justice of the Court of Queen's Bench for Manitoba, for three years running in his annual reports, has been talking about deficiencies at the Brandon courthouse. I know that. I am very aware of it. I live in Brandon. I worked in the Brandon courthouse. So nobody, and certainly not the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), is more aware of the deficiencies at the Brandon courthouse than I am.

So then we come down to a question of how we are going to prioritize our expenditures. Was it not necessary to spend those \$23 million to build a new Remand Centre to remove inmates from those inhumane conditions that exist at the Public Safety Building? The answer seemed to be a resounding yes. That was the right thing to do—an expensive project, but the right thing to do. If there was money available, the answer about all the other facilities I have spoken about would be, yes, too.

I come from a community where we run a hospital, we run educational facilities and other social services. Brandon is a vibrant, growing—not fast enough, mind you—but a growing community in the province of Manitoba. Brandon has been doing rather well in many areas of concern with the present government in office.

I can go into some of the supports that have been provided to the community of Brandon and southwestern Manitoba by this government, including things like decentralization and things like a major overhaul and renovation of our Keystone Centre, the unification of the Family Division of the Court of Queen's Bench and the conciliation side in terms of family court, downtown redevelopment dollars, millions of dollars for the upgrade of our sewage disposal system, and a brand new building in Brandon for the Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba so that they can combine their administrative and service delivery functions under one roof. All of those things have happened, and yet there remains this issue relating to the courthouse.

The people in Steinbach needed improved facilities for the delivery of court services, and we have been able to meet that demand. The people of northern Manitoba need better facilities to operate court services, too.

The point that I am trying to make is that the problems in terms of justice facilities did not just happen a week or two after this government took

office in 1988. Because of, yes, neglect, because of need to direct resources into other areas like health care and education in the past, justice services in the past under previous governments, plural, those services have not been given the kind of priority that I as a Minister of Justice would like to see them given.

However, when you look at the record of the past four years in Justice, any objective observer—and the honourable member for St. James is objective, occasionally, and he would agree, too, that there has been a new emphasis, a different emphasis on justice issues in Manitoba. I take a fair amount of pride in that. I also know there is much left to be done and part of that job to be done is to improve facilities for the delivery of justice services out of the Brandon courthouse.

* (1520)

So I think the honourable member was asking something a little more specific than the answer I have given him response to; but in specific terms, there have been reviews made of the facilities and how we might approach the problem. There is a need to make decisions for future upgrading or renovation of facilities in Brandon. No final decisions have been made. The Department of Government Services has been working on this matter in conjunction with the Department of Justice. The honourable member knows we have one feasibility study that has been completed and another one has now been completed as well.

From the first go around, it was clear as was the case with the Winnipeg Remand Centre, the plans that were put together needed to be refined and the second study refined the plans that were laid out in the first study. What remains now is some decisions to be made and the availability of the dollars necessary to spend multimillions of dollars to upgrade the court facility.

As a person coming from Brandon and as one who has worked in both the Winnipeg and Brandon courthouses, I look with some envy, believe me, at the facilities here in the city of Winnipeg and I say, well, how come that is? How come the previous government, for example, poured all those millions of dollars into the courthouse here in Winnipeg and forgot altogether about Portage la Prairie and Brandon? They let the roof of the Minnedosa courthouse practically cave in. So it is that kind of an issue, too.

Yet, the honourable member for St. James continues to raise the issue of the Brandon courthouse. In fact, the honourable member appeared late, I am told by the media in Brandon, for a news conference on the steps of the Brandon courthouse. Well. You know, the people of Brandon know the issues, too. They do not know them as well, the honourable for St. James would think as he, but actually they know the issues better. The people in Brandon—[interjection] I will wind down. The people in Brandon are very, very concerned about health care, and they are very, very concerned that health care reform in the future will not impact negatively on the ultimate delivery of health care services in Brandon.

So when it comes to a very bad number of years in a row of government revenues and it comes to difficult decisions that need to be made about how government revenues are going to be spent, my advice in the city of Brandon is for sure, for sure, maintain and, if possible, enhance health care services. Protect what we have and make sure that when we look to new models of health care delivery, make sure the patient is the one that you think about. Make sure the patient is your bottom line. If the courthouse has to wait a little longer, then I guess that is going to have to be necessary. That is about as honest an answer and straightforward an answer as I can give the honourable member.

The bottom line is this government will make the right decisions, and this government also has been listening to the Minister of Justice who identified as a rather urgent problem the Remand facilities in the city of Winnipeg. There is \$23 million in capital expenditure, and I will do my best to make the changes that are necessary for Brandon, but at the appropriate time and when that decision can be justified on the basis of available revenues to address the problems that exist.

Mr. Edwards: I only comment that I completely understand that the minister is under many demands for money. Everybody wants money, Thompson, Winnipeg, Brandon. We can always use money to give more programs and build more facilities. That is true. It is a constant, I am sure, challenge to decide. What a government has to be accountable for more than any other time when money is tight is its priorities. Then the government really has to be sure that it is spending the money in the right places.

The projects the minister talks about in the Justice area and health care are important. I simply draw to the minister's attention that in 28 out of 30 administrative support lines in his department, the amount of money spent this year went up. The total of that is \$965,000. I wonder where his priorities are with respect to that, and how much it might have taken to have done something or gone some way towards what he committed to do in 1988 which was to try to improve the courthouse?

I am just holding him. Whether or not I think it is priority really is not that relevant in the sense that I am not the government, but that is why I was so interested to see the minister. Of all the issues in Brandon, health care—health care was in desperate shape in Brandon in 1988. There were all kinds of problems with social services. The NDP had been in government for years. There were numerous problems in Brandon. What did the minister put in his pamphlet in 1988? What did he think was a priority for Brandon? The Brandon courthouse. So I do not have to look far to find evidence that he saw it as a priority.

Since then he has not seen it as such a priority, rather he sees a \$965,000 increase in administrative support across his department in 28 out of 30 branches; that is his priority. He says he does not have money for crime prevention, that is only \$100,000. That leaves \$865,000. What might he have done in Brandon with even a portion of that, even a portion? I have never seen the feasibility study. I would like to see it. I have asked. I have not been able to receive it about the Brandon courthouse. I would be interested to know what costs were associated with enhancing that courthouse. In any event, those are comments that the minister has, I am sure, heard before, could have predicted here today.

The point is that all of the attempts to throw off an excuse as to why the people of Brandon have not been given some answer does not sit too well with me when he is increasing his own executive support by 11.5 percent, when the departmental increase is 4.3 percent and administrative support, across the board, is \$965,000. That is a question of priorities that he has chosen.

So do not talk about priorities that he threw aside in 1988 when he put out his ads in the Brandon Sun. Do not talk about priorities when he is beefing up administrative support across his department and across this province and say, somehow, that he is

only funnelling money into all of these worthy projects, more worthy than the Brandon courthouse. He is furthering the administrative size of his own department.

Madam Chairperson, so his arguments ring hollow, I am afraid after four years, and they did with crime prevention when he used the same excuse two days ago and, to a lesser extent, admittedly, but to a lesser extent they do here.

I wonder if the minister can tell us when he is going to make a decision on this. He has two reports, he tells me. That is the first I have heard there are two reports. In other words, there is the feasibility study and there was a second look at it, as I understand his answer. When might a decision be anticipated?

Mr. McCrae: I do not know if the honourable member speaks for the Liberal Party of Manitoba or for one particular honourable member from St. James or just who he speaks for, but he tells me not to talk about priorities. I bet you, Madam Chairperson, when that by-election in Crescentwood comes along, that this honourable member for St. James will be out knocking on the doors for one Avis Gray, and saying what a fine member Avis Gray would be—

An Honourable Member: She is from Cromer.

* (1530)

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member tells me she is from Cromer. I know a little bit about this honourable member that we are talking about. I know she is seeking a seat in this Legislature representing the people of Crescentwood.

The honourable member for St. James was talking about priorities and that I should not talk about priorities. I do not think he wants to talk about priorities either, because a little while—now here he is defending the construction of new court facilities in a centre outside the city of Winnipeg, but where was this honourable member, who is going to be knocking on doors for Avis Gray, when Avis Gray was sitting across from me in this Chamber saying, oh, do not fix that roof on that courthouse in Minnedosa; that is not important; do not fix holes in the roads for people who live outside the central area, the city of Winnipeg here in Manitoba; do not do that; spend it on something else that is important to me, a Liberal, and the honourable member for St. James?

How is it today—oh, and I forgot. When it came to construction of health facilities in Minnedosa and

Elkhorn, where did this person who comes from Cromer stand on those issues, she and her colleagues in the Liberal Party? They said, oh, no, do not build those facilities in Minnedosa and Elkhorn; put something else higher up on your list of priorities. Well, I am here to tell you, Madam Chairperson, the people of Minnedosa and the people of Elkhorn did not appreciate that point of view expressed by Avis Gray and by the honourable member for St. James. In fact, if the member for St. James and Avis Gray had their way, the sick people in the Minnedosa area and the sick people in the Elkhorn area would not have a place to go.

So the honourable member for St. James ought not to lecture me or anybody else for that matter, even the members of the New Democratic Party. He ought not to lecture anybody about priorities, because I sense from time to time that the honourable member's priorities have more to do with making a point or two in front of the television cameras than they have to do with improving society in general for Manitobans.

This is a little debate that comes up from time to time with the honourable member and myself, and I think it happens every Estimates process or every time he gets a chance. This is the same honourable member who on other Estimates exercises spent an inordinate amount of time on matters that had less to do with delivering justice services to people than other far less important matters. The honourable member knows about my criticism of him in those cases, too.

I do not propose to raise that criticism of him this time around except to say that the honourable member for St. James knows very well the kinds of pressures that are on the justice system. He knows very well the kinds of pressures that are on governments these days all across Canada. All he has to do is go and look in Newfoundland or New Brunswick or maybe even some ND provinces where they are hacking and slashing all over the place. Is it because they are mean-minded NDs or Liberals? I do not really think so. I think they have financial pressures just like we have here, except I think maybe we have handled them sooner here and better here so that it is not as bad here as in those provinces.

An Honourable Member: With no help from the opposition.

Mr. McCrae: With no help from the opposition.

Madam Chairperson: Item 5.(a) Court Services: (1) Salaries \$3,203,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$969,400—pass.

5.(b) Winnipeg Courts: (1) Salaries \$6,484,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,277,200—pass.

5.(c) Regional Courts: (1) Salaries \$3,585,900.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I want to raise very briefly the issue of court services in the North and court reporter services, court clerking. There have been numerous complaints that have come into my office, I am sure the minister's, from those in northern Manitoba, particularly with respect to the court clerking. I wonder if the minister can indicate with respect to Transcript Services and also with respect to the availability of clerks in the North, whether or not all of the hiring has been done, who has been hired, and whether or not the full staffing complement that he envisages for northern Manitoba has now been reached.

Mr. McCrae: I commend the honourable member for raising issues of justice in the North. The honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) does that occasionally and so do other honourable members. Justice services are harder to deliver in northern and remote areas than elsewhere. They do require the attention of government—I hear the honourable member for The Pas speaking from his seat and I cannot quite make out what he is saying.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): I said, you never listen.

Mr. McCrae: He says, except I never listen, which the facts of the matter would show that he is very, very wrong about that. Each time the honourable member raises issues with me, whether they are in writing or otherwise, I do turn my attention to those issues and try to do my best. Within the resources that are available to us, I try very hard to solve the problems.

Indeed, the staffing situation in the past year at Thompson, The Pas and Flin Flon has been improved in terms of the actual arrangements and staff-year allocations. I can get further information for the honourable member for those three centres and make it available to him.

The pressures in the North are there just like they are everywhere else in the province. I find that if we were to put more attention on the remote areas, I believe there would be found a way to take pressures off centres like Thompson, The Pas, and

Flin Flon. I believe it is fair to say that my department is looking, with interest, at proposals to improve Justice services in the small and more remote communities outside Thompson, The Pas and Flin Flon, so we can take the pressure off Thompson, The Pas and Flin Flon and deal with people and the justice issues closer to the home. That is a goal that I have.

Madam Chairperson: Item 5.(c) Regional Courts: (1) Salaries \$3,585,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,518,100—pass.

5.(d) Judicial Services: (1) Salaries \$6,610,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$391,900—pass.

Resolution 99: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24,041,000 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

Item 6. Protection of Individual and Property Rights (a) Manitoba Human Rights Commission: (1) Salaries \$1,045,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$276,600—pass.

6.(b) Canada-Manitoba Legal Aid: (1) Salaries \$4,454,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$7,966,800—pass.

6.(c) Public Trustee.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I received in our office some concerns about the public accounting of funds in the Public Trustee's Office. This is specific to a letter that was received by our office by a Ms. Marlene Johnson.

Her attorney, Mr. Bjornson, who is with Tupper & Adams, was involved. I wonder if the minister can indicate what improvements have taken place. I know that there has been some effort to increase the accountability of the funds that the Public Trustee handles. I know there were some criticisms in years gone by, whether they were well-founded or not. I wonder if the minister can indicate whether or not there have been improvements in the accounting system in the Public Trustee's Office.

* (1540)

Mr. McCrae: All of the information requested of the Public Trustee by the legal counsel for the person to whom the honourable member refers has been made available. Beyond that, if there is something more specific that the honourable member wants, I will see what I can do.

Mr. Edwards: Just on that point, have there been changes in the way, in the manner in which the Public Trustee is handling the public funds and is accounting for them? Have there been changes in the procedures recently, in particular in the last year?

Mr. McCrae: As a result of recommendations made by the Provincial Auditor, the Public Trustee's Office has set up an investment committee in order to better invest the funds in the common fund. That was, as I say, recommended by the Provincial Auditor and followed up on and carried out by the Public Trustee's Office. That amounts to a significant improvement.

I wonder if, while I am on my feet, it is probably not in order, but if the honourable members agree I could give a brief answer to a question asked earlier. One of them had to do with some correspondence—oh, now Mr. Bruce has gone already. I will give it to the honourable member. It was in reference to somebody that the honourable member referred to, a Mr. Vincent. The most recent correspondence from me to him I will share with the honourable members, it was here a few minutes ago.

The other point has to do with the Maintenance Enforcement telephone answering business. That was a problem sometime ago. There was a complaint, I believe, maybe coming from the honourable member but maybe others as well, that there was an answering machine installed. That issue was addressed and was not found to be appropriate that there just be an answering machine, but nonetheless there are a lot of telephone inquiries coming into the office of the Maintenance Enforcement staff.

So what we have is not unlike other agencies you might call, you phone, if all the lines are tied up there is then a message that puts you on hold, I guess, until someone is available to come to the phone. We have replaced the answering machine with that kind of a service which is better, and we think serves the public better.

Madam Chairperson: Item 6.(c) Public Trustee: (1) Salaries \$2,485,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$632,300.

Mr. Edwards: I just have one other question in this area. What will be the effect on the Public Trustee's Office, if any, of the move to vulnerable person's regime? Is there an impact in the Public Trustee's Office? Is there a move to enhance the staff

complement to deal with the increasing number of concerns that are being expressed about seniors' abuse and the problems that are experienced in that area? This has been raised repeatedly in past years. Is there a move to have the Public Trustee's Office deal with those increasing concerns, or is that going to be dealt with more in the area of social services and in the Department of Family Services?

Mr. McCrae: Any government activity related to improving services for vulnerable persons—and I should say senior citizens. I am talking about senior citizens, but vulnerable persons are already served by the Public Trustee, but when you get into a specific reference to services for seniors, those kinds of initiatives are co-ordinated through the Seniors Directorate and the Public Trustee is always available to work with the Seniors Directorate and is consulted from time to time by the Seniors Directorate.

Madam Chairperson: Item 6.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$632,300—pass.

6.(d) Land Titles Offices: (1) Salaries \$5,401,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,054,600—pass.

6.(e) Personal Property Registry: (1) Salaries \$605,700—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$485,300—pass.

Resolution 100: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24,407,200 for Justice, Protection of Individual and Property Rights, \$24,407,200 for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1993—pass.

At this time I would request that the minister's staff please leave the Chamber, so that consideration may be giving to 1.(a) the Minister's Salary.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, I think we had agreed to revert back to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry at this point. My suggestion would be—I have not canvassed this—that we deal with that before we deal with the Minister's Salary, that we go back to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, which we agreed to discuss. I am open to other suggestions.

Madam Chairperson: At this point, we will determine, indeed, what the will of the committee is. It is treated as a separate printout on page 153 of our Estimates manual, so I will need consensus of the committee.

Mr. Chomlak: Yes, I believe that was the agreement we had tacitly agreed to earlier, that we

would deal with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry at this point, prior to the Minister's Salary.

Now, whatever arrangements can be made, we are prepared to accommodate it, as long as we deal with the AJI matters. Well, we will give leave to deal with whatever aspect that the minister—if we want to deal with the Minister's Salary now and then—

An Honourable Member: We will do the AJI and then Minister's Salary.

Mr. Chomiak: In the Minister's Salary, we will allow staff in here. Is that the—

* (1550)

Mr. McCrae: Well, the only thing about it, Madam Chairperson, I am just worried about my salary here. So, with the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) saying, well, you know, we will talk about your salary afterwards, and I do not say all the right things, I am a little worried about how I am going to pay the bills. I guess I can agree this time, because I believe that we will get through this one way or the other.

I guess, if all it requires is the leave of this part of the committee to do it that way, I would yield to advice you get from the Clerk's Office about that. I am willing to agree if it can be done by only half of the House.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I have been advised by the Clerk that, indeed, technically we should be dealing completely with the Department of Justice and then moving to the Aboriginal Justice Initiatives. However, it can be dealt with by leave of the committee.

Mr. Enns: Well, Madam Chairperson, if it is of any further help to the committee and the members opposite, the issue dealing with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry encompasses several other ministers as well, notably the minister responsible for Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey). It certainly involves the ministry of Family Services, the ministry of Natural Resources—in fact, those ministers who comprise the subcommittee of cabinet that are charged with the responsibility of dealing with the inquiry report. I tend to agree with the advice that you have been given, that we ought to conclude the formal deliberations of the Department of Justice at this time.

I think our House leader and the minister would agree to set aside such time that the Aboriginal

Justice Inquiry Report could be dealt with separately.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, I did not hear everything my colleague said, and this is a colleague that you should listen to. He has been around for a long time and knows this place very well, but between the opposition critics I think we might have worked something out that will meet the technical problems that arise.

If we deal under Minister's Salary with issues related to Aboriginal Justice Inquiry—this may well be what my honourable colleague has just suggested—we could deal with all those things, pass or whatever we are going to do with my salary, and then in a very shortened kind of way just pass that other appropriation. I think that might resolve this difficulty.

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee? [Agreed]

Mr. McCrae: The other thing we have to agree to is if, by leave, we can agree to allow my staff to be here for that discussion then that is forthcoming I understand.

Madam Chairperson: Is there leave granted for the staff to remain during this debate? [Agreed]

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chairperson, it is five minutes to four and I know we have to wrap up by five o'clock. Nevertheless, I welcome the opportunity to be able to ask questions and give comments with respect to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report that was released last August.

I am also disappointed in a way, Madam Chairperson, that the time that has been allotted for Estimates purposes—the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. I just want to say that I feel I am in my rightful place here. I have been relegated down to approximately 60 minutes for Aboriginal Justice Inquiry questioning on the Estimates process.

An Honourable Member: It is what we agreed on.

Mr. Lathlin: I know. I am not just looking at you. I am speaking as an individual, as a member for The Pas.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

However, I am used to that place. I will take the back of the bus again, and carry on with the questioning here, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

I want to start out by saying that it was the aboriginal people and their leadership who, as a

result of the Helen Betty Osborne case in The Pas and subsequently the J.J. Harper case, initiated the call for the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. The aboriginal people played a very significant role in convincing governments and the institutions of the need for such an inquiry. I myself was a chief at the time of the trial of those people who committed the crime against Helen Betty Osborne was held in The Pas, and it was at that time that I became very involved with the aboriginal leadership to call for an inquiry into the case that was held in The Pas.

As a result of the lobbying and the pressures that were put on governments by the aboriginal leadership the commissioners were finally appointed. We called on the NDP government in the spring of 1988 and they agreed to call for an independent judicial inquiry into the administration of justice as it affected aboriginal people. Commissioners worked for almost three years to produce, what I call, a very comprehensive report, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

Indeed, from my perspective, I think the commissioners did a tremendous job because they went beyond what I initially expected and I am sure what the government initially expected. Besides reviewing the manner in which the legal system deals with aboriginal people, they also reviewed and produced wide-ranging recommendations in the area of treaty land entitlement, aboriginal self-government, aboriginal women, and also they recommended a separate aboriginal justice system and so on.

So, in August of 1991, the commissioners released the AJI Report. The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) remembers at that time, at the time of the release of the report we tried very hard, along with the aboriginal leadership of this province and indeed throughout the country, to ask the government whether or not it endorsed the report as it was produced.

Of course, as we all know, the government refused to take a position on the report until six months later and that position again was very disappointing. I remember the Minister of Justice, in response to my questioning in the Chamber, telling me that the member for The Pas will be pleasantly surprised with all the announcements coming forward. Of course, I was surprised, but I was not surprised pleasantly, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

The reason that I was disappointed was because, in the words of the minister, and those words sort of gave me an indication at that time how his government was going to treat that report, because the minister in his own words said that the AJI Report is only the opinion of two men. That has been indicative of government's attitude towards the report ever since then.

Nevertheless, I am going to keep my opening comments very brief because I know time is running out and I want to ask the minister several questions regarding the AJI Report. I just wanted to express those opinions and observations first.

The first question that I wanted to ask the minister, I guess, is this budget that has been set aside—I believe it is a million dollars. Perhaps I could ask the minister to give us a breakdown as to how those funds are going to be expended, how they are going to be flowed, the criteria, whether aboriginal organizations are going to be funded as they have been asking? Maybe we will start off with that, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

* (1600)

Mr. McCrae: I thank the honourable member for his comments, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I do say to him, I can grant him his disappointment in the fact that, as he says, the time allotted for discussion of the Justice Inquiry Report is relatively brief, but I do have to say that is not my fault. I am here to answer the questions; the Estimates process is really driven for the most part by members of the opposition in the honourable member's caucus and in the Liberal caucus, and it just plain is not my fault. I am prepared to answer as many questions as there are asked and to take as long as it needs to take, but that is not my call either.

These matters are extremely important. The honourable member knows as well as, or better than I do, that a disproportionate number of aboriginal people find themselves involved with the justice system. That is something, I believe, we all accept, and we all agree needs desperately to be addressed.

I know the honourable member sometimes is prone not to give present government the credit it sometimes deserves in various areas. That is part of the game that we play here, part of the back and forth that happens in this Chamber. I regret that the honourable member will not try a little harder to be more constructive in his comments sometimes, too.

I know he is critical of me and that is fair. When I do not do the job properly, then I deserve to be criticized, and I accept that, but when the honourable member, whether directly or indirectly, doubts about my intentions, my good faith in these matters, I get offended and the honourable member gets offended, as he points out and I understand that. I really do.

I know the honourable member quite well now after having taken part with him in the constitutional discussions. I know a little bit about how he thinks and I know the reasons he thinks that way, and those reasons are well documented also in the history of this country. It is not a pleasant part of our history, and it is not something that any of us can be proud of, no matter which side of the House or no matter which culture you happen to belong to. Those things are clear in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report and they are assertions of fact of our history that I accept and want desperately to do something about.

So where do we go from here? The honourable member wants to see change. He wants to see improvement. I want to see change, and I want to see improvement. So what limits us? What are the things that hold us back from achieving very, very quickly the kinds of things we both want to achieve? We are going to disagree along the way about how we get there, and that is fair, there is nothing wrong with that. An improved social condition for human beings to live in in this country is what he is talking about and it is what I am talking about. We are going to argue till the cows come home about how we should get there. Meanwhile we should be doing something while we are arguing, and I accept that.

So we are limited by some philosophical differences, party to party, culture to culture. We are limited but not necessarily stopped, and where we are limited we should learn to cut the partisanship, cut through barriers between our cultures and sometimes just plain cut the crap when it comes to our relationships one with the other. So, on January 28, this government came forward and announced its response to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, to the condemnation of the honourable member opposite and the condemnation of other aboriginal leaders in this province, but not all people in this province and not all aboriginal people in this province.

The honourable member profoundly disagrees with the approach taken by the government. Is that fatal? Does that have to end the process? I say no. The Grand Chief of the Manitoba Assembly of Chiefs has outlined profound differences in his approach as opposed to the government's approach. He is joined in some respects by the three other major aboriginal groups with whom we have been talking. In various areas there might be profound disagreement all the way over to agreement, maybe, in some areas.

So do we let the disagreements stand in the way of progress? In other words, do we make all the wheels stop because this government, part of its approach differs from the approach that would be favoured by Grand Chief Fontaine, for example? Well, so far that appears to be what has happened. That is profoundly unfortunate for ordinary, average aboriginal Manitobans. Those people are not being served by this approach.

We have extended, as a government, a hand of welcome to the four aboriginal groups, those being the Assembly of Chiefs, the Métis Federation, the Indigenous Women's Collective and the Winnipeg—I never remember the name—the Aboriginal Council, I believe it is called, here in Winnipeg.

We have extended a hand that said, join us. Give us your advice, your criticisms are welcome. We know you disagree about the issue of separate systems. But do we really disagree? I do not know, because we have never taken the time to sit down and talk about just what is the nature of our disagreement. You accept what we want or we are not going to sit at the table of the working groups with you. That is what I have heard so far, and the government's response is, here is the direction we are prepared to go in, join us at the table.

So you can see the different approaches, but there is so much to be done. Why do not we get started? We are never going to agree about everything, but we will, indeed, get started. Hopefully it will be with the advice, the participation of spokespersons for aboriginal communities. That is what we want. Money is here in the budget. That is the other limitation. It would be nice if it was more, but we do not know how much we are going to need this fiscal year, because nobody has joined us at the table to tell us what the priorities in those areas of recommendations the government is prepared to move on, which ones we ought to move on first, which makes the best sense, which community is

the right one to start in since we cannot do it all overnight, and everybody recognizes that.

So where is the best place to start? We want that kind of advice. We have asked for that kind of advice. It is being withheld from us. Because various individuals, including the honourable member for the Pas (Mr. Lathlin), disagree fundamentally with our approach.

We accept separate systems, a sort of sovereignty of justice systems or we go nowhere. Sorry, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that is not acceptable to this government. Nobody is going to be served if we never talk.

We have been not talking for 125 years, since Confederation and perhaps before that. What good has that done the aboriginal people of this country? I ask the honourable member for The Pas to think about that because I desperately want to join hands with him—desperately—and many of his colleagues in the aboriginal community.

I am not promising, I cannot promise, the kind of change that we all would like to see tomorrow. I cannot promise that it will happen tomorrow because I am limited, as any government in this country is limited, by the availability of funds. Let us get that right upfront, and be honest and clear about it. Yet I desperately want to see change in our justice system.

There are a lot of problems for aboriginal people and they go far beyond the justice system. If we did not have those problems we might not have so many problems in the justice system. Those problems are in the social system and the economic system and the political system, but the fruit, if you want to call it that, of all of those problems is found in the justice system, in disproportionate numbers in our system.

I say the present stalemate, standoff, whatever you call it, waiting for the other side to blink, all of that, what good does that do anybody in this province? What good? Does the honourable member for The Pas think that if he waits long enough, perhaps for a Liberal government in Manitoba, perhaps for a NDP government in Manitoba, that all his dreams will come true and all his people's dreams will come true?

*(1610)

Think again, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I do not know what you were thinking, Mr. Acting Chairperson, but anybody who was thinking that

ought to think again. Because in spite of the suggestions made by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), about some day there will be another kind of government, we will see something different; do not hold your breath, I say to the honourable member for St. James. Certainly do not hold your breath for the election of a Liberal government. But do not hold your breath for even a Liberal government to make the kind of changes being suggested by the honourable member for The Pas.

Do not wait for an NDP government. How long was the NDP government in office in this province?—since 1969 or so when the first New Democrats were elected here in the province of Manitoba. What kind of progress have we seen for aboriginal people in their neighbourhoods, in their communities under that government or other governments?

So let us make a start and let us work along together, even though we have differences. We always have had differences and we will never stop having differences. One person with the other, one government with other, one culture with the other; there will always be differences.

So is it a bottom line for the beginning of discussions that all our differences be resolved by our accepting what the honourable member for The Pas says, and then and only then, we can get on with progress? Surely that does not stand the test of reason, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

So I appeal to the honourable member, as I have done in the past, use the powers that you have as a member of this Assembly, as a former Chief, leader; use the powers that you have in an effort to bring the parties together. I have asked the honourable member before to do that, but he keeps reading petitions each day or every few days in the House to bring forward a separate or parallel justice system, a separate or a parallel justice system as he sees it, as he defines it.

The world does not revolve around the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), it revolves around all the people in the world. In Manitoba, it revolves around all the people in Manitoba, many of whom are aboriginal persons and many of whom deserve a better deal than they are getting from me and a better deal than they are getting from the member for The Pas.

I want to give them that better deal, and I want them to start working on a better deal. If the honourable member does not believe that, then we are not going to go anywhere with the honourable member, but we are going to go somewhere.

Mr. Lathlin: I did ask a question there somewhere, and I do not believe the minister answered the question that I asked, but I will come back to that.

I just want to say to the minister that he is wondering why the aboriginal leadership has been having difficulty working with the minister and his department. The answer is very simple. Maybe if I give the minister some sort of an illustration to point out why the frustration is out there in the aboriginal community.

I used this example when I was chief in trying to describe what it is that aboriginal people want, and I used the example of a vehicle. The minister is in the driver's seat, and I am a passenger in a vehicle. It is up to the minister where this vehicle is going to go. It is up to the minister how fast this vehicle is going to go or how slow it is going to go, where it is going to go, whether it is going to go around in circles or is going to make a left turn or go forward or whatever, or stay still.

Do you know why? Because the minister is at the controls, and I am just a passenger. Okay? If I ask the minister, if we want to make a left turn five miles down the road, and if he decides to go right through, well, I do not have any choice, I have to go along with him, and I have to accept wherever he is going to take me, whether it is good for me or not. I have to accept what the end result is going to bring.

I believe that is why the aboriginal leadership are having a lot of difficulty in working with the minister because so far the minister has been telling aboriginal people, you do it my way or no way at all. I can guarantee you that is what he tried to do in the Manitoba Constitutional Task Force. Everybody talks highly about the harmony that went on in the task force.

Well, we had a lot of differences, and I must say that most of the difficulties that we had came from the minister himself. He used to speak highly of trying to work with aboriginal people, about how he recognized the problems that they were having. He even went so far as to say, we have no problem here recognizing the rights of the aboriginal people to inherent right to self-government, and yet, when the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report came out, he dug

his heels in, he would not take any action. That is why the aboriginal leadership are having a lot of difficulty in working with the minister.

If they saw the minister for one instance co-operating, then the aboriginal leadership would come to work with the minister, but so far the minister wants to call all the shots. We saw that on Day One when the AJI Report first came out. He said, this is the work of only two men; we should not get too excited. That is the way the minister has been operating ever since the end of August last summer.

He is wondering why the aboriginal leadership is having difficulty working with him? Perhaps the minister should look at himself for once and see how he operates and see how he affects people, because it was not—[interjection]—yes, the minister says, I offend him sometimes, what I say.

I can tell the minister too, Mr. Acting Chairperson, that he really tried my patience here one afternoon when he started accusing me of whatever activity that I might have been involved in, in regards to aboriginal women, child abuse and so on, when I was a chief. He really tried my patience that afternoon. Yes, he offended me.

I did not react in a way that the minister carried on that afternoon here. I decided to be better than him, Mr. Acting Chairperson. That is why, when he works with the aboriginal leadership, that is the way he carries on, and no wonder the aboriginal leadership does not want to work with him.

I want, again, to ask him: Could he provide us with a breakdown of how his budget that has been—I believe it is a million dollars now, that was set aside for the AJI. What is it going to be used for? The criteria, who is going to be funded, and so on?

Mr. McCrae: Well, if the honourable member, Mr. Acting Chairperson, is prepared to put on the public record of this Chamber that his view is that during our work on the task force, if there were difficulties, they came from the minister himself, you would think that the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) would have the courage to be a little more specific than that.

He did not show that courage, so maybe he will show a little courage in his next question and be a little more precise about what it is that bothered him about my performance on the task force. My view of the task force was that we came to that task force with our own perspectives. I see my signature on

the task force documents. I see the honourable member's signature on that document. Then he talks about these difficulties.

Is the document not an honourable document? The honourable member's signature is there. So is mine. Maybe he should shed a little bit of light instead of making vague and mischievous comments, without backing it up with any hard facts.

Then he talks about my making accusations against him in this Chamber respecting child abuse and women, to use his words. I would like him to be specific about that, because I think this is a very serious matter that the honourable member is raising and borders on a question of privilege. I do not propose to raise a question of privilege at this moment, because this, as I understand the rules, is not the time to do it.

* (1620)

If the honourable member has something to say, rather than horsing around and pussy-footing around, let him come right out and say it, if he has a problem. The honourable member should be clear. If he has a problem with difficulties on the task force, then why did he sign the task force report?

If he has difficulties about accusations, true or otherwise—otherwise I suggest—if he has difficulty with accusations made by myself, then let him stand in his place and raise a question of privilege. He is a member of this House. He is an equal to every other member in this House.

You see, I have trouble with innuendo, the kind indulged in by the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). If there is a poisoned atmosphere here, the honourable member need only read his own words spoken today. He sits firmly in his seat and talks about who created them. Well, if there is a problem, tell me what it is and we can deal with it. We are never going to solve the problems the honourable member wants to solve if you sit around making half-baked innuendo at other members of this House. That is not the way to conduct oneself in this place. The honourable member knows better and ought not to act in the way he is today, but if he would like to correct the record or put something on the record to which I can respond, I welcome him to do that.

Now he wants a breakdown of the budget. How does the honourable member propose for me to break down a budget in the Estimates process or in

the budget process when he will not even suggest to his own former colleagues, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, that they get together with the government and talk about priorities for the implementation of Aboriginal Justice Initiatives?

He will not even talk about how money should be spent. Instead, he wants to talk about things that bother him all the time. Well, the only way things are going to stop bothering the honourable member is if he talks about those things. We can have an honest dialogue, one with the other, and sort these things out. I am here. I was there on the task force. I worked with the honourable member. I thought both of us were working very hard, and I also thought both of us were trying very hard to resolve differences that we might have approached that process with. I see a document with both of our signatures on it and I wonder, is he repudiating that document? If he is, it would be interesting to know that, too, because if he is repudiating the document, he was signing that document on behalf of his colleagues in the N.D. Party across the way.

He says that I offend him. I really have to say today when I hear the kind of smears sort of innuendo that the honourable member is raising in this House this afternoon, I feel offended. I feel entitled to defend myself from the kinds of accusations I hear from this honourable gentleman opposite, but he will not particularize anything except to say that I accused him of something to do with child abuse and women. Well, it sounds pretty serious to me. Tell me, what did I accuse the honourable member of? Surely, he owes this House an explanation for his accusation against me. So I await with interest the honourable member's response to the references to the task force and to the references to comments in this House.

I have answered his question about breakdown on the budget. I would like to break down the budget. It would be nice to have aboriginal help doing so.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Acting Chairperson, that is the way the minister operates, and I am afraid I guess that is how we have to let the process carry through.

Perhaps I can ask the minister then: When was the last time the minister met with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to try to get these working groups that he has been talking about get going on the work that he says he is trying to do? Also, how many

groups are there? Who is going to be sitting in the working groups from the government side?

Mr. McCrae: We have made repeated requests, both verbally and in writing. I can make available the catalogue of written requests of the chiefs and the others to join us at the table. I do not have my dates. I can certainly fill them in for the honourable member.

At the most recent formal meeting we had with Phil Fontaine and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and some of the members of our Native Affairs Committee of Cabinet, it was all agreed, yes, we are going to allow aboriginal people—or aboriginal people are going to take their place on the working groups as co-chairs. So there would not be just one chair on the government side, but there would be two chairs of each committee or subcommittee, and one of those would be aboriginal people.

Then there was an issue discussed that money would be required to secure the participation of aboriginal leadership on these committees, and we are in the process of responding to that request or demand or whatever it was.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

Then also, after the meeting was over, and unbeknownst to myself, it was announced that another condition for the participation of aboriginal representatives was that the issue of separate systems was back on the table. That was not so, but that was said nonetheless.

So you see what I am talking about, Madam Chairperson. When we do not really talk to each other, we really do have a problem do we not? So what I am saying is, why can we not just say what it is that we want to say. I have said, on behalf of the government, and so have my colleagues, that we want aboriginal participation, and the response is, we want \$250,000 to talk to you. Well, I am sorry, that is not on. That is not the way it is going to work.

If I had \$250,000, would I not rather put that money into a program for people? What do we need \$250,000—we have the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report, which was a \$3-million project, and that does not count the remuneration of the judges. We have a three-year project that took into account massive levels of consultation with people. So what is the \$250,000 to study the report for another year for? That was the request I got from the grand chief, another year of study and \$250,000, or maybe it was a little more. Sorry. Are we going to do something

for people or are we going to spend money studying?

We have spent \$3 million and three years studying. We have the basis of a lot of work that we can do on behalf of aboriginal people to improve conditions in the justice system for aboriginal people so that they can take partnership and in some cases ownership of the justice system. But why do we need to stall for another year after three years? Why do we need to spend another \$250,000, just so we can talk for another year and study and research some more?

The people of this province think that this matter has been studied to death already. So what does it take to get the chiefs to join us at the table and talk about the substance, not about whether we are going to have a separate system—or is what the honourable member is proposing a separate system, or is it really what I am proposing that is a separate system? How long are we going to debate this, and how many more hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars of taxpayers' money are we going to spend playing politics, indulging in rhetoric? When are we going to get down to business? I ask this of the honourable member for The Pas. When are we going to get down to business and do something for the people we all represent and improve conditions that are bad and need to be much better?

So I would ask, repeatedly, the honourable member, to use his good office and to use his influence to try to persuade the aboriginal leadership to get on to this project and join with us. Yes, we cannot devise quickly or fund quickly, a separate aboriginal justice system, but we can fund and devise the beginnings of systems of justice that will serve aboriginal people far better in a way that respects their culture. These things can all happen in steps, same as self-government, generally, can happen. We want it to happen in steps.

* (1630)

I sometimes do not think the honourable member knows what he is talking about. He does not like me. He has made that clear today. That is all right. I like him, but he does not like me. Fair enough. We worked for a long time together on the task force. He never told me that before, but he has made it pretty clear today the way he feels. It is unfortunate, because there is a lot of work to do. The honourable member wants to play games, let him play, but let

him play with somebody else, because I am interested in doing something while I have this job.

I am interested in proving the justice system. I have proved and my department in working with me has proved that we know how to do it. We know how to make changes that are better and an improvement in the system. Why will you not give us a chance to make changes that will make a real difference for the people of that the honourable member for The Pas and the chiefs of this province represent? Why do you not give us a chance instead of all of the kinds of questions and comments I am getting today from the honourable member?

I am telling you, Madam Chairperson, I am really very disappointed in the approach the honourable member takes, because his approach just means the status quo. If I were to play along with this for much longer, it would mean the status quo until somebody else comes along who is ready to embrace everything the honourable member suggests, but nobody is ready to do that. His colleagues in his own party are not ready to embrace the stuff that he is putting forward. What does he think is suppose to happen next?

The honourable member thinks that we are suppose to succumb, if you like, and say, yes, we will accept everything that the honourable member for The Pas says and that is what we will devise. Money is, obviously, no object, and we can make it all happen next week and everybody will be happy. Well, welcome to the real world. This is Manitoba. It does not work that way here. It does not work that way anywhere else that I know of.

What is it that the honourable is trying to achieve? Is he trying to achieve positive change for the aboriginal people of Manitoba? I do not know which constituency he is speaking for sometimes, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chairperson, perhaps I can ask the minister again—I believe it was \$1 million—when it was set aside, what was that money going to be used for? I know the aboriginal leadership have asked the minister for financial assistance for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, their justice committee, to operate and so on. I think why they were asking for that money for the committee, for the chiefs, was, because as the minister knows—he has got his department, I mean the infrastructure is there, the budget is there, so he

does not need a whole lot of extra resources to carry out the work that needs to be done with the aboriginal leadership. I believe what the aboriginal leadership were asking for was some assistance in offsetting some of their expenses. Twenty-five Indian bands are in remote areas. It costs a lot of money for people to travel from northern Manitoba to Winnipeg for meetings and so on. That is why the aboriginal leadership were asking for money.

I am still interested in finding out from the minister. When he set the money aside, what was he going to use it for primarily? Did he not think that he would have to fund some of the work, the expense that comes with the work in working with government? Because I know myself, as a chief for six years of my band, it costs money to come to Winnipeg to meet with government, because ministers do not often go to where you want them to go. It would be fine if the ministers that I used to deal with would come to The Pas, and then there would be no expense to me, but it costs money to come to Winnipeg.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, Chief Fontaine's office is just down the street, so he is not that far away. Yvon Dumont has met with me on numerous occasions and never asked for money. He and his federation, I believe, are funded in a core kind of a sense by the government of Manitoba, as is the Assembly of Chiefs. The urban native association, sorry, but I will never get that name in the right order, is locally based and the Indigenous Women's Collective is, I believe, locally based. There is a start in giving the answer to the honourable member.

So, if it comes to travel expenses, my mind is wide open if there is someone who needs to be at a meeting and absolutely cannot get there without assistance from the government. That is an open question, that is not a closed question. That is not what the \$250,000 was all about. Let us get talking about the same thing.

You want to know what the \$1 million is for, the money set aside in the budget. The honourable member wants some particularities. Well, that is fair, except he has not done his part yet in persuading his aboriginal colleagues to assist us in arriving at some solutions. But I will tell you, we have learned from Phil Fontaine, and we have learned from others.

St. Theresa Point Indian government project is acceptable to the chiefs; Phil Fontaine told me that himself. That program will be funded out of that appropriation. That is the kind of thing that will work. That program, I know the honourable member knows about it, is a highly successful program to provide culturally appropriate local services to young aboriginal offenders in the aboriginal community of St. Theresa Point. That is the kind of project we want to fund, and we want to see happen. We want to see it expand, and I would like to see, in the future, other aboriginal communities taking up a similar model.

For argument's sake, I will say it is a separate system. It is run by aboriginal people in the community for the people in the community. So what are we really arguing about here? The St. Theresa Point Indian Youth Court is a separate justice system for those young offenders who come before it.

Their success rate is quite phenomenal really. They have been operating for a number of years. The Law Foundation of Manitoba has been funding them. The Law Foundation is broke, as honourable members well know, or nearly broke, and they were unable to fund them anymore. The government of Manitoba has stepped into the breach, if you like, and said, hang in there for a little longer while we get all the arrangements put together, but there is going to be support from the Manitoba government for the continued operation of that program and even the expansion of that program.

We want desperately to get the federal government involved. We are working with them and we are hopeful that they are going to get involved. We are first in, of course, in terms of announcing our support, but that is nothing new. We are closer to St. Theresa Point than Ottawa is and that is maybe understandable.

St. Theresa Point is a very fine model. A number of aboriginal communities might very well look at that model for themselves and for their communities and for their people. I do not have the numbers with me, again. I am not very good with statistics, unfortunately, but hardly any young offenders from that region have been referred to the mainstream provincial court system. Hardly any, a handful, I think, over the last number of years. A perfect example of aboriginal justice, self-government working for people.

The honourable member, does he really want to stand in the way of that kind of stuff? Well, I am not going to let him anyway. So there you have it. I am very upset. I am very upset with what is happening at the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council probation services, funded 50-50 by this government and the federal government up till now.

The federal government has decided it wants to withdraw its participation. I mean, that is a heck of a time to be doing it. Here we are going to Ottawa next week to talk about self-government some more and the federal government's pulling away from funding for the DOTC probation program. It makes you wonder, well, what did they really mean? What is the federal government really about?

* (1640)

The honourable member may not know it, but I met with representatives of the DOTC about the future of their probation service, another tremendously successful probation service. The Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Corrections is here and can correct me if I am wrong, but they have a better success rate than the Manitoba government probation services, arguably. Fair enough?

I have looked at some numbers and the rate of repeat that I saw, repeat offence or repeat exposure to the service, is higher in the Manitoba system than in the DOTC system. What I am saying right now, I am just looking at Mr. Demers and I am going to have to say it is subject to correction, but at least he and his branch agree that the DOTC probation service is a good one—worth preserving. So why are the feds pulling away? Well, we are trying to find that out. We have written to the federal Solicitor General. We have worked with the DOTC probation people.

As a matter of fact, on Tuesday morning of this week I telephoned Joe Clark, a gentleman with whom I have been doing some work lately, asking him to talk to his colleague Doug Lewis about this and telling him, this is not the right thing to be doing. This is a good program. It has been funded for a number of years by both governments, 50-50. Our funding, unfortunately, is contingent on the federal funding, because if the federal funding is not there, there is really not much of a program left to fund. So I want to see that program keep going. It is serving many people, serving many reserve communities. That is good. It is better service, according to the

people being served, because they are being served by their own agency. That is self-government.

Well, the honourable member is going to go to The Pas, he is going to go wherever he can and say, McCrae, he is not in favour of self-government because he does not support separate systems. Well, what do you call that system up at St. Theresa Point? If the honourable member knows anything about it at all, and I suspect he does, he knows that it is a separate system of delivering justice services to aboriginal people in their own culture and in their own community. Does the honourable member want to speak against the St. Theresa Point system? It has been going for years. It has been going well. For the amount of funding it has received it has been going very well.

Why does the honourable member not get on board? This is more than just being a New Democrat. It is your job to be opposed to things that you should be opposed to, but why do you want to be opposed to progress in the area of aboriginal justice? That is what you are doing. That is the way it is being interpreted. Well, I mean the honourable member can sit there and grin and make faces sometimes from his seat in Question Period and make the odd offensive comment from his seat in reference to his interpretation of something I might have said. The honourable member is going to learn that it does not cut that much ice, that kind of way of doing business.

We have important people in this province to serve, and we have very, very serious problems. Here we are, some people anyway, prepared to say we will take nothing for our people if we cannot have it the way I say it. The fundamental problem with that approach is it does not respect very much the democratic process in the rest of this country. We would like to see the honourable member show a more co-operative attitude, and, for goodness sake, do not come out of a long process of intense discussions and negotiations on a task force, sign the document and then say, oh well, this fellow he gave us a lot of difficulty. I mean, really, as I said earlier, give me a break.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chairperson, I still cannot understand why the minister refuses to—I have been to other Estimates where ministers are asked questions and they give answers and so forth. I just cannot imagine the minister sitting there saying, we will set aside a million dollars, for what I do not know,

but just in case, if something comes up, I will set aside a million dollars. Surely he must know what he was going to use that money for, and again I ask him, what were his plans?

Also, he speaks a lot about the St. Theresa Point project, about how, he says, I do not know anything about it and so forth. You know, it is too bad that the St. Theresa Point had to come into Winnipeg, cap in hand, and beg this government to fund that project. It took a press conference. It took a lot of lobbying on the part of the people from St. Theresa Point. The minister when he speaks makes it sound as if he was solely responsible for making this happen, Madam Chairperson. No, it did not happen that way. I met with the people from St. Theresa Point, and I was there when they had their press conference. If it had not been for that, I wonder if the minister or this government would have done anything afterwards.

If that is the way the minister wants to operate in terms of the justice system or the legal system, I guess now we are going to have to have every individual band come into Winnipeg, cap in hand, beg this government, lobby and so on, because it seems to me that that is the only way this government responds to requests that come in from those people. I know Swampy Cree Tribal Council has proposals in here, the Minister of Justice's department, and we do not know where that is right now, but I do know it is not moving. So, again, I ask the minister what was he going to use the money for, the \$1 million he had set aside?

Mr. McCrae: You will have to pardon me, Madam Chairperson, but I do not recall taking the credit for the St. Theresa Point aboriginal Indian court project.

An Honourable Member: You should.

Mr. McCrae: My honourable colleague the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) says that I should. Well, maybe I can take credit for helping the thing carry on, but I do not recall taking credit for the St. Theresa Point Indian court system, because that would be the wrong thing to do. You know who deserves the credit for that? The people of St. Theresa Point deserve the credit for it.

It makes you wonder why The Pas band never got into such a good idea. Now why? Maybe the honourable member can tell us that. Those people in St. Theresa Point without a nickel of government funding started this thing up on their own. Time came, they approached the foundation, but they

were going, they were doing. Now they just want to carry on, and that is okay because they are doing the right thing for the people in their communities.

* (1650)

What did the honourable member do for The Pas? Did he look then, in those days, at the St. Theresa Point system? He was chief at that time, I believe. What system did he put in place in The Pas without any help from anybody else? Time came, Theresa Point and the Law Foundation got together. I do not know how. I do not know who approached whom. The Law Foundation was then there, and now the government is there. It is not my project. The project belongs to the people of St. Theresa Point. Is that not what the honourable member is arguing for? Make up your mind.

The honourable member wants to know what we are going to spend the money on. Look in this document. How many times have you read it? I have read it twice. Look in this document. It is called An Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report, prepared by Associate Chief Justice A.C. Hamilton and Associate Chief Judge C.M. Sinclair. This thing is chock-full of ideas, beginnings of ideas and other kinds of ideas that will help us through many, many initiatives. Some will be exactly like the judges suggested; some are not going to be accepted; some will borrow from ideas of the judges. That is reasonable, and if you say it is not I am going to take my marbles and go home, then we will just have to do it without you. But I hope we do not have to do it like that.

Even if we do it without you, the honourable member has already told us, that through his colleague the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), every single recommendation is okay with him. So, therefore, if the chiefs will not join us, we will have to go it alone. Too bad if we have to do it that way.

This sort of noncommunication that swirls around all of these words that are being spoken is quite disturbing in a political sense, but it is a tragedy if you happen to be an aboriginal person living in a reserve community or elsewhere, and your life is deeply and tragically affected by a social, political and economical system which leaves you out or behind. The justice system that comes along just makes the whole thing worse for you.

What good does the honourable member's position do? The position being taken by the

honourable member, what good does it do for a young aboriginal family facing trouble with the law? The position the honourable member is taking, what good does it do for a young aboriginal single mom and her children? What good does the honourable member's position do them? What progress are we making with the position being taken by the honourable member?

I keep trying, Madam Chairperson, but I am afraid I am not getting through.

Mr. Edwards: We have had a very illustrative example in the last close to an hour of exactly why implementation of this report should not be left to the members of this Chamber alone.

Ultimately, the decisions have to come here for ratification, the expenditure funds and the enactment of legislation, but we have had a pretty good example of why the strategy for action embodied in the report made eminent sense, and I welcomed and congratulated the commissioners on making that a part of their report.

They did not just tell us what to do, they advised on how to do it, and they entitled it, A Strategy for Action, and on page 755 of their report they started that with the recommendation for an aboriginal justice commission.

The recommendation was that it be established by legislation and by appropriate processes with a board of directors made up of equal numbers of aboriginal and government representatives and an independent chairperson, and that it should be given the necessary staff and resources.

They also said the position of aboriginal justice commissioner should be established as the CEO of the commission, and the tasks, and this is the important part, would include monitoring and assisting government implementation of the recommendations of this inquiry.

It was an action plan, and this was the lead recommendation under the Strategy for Action.

The commissioners recognized that it would be controversial. They recognized that there would be difficulties and that there was a communication problem. They also recognized that political parties and political biases would further impede putting into place their recommendations, and so they handed us an opportunity to do something about that.

The minister chose not to accept that and embarked on another path of implementation. I want to ask him in the brief time we have left, what was wrong, in his view, with the strategy for action and, in particular, that recommendation of the commissioners?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, it is not so much a question of right or wrong, and I know the honourable member probably did not mean to frame the question in that kind of a way, although it is his question. I do not see anything so wrong with that proposal as I see right or better or more workable and more practical than the approach that we are taking.

I can see in that recommendation the likelihood of an extremely expensive bureaucracy that would have to go along with such a commission. Remember we got to that point, and then we spent maybe another million dollars and still not one iota of change has happened for the aboriginal person out there.

It has been a while since I read that, all of the accompanying material that goes with that particular recommendation, but there is a sense also, and the honourable member in raising the question is not far off from some other proposals put forward by members of his party, to take away from government or remove from government, should I say, the responsibility and the right to make decisions.

We honestly felt and still do—I continue to hold out hope here—that we can work together. We found that in other areas of common interest, aboriginal people in this government have been able to work together. So we felt and continue to feel that approach can work again in the future.

The approach that we are proposing, the working group proposal, does, I believe, lend itself to a practical working solution to many of the problems there are and the practical implementation of many of the recommendations that we are accepting.

Perhaps it is because the aboriginal leadership think we should have accepted this recommendation that we still do not see them at the table. If that is the case, I suggest that is not our fault. They have been invited to the table. We want them at the table.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Chairperson, there is no particular need for us to go through each of the recommendations, because we could do that. I think we could agree and disagree on much of them.

The main point today, I think, is to find a way to get together with the aboriginal community and work out a process of implementation.

It is wrong to think that we should be able to implement it without cost. That is wrong to think that. We spent \$3 million, that is true. It is a lot of money. It would be a squandering of that money if we were not to be prepared to spend what it costs to implement it. That would truly be a waste.

Now the minister says, workable and practical. The minister says he wants a workable and practical implementation process and he says he has found a better way through the working groups, whatever he has set up. Well, workable is easy, because it is not working. It is not working. His plan is not working. That is clear. [interjection]

Well, the people at St. Theresa Point had their program, as he pointed out, long before this commission, long before this commission. What I am talking about, and I want him to address, is the action plan for implementation of the recommendations in this report which are extensive.

His response has been pathetic. After a month of having the report, he had a press conference to say, I have nothing to say. That is what he said a month after he had had the report.

Today, he says his implementation process is practical and workable. Well, it certainly is not practical because it is not working. It just is not working. What is wrong with what they recommended?

What is really wrong is he thinks it might cost a few dollars. That is really what is wrong; that is what he said. He said it would be too expensive to put into place a commission to implement.

Well, let me suggest to him that he spent \$3 million coming up with recommendations, and now he is not willing to spend a dime to put it into place. That is a wasting of the \$3 million, if he does not act on it. That is really where he is going.

He is using the fact that his system is not working to do nothing. There is an opportunity here to go to them and to say to the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the aboriginal community, you say you accept all the recommendations; I am following one; I am putting into place the aboriginal commission.

Put them to the test. Ask them for their nominations to that commission. What is wrong with that recommendation? He has not told us yet,

except that he does not want to spend a dime to put it into place, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson, that is the poorest financial decision he could make, because it not only squanders the social and the human potential of putting these recommendations into place, but he is going to squander the three years and \$3 million worth of work that it took to come up with them. That is what he is going to do if he does not act quickly to put into place a truly workable implementation procedure.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

Committee Report

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): The Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same, and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion presented.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 16—The Health Care Directives Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), Bill 16 (The Health Care Directives Act; Loi sur les directives en matière de soins de santé), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 18—The Franchises Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), Bill 18 (The Franchises Act; Loi sur les concessions), standing in the name of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 25—The University of Manitoba Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), Bill 25 (The University of Manitoba Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université du Manitoba), standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 27—The Business Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), Bill 27 (The Business Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 31—The Municipal Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), Bill 31 (The Municipal Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités), standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 32—The Immigration Consultants Registry Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 32 (The Immigration Consultants Registry Act;

Loi sur l'inscription des conseillers en immigration), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 36—The Health Care Records Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), Bill 36 (The Health Care Records Act; Loi sur les dossiers médicaux), standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 50—The Beverage Container Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), Bill 50 (The Beverage Container Act; Loi sur les contenants de boisson), standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Bill 51—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), Bill 51 (The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [Agreed]

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this bill put forward by the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema). I do not intend to give lengthy comments, but I did want to stand in support of this proposal to put into law the five essential principles of our universal health care system. I think it is a particularly important time for this House to address this issue and to pass this legislation with all due haste.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for that is that I believe that the discussions which are occurring throughout

the country in these past weeks and are going to continue to occur on our constitutional future have a lot to do with universal health care in this country. I think it is a mistake to restrict the debate to the more notable issues which tend to get the greater amount of press coverage.

The distinct society in Quebec, the Charter issues, those are vital issues, but recall, if you will, Mr. Speaker, the debate which circled around the issue of standards in the social services throughout this country. That was—and I had the privilege of being on the task force on a number of their hearings—an extremely important issue to Manitobans. They came forward time and time again to talk about the need for a strong central government, the need for strong national standards in health care and the need for, above all else, our ability to maintain a universal, accessible health care system as fundamental to their notion of what it was to be Canadian.

It was not just a sense of fairness that led them to that conclusion. It reflected, I think, a deeper sense of pride in the principles of universal health care as notably Canadian and something that they wanted to leave as a legacy to their grandchildren and say that we protected this, this was our first priority. This is not the United States where in excess of 30 million people live in the fear of getting ill, or in the fear of having an accident that they will not be able to afford health care costs.

It is an interesting statistic to note that the United States per capita has higher spending on health care than any nation in the world, and still in excess of 30 million people do not have access to it. Larger than the entire population of this country in the United States does not have access to health care without the fear of having to pay and not being able to pay for adequate health care. All of the technology, all of the high-tech things, and, of course, we appreciate the research and development which is done in the United States and we benefit from it, I am the first to acknowledge that, but the fact is, all of that is for naught for something in excess 10 percent of the population of that country.

Frankly, I believe that wherever we go in health care in Canada we go together or we do not go. That is the principle I start from, that is enshrined in this bill, Mr. Speaker. It is not only a tradition in this country, but it should be a road map for the future.

These principles are set out in the Canada Health Act. They should be enshrined in legislation here.

We need to send a message today before they meet again in these rounds of constitutional debates. We need to send a message today, and I ask all members to consider the importance of addressing this issue today in this Chamber and sending a message to the leaders of this country, that we believe fervently in the enshrinement of the five essential principles of universal health care in this country, and that is not to be forgotten in any of these debates. All of the other issues are important, but this, too, ranks as an issue, first and foremost, for our leaders to have on their minds as they talk about EPF funding, they talk about the role of the federal government and the relationship between federal and provincial governments. This is a key issue and we should pass this legislation today.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Madam Deputy Speaker, I too would like to join in this debate on Bill 51 and to indicate quite clearly for the record that the New Democratic Party has no difficulty supporting this bill. I have stated that publicly, I have stated that in Estimates, and I am pleased to reiterate that position for the debate in this Assembly. It would come as no surprise, I am sure, to members in this House to know that the New Democratic Party and our caucus clearly supports any attempt, legislatively, programmatically, politically, to preserve medicare and the principles, the underlying fundamental principles behind medicare.

* (1710)

There is no question that any entrenchment of the five founding original fundamental principles of medicare in any aspect of provincial or federal law would serve us well. There is no question that in this period in our history, attempts to entrench principles and to demonstrate political and government obligation to upholding those principles is more important than ever.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this idea of entrenching the fundamental principles of medicare in provincial law interestingly enough was outlined in the British Columbia Royal Commission on health care and cost released not too long ago. That report clearly stated that it would do no harm and it would certainly serve considerable purpose to entrench the

principles, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, accessibility and public administration, in provincial legislation.

I quote from the B.C. Royal Commission: To date no Canadian province has confirmed the five principles of medicare by enacting them in legislation. Every province has taken steps to discourage or prevent extra billing and has removed hospital user fees, but none has gone further. We believe that it is important that the B.C. government take the first step and make these principles an integral part of B.C. law.

It would certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker, be acceptable, be fitting for all of us here in this Chamber who have worked so long and hard to preserve the fundamental principles of medicare to move quickly and to ensure that happened promptly in this province of Manitoba and served as a reference point for other provincial jurisdictions right across this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to see that, in fact, the Liberal caucus has brought forward this legislation, because there have been doubts about Liberal position on medicare and the principles underlying that fine nationally treasured program. I hope that the introduction of this bill is an indication to all of us that the Liberal Party here in Manitoba has done some rethinking on this matter and has re-evaluated its previous positions and determined that it is in the best interest of all Manitobans to be governed by the five principles of medicare.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our concerns with respect to the Liberal Party in Manitoba, of course, come out of previous election commitment to suggest that perhaps some form of a charge in hospitals might not be all that bad. The suggestions were made in the 1988 election. We raised our questions and concerns at that time. Manitobans spoke their mind at that time, and I believe that, perhaps, as a result of that exposition of the issue in the media and in the public, the Liberals, perhaps, in Manitoba, have had a change of heart and decided that it would be best to come down firmly on the side of the fundamental principles of medicare.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is one concern with respect to the Liberal Party. Even more fundamentally—[interjection] The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) doth protest a little too much, I think. I have only mentioned the announcement of

this party in the 1988 election to charge for meals and slippers and soap and other amenities.

I did not mention, but I will, the fact that the present Liberal critic for Health, along with a former member of the Liberal caucus, held after 1988, a press conference clearly coming down on the side of a means test for our home care program.

We expressed absolute outrage and concern at that suggestion, and we had hoped that, in fact, this bill before us today indicated a change of heart. I am getting a little worried by virtue of the calls and cries and heckling from the Liberal member for Inkster.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am more concerned though, about the role of Liberal governments on the national scene today. I am more concerned about the apparent movement towards the introduction of user fees, towards methods of deterrence, towards means test, towards privatization. Those concerns have been fueled in particular by Liberal Premier Frank McKenna, who clearly stated quite recently that the concept of user fees should not be ruled out, that it may have to be implemented, that it might be fundamental to addressing the economic plight of provincial governments and provinces.

So we have every reason to be concerned and are hopeful that this bill today, presented by the Liberals of Manitoba, reflects a change of heart, or at least that it will have some impact on Liberal members in opposition or in government right across this country.

Because, in fact, we have a much bigger battle to fight. We have a much more worrisome issue at hand than the specific entrenchment of the principles of medicare into provincial law. This is a fine move. It will do something. It will give us all the means to keep our governments, in particular the government of the day, in check when it comes to the delivery of health care.

We have expressed many concerns in this House about a movement away from the medicare principles by the Conservatives of Manitoba. We have expressed concern about the erosion of universal quality health care here in Manitoba. We have expressed opposition to attempts to deinsure services, to delist drugs, to cause longer and longer waiting lists which have resulted in a great climate for private entrepreneurs in the health care field.

We are very worried about the rapid rise in private surgical procedures here in Manitoba for cataract

surgery, and now we hear hip surgery and knee surgery. I think it is important for everyone in this House to realize that the entrenchment of these principles in provincial law will require some reconsideration, some new thinking on the part of everyone in this House, particularly the government of the day.

The bigger issue is, of course, the question of whether or not there will even be a medicare system to worry about and whether or not it will make any difference to have these principles entrenched in Manitoba, in provincial law, if there is no national health care system that is universal and portable and accessible and comprehensive and run on the basis of public nonprofit administration.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have tried on numerous occasions in this House to find ways to work with members of the government, to try to form some sort of united coalition around the issue of preservation of medicare.

It is regrettable that that kind of effort has not succeeded and that in fact the present administration has shown little commitment to the preservation of a national health care system founded on these very principles as outlined in Bill 51.

Let us for the record, once again, state the reality that even now members of the Conservative government of Manitoba have recognized and documented. Let us not forget that beginning—I can go as far back the Liberals prior to 1984, but let me deal specifically with Mulroney policy beginning in 1984—this, after an election promise, an election promise to preserve medicare and the fundamental principles as documented in this legislation.

Let us remember Bill C-69, Bill C-20 and other legislative and regulatory moves to change the formula for funding of health care and post-secondary education under EPF, the Established Program Financing Act.

* (1720)

Let us all remind ourselves that if nothing else changes, if no other legislative amendments are made, funding for health care, funding for provincial health care systems will dry up, will end, will come to a complete halt. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is coming faster than we think.

By everyone's documentation and statistical analysis now, even the Conservatives', money will run out for Manitoba shortly after the turn of the

century. Madam Deputy Speaker, without the dollars, without the financial contribution, the federal government loses its leverage to uphold the principles, these very principles before us, entrenched and enshrined in the Canada Health Act.

Already we know what is happening: that provinces like—headed up by Frank McKenna are looking at user fees. Other provinces are looking at—[interjection] Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should just settle down and put correct information on the record.

Many provinces have looked, and I think of Alberta and British Columbia before the present NDP government, have promoted the idea of disentanglement. That will only lead to a patchwork of health care systems right across this country, where user fees and premiums and deterrence measures are considered appropriate. It is the Americanization of the system. It is the opposite direction to go in. It is wrong. It is contrary to the basis behind medicare and the fundamental principles, and that is the recognition that access to quality health care is an inalienable right and something which all of us should defend, no matter what it takes.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the debate this afternoon and the opportunity to put a few words on the record today on this very important bill, Bill 51, a bill again introduced by the Health critic for the Liberal Party, a bill that we support, and we hope that the government will bring to a vote here this afternoon.

The No. 1 concern to me and my constituents, I know that all of us, as we have gone out and knocked on doors—I have done this several times in my constituency, up and down the various streets of my constituency—it is always a No. 1 issue. We have within Selkirk the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, and we have got the Selkirk General Hospital and several nursing homes. So it is very important to us in Selkirk and in rural Manitoba.

Again, what the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) was mentioning, that this bill asks that the five basic principles of the Canada Health Act be entrenched in law, it is very important for us, for New Democrats, obviously enough considering the fact that it was the New Democrat government

which was—CCF government which originally introduced the form of medicare in Saskatchewan, who first brought it in. It has been New Democrat governments since that have fought for universal medical care for Canadians. It is one of the things they talk about their country as has been voted as the finest country in the world to live in. In spite of the efforts of the federal Conservatives.

One of the principle reasons why they stated that this country is one of the best countries to live in is our medicare system, which is again, like I said, in spite of Conservative governments. One can only imagine how high we would rank if New Democrats were to be elected federally here in this country. So that would be very interesting to see, and we will have to wait and see, of course, as the federal election approaches and we may have the opportunity to form government. I will be anxious to see how the members opposite vote, if they will be voting for their federal Tory counterparts.

So often I have attended functions where there were federal ministers there or a federal member from Selkirk, and he is at complete odds with the provincial Conservative Party, completely different. I have gone to a thing where Felix Holtmann was there, and he was yelling out, do not blame me, blame Gary Filmon, blame Harry Enns, do not blame me. We are in the same Chamber where we have the members opposite, do not blame me, blame Brian Mulroney.

So it would be kind of interesting to see when they go into the next election, when they go into that little booth and all the names are on the ballot, whose names they are going to mark. It will be interesting to see if they are going to support Dorothy Dobbie or Bjornson—

An Honourable Member: Alcock.

Mr. Dewar: Well, maybe they will be supporting Reg. It will be kind of fun to see. [interjection] Who knows, they may be supporting the Reform Party here. I imagine a number of them may support the Reform Party, and that again is interesting political beliefs there. What exactly is the Reform Party position on medicare—I am sure many of the members opposite know those positions quite well since they probably—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) states that many of them probably have a dual membership in both of those political parties. I would not be surprised if they know Preston Manning's home phone number there.

I am kind of amused at some of the members in the House, Tory government members introduce bills and they will speak in French, which is fine, but I do not know if Preston Manning knows that they are doing this here. It is kind of a concern of mine. The member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) often will demonstrate his bilingual nature.

An Honourable Member: Do you have something against bilingualism now?

Mr. Dewar: No, I have nothing against it, but obviously one of your political heroes, Preston Manning, does. So you had better be careful that he does not hear you using our second language. He may rip up your card in the Reform Party. You never know. [interjection] That is true.

So what exactly is the Reform Party's position on such things as medicare? It is interesting. Well, the five—I do have a quote here somewhere, but I do not know if anybody is interested in hearing it.

It is ironic, of course, to us on this side of the House, even though we do support the member on this particular bill, that it was brought in by a Liberal member, considering some of the policies of the federal Liberals. I believe it was in 1976 amendments to the Medical Care Act, passed by the Liberal government, imposed limitations on the amount of federal contributions to medical care costs.

In 1977 they established EPF programs, legislation passed with the support of the Conservatives, and this legislation introduced block funding. It ended the practice of 50-50 financing by the federal government for medical care.

In 1982 the Liberal government eliminated the revenue guarantee component of the EPF financing, thus cutting \$5 billion from money which would have gone for health care over the next five years.

In 1984 Parliament passed the Canada Health Act, which I am going to read some quotes from immediately here, containing provisions to deal with the problems of user fees and extra billing for medical services.

In 1986 the federal Conservative government this time passed Bill 96 reducing the rate of increase in EPF fundings. It is estimated that this will cost health and post-secondary education \$2 billion annually by 1992.

In '89 the federal Conservatives introduced Bill C-33, again which was an attempt to reduce transfers.

In 1990 Wilson, the federal Minister of Finance, again reduced EPF funding to the provinces, and Bill C-69 froze funding at 1989 levels.

In this last year, Wilson again, the Minister of Finance, announced the extension of the freeze of EPF funding for a further three years.

So it is interesting—[interjection] Where were our federal Tory members of Parliament then? Where were our provincial Tories? Where was David Bjornson and Felix Holtmann and Dorothy Dobbie? I know you guys are going to have a hard time supporting them in the next federal election, and I do not have that difficulty. I certainly will not be worried about that.

* (1730)

In fact, the federal Tories praised medicare, Mulroney called it a sacred trust. He called it a sacred trust, I believe, and when he was running for office and he was trying to outdo Wilson at the time of who was more compassionate, who actually cared more about social programs in this country, who cared more about the continuation of medicare—oh, it is a sacred trust; we will not touch this. As soon as they got into power, the first thing they did was deindex seniors pensions which is something, of course, that this government—they know a lot about deindexing, because they deindexed the 55 Plus in the past budget, an issue that the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) has raised several times, an issue that affected seniors in this province. So they know a lot about—obviously, they learned their lesson well.

They praise—the PCs will praise medicare, a sacred trust, best country in the world because we have these medical services here. Yet when they had a chance to go down on Bill C-20, who went? Did the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) go down to Ottawa to protest Bill C-20? Did any of the members opposite? The Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme), did he go down to Ottawa to protest Bill C-20 which will effectively eliminate federal funding to the provinces? It has been estimated to last 10 to 15 years, which will basically mean the end of medicare in this country.

Did anyone go? Who went? The Minister of Health? No. Did anyone from the Liberal Party go down to Ottawa? No. The only member from this

Chamber who went was the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), our Health critic, the only one who cares in this whole province, cared enough to go down there. She was the only one who cared enough to go down there to bring forward a position opposing Bill C-20. The Minister of Health did not even go down there.

Why did he not go? It is a terrible indictment of this government's philosophy towards medicare when they do not even bother going down there. They do not even make the effort to go down there to stand up for medicare by opposing or at least making an effort to oppose Bill C-20. Maybe they had a chance to talk to some of their federal cabinet ministers, give them the advice. Apparently, there is again—who knows?—rumours that Jake Epp is in favour of user fees. This is again a quote I had, I believe from the Ottawa Citizen, where he was quoted as saying that he is not exactly opposed to user fees. [interjection] Oh, definitely it would play well in Steinbach.

There is a myth when the PCs ran in Central Nova in 1983, well, that was of course when our current Prime Minister was running for office, I believe. The quote goes: As the Progressive Conservative Party believes that we can reverse the ominous trends of past decades and secure once again the future Canada deserves, our party is committed to preserving and protecting the principles of medicare and to maintain important social programs that are critical to the well-being of Canadians.

This is a quote from Conservative campaign literature in 1983—maintain important social programs, protecting the principles of medicare. What are we seeing? Members opposite have mentioned it, have said it many, many times to us, that the federal government is abandoning their policies, abandoning medicare by their policies. They have admitted that in very unequal terms by the references that they have made here, they have often criticized, you know, we are bringing in this; we are bringing in that. We have to in response to the cutbacks from the federal government, cutbacks that will continue.

We see this in the budget brought in by our provincial Health minister here, where he charged \$50 user fees for northern patients for transportation south of the North for elective surgery. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has raised the issue where some of his constituents have had to use this service three or four times, racking up quite

expensive bills for those who already often have unemployment rates in the north of this province up to 25 per cent.

So we can see again that if this government were to stand up a bit more against their federal counterparts, maybe some of these issues would be resolved instead of having to pass this legislation here. We recognize—I see my light is flashing, so with those few comments I would like to conclude my remarks this afternoon.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of Bill 51, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act. What is this bill and what is the purport of it? What is its intention? Its intention is to put into The Health Services Act the five principles that are now in the federal legislation, namely comprehensiveness, universality, portability, accessibility and public administration.

I will not go into them and define them or expand on them with one exception, and that is public administration. These days we frequently hear comparisons, especially by our Conservative colleagues across the way, about the differences between the American economic system and the Canadian economic system and free trade. Quite often we hear the jargon of free trade about the level playing field. One of the items that comes up most frequently is that taxes are too high in Canada. In fact, we hear this every day from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), and we know that all of his colleagues agree with him.

If you look at differences between Canada and the United States, it is fairly obvious that our taxes include payment for medicare and the Americans' do not. However, there is a shift going on in the United States. There is a major change in philosophy going on in the United States, and it is not coming just from people, and it is not coming from health care professionals, it is not coming from elected representatives; but it is coming from corporations. It is coming from a surprising area of the American people, and the reason is that corporations are paying health care benefits or paying for health insurance plans on behalf of their employees as part of employee benefit packages. It is very, very expensive for them.

There was an excellent program on The Journal that I hope some other people saw about the move to a publicly administered medicare system in the

United States, and it pointed out that employers like General Motors and the other Big Three auto makers are paying \$6 an hour per employee to purchase private medical insurance.

So, of course, the corporations now want to move to publicly funded medicare because it would take the burden off the corporations. Now, hopefully, corporations would be paying taxes to support a publicly supported medicare program. We do not know that, but we could assume or hope that would be true. It would also mean the taxpayers would have to pick up part of the cost of a public-administered plan.

To get back to my original point, it is that it is not fair, I would say, to compare taxation of individuals and corporations in the United States and taxation in Canada, because in Canada we pay through our tax system for an excellent medicare system, and the costs are actually lower, a lower percentage of our gross national product to support medicare in Canada.

* (1740)

There are numerous reasons for that. One reason is that in the United States there are hundreds of private insurance companies providing medical coverage to individuals, whereas in Canada we have government running a system. It is much cheaper to have one administration than to have hundreds of administrations paying health care benefits to individuals.

So those are my comments on the public administration part of the five principles.

We in the NDP have long been supporters of a publicly administered health care system, commonly known as medicare. In fact, it goes back before 1961 when Tommy Douglas and his government in Saskatchewan brought in medicare. In fact, in rural municipalities in rural Saskatchewan as early as the 1930s there were health care districts or hospital districts whereby a rural municipality or a number of rural municipalities went together and provided hospital care to their residents. That was really the forerunner of medicare as it was brought in in Saskatchewan in 1961.

There were good reasons for that. We know that the Great Depression, commonly known as the Dirty Thirties in Saskatchewan, hit their residents much harder than many other places in Canada. People were destitute. People were unable to provide for themselves and to pay for doctors.

In fact, it is very interesting to live in rural Saskatchewan and to hear some of these stories first-hand, as I did when I worked for four summers in Saskatchewan, and lived in Saskatchewan for four years. Of course, these stories are told over and over again during election campaigns, because in Saskatchewan it tends to be black and white as a result of the great battle over medicare in 1961. It tends to be the good guys and the bad guys. Of course, the bad guys are lumped together, both the Liberals and Conservatives, because both of those parties opposed the introduction of medicare in Saskatchewan in 1961.

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) feigns disbelief, but I can assure him that it is true. [interjection] As my colleague from Transcona says, the public is not fooled. They have history that they have to either defend or deny or acknowledge and admit that it was true.

Now the Liberal Party in Manitoba seems to have changed their mind and have introduced this bill which we support. We are pleased that they support the principles of medicare. In fact, the member points out that they introduced it nationally, which is true. I will acknowledge that.

One of the stories that I was going to tell about Saskatchewan has to do with the kind of charity that people had to beg for in order to get medical care. If people could not afford to pay for visits to a hospital or a doctor, then they had to depend on the charity of the doctor or the charity of the hospital or the charity of the rural municipality in order to get medical care. In fact, I know of a doctor who, when he retired, he burned \$30,000 worth of unpaid bills. He shovelled them into his coal furnace. He wrote them all off as bad debts. In fact, I would suggest that he forgave and forgot, which was probably the best thing that he could possibly do because he was realistic, he knew that he was not going to get paid.

An Honourable Member: He was a humanitarian.

Mr. Martindale: As my colleague said, he was a humanitarian, and a humanitarian is generally considered to be a good type of person to be. But the problem is that no one should have to depend on the charity of a doctor or the charity of a hospital or the charity of a municipality in order to receive medical care, as many, many people were forced to do.

Of course, during election campaigns in Saskatchewan—and I must say, they are great fun.

I was in Saskatchewan during the provincial election last fall, and it was very enjoyable to be helping them out with their great cause. I was not just a visitor, I was there to work, and it was great fun working for a winning candidate in the riding of Indian Head-Wolseley. In fact, it was a wonderful party. They could not remember the last time they had won in Indian Head-Wolseley, so they were ecstatic, to say the least.

During election campaigns, at political rallies, especially NDP political rallies, people tell stories about the introduction of medicare and what it was like living in Saskatchewan before medicare and after medicare. People remember and people tell true stories about things that happened to their parents or their grandparents about going to the hospital and being refused treatment because they could not pay—or going to see a doctor and being refused treatment because they could not afford to pay.

As we know, that does not happen anymore. In fact, one of the ironies of the Saskatchewan situation is that even though the vast majority of doctors fought very hard against the implementation of medicare, now doctors are better off than ever before as a result of medicare because now they always get paid; whereas in the past when the billed patients, frequently they did not get paid if patients could not afford to pay the fees. Now doctors always get paid.

It is something like Autopac in Manitoba. One of the things I do almost every day is I have coffee at the North Y, and I have coffee with a bunch of businessmen, in fact, I would say, right-wing businessmen. It is always very interesting to talk to them. Two of them are Autopac agents and they sometimes talk about the great fight in Manitoba against Autopac, but privately they will admit that they have never been better off since Autopac came in because they always get paid, the same as doctors. They fought against medicare; medicare came in; their income went up because they always got paid. [interjection]

What about Ross Thatcher? Well, I think he was in for one term and then he got kicked out.

We have some serious concerns about the erosion of medicare. We are concerned because there has been a decline in funding from the federal government, and this is not a recent decline. This did not begin in 1984 with the election of a

Conservative government. This began with the Liberal governments, beginning in 1976 when amendments to the Medical Care Act were passed by the Liberal government, imposing limitations on the amount of federal contributions to medical care costs.

So this slippery slope that we are on of declining of federal transfer payments to provinces did not begin recently, did not begin with the Conservatives. It began way back here with the Liberals, this slowly declining and now quickly declining transfer of payments from the federal government to provincial governments for medicare costs.

In 1977 established programs financing legislation passed with the support of the Conservatives. This legislation introduced block funding and ended the practice of 50-50 financing by the federal government for medical care. Who was the government in Ottawa in 1977? It was a Liberal government in Ottawa in 1977.

In 1982 the Liberal government eliminates the revenue guarantee component of the established programs financing, thus cutting \$5 billion from money which would have gone for health and post-secondary education over the next five years. Who was in government in 1982 in Ottawa? It was a Liberal government in Ottawa in 1982.

In 1984 Parliament passes the Canada Health Act, containing provisions to deal with the problems of user fees and extra billing for medical services. In fact, the Liberal government did something good in 1984 by passing this legislation. I was part of a campaign in the community to save medicare, and it was the result of coalitions in Manitoba and all across Canada that the Canada Health Act amendments were passed.

In 1986 the Conservative government passes Bill C-96, reducing the rate of increase in established programs financing. It is estimated this will cost health and post-secondary education \$2 billion annually by 1992.

In 1989 the Conservatives introduced Bill C-33 which attempted to further reduce the transfers to the GNP, minus 3 percent with the caveat that it could not fall below the consumer price index. Unfortunately, costs in the affected areas tend to rise more quickly than the GNP. This bill did not pass. It was replaced in 1990 by Bill C-69.

My colleague from Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) asked me, what would the NDP do? I can assure the

member that if we were the federal government, we would protect medicare at all costs because medicare has always been important to this party and we would not do anything to erode medicare.

In 1990 Finance Minister Wilson went for further EPF cuts. The Tories, through Bill C-69, have frozen funding at 1989 levels until the end of 1992. In 1991, Wilson announces the extension of EPF freeze for a further three years.

A survey of provincial and territorial government budgets reveals that most provinces, the most notable exception being Ontario, have responded by reducing insured services, increasing premiums, drastically reducing staff and closing beds. Provincial governments lay the blame directly at the feet of the federal Tory government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are a number of myths about medicare. For example, Michael Wilson, in his budget papers of 1991, said: I recognize that limiting the growth of transfers under established programs financing raises concerns about the ability of the federal government to continue enforcing national medicare principles under the Canada Health Act. Legislation will be introduced to ensure that the federal government continues to have the means to enforce these national medicare principles. The principles of the Canada Health Act will not be compromised.

That is the myth. In reality, the Canadian Medical Association president, Dr. Lionel Lavoie, accused the government of financially strangling medicare because of the way Ottawa had systematically reduced the plan level of federal support five times since 1982.

I have one more quote that I want to use, because I think it is a good one. It has to do with the Manitoba Conservative Party and their federal minister the Honourable Jake Epp, the Minister of Energy. He wants his cabinet colleagues to consider introducing user fees to the health care system, quote: On the basis that it reduces costs, what we are saying is it is valid and should be considered. It would mean less of a drain on the system.

* (1750)

Epp's position was supported by the provincial wing of the federal Conservative Party which wants a fee to discourage abuse of the system. [interjection]

You will have to take my word for it.

We on this side are opposed to user fees because what it means is that poor people do not access medicare.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): On a point of order, I would like to have the letter tabled that the honourable member was reading from.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Norbert does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to add my comments to this important bill, Bill 51, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act. As the previous speakers for our party have indicated, we are supportive of this particular piece of legislation and its intent on what it tries to do for the people of Manitoba. We think that this is a piece of legislation that we can support, and that is why the previous speakers from my party have indicated our strong support for this particular piece of legislation so that we can entrench in our legislation in the province the intent, the administrative principles of this legislation.

It indicates that there are five administrative principles that are shown in this particular piece of legislation and it shows—and I will indicate the five basic principles that we think are very important to medicare in this province and in this country. They are the public administration, the comprehensiveness of the plan, the universality of medicare, the portability and the accessibility—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask that the honourable member table the letter and he passes it on to the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and he has it rushed out of the House. That is uncalled for and unreasonable when the member for Selkirk can hustle a piece of paper out that that member does not want me to read. I am horrified, horrified, that that member, a reverend, would sneak a piece of paper out of this House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I previously ruled on the point of order and, in my opinion, I did not witness the member reading from

that specific piece of paper, and I ruled that there was no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Reid: I am somewhat shocked at the display of the honourable member opposite. I hoped that we could have seen some level of decorum in this Chamber, and it is obvious that that member opposite was not intent on allowing that to take place in the Chamber during debate here today.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

To continue my remarks, the previous speaker, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), has indicated the fundamental differences between Canada and the U.S., the constant comparisons we do about the levels of taxation in Canada versus the levels of taxation in the United States. It is very apparent from the different debates and the different pieces of literature that we have seen that there are significant differences in Canada how we support our medicare system to provide for the administrative principles that are outlined in this Bill 51, including universality and accessibility.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to discuss the differences between Canada's level of taxation, because I had members of my own family that were here visiting from the United States, and they were somewhat taken aback by the levels of taxation on certain items that they purchased here in this country.

When I indicated to them the difference between Canada and the United States was that we support our medicare system to provide equal opportunities for all Canadians, universal access to medicare in this country and this province, and I asked members of my family to indicate to me. They wrote back to me and gave me an indication on what it costs an average family of four in California where members

of my family are, for their medicare premium coverage in that state. They wrote back and they indicated that my cousin and her husband, the husband pays \$190 a month to cover the family unit for basic coverage. Then, on top of that, the husband's employer pays \$210 a month to cover the husband. On top of that, my cousin's employer pays \$200 a month to cover my cousin. The total altogether, there is a \$600 a month premium for medicare insurance that is paid by my family members down in California.

So if the average family had to pay that, I think it would be beyond their ability to pay that type of monthly premium, similar to what my family has seen in the States in what they have explained to me. So that is why we believe very strongly in the concept of universality and accessibility, along with the other administrative principles that this bill brings forward.

There are many things, Mr. Speaker, that we could talk about in debating this bill here today, but I believe other members of the Chamber would also like to have the opportunity to add their comments to the record as well. I know, Mr. Speaker, I will hopefully have another opportunity at a later date to add further comments to this particular piece of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst).

Six o'clock? Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? It is agreed? Agreed.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned till 10 a.m. tomorrow morning (Friday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Thursday, June 4, 1992

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Presenting Petitions

Heritage Federation Granting Authority Lamoureux	4198
Brandon General Hospital Funding L. Evans	4198
Aboriginal Justice Inquiry: Support for Recommendations Lathlin	4198

Reading and Receiving Petitions

Independent Children's Advocate Office Carstairs	4198
Dutch Elm Disease Funding Friesen	4198
Fight Back Against Child Abuse Campaign Barrett	4199
Aboriginal Justice Inquiry: Support for Recommendations Lathlin	4199

Tabling of Reports

Estimates, Consumer and Corporate Affairs McIntosh	4199
Estimates, Civil Service Commission Employee Benefits Praznik	4199
Estimates, Environment Cummings	4199
Annual Reports: Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation; Manitoba Pork est. Findlay	4200

Introduction of Bills

Bill 97, Winnipeg Bible College and Theological Seminary Incorporation Amendment Act Penner	4200
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Oral Questions

Mental Health Care System Reform Wasylycia-Leis; Orchard	4200
Port of Churchill Reid; Driedger	4201
Constitutional Proposal Carstairs; McCrae	4202
Municipal Assessments Wowchuk; Derkach	4203
Domtar Site Cerilli; Cummings	4204
Human Rights Case Cheema; Downey	4205
Policing Services Chomiak; McCrae	4206
The Diviners Render; Mitchelson	4206
Recycling Programs Edwards; Cummings	4207
Abitibi-Price - Pine Falls Edwards; Cummings	4207
Manitoba Blue Cross Santos; Manness	4208

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committee of Supply

Labour	4209
Justice	4237

Private Members' Business

Debate on Second Readings - Public Bills

Bill 51, Health Services Insurance Amendment Act Edwards	4262
Wasylycia-Leis	4263
Dewar	4265
Martindale	4267
Reid	4270