

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
Monday, 14 July, 1980

Time 8:00 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER by Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER, Hon. Harry E. Graham (Birtle-Russell): Presenting Petitions . . . Reading and Receiving Petitions . . . Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees . . . Ministerial Statements and Tabling of Reports . . . Notices of Motion . . . Introduction of Bills.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. SAMUEL USKIW: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Manitoba Housing and Renewal whether or not he can complete his answer to a question I posed to him some months ago with respect to the disposition of government properties in the area of East Selkirk, which was originally purchased for the purpose of land banking. I know a portion was sold and he reported on that but there is a large portion that he did not report on. I simply want to remind him that he didn't complete his answer.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the day.
The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. USKIW: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to ask the Minister whether he's prepared to take that as notice and come back with an answer; and along with that, whether he can also supply us with information as to what the government intends to do with the uncompleted development in the Selkirk area?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. J. FRANK JOHNSTON (Sturgeon Creek): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would only ask which uncompleted development he is speaking of?

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Minister, there is a development that's partially under way, or partially completed near the Mental Hospital at Selkirk, just south of the area, which I'm sure his staff is familiar with, if he isn't, and we just want to know what the status of that project is, it's been frozen, or at a standstill now for two or three years.

MR. JOHNSTON: I can identify the one now, Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of it, it has cost about 1 billion already, and we'll give the member a complete report.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. SIDNEY GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Attorney-General, the House

Leader. Mr. Speaker, is it correct that the House will lack the presence of the First Minister because of his attendance at the Republican Convention; the Minister of Agriculture because of his attendance at an agricultural conference for the remainder of this week; and yourself, Sir, for the remainder of this week because of government business? And if that is correct, is there any indication that the Minister can so conduct the business of the House, if the Opposition was co-operative with respect to Supply bills, so that others members can be at other places during the last two weeks in July and the month of August?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. GERALD W. J. MERCIER (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Agriculture is away at least today, tomorrow and Wednesday and I believe the Premier is away at least until Wednesday. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who has been acting in my stead, has tried to organize an agenda of business to accommodate those who are away and to accommodate members Opposite and that is why we met at Law Amendments Committee today to deal with the three bills that have passed second reading that stand in my name and I believe he indicated this afternoon that he intends to, some time during the course of the evening, call Law Amendments Committee again tonight to deal with the two bills that the committee has not dealt with. So I'm sure the Member for Morris is taking into consideration the absence from the House of the Minister of Agriculture in the same way.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciated that and my remarks were not intended in any way to criticize the absence, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, my remarks were intended to indicate an envy of the absence, not a criticism, and I just wondered whether the Minister would consider proceeding with the Supply bills, which I'm sure would be able to be dealt with very quickly within the next two days, and leave the remainder of the legislative work to be completed at a time when it's more convenient for all members of the House, including members of the back bench of the Conservative party, to deal with the legislation, such as the fall?

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Speaker, I believe it is the intention of the Minister of Consumer Affairs to call Bill 83 this evening and then later on in the evening to go into Law Amendments Committee. I'll pass on the suggestion to him with respect to consideration of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. HOWARD PAWLEY (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Last week the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicated that he had consulted with some municipalities in the additional

zone pertaining to the introduction of The Planning Act, notice was accepted by the Attorney-General of a question from myself later as to what municipalities the Minister consulted with. Is the Minister now in a position to respond?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. DOUG GOURLAY (Swan River): Yes, Mr. Speaker, either myself or members of my staff have talked to the R.M. of Rosser, R.M. of Springfield, R.M. of Macdonald and the R.M. of Tache with respect to The Planning Act.

MR. PAWLEY: Mr. Speaker, then by way of further supplementary to the Minister, can the Minister indicate why he did not consult with other municipalities that were as well affected by the legislation within the additional zone?

MR. GOURLAY: Mr. Speaker, we, at least I had indicated that I talked to the municipalities that I indicated. I have not had the opportunity to speak to the remaining additional zone municipalities.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George.

MR. BILLIE URUSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I direct this question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who is also Minister of Northern Affairs, and ask him whether the province is intending to cost-share in the supply of hydro-electric services to the community of Dauphin River.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. GOURLAY: Mr. Speaker, I'd take that question as notice.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George.

MR. URUSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister, if he's taking that question as notice. I just want to ascertain whether he's aware that there is both a reserve community and a non-native community at Dauphin River and the residents have received cost-sharing, I believe, from the federal government to the tune of approximately 170,000.00.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George with a final supplementary.

MR. URUSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, can he indicate what the outcome has been, since the Minister of Agriculture is away, in the discussions of the Minister and his officials with the RMs of Minitonas and Swan River with respect to the question of allocation of hay rights in the Red Deer Lake area, whether he's aware of the decision.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. GOURLAY: Mr. Speaker, I do not serve as Acting Minister of Agriculture.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Transcona.

MR. WILSON PARASIUK: My question is directed to the Minister of Energy. I would like to ask him what the Manitoba government's position is with respect to a federal proposal to pre-build the Alaska Pipeline, that is, pre-build only the portion in Canada, which would then entail a further exportation of natural gas from Canada to the United States?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Finance.

HON. DONALD W. CRAIK (Riel): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the principle reason for the building of that line is for the eventual export of Alaska gas through Canada to the United States. I understand that the present line may well be used for export of Canadian gas on a slop-out or other basis, but not exclusively for the purpose of Canadian gas. We have no debate, Mr. Speaker, with the decision of the federal government in this regard and it will bring about what eventually, I suppose, will be the sensible thing to do which is to move the Alaska gas to the United States by way of Canada.

MR. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the American government will give no ironclad commitment to build the Alaska Pipeline through Canada and continue the part that isn't in Canada, can the Minister indicate why the Manitoba government would support some position which would entail the exportation of natural gas leading to a situation where Canada's energy self-sufficiency would be further jeopardized, while at the same time, it adopts the position of increasing oil prices fairly fantastically in order to try and achieve some position of energy self-sufficiency, can the Minister explain why the Manitoba government has taken these apparently contradictory positions with respect to energy self-sufficiency for Canada?

MR. CRAIK: Mr. Speaker, the hearings held by the National Energy Board do not bear out the allegations of the Member for Transcona, in fact, they do otherwise. The petition of the Manitoba government to the National Energy Board has been, I think, pretty clear, and that is that Manitoba be guaranteed of a supply under a formula which is not less than that of the province of Alberta. The 30-year supply has been indicated by the National Energy Board and to suggest that the Canadian supply is in jeopardy is a little outlandish, to say the least, Mr. Speaker, and the rest of the suggestions from the Member for Transcona really haven't got anything to do with the decision at hand. To repeat, we've made our petition to the National Energy Board which a province ought to do and which we did. The National Energy Board has come back with figures that indicate that our position is well protected. It's protected no less than that of the province of Alberta and under the formula that they have agreed upon we don't find a great deal to argue about.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Transcona with a final supplementary.

MR. PARASIUK: . . . ask why the Manitoba government is accepting carte blanche the projections of the National Energy Board regarding the future availability of natural gas, especially over a long period of time, in view of the fact that the National Energy Board has reversed its position at least twice in the last eight years regarding the availability of natural gas from Manitoba and for the rest of Canada, because they base their projections entirely on the oil and natural gas producers giving them information which they have no means of verifying right now?

MR. CRAIK: Mr. Speaker, we haven't come to the conclusion that the National Energy Board does not know its sources of information other than by unreliable sources. I'm well aware of the fact that the National Energy Board has on occasion, in the past, come up with decisions and recommendations which have not been very accurate. There is no evidence in this case that their position is other than one which safeguards Canada's position. Mr. Speaker, in total, as I said, there are no grounds upon which Manitoba could enter this picture and prove anything other than the fact that there is an adequate supply of natural gas for Canada to go ahead on now.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

MR. ROBERT G. WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Attorney-General in charge of OPD. Would the Minister confirm that OPD, I guess that's the Orderly Payment of Debts, is an arm of government that debtors pay cash into staff people for distribution to creditors?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. GERALD W.J. MERCIER (Osborne): Generally, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WILSON: Has there been a request for an internal audit? A constituent claimed or reported to me that there is something wrong now with the reporting system and suggested there may have been an untimely death connected with the failure of that reporting system at this time.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the allegations that the Member for Wolseley offers.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Elmwood.

MR. RUSSELL DOERN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take advantage of asking the Attorney-General a question while he's making a pit stop in Manitoba, and ask him if he can indicate whether the Canadian Transport Commission has approved construction for the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Speaker, as I understood this matter, it had been approved, sent to the Minister's

office, who then, I believe, was to authorize the order being issued. I'm not fully aware if the final order has been issued.

MR. DOERN: Has the Minister received an indication from the federal government as to whether they will cost-share or fully cover the 2 to 3 million price rise caused by the construction delay?

MR. MERCIER: No I have not, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Elmwood with a final supplementary.

MR. DOERN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister whether his government feels committed to picking up that inflationary delay in the event that the federal government refuses to contribute?

MR. MERCIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question is hypothetical because as yet we don't have a response from the federal government. When that response is received we would, depending on what the response is, if it was negative, certainly give serious consideration to it.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. BRIAN CORRIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Attorney-General as well. Mr. Speaker, we would like to know, in view of the fact that the Honourable Attorney-General is about to commence his trip to the ongoing federal-provincial Constitutional Conference, whether he will be advising that Manitoba has changed its position relative to entrenchment of a Bill of Rights in the Constitution, and we'd like to know that, Mr. Speaker, in light of the recent events in this House relative to the Metis Inquiry, and the fact that the real danger in this regard with respect to human rights has now been proven to be from governmental sources. So will the government indicate whether or not it now favours an entrenched Bill of Rights in order to protect the right of the press to freedom of speech and expression?

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Speaker, the position of Manitoba has not changed and is the same as the majority of provinces, who do not favour an entrenched Charter of Rights.

MR. CORRIN: Yes, I would like to address a question to the Acting Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and it's quite an important one. I'll ask it and presumably somebody on that side is monitoring that department this week. In view of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that on June 12, the Milk Control Board announced it had started an important study regarding special programs for the aged, expectant mothers, and low income children, can the government advise whether prior to the dissolution of the present Milk Control Board, it will enable and allow that board to table its report in this Assembly on that very important subject? Can we have that assurance from the Treasury Bench, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. BRIAN RANSOM (Souris-Killarney): Mr. Speaker, I trust that any change in procedure will take place according to good order.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Churchill.

MR. JAY COWAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During his estimates, the Minister of Labour indicated that the department, the Workplace Safety and Health branch, was looking at expanding the role of workplace safety and health committees in work sites through Manitoba, I'd ask the Minister if he can indicate if any new sites had been designated as sites requiring workplace safety and health committees under the appropriate legislation.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour.

HON. KEN MacMASTER (Thompson): Not as of yet, Mr. Speaker.

MR. COWAN: Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary to the Minister, can he indicate if there is action being undertaken now by his department to draw up a list of workplaces that may well be designated in the near future?

MR. MacMASTER: Consideration is being given, Mr. Speaker, to something along that line.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister for Churchill with a final supplementary.

MR. COWAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister, I'd ask him if he can indicate as to when one should expect an announcement from his department and if that announcement will be along the lines of mandatory workplaces based on numbers of workers, or will be along the lines of designated workshops as it is now under the present Act.

MR. MacMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we haven't made that final decision, but it could be one of those or another variation of industries in the province.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

MRS. JUNE WESTBURY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the Minister of Finance. When can we expect an announcement regarding the Advisory Council on the Status of Women as promised in the speech from the Throne? Will the composition of that Advisory Council be announced within the next week or so?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Labour.

MR. MacMASTER: I would hope in the near future, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WESTBURY: Well, I hope in the near future we're no longer sitting, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for addressing the question to the wrong Minister. Can the Minister of Labour advise whether this announcement will be made before this House rises?

MR. MacMASTER: I have no specific indication as to when the House would rise, Mr. Speaker, but I hope I spelled it out very clearly that we do intend to appoint that committee in the very near future.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Economic Development.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Brandon East had asked me a question last Thursday or Friday regarding the Federal Pioneer Limited. I did not recognize the name that he gave me, I believe he mentioned Exxon. But just to briefly bring it up to date, November 16th we were notified that the acquisition by Reliance Electric of Federal Pioneer was turned down by FIRA. On May 1st, 1980, we were informed by the FIRA that the acquisition by General Electric of Federal Pioneer was turned down by FIRA, and the company that has the request for acquisition at the present time is Enco Incorporated, which I believe owns Reliance Electric and its subsidiaries and Pioneer Federal Limited is what they're asking to purchase. And I believe Enco is Exxon if I'm not mistaken after checking on it. There has been no decision made by FIRA at the present time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Brandon East.

MR. LEONARD S. EVANS: Yes, I thank the Minister, Mr. Speaker, for that information, confirming that Exxon is in the process of attempting to acquire Federal Pioneer Electric or a division of it, could the Minister advise what position the government of Manitoba will take in this respect because, as the Minister knows, he is in a position to give an opinion, or to give some advice to the federal government, with regard to acquisitions. And I wonder, therefore, Mr. Speaker, whether the Honourable Minister would indicate at this time, what the position of the government will be?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, as I think the member knows, the arrangement between FIRA and the province of Manitoba, or the federal government and the province of Manitoba, in these matters, I don't know about the other provinces, has been one that we would not announce our positions for fear of jeopardizing or influencing the decision of the board in Ottawa. But I can say to the honourable member that the usual procedure is to decide whether it will be beneficial to the province of Manitoba, or better still if it could be harmful to the province of Manitoba, we would look at it very very closely. I can say to the honourable member that we would be concerned, we would be very concerned about this request for acquisition of Federal Pioneer.

MR. EVANS: Yes, well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister puts his finger on the nub of the matter and that is, will this acquisition, if it goes through, cause fewer jobs in this particular industry in Manitoba? Is there a danger in this particular takeover, if it is approved, in the province losing some jobs, or losing an industry, or part of an industry, and I would imagine, Mr. Speaker, that this would be part of the Minister's investigation, so could he indicate now whether he

has any information which would tell us whether there is some jeopardy, whether this company is being put in any jeopardy by a takeover?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, we don't know whether the company would be in any jeopardy or not. The point of the whole thing is the fact that we don't know and we have not been guaranteed the insurances that we would ask for in FIRA applications. We would be very concerned about this takeover, mainly because we do not have all the information we would want to have, or the insurances we would want to have in this case.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Brandon East with a final supplementary.

MR. EVANS: Yes, well, will the Minister assure the House that he and his department will indeed investigate and attempt to get as much guarantee as possible, with respect to this matter? Inasmuch as there is a possibility that change of ownership can be detrimental to the industry, so would the Minister give that assurance to the House?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I would give the insurance that if we do not have the information that we want, and the insurances that we want for the benefit of the people of Manitoba, we will still remain very concerned about the acquisition.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the House Leader, and it relates, Mr. Speaker, to the vote in this House, which dealt with allegations of impropriety on Legislative Counsel before committee, and the concern of the members that Legislative Counsel be at committee and not engaged in political debate, would the House Leader assure the House, that the manner in which the committee proceeds, and whether or not they will call witnesses, which I happen to think is completely unnecessary, is a matter which will not be predecided and will be determined when the committee decides to deal with the question?

MR. JORGENSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that matter is entirely in the hands of the committee, since the matter has been referred to them.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I believe that some misunderstanding arises from certain predictions as to how the committee would receive some of which were made by the House Leader himself. Can the House be assured that it is entirely open to the committee to examine the record and report to the House that Legislative Counsel did not engage in political debate, and that is one way in which the matter could be disposed of, should the committee so decide.

MR. JORGENSON: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to predetermine the decision of the committee, but the observation that I made was a personal one and I don't intend that I shall bring any influence to bear on the action of the committee themselves.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George.

MR. URUSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I direct this question to the Minister responsible for transportation dealing with railways. Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that it has generally been recognized by our sister provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, the effect that the Canadian Pacific Railways have not lived up to their obligations under the Railway Act, and they have proposed that the railway lines west of Winnipeg be taken over, can the Minister indicate what the provincial government's position is to this idea of Alberta and British Columbia?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation.

HON. DON ORCHARD (Pembina): Well, Mr. Speaker, I first am in the process of determining first hand what exactly the position taken by my colleagues or my counterparts in British Columbia and Alberta, in fact, was, and intend to have that position clarified in the very near future.

MR. URUSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister whether the Manitoba government position recognizes that the Canadian Pacific Railways have not lived up to their obligation and whether they're prepared to recommend that rail line be nationalized?

MR. ORCHARD: Mr. Speaker, I suppose railroads have many obligations. Is the Member for St. George referring to passenger obligations? What obligations is he specifically referring to?

MR. URUSKI: Mr. Speaker, well if the Minister doesn't know what obligations, I certainly won't tell him. If he can't recognize that they haven't lived up to their obligations of hauling grain this year, I don't think anybody can tell the Minister that.

Could I ask the Minister whether or not the province of Manitoba believes in a responsive national transportation system and/or interprovincial transport, regulated by the federal government, or provincially regulated?

MR. ORCHARD: Well, Mr. Speaker, now that we've qualified that the Member for St. George is on the usual national farmer's union witch hunt against the CPR, in terms of grain . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. ORDER please. May I suggest to the honourable member that he attribute words to the member who spoke them and not to someone else.

The Honourable Minister.

MR. ORCHARD: Mr. Speaker, I will retract that statement. Now that we have established that the Member for St. George is engaging in the Socialist witch hunt against the CPR, and their alleged performance or lack of performance in hauling grain, I might point out to the Member for St. George that amidst a great amount of difficulty this year, in terms of Second Narrows bridge failure etc. etc. that we

are approximately 18 percent ahead of last year, in terms of export performance in grain.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that much of that credit has to be attributed to the brief time that the Honourable Don Mazankowski was federal Transport Minister, and that some of the improvements that he put in place, in terms of the Grain Co-ordinator and other initiatives, positive initiatives, in grain transportation, are now bearing fruit for the farmers of Manitoba and western Canada. I would like to assure the Member for St. George that yes, indeed, this government indeed has a great deal of interest in the movement of grain, as was demonstrated in January of 1977 when Premier Lyon, the Premier of this province .

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

MR. URUSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the Minister of Agriculture is so concerned about the incomes that farmers receive from the sales of the grain, is he now prepared to recommend to his colleague, the First Minister, that they urge the federal government to abandon the stand of the embargo of grain to Russia contrary to their earlier position supporting the federal government where their colleagues have now reversed their position?

MR. ORCHARD: I want first off to correct something that my honourable colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources . . . Premier Lyon instituted that conference on grain handling in 1979, not 1977 as I indicated. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, in terms of this government's endorsement of the grain embargo that the United States has imposed against communist aggression in the free world, Mr. Speaker, I would think that the grain embargo in the export of grain is being solved now, every day as Manitoba goes further and further into the drought scene which is going to limit grain production in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, may well limit the amount of available export supplies that this country has to deliver to the hungry world. A sad state of affairs indeed, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Rock Lake.

MR. HENRY J. EINARSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Transportation. I would like to ask him a question which relates to the National Farmers Union taking the Canadian Pacific Railway to court. I wonder if the Minister of Transportation could advise the members of this House and the people of Manitoba what the results were on the court case decision versus the Canadian Pacific Railway and the National Farmers Union. What was the outcome of that decision?

MR. ORCHARD: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the National Farmers Union lost their efforts in taking to court the CPR for the alleged failure to haul grain. I don't know the details of the case and why the case wasn't sufficiently substantiated, but nevertheless I guess the courts decide on an unbiased and factual account of the situation.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the Minister of Transportation is so expert on the question of the sales of grain to Russia or the embargo of the same, I wonder whether he can enlighten us on whether his government is prepared to pressure the Canadian government in order to recover any damages to Canadian farmers as a result of the embargo, and in particular would he take up the case for Jack Murta, who says he lost 30,000 because of the embargo, Mr. Speaker, which he himself put in place when they were the government of Canada.

MR. ORCHARD: Mr. Speaker, from time to time people in the free world make sacrifices and I submit that Mr. Murta, if he did lose 30,000 because of a grain embargo as the Member for Lac du Bonnet indicates his government supported, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that is the supreme sacrifice that any freedom fighter can make in the preservation of democracy.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

MR. D. JAMES WALDING: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister to whom Manitoba Telephone System reports. I asked the Minister a question last Thursday. I wonder if he now has the answer.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Government Services.

MR. ENNS: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday seems such a long time ago. I wonder if the honourable member would repeat the question.

MR. WALDING: Mr. Speaker, as I recall, the Minister took several questions as notice and they had to do with a reported 500,000 loan by Manitoba Telephone System to Interdiscom Systems Limited.

MR. ENNS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that that loan was made by Manitoba Telephone Systems to the firm identified as Interdiscom. It's a firm that is involved with the research and development work of some of the trial new communications technology at Headingley under the IDA program. It was deemed in the interests of Manitoba Telephone Systems involvement with that firm and in the new technology that is being brought onstream through that experiment to make that loan. It is fully secured by debentures and interests in the firm in the product that is expected to come out of the research and development of Interdiscom in connection with this trial.

MR. WALDING: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for the answer. I would like to ask him a supplementary. In view of the fact that he had to take the question as notice, was the Minister not aware that this particular loan was made?

MR. ENNS: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member, having some knowledge in the interests and the

operations of the Crown corporations, the Manitoba Telephone System, is aware that the system operates under the direction of a board of commissioners and a chairman of that board of commissioners, and as such, within the confines of The Manitoba Telephone Act, is of course empowered to do certain things. A direct answer to the honourable member's question, I was not aware that loan was being considered or was about to be made to this firm.

MR. WALDING: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was aware as the Minister suggests that Manitoba Telephone System is run by its board and I'm also aware, Mr. Speaker, that there is a member of the government, an elected representative, who sits on that board. I'd like to ask the Minister further if he can inform the House what the terms and conditions of the loan were.

MR. ENNS: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that that kind of a detailed question would be appropriately asked for through an Order for Papers.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the Minister for Highways suggests that the Member of Parliament for Lisgar is quite willing to make a supreme sacrifice for the cause, would he then explain to the House, Mr. Speaker, why it is that that particular individual, along with a number of other Conservative MPs, have been harrasing the now new Liberal government for compensation for the fact that they have lost money as a result of the embargo of grain sales to the Soviet Union?

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Transportation.

MR. ORCHARD: I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Lisgar and others of his colleagues, would be hassling, as the Member for Lac du Bonnet puts it, the present Liberal government for any losses, because I think the former Prime Minister, the Honourable Joe Clark, indicated that the farmers would not be the people to bear the costs of the embargo. That was a former federal Conservative Party promise. And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, they would hope that would be part and parcel.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet with a final question.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Highways would convey to his federal colleagues the fact that I haven't found, and I don't think he can find, one taxpayer in Canada that wants to pay that bill either.

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

MR. JORGENSEN: My point of order is simply that questions that are asked in the House are asked of the Ministry over which they have responsibilities. I fail to see where that particular question has

anything to do with the responsibilities of the Minister of Transportation.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please. The time for question period having expired, the Honourable Government House Leader.

MR. JORGENSEN: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would call Bill 83 for the purpose of allowing the Member for Brandon West to complete his remarks after which the Mace will remain on the table and the House will go into Law Amendments Committee to complete consideration of the bills that are still yet uncompleted.

A MEMBER: We can come back?

MR. JORGENSEN: Well, we'll come back into the House and it depends on how late we are as to whether or not we'll conduct any further business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNED DEBATES ON SECOND READING

BILL NO. 83 AN ACT TO AMEND THE LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT AND THE CONDOMINIUM ACT

MR. SPEAKER: Bill No. 83, the Honourable Member for Brandon West has 34 minutes. The Honourable Minister without Portfolio.

HON. EDWARD MCGILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought we should have that matter clearly on the record to begin. I appreciate the opportunity to complete the remarks which were terminated at the lunch hour on Bill 83 and the amendments proposed by the Honourable Member for Inkster, recognizing that the adjournment of the bill will remain in the name of the Member for Churchill.

At the adjournment at the lunch hour, Mr. Speaker, I was referring to the remarks and the comments of the Honourable Member for Transcona, both during this debate and in the debate two years ago when a bill relating to the same subject was introduced. I had reached that point where I was quoting statistics provided by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation with respect to the vacancy rate in the city of Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, I pointed out that rate in April of this year was 6.7 percent which is the second highest of all the major market areas in the country. The highest vacancy rate is in the city of Hull, Quebec, and is 6.8. Now, this is significant to me, Mr. Speaker, because in the positions taken by the opposition two years ago, the position was that if vacancy rates were to get into the neighbourhood of 4 or 5 percent they would think it would be reasonable to terminate rent controls. But since the vacancy rates at that time were 1.2 and 1.3 or 4 percent, in that area, they saw no possibility or opportunity for a disengaging process. Mr. Speaker, it was further pretty generally understood by the comments of members opposite that it was not their intention to continue in a permanent way the control of rents in Manitoba. These controls had been instituted as part of an anti-

inflation control mechanism and were intended to be related to those controls which began to be discontinued in April two years ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a rather significant difference in what the members opposite are saying now and what they said two years ago. I quote and note a quotation from the Member for Wellington in the Free Press of July 4, 1980 where he says his party has long supported the retention of controls and would reintroduce them if elected. He said that he couldn't be specific in the form of controls an NDP government would pass, because he doesn't have access to the necessary information. I can understand that, Mr. Speaker, some of the comments he has made with respect to rent controls indicate that there are some serious gaps in the information which he has been receiving.

His seatmate, the Member for Transcona, when he quoted vacancy rate statistics this morning, did it in rather a selective way I believe. He quoted vacancy rates for Transcona and for St. James-Assiniboia but he didn't refer in any way to overall vacancy rates for the city of Winnipeg. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that because that vacancy rate didn't suit his argument that he probably was aware of the new figures but did not use them. I rather think, Mr. Speaker, that he was somewhat less than completely candid with the House, less candid than was the Member for Brandon East when he discussed this bill, when he observed that the vacancy rates in Brandon, the other city under control at the present time, were easing. I think he was being very candid with the House in making that information available. I can't say the same for the Member for Transcona who I believe should have given the House the overall vacancy rate for the city of Winnipeg. Some other vacancy rates to compare with the city of Winnipeg might be interesting, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Honourable Member for Transcona.

MR. PARASIUK: Mr. Speaker, the Minister without Portfolio has said that I didn't refer to the average rate in Winnipeg and I did refer to it. I said it was 4.8 percent, according to the figures that were available from CMHC for April and I used those figures and I went out to point out specific shortages in specific geographical areas of Winnipeg. The Minister is saying that I didn't do that when, in fact, I did.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order please. I would hope the honourable member would wait until the member has completed his remarks and then he can rise and correct any inaccuracies. The Honourable Minister.

MR. MCGILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the member is quoting now a general vacancy rate of 4.8. I'm not sure where that figure comes from because the table which I have in front of me indicates that the overall rate for Winnipeg is 6.7. Some of the other rates are interesting, Mr. Speaker. The vacancy rate in Vancouver is 0.2 percent in April; in Toronto, 1.1; in Thunder Bay, 2.6; in Regina, 2.6; in Saskatoon, it's 2.3. So, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty evident that if the members opposite are serious and are holding to their positions that, when vacancy rates became easier, they would agree that

rent controls should be discontinued. I suggest to them that vacancy rates are, indeed, well above the 4.5 or 5 percent that they thought would be necessary in order to take this move. I cannot clearly understand why their position now is changing to one that is quite different from that which they gave the House two years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Transcona also indicated and was critical of the Minister responsible for rent controls in that he was bringing this legislation to the House at a very late date and that this was unfair and that this would cause untold hardship and difficulty for those people who would be affected by the decontrol process and by the terms of the legislation. Mr. Speaker, I suggest to him, and to other members opposite, that while this delay in introducing the legislation was not entirely premeditated by the Minister, there were technical problems which arose. It would seem to me rather clear that the fact that it is being brought in at this time will enable the Minister to embody in that bill, through amendment, the mechanisms that he may consider now necessary, in the light of experience and positions that have been revealed to him during the last few days of the final period of Phase IV of rent controls.

So, Mr. Speaker, what the Member for Transcona indicates is a weakness in the late arrival of this legislation may, indeed, be a benefit for those who are to be directly affected by the lifting of controls. I'm sure that the Minister, as he has indicated on a number of occasions to the House, will be intending to amend the legislation in a way which will enable it, in a maximum way, to deal with those particular situations which have been brought to his attention in the recent days.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to comment on the positions taken by the Member for Seven Oaks. He was one of two or three principal opposition spokesmen two years ago when it was announced that it was the intention of this government to proceed through a period of decontrol and the final disengagement process. The Member for Seven Oaks discussed the previous bill by suggesting that, at that time, it really was an Act to introduce the demise of rent controls. He said, 'I, as others in this House, recognize rent controls cannot exist forever, that there is a negative aspect of it, that you simply cannot sit on the pressure indefinitely, that rent control is a temporary step. It was introduced by us' meaning the previous administration 'when we were in government at the same time as the AIB was introduced'. He later said the following day and, Mr. Speaker, again I'm quoting the Member for Seven Oaks, 'Mr. Speaker, without some strategy to build up the supply, until we have about 4 or 5 percent vacancy rate, when this happens, sure you can remove rent controls'.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I and other members on this side are inclined to listen when the Member for Seven Oaks makes his position known. I'm under the impression that he hasn't yet contributed in this debate and I'm rather looking forward to hearing what he will say at this time, whether he will recognize that, while we all agree that the disengagement process will be difficult even with a 6.7 percent vacancy rate. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, that was in April. It may well be that the vacancy rate

in Winnipeg is somewhat higher than that now, since the universities have completed their term and there is usually an increase in the number of vacant suites when that occurs. So certainly, Mr. Speaker, we can be reasonably certain that the overall vacancy rate in Winnipeg is 6.7, nearly 2 percent above the highest vacancy rate that the Member for Transcona, two years ago, and the Member for Seven Oaks, two years ago, indicated that when that point was reached they would certainly agree that rent controls should be discontinued.

Mr. Speaker, it's really a difficult thing now to understand why their positions have I was going to say subtly changed but not so subtly changed, they were clearly committed to the principle that rent controls were temporary and they have somehow now indicated that they have changed that position and they favour what I would seem to think is a permanent control of rents in our province.

No one has suggested at any time that we would be able to get out of rent controls without having some groups, in those people who require and need and depend on rental accommodation for their living positions; no one has ever suggested, Mr. Speaker, that could be done without some difficulty for some of those groups, and particularly for groups on limited incomes or on pension incomes which are relatively fixed in size. I suggest, and we should remember that steps have been taken, in a complementary way, to provide for the relief of some of these groups, through the programs that have been announced earlier this year by the Minister of Economic Development. The opposition have seen fit to be critical, even of that kind of support for elderly renters and renters on low incomes and feel that this will not be enough to enable the transition to be made fairly with all groups in the renting scheme.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I repeat, we expected there would be difficulties. We could hardly have expected that we would have had as favourable a situation as we have at the moment on June 30th for the discontinuance of rent controls. We think that the vacancy rates are such that this transition can be made and that the Minister is aware of those particular problem areas; that he still has time to bring into the legislation the mechanisms that will be considered necessary to monitor, to provide appeals, systems for people who perhaps are beset by unconscionable demands by a few landlords. By and large, Mr. Speaker, the great majority of the landlords in the city of Winnipeg, I believe, will keep their increases within reasonable bounds. It is impossible to provide legislation in detail that will take care of all kinds of demands. It is impossible to ever satisfy all tenants because, Mr. Speaker, we know that there will be tenants who, with any kind of an increase, will say that it is unreasonable, that it cannot be justified by the landlord. It's up to the Minister and the people he puts in place to deal with these complaints in a fair and equitable way. I have every confidence that will be done. I know that we will hear many briefs and that there will be many indications from various groups in our province, particularly in the city of Winnipeg, complaining about the dire results of this decontrol process.

But I suggest again, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to members opposite, that this is, indeed, the time in which to complete this

disengagement process and that it can be done knowing that the vacancy rates are well above those which even the opposition, in its most critical moments, said were the minimum at which such a move could be made. I see no reason now, having given such clear and long-term advance notice of the intent of the government, why it should suddenly be the position of members of opposite that we should not proceed. They are acting as if this move was rather a surprise. I can think of few programs, few policies, that have been given with such a degree of advance notice and with such clear spelling out of the intention of the government.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this legislation to the members. I congratulate the Minister for the way in which these matters and the questions which have arisen have been dealt with by him. In conclusion, just to briefly comment on the rather large complaint and the furor that erupted a day or two ago when it was alleged that a document relating to rent controls had been doctored and that the real report had never reached the Legislature. Mr. Speaker, there was only one real report and that was the one which the Minister received from those people who were responsible to provide it to him. The alleged other reports were not indeed reports, they were working papers, and they were not intended to ever be the final paper.

And, Mr. Speaker, for those who hold the opposite position, I think the Minister has clearly explained to the House that he received a report and without any guidance or suggestion from him, he accepted it and he made it available to the members opposite. So, I again, would suggest that the time is right, the vacancy rates are right, and we don't intend permanently to remain under rent controls. I thought the members opposite had the same view of that rent control scheme and policy. They introduced it, they said at the time it was temporary, the temporary time is now, we should proceed with this legislation and make the transition.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

MR. JORGENSEN: Mr. Speaker, we'll now proceed to the Law Amendments Committee, where we will complete consideration of the bills there. The Bill No. 83 stands in the name of the Member for Churchill who had the original adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER: The House is then recessed for committee work.

MR. SPEAKER: I am now leaving the Chair, to return at the pleasure of the House.

HOUSE ADJOURNED TO LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Government House Leader.

MR. JORGENSEN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable, the Attorney-General, the House do now adjourn.

Monday, 14 July, 1980

MOTION presented and carried.

MR. JORGENSON: Mr. Speaker, honourable members would be interested in the Order of Business for tomorrow. It is my intention to have the House sit three sessions tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The House is accordingly adjourned and stands adjourned until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. (Tuesday)