



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupert'sland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 20, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I would like to present the petition of Josefina Bundoc, Henry Tang, Jannie Tang and others requesting the Government of Canada to cancel fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Santos), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has been immeasurably enriched socially, economically, and culturally by immigrants and their families; and

WHEREAS it was for this reason that successive provincial and federal governments have encouraged immigration to Manitoba; and

WHEREAS since 1993, the current federal Liberal government has reversed these policies by instituting a series of changes making immigration more difficult; and

WHEREAS the 1994 changes in quotas for family reunification class of immigrants were unfair and punitive; and

WHEREAS the fee increases for immigrants instituted in the 1995 federal Liberal budget are neither fair nor justifiable and border on racism; and

WHEREAS the new \$975 fee being imposed on adult immigrants is more than many immigrants make in their home country in an entire year and will make it even more difficult for people from these countries to immigrate to Canada;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the Government of Canada cancel these fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

* (1335)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I would like to, first of all, table the Annual Report for the Manitoba Municipal Employees Benefits Board.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

McCain Foods Expansion

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I have a statement for the House.

Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to congratulate McCain Foods for the decision to embark upon a major expansion of their potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie, which will have a major impact on the economy of both Portage and the province.

The company plans to invest almost \$56 million over the next two years, with the possibility of additional expansion which will bring the total to \$75 million.

Madam Speaker, McCain has shown a great deal of faith in Manitoba's ability to compete and to supply high-quality raw product to which to add value.

I would like to point out McCain looked at many different locations throughout North America for a location for their plant and chose Portage la Prairie and Manitoba because of our advantages, including, in the words of Arnold Park, the executive vice-president and general manager of McCain Canada, location, quality raw material available, superb workforce and our potato producers. Mr. Park also cited the support the company has received from the community and the government. This is a strong testimonial to Manitoba.

This plant will be the largest and the most modern in McCain worldwide operation. It will create hundreds of jobs during the construction phase and also create as many as 150 jobs within the plant, as well as creating potentially hundreds of spin-off jobs throughout the agricultural community. This project will make a significant positive impact on our province's already impressive record of exports to the United States.

This expansion, as well as an announced \$18-million expansion at the Nestle-Simplot plant in Carberry will further fuel value-added processing and export growth, and that means even more jobs for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, through these private-sector investments, Manitoba will continue to be a leader in job growth. We are the only province to record eight consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth in 1995, which gives us the highest level of employment since our all-time high in 1990.

Expansion within the agri-food industry in Manitoba is all the more important because of the need to diversify in light of recent federal government changes to agriculture, in particular as it relates to the cancellation of the Crow rate. Manitoba farmers are looking for ways to improve returns on their farming operations, and these projects provide that opportunity.

Madam Speaker, we are now seeing the benefits of a climate of opportunity provided by this government to make Manitoba an attractive place for investment and job creation. Almost every day we see new examples of companies putting their faith in Manitoba and in Manitobans, and we are all seeing the benefits.

Thank you very much.

*(1340)

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, we would be pleased to join our voices with those of the government in welcoming the new employment opportunities in these two plants. We are always happy when there are new economic development and export opportunities for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we are, at the same time, deeply concerned that in a number of submissions to the Environment Commission and at hearings, in particular, I recall, on the diversion of the Assiniboine River, that our provincial departments have acknowledged that they do not have the staff nor the test wells to monitor adequately the Winkler or the Oak Lake or the other major aquifers, including the Carberry aquifer.

The drawdown rates of these aquifers are very significant, Madam Speaker, and we would like to see the government put in place sufficient measures that they can adequately monitor the drawdown rates and provide a really seriously examined sustainable development plan for that region of Manitoba. We do not want the Carberry desert to become the dominating feature of western Manitoba.

So I thank you for the opportunity to respond. We welcome the jobs. We are deeply concerned about the sustainability of the underlying water supplies which are so essential to the common methods of potato farming now used.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Jets/Arena MEC Proposal

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister.

Last June, when the Premier rejected the Burns recommendations of \$111 million of public investment and called those investments unconscionable for the public purse, he was involved in creating a group called the MEC to help us keep the hockey team in the province of Manitoba.

Throughout the election campaign the Premier, on many radio occasions, many debates, stated to Manitobans that he was committed to (1) capping the donations of the provincial Conservative government to \$10 million, and (2) cancelling the operating-loss agreement for the hockey team effective May 1.

I would like to ask the Premier, was the financial plan prepared by the group that the Premier was involved in establishing, the MEC group, proposing a plan consistent with the commitment of the Premier to cap the donation of the provincial government to \$10 million?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member opposite referred to my comments last June in response to the Burns report. Obviously, as he regurgitates and recycles his questions, he did not change the preamble, because I am sure he means June of 1994 because that is indeed when that comment was made.

As the member knows full well, many things have changed along the way as many people became involved in a grassroots process to attempt to maintain NHL hockey in Winnipeg. I know that members opposite fought that at every step of the way. They did not believe in supporting Manitobans in their efforts to do that. At every step of the way they tried to make cheap political points on the issue, and they continue to do nothing positive but to be only negative.

Even today the duke of despair from Crescentwood, in response to an investment of \$75 million, creation of hundreds of jobs, comes up here and speaks negatively, negatively, negatively, joining his colleague the prince of darkness in this whole effort.

Well, Manitobans have spoken. They are fed up with the negativism of New Democrats and their lack of leadership in this province. I say to the member opposite that all of the information that he seeks will be provided.

We have said that there will be audits, that there will be complete analysis, and all of the information will be provided in due course. All of the information that is required will be provided on all of these issues.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, it is understandable why the Premier choked with the comments he made because what we are seeking here is accountability and truth, not rhetoric and speeches from the Premier.

Madam Speaker, I want to table the financial plan submitted by the Manitoba Entertainment Complex, a group created by the Premier, dated April 11, 1995, some two weeks before the election campaign during a period of time where the Premier was going across this province saying that the provincial Tory commitment was some \$10 million capped, full stop.

In this document prepared by a group to the Manitoba Securities Commission, it outlines a federal and provincial contribution not of \$10 million of provincial contribution, but some \$35 million. In this document it further outlines that the provincial shares would be transferred to the new ownership group, a further financial contribution, and further, it goes up to \$89 million in public money.

I would like to ask the Premier, was he aware that this plan totally contradicted his election promise some two weeks before the election?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, if Manitobans are looking for truth, they will not look to the Leader of the Opposition for it.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Answer those questions. When did you know?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I have not seen this plan. I will take the time to look through it. I can tell him unequivocally that during the election campaign I made my commitment based on the information that was available to me.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

Is he saying to Manitobans that the group of business people that he and his Finance minister established in June of 1994, a group of people who met with government officials and government ministers and the

Premier all the way through the period of time, were going to put forward proposals to the Manitoba Securities Commission that had not been approved by the Premier himself and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and kept secret until past the election campaign?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, firstly, again, the falsehood that he continues to put forward, he adds to. The group that was known as MEC, Manitoba Entertainment Complex, was not created by this government or anybody in this government.

It was created by the individuals who came forward and offered their efforts and their energy and their commitments to try and put together a package to save the Winnipeg Jets. That is the fact. They were not created by this government, and he ought not to try and spin that falsehood either.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, a new question to the Premier.

The Premier has acknowledged throughout the months that the former treasurer of the Conservative Party, Mr. Jules Benson, who now works as the secretary to the Treasury Board, has been involved in discussions all along with MEC. We know he was meeting with the Premier all the way through the election campaign. In fact, we saw him coming out of the Premier's Office on many occasions.

My new question to the Premier is, in the submission to the Manitoba Securities Commission it states and I quote: that because of the pending provincial election, that sensitivity to the issues involved in this matter, we would ask that the information and the application be dealt with in a strictly confidential manner. In other words, kept from the people of Manitoba. I would like to ask the Premier whether this confidential proposal from the MEC group, was that on the instructions of the Premier and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) who wanted to keep their election promise secret until after the election campaign?

Mr. Filmon: Absolutely not, Madam Speaker. I would think that they were more concerned with the fact that every day of the election campaign, these

members opposite were trying to play cheap politics with the issue of the Winnipeg Jets and were raising it and distorting it for own their political purposes.

* (1350)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier.

In light of the fact it was the Premier's promise of limiting and capping the donation, the provincial commitment, to \$10 million all the way through the campaign day after day, radio debate after radio debate—all the debates that I attended with the Premier, that was his commitment; that was in Tory pamphlets all across the province—in light of the fact it was his promise to commit only to \$10 million and in light of the fact that the MEC plan clearly contradicts and has much more provincial contribution than the word of the Premier, why would the MEC group want to keep this document secret if it was not only to protect the Premier's alleged word in the election campaign until after the election campaign?

Mr. Filmon: He would have to ask MEC that, Madam Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Richard Nixon used to say—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

An Honourable Member: You cannot help it. You lied your way into office.

An Honourable Member: You are the most dishonest, disreputable person.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson will be recognized when the Speaker maintains order.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, Madam Speaker, in some of the heat of some of the exchange going on back and forth, some of us may have made some comments, including the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) who just called me dishonest, and coming from that First Minister, I would ask that that First Minister withdraw that comment unequivocally.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order from the honourable member for Thompson, I did not hear an exchange between members. I will, however, check Hansard and, if necessary, report back.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this plan was dated and filed with the Manitoba Securities Commission two weeks prior to the election and voting day. This plan requires more contributions from the provincial government than the Premier's word. This plan includes more contributions from the public sector than what anybody was ever led to believe before the election campaign.

Is the Premier telling us that Mr. Benson, the former Conservative treasurer and secretary to the Treasury Board of the Conservative government, who met with the Premier daily throughout the election campaign, never informed him that his government had agreed to donations and contributions well beyond the Premier's word of \$10 million during the campaign with the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: That is absolutely right, Madam Speaker, because this government did not agree to any additional contributions—absolutely not, absolutely not.

Winnipeg Jets/Arena

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Following the settlement of the NHL strike without an agreement for a salary cap or revenue sharing, everyone knew that keeping the Winnipeg Jets in Winnipeg was going to be increasingly costly and difficult. In January, the Minister of Finance met with Lloyd Axworthy and Spirit/MEC officials as well as

senior staff to review the financial realities facing MEC.

Will the minister tell the House what MEC stated was needed from the province and the federal government in order to complete their business plan?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): The MEC group, as the member for Crescentwood well knows, that tabled their ultimate business plan with us on April 26 of 1995—at that time at those meetings we confirmed what we were prepared to commit, the \$10 million that was our commitment at that time based on all the information that was available, and that was what was communicated to MEC.

Mr. Sale: I would ask the minister, will he please stop skating and finally confirm that MEC indicated that it needed \$35 million to \$45 million in cash from the province and the federal government in January at that meeting?

Mr. Stefanson: MEC had some preliminary business plans that showed a level of contribution of somewhere in that vicinity. We indicated to them what we were prepared to commit. The federal government was taking under advisement what they felt they could commit, and later in the whole process the federal government came back with their ultimate commitment to the process. The direction to MEC was to work on their business plan to find all of their other sources of funding, Madam Speaker.

*(1355)

An Honourable Member: I thank the honourable minister for confirmation of—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would just remind the honourable member that if he wishes to have comments on Hansard, he must be recognized through the Chair.

Mr. Sale: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for that helpful direction. I apologize to you.

How then does the Minister of Finance explain the fact that following the January and February meetings

where the \$35-million to \$45-million figures were used and made very clear by MEC/Spirit, the federal and provincial governments then proceeded to give MEC/Spirit \$3 million to continue with their business plan?

Why would they do that if they had not agreed to the \$35-million, \$40-million precondition?

Mr. Stefanson: Plain and simple, Madam Speaker, because MEC had to continue to do all kinds of work in terms of attempting to raise their funding. I mean, major parts of it was the preparation of the business plan, was the marketing package that was underway, all elements of attempting to raise the funding that ultimately led to MEC being unable to close the financial package, then being revived by the Spirit of Manitoba and the significant financial undertaking put in place by them. It was that simple.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Both the Speaker and the Clerk have indicated that the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has had one question and two supplementary questions, and I did recognize the honourable member for Inkster.

Immigration Agreement Negotiations

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier regarding the immigration bilateral agreement.

There is a great deal of concern in terms of the way in which this government has been dealing with this issue, the apparent misleading of individuals within this Chamber and, in fact, the public. You can read articles through today's media where there are very serious allegations that are put forward against this particular government.

The fact of the matter is seven of the 10 provinces have achieved a bilateral agreement, and the federal government is proposing a new provincial nominee immigration classification.

The question to the Premier is, does the Premier believe that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) is capable of negotiating and co-operating in good faith? If not, maybe it is time that we replace this particular minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I thank the member for Inkster for that comment and question because it enables me to speak to some of the lack of credibility of the federal minister in the article that he refers to.

Madam Speaker, I quote from the article that says: Marchi said he has never been contacted directly by Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship Minister Harold Gilleshammer.

I have for tabling, Madam Speaker, a letter on the letterhead of the office of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration directed to the Honourable Harold Gilleshammer, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, dated in Ottawa June 23, 1995:

"Dear Mr. Gilleshammer: On behalf of the Honourable Sergio Marchi, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I would like to acknowledge and thank you for your letter of June 16, 1995, requesting an opportunity to meet with the minister. Regrettably, I am unable at this time to confirm a date for such a meeting. However, we will contact you should the minister's schedule allow him to meet with you in the future. Again, thank you for writing. Sincerely, Jennifer LaDue, Assistant to the Scheduling Assistant."

Madam Speaker, it is not only an insult that the minister will not even deal with his counterpart minister, but has an assistant to the assistant scheduler write the letter. That gives I think a very direct indication of what a low priority the federal government puts on its relationships with ministers in this government and on this particular matter.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I understand that, in fact, there has been a proposal that has been submitted back on September 15, and I would ask the Premier whether or not he is prepared to share that proposal with Manitobans today.

Mr. Filmon: The point is that in mid-June the minister asked for a meeting with his federal counterpart so that we could get at a matter that has been on the drawing boards for two and a half years and on which progress was being made, substantial progress was being made until there was a change of government in November of 1993, and since that time there has been absolutely no commitment on the part of the federal government to get at an agreement between this government and Ottawa, Madam Speaker, and I know that other provincial governments are concerned about the same kind of issue in this respect.

Madam Speaker, rather than come up here and try and defend his federal counterparts, I would say that the member for Inkster ought to get on the phone and tell them to get on with an agreement with this government, so that we can indeed do the things that all of us want in having more immigration to Manitoba and to meet our skill shortages, whether it be in the fashion industry or many other areas of our society, and he should get on with that job instead of trying to make Brownie points here in this Legislature.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the question that I asked the Premier, and I will ask again, is that there was a proposal that was submitted on behalf of this government. It takes both governments' consent in order to release this particular document. I am asking the Premier, is he prepared to release this document so that Manitobans will know exactly what it is that this government wants to do with dealing with immigration?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that I will be meeting with the federal minister soon, after repeatedly trying to get a meeting with him. We have made a number of proposals on the domestic recruitment of foreign students, I think a legitimate proposal that would benefit Manitoba and Canada. That has been rejected. We have made a proposal about bringing immigrants from the Ukraine to Manitoba. That proposal has been rejected by the federal minister. We had made other proposals as well, direct contact with posts overseas. That has been rejected. We have asked to take over the running of the ESL system. That proposal has been rejected.

But I go there with some optimism in that we finally have a meeting with the federal minister. We have a number of proposals to put forward, and we hope that we can move forward to getting an agreement.

Winnipeg Jets/Arena MEC Proposal

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

In the MEC business plan which was tabled on April 26—coincidentally one day after the election—MEC notes on the third page that it met in January with representatives of the provincial and federal governments and they had indicated at that time that they would be requiring \$35 to \$45 million from those two levels of government. The outcome of that meeting was a further \$3-million grant to them to pursue their operation.

Will the minister then finally confirm what the MEC business plan did confirm on April 26, that \$35 million to \$45 million had to be committed by the two levels of government for this business plan to have any credibility at all?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): No, I will not confirm that, Madam Speaker. Again, as I have already answered to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), discussions were held back in January not only with the federal government, with the City of Winnipeg, and that was the magnitude of requirement I believe from all three levels of government. We indicated what we were prepared to do. The federal government had not given any kind of a firm commitment.

There was some suggestion at that particular point in time the federal government might be contributing as much as \$30 million or \$40 million to the overall combination of the development of an entertainment facility and attempting to save the Winnipeg Jets to keep them here in Manitoba. Ultimately, Madam Speaker, that number becomes significantly different because there is a requirement for \$111 million from all three levels of government, but the number that was being focused on back in January from all three levels

of government was that magnitude. We indicated \$10 million. The federal government never gave a firm commitment.

Obviously, in the interim, work had to be done in terms of moving the project forward. We all know the time lines that project was under. We know the deadline of May 1 in terms of closing of the exercising of the option and moving forward with the development of a facility, so there was a lot of work that had to be done. The federal government and ourselves decided that it was appropriate to allow this to move forward knowing full well that our commitment was the \$10 million and that MEC had to work with the federal government, the City of Winnipeg and any other methods of coming up with any financing that they required to put together the final deal, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Sale: Would the Minister of Finance, in light of his knowledge of the Securities Commission act, explain to this House why MEC would put forward in April a plan which had been worked on clearly from February onwards which included statements such as: the facility company expects to receive up to \$35 million from the federal and provincial governments? Expects, Madam Speaker.

Will he explain why they would put forward a legal document that has commitments clearly indicated in it if they had not received those commitments from the federal and provincial governments?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, all I can tell this member is our commitment was made perfectly clear to MEC. We were not aware of any filing of any document with the Manitoba Securities Commission. We received the business plan on April 26, and if MEC filed that kind of a document with that kind of information it was obviously based on their assumptions that they could come up with that additional financing from the federal government or the City of Winnipeg or whatever source. They knew what our commitment was at that particular point in time, and they proceeded on a whatever basis.

In terms of this particular document, we were certainly not made aware of it, the one that is referred

to being filed with the Securities Commission, nor was any representative of ours made aware of that document, plain and simple.

Standing Committee Review

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): My question is to the Premier.

Will the Premier then make a commitment, in light of his statements, to attend Public Accounts committee, to bring Mr. Benson to that committee and to explain all of Mr. Benson's activities on behalf of your government in the period of time from last September to the day after the election?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I can tell the member unequivocally that we did not see this proposal until it was tabled here today, that Mr. Benson was not aware of the submission to the Securities Commission and that further, he can only look at the press clippings and know that Mr. Osler, who was the spokesperson for MEC, is quoted in the period leading up to last spring as saying that the federal government would provide some \$30 million. He talked about them providing money from winter works programs and other things. They may have had an expectation from the federal government, but we made it clear that it was \$10 million we were prepared to commit.

* (1410)

Eating Disorders Adolescent Treatment Programs

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, in 1992, New Democrats raised concerns about cuts to eating disorder programs, especially those at the Health Sciences Centre. Despite the fact that services are already borderline, yesterday we tabled a memo which demonstrates that services will be cut still further. The critical state of treatment for adolescents is dramatically clear in the plight of the dying Jamie Woodhouse from Binscarth.

My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell this House today that his government will immediately establish an adolescent eating disorder treatment

program and so save the lives of young people like Jamie Woodhouse?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member opposite has caught the disease of her Leader, and she says that yesterday they tabled documents that show that services will be cut at the Health Sciences Centre. What she tabled was a budget exercise being conducted by the Health Sciences Centre in which they asked for proposals to reduce 5, 10 and 15 percent expenditures in various areas of various parts of the Health Sciences Centre. Some of them were administrative reductions, pure and simple administrative reductions—no impact whatsoever on services. Others were simply proposals that may not and probably would not ever be acceptable to anybody in the delivery of health care.

That kind of segue into a question is absolutely misleading and has no place in this Question Period.

Out-of-Province Treatment

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, today I wish to table with the House a letter from Jamie's attendant physician which states that because there is no appropriate treatment in Manitoba, Jamie's life depends on her being sent to the Montreaux Clinic in B.C.

Can the minister explain to this House why so little attention has been given to this dying girl when the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is on record as promising, and I quote, the best possible treatment for Jamie?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Well, Madam Speaker, I guess I am closer to that situation than many in this House are because this individual happens to be from my constituency.

I can tell the members opposite that this is not an easy matter, one that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is truly familiar with, and one in which the Department of Health has worked closely with the medical staff in Brandon and in Russell to try and save this young person's life.

There is not anybody in this Chamber who would turn a blind eye to this. I can tell you that the Minister of Health has certainly been attentive to this situation and has worked with his department to try and do whatever we can to try and save not only Jamie's life, but others who are in the same situation.

In terms of the specifics, Madam Speaker, I would have to take that part of the question as notice for the Minister of Health.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the Minister of Health is away, but time is of the essence.

So I ask the Premier, will the Premier please give us his personal commitment that he will work to save the life of Jamie Woodhouse by sending her to the Montreaux Clinic in Victoria?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I was concerned when I read the information, as I know the member opposite is by her questions about Jamie Woodhouse, and have asked for further information to be provided. I am prepared to review the matter and see what is the best approach and the most appropriate treatment to be provided on behalf of this individual.

I am concerned in the information that has preliminarily been provided for me to find that no medicare system in Canada, including British Columbia in which the clinic is located, pays for individuals to go for treatment there. That gives me pause to review and make sure that the treatment is appropriate to the needs of the individual, and when I am satisfied with that kind of analysis, then we will obviously be discussing further with the Department of Health the appropriate treatment.

Immigrant Referral Centre Provincial Commitment

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

The new immigrant referral centre to be housed at the Somerset School across from the Health Sciences is a project co-ordinated by the Winnipeg School Division

in co-operation with the federal government and presumably this provincial government. This centre would provide settlement services and assessment services for immigrant families, including social, educational and health care needs.

My question to the minister: When will this provincial government announce their commitment to this project and to immigrants in Manitoba, which has already received support from the school division and the federal government? When is this province going to make a commitment to immigrants?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Our commitment to immigration and settlement issues in this province has been a very consistent one. We have maintained our budget of almost \$2 million to help with settlement issues and particularly with ESL. That is a commitment that has not been matched by the federal government, but there are certain downward changes in the amount of funding that they are providing. My department is committed to providing those settlement issues and services for immigrants in Manitoba.

We have made a proposal to the federal government that this is an area of overlap and duplication whereby both levels of government are involved, and we think that Manitobans and immigrants generally would be better served if this was taken over by the province, and that is one of the issues that we have on the table.

Ms. Mihychuk: In this situation, it is not the federal government or the school division that is backing out of this project. The reality is that what we are looking for is a commitment from this provincial government to kick in for this project. It is just waiting for this province's commitment.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, the second question is essentially the same as the first. Our commitment in terms of resources and funds and staffing for immigration settlement needs in this province has been maintained, and I tell the member it

is the federal government who is withdrawing funds, particularly from the language training area.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the minister aware that we are not talking about ESL services alone? We are talking about settlement services to family that include a co-operative approach, including social services, health and education. Is this province willing to make that commitment and when?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, again, our commitment has been maintained for settlement issues in terms of the funding levels and staffing levels, and, in fact, at this point in time, there are fewer immigrants needing those services, but our commitment has been maintained at the same level.

* (1420)

Health Sciences Centre Budget Reduction

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, throughout this government's massive cuts to our health care system, they keep spinning the story that patient care is not compromised, and the government continues to say they are going to cut back in administrative costs in the system.

The Premier earlier in an answer, Madam Speaker, said that the proposals yesterday talked about cutting administrative costs out of the \$19 million to be cut from Health Sciences Centre.

Can the Premier explain how on these proposals that see the elimination of possibly 20 nurses, a psychiatrist, a medical officer, pharmacy, housekeeping, one administrative position out of 25 will be eliminated in this proposal, how that is cutting \$19 million or \$1.9 million out of the budget with administrative costs? How can he perpetrate such nonsense on the public of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as I indicated, there are many proposals being submitted from various areas of the Health Sciences Centre, from various departments. I said the proposals vary and one of them happens to be for an administrative cutback.

These are the kinds of things. This is not something that has been adopted. This is not something that has been prioritized by the Health Sciences Centre or approved of by government.

It is fearmongering on the part of the opposition, and it is the kind of approach that I think they ought to be ashamed of.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the Premier explain in these proposals how it is, of the proposed 25.25 positions to be cut, there is one administrative position to be cut in here and the majority, the vast majority, in fact, 24 positions are actual health-giving positions?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as usual, the member takes everything out of context, does not look at the entire picture.

The executive director of Mental Health Services in Manitoba was on the radio this morning saying that a person ought to look at the whole picture and see whether or not there are services being provided in the community that would offset some of the services that are presently being provided in the institutions because that is part of the long-range plan.

It is supported by the mental health community, and it is something that was endorsed when the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) provided his proposal here. It was highly endorsed and acclaimed by those in the mental health community. They are looking at the entire picture, not doing the knee-jerk typical reaction of the member for Kildonan.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Change

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be amended as follows: Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) for Thursday, September 21, 1995, for 10 a.m. [agreed]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill 2, Bill 5 and then the balance of the bills as listed in the Order Paper.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), who has 20 minutes remaining, and standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): When we ended off yesterday, I think that I was discussing the bill's provisions for referendum on tax increases. I was expressing the concern that this provision is going to stack the deck against the government having a more fair tax system.

I was particularly concerned about a couple of the provisions in this area, one of them being for the kind of tax increases we have seen from the provincial Filmon government, the current government, as they did in 1993 when they increased taxes to the tune of about \$400 for a family of four in that year by broadening the scope of the PST, by decreasing property tax credits and those kinds of things. None of

those kinds of tax increases would go to a referendum vote. That is one of the things that is a concern.

The other thing that is of concern is that there is a requirement in the bill that there cannot be any increase in revenue generation from a tax change, so that they can shift the tax from one type of tax to another; for example, as they have been doing, decreasing tax on business and increasing taxes on individuals and citizens whether it is in the form of fees. They can do that as long as they do not increase the total revenue which would make our tax system more unfair, and again because that would not require a referendum; it would not require any kind of a vote. They can do that without the kind of attention that other tax changes would incur from the public.

So there is a real problem in this bill, I think, that we can see they want to use it as a way of choking the ability of the provincial government to meet the needs in the community. What happens is the only way that the government can have new revenue then is from a growth in the economy so that there is going to be more revenue generated from more people working.

The kind of growth we have seen, where we have had what is called the jobless recovery where there may be more economic activity, but we are not necessarily seeing more jobs. We are going to have a real problem on the revenue side. Those of us on this side of the House have said many a time, but especially across the country in Canada, the deficit is not so much a problem with spending but it is a problem with high interest rates and monetary policy that is trying to deal with inflation and increasing the interest rates.

This government then is going to—also because they are lumping the capital side and the current expenditure side or operating side of the budget together—what we are going to see is more pressure on them to cut services in order to balance the budget. They are not going to, I wonder, look at things like some of their own documents have suggested that they look at green taxes to do something about the very low fees we have, stumpage fees in forestry, for example.

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

So how about all of these other kinds of ways that we can deal with new revenues besides this government's approach which is going to be simply to cut programs, programs that have often meant the difference between someone being employed or unemployed? As I said yesterday, programs like the Access program that they cut, which was very successful in economic terms of actually saving money in the long run.

My big concern about the legislation is it is going to, through the unbalanced approach to the tax provisions for the referendum, encourage a more pay-as-you-go government. I am referring to it as the business of government will change from being one of having an interest in function in managing public finance to help plan and direct the economy, where the government is going to change to becoming more of a cashier where citizens will have to pay for services as they go, and the government will just be there to exchange a service for a fee.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

That, I think, is moving away from a sense we have that government is there to work in a collective sense on behalf of all of us for needs in the community that we all share, be it by the fact that we are part of the same community. This is going to create a two-tiered system because we all know families, I am sure, who are not going to be able to pay for services in this fee-for-service fashion. It is going to lead to a greater disparity between the wealthy and all the rest of us in the community, and it is going to I think compound the problems of poverty.

It is interesting when I look at the exemptions in the bill. The exemptions in the bill include serious disaster, Canada being at war and having a reduction in revenue of 5 percent or more which in '95 dollars accounts for about \$270 million. Well, the ministers opposite, particularly the speeches that I heard yesterday, talked about us being in a global economy and how we cannot just try and fence our province off and not trade and do business with the rest of the world. When we deal with the economy in this fashion, we may already be in a war.

* (1430)

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

It is very much an economic war. We are in an economic war with our other provincial partners in this country in fact. In some ways individual communities in our province are in an economic war with each other in an effort to attract industry and jobs. Similarly, of course, internationally there is an economic war going on. The problem is the victims of this war are individual citizens and in some cases entire communities.

We are seeing the victims also become government regulation, whether it is environmental regulation, whether it is labour legislation and regulation to protect workers, whether it is now even social services, and given the changes that are being proposed across the country, whether it is to the Wheat Board, whether it is to institutions like CN, CBC, across this country there are many victims of this global economic war that is being fought.

One of the weapons in that war that this government has supported is the Free Trade Agreement, and they are compounding the problem rather than assisting us as a community, because they are further entrenching this globalized economy and taking away our ability to protect health services and medicare and our public education system.

So in the provision for exemptions to this legislation, one of them being the country at war, I am trying to make the point, and I am making the point that we are at war indeed. It is an economic war that we are undertaking.

The other exception for this legislation is a serious disaster, and I think we are coming to see more and more, especially after Question Period today when we saw the—what can I call it and be parliamentary?—misrepresentation of the facts perhaps that this government had on the Jets and arena deal, that this government is the serious disaster that we are facing in the province. I think as we go forward, given this legislation which we have heard already in the House is not necessary to balance the budget, what we are

seeing is this government has been the serious disaster in dealing responsibly with the finances of the province. They have not, even though they would like us to believe, been able to balance the budget. Even the pre-election budget was not a balanced budget. The Provincial Auditor has shown quite clearly that it was a \$98 million deficit budget.

The final exemption under the bill is for reduction in financing. We are facing incredible reductions from the federal Liberal government, and it will be interesting to see when we add them all up how close we are going to come this year and over the next few years to the \$270 million that will allow for an exemption under this clause in the legislation. I do not think that that is going to benefit us if they take the same tax that they are with this legislation.

My largest concern about the bill, then, is that it is going to dramatically change government as we have known it. It is going to change government in terms of being able to meet the needs in the community that we all share, and it is going to, I think, exacerbate the effects of unemployment and poverty in the community. It is going to affect certain members of our community more, because we know that there are certain members of our community who, because of their socioeconomic status, rely more heavily on the support of government.

So this legislation is going to further wedge the difference between the haves and the have-nots in our society. New initiatives like child care are going to become next to impossible.

I think that I want to just conclude my remarks by encouraging the government to be honest about its intentions with this bill. I think that they have to be honest with the public in what their real agenda is. I earlier in my debate was talking about a letter to the editor that was in the Free Press which talked about the causes for poverty being high taxes, rigid labour markets and the public education system.

I think that this government has an agenda to privatize, as they have been doing, more and more services in health and education. They do not agree with the vision of government that we should pay

according to our ability to pay and to provide services that are there for all the public, equal services, and provide equal access to all those services.

I am very concerned that we are going to see more privatization and that this bill is going to pave the way for it. What we are going to see is more and more of a two-tiered system, one system of services in health care and education for those that have means and one system for everybody else, and what we end up having there is really the financing through public money, as we are seeing in education, of two systems, both drawing public money, one having to deal with the problems from the community at large, all those people who are of low socioeconomic status, and one system that does not have to provide for the special needs of those groups but can simply select those that they want and not have to deal with the great cost of providing services for those that are more disadvantaged.

I look forward to the committee hearings on this bill. I think that it has been drafted with a lot of gimmicks in it. I think, though, that the public, as it hears more and more about the legislation and we go through the committee hearings, will see that there are some very dangerous things in this bill. It is interesting that we have the government going into a new mandate and we will have to face many years with this bill. As I said earlier, I am concerned that they will try to use it to deflect responsibility for changes in public services, for cuts, for user fees, for more unfair taxation away from them. They will be able to use the legislation and say, it is not us, we are not making this decision, it is the law.

I think that that speaks to what I was saying earlier as well, that this is one of the tools the government is using to take away the influence of democratically elected governments, not only this democratically elected government, but the ability of governments in the future, and that is incredibly undemocratic. I think it goes against the whole reason for this House being here, and I am very concerned about the long-term effects that this will have.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is saying that a new government could repeal this, but they will still have to deal with the damage that this bill will have

done to a number of people in our community, because when we look at legislation like this I think we have to deal with not just the wording in here but the implications that it will have in the community.

* (1440)

I will put to the Minister of Agriculture that this will have a very unequal effect in the community. It will make the division more extreme in Manitoba. It will exacerbate that gap between the haves and the have-nots, and it will leave many people who rely on quality public services without those services.

With that, Madam Speaker, I conclude my debate. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? [interjection] You are right. The bill has been left standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): I certainly welcome the opportunity to address this amendment in Bill 5 proposed toward The Education Administration Act. I hope I will attempt to put on record some of the viewpoints of our party with respect to this particular amendment, as well as some personal observations that I hope will be taken into account by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) when she has an opportunity to review comments, et cetera, as respecting this bill.

Madam Speaker, to commence, I recall in the previous session when I had the opportunity again in this Chamber to talk about this particular amendment.

At that time, during a previous session, the amendment had been brought forward by the former Minister of Education, that is, the former member for Morris. At that time, we had indicated some of our concerns with respect to that particular amendment. One of the comments that I had made at that time to the member for Morris was the fact that I am not certain that he was cognizant of the fact that school councils were up and functioning in very many areas of the province.

In fact, I cited the example of Seven Oaks School Division where local representatives and the public had long had such councils functioning and doing very good work within the school systems. In fact, I cited to the member for Morris at that time, and I cite it again for members of the House, the fact that I had occasion to attend a community meeting set up by the school division to discuss a proposed school, now constructed, in Seven Oaks School Division.

In other words, the Seven Oaks School Division had gone to the community prior to the construction of the school, met with parents, community leaders and others to discuss the functioning of the school, student council establishment, et cetera. That had taken place prior even to the construction of the school.

I cited that at the time as an example of what is happening in the education system without the need of the paternalistic approach that was adopted by the then Minister of Education and to a certain extent in my view is continued by the present amendment and by the present approach to education by this particular government. I find it very curious and quite contradictory the words espoused by members opposite and by members of this government and the actual practice that takes place. For example, Madam Speaker, this particular bill talks about and mandates the establishment of school councils when, in fact, I am given to believe the majority of schools already have such councils existent.

It purports to cite rules as to when suspensions should take place, how the councils should be set up, et cetera, all at the dictate and all at the mandate of the Minister of Education. Therefore, it says, "the minister shall, the minister shall," keeping in line with the pattern in Manitoba of ministers of Education on high

decreeing certain things "shall" happen in the education system.

This is a pattern long adopted by this government through its many ministers of Education, be it the member for Roblin (Mr. Derkach), the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), the member for Morris. And now the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh), I hope, will adopt a different attitude, but unfortunately the way that this particular amendment is worded and the particular amendments continue this pattern of "the minister shall decree, the minister shall," it overlooks the total fact, the contradictory fact that this government purports to want to have grassroots representation.

It purports to want to hear from the public, yet it purports to determine how it will hear from the public, what it will hear from the public, when it will hear from the public, and that is totally contradictory. It runs contrary to the very nature of the process. One can certainly understand why members on this side of the House and the education community in general are very suspicious of the decrees from on high that come to us from the Department of Education, and no better illustration.

Madam Speaker, that attitude prevails throughout the government. It is not just in the Department of Education. Let me cite an example within the area of Health. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) recently made an announcement, in absentia, about the proposal to establish regional health boards. There was a committee that was established and had done work, and it made a recommendation to the government as to how these regional health boards should be established, determined and elected.

Now in the very first decision to be made by the minister concerning the recommendations in this particular report, the minister rejected the recommendations of his committee, and decreed that, rather than have elected boards, rather than start with a prototype board to be followed by election process, the Minister of Health would determine who would be on all of these health boards in Manitoba. The Minister of Health completely and totally contradicted the very recommendations of the committee that recommended—

[interjection] The member for Rossmere is encouraging me to—

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

An Honourable Member: The Minister of Labour.

Mr. Chomiak: The Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews)—continue my discussion in this area. The point that I am making is that, although this government purports to be listening to the public and purports to be determining the nature of the public, it does not happen. In fact, the public makes a recommendation, as they did with respect to the regional boards in Health, and the minister completely and totally ignores the recommendations. Instead of proceeding with the recommendations, he proceeds to appoint by ministerial decree, which, again, is a pattern consistent with this government. By minister decree, the minister shall in Manitoba appoints boards.

We see this very same pattern in the Department of Education where the minister shall appoint and determine school councils, the minister shall appoint and determine how a suspension shall take place. It is quite consistent with the pattern of a government that purports to delegate authority, but in fact keeps authority very, very close to its vest, in fact, largely revolving around the Premier's office, and decrees from on high how we and the public shall manage our affairs.

Again, illustrative is the fact that the legislation and the minister, particularly the previous minister, totally ignored the fact that there were very many functioning councils, totally ignored the fact of perhaps looking at some of those experiences and discussing those experiences with those particular councils, but from on high, by decree, determined that the minister shall determine the power over principals, the composition and role of school councils and over school discipline policies, and overlooks the locally elected autonomous boards. This pattern continues throughout Education, be it in the area of the boundaries review or be it in the area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of reforming education.

The member for Roblin (Mr. Derkach), who I am pleased to see is attentively listening to my comments,

might recall in fact that an interesting pattern has developed in Manitoba with respect to recommendations by the public. The minister will know of the voluminous reports that have gone on, be it in the area of reforming of The Public Schools Act or be it in the area of special needs that have been prepared and recommendations have been made. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I recall, the member for Roblin tabled in this very Chamber a five-year strategic plan for the Department of Education which failed in fact to even meet the expectations in year one and has long since been shelved, together with the majority of the reports by the minister. It has long since been shelved, together with the majority of reports, so it is very difficult to have confidence in the decrees from on high of ministers of Education who decree from on high but are very far removed from the reality that takes place on the ground with respect to the organization and to the running of schools in the province of Manitoba.

* (1450)

I could cite in fact, and perhaps I ought to cite to the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) and to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), many of the reports that made recommendations from the public and from citizens as to improvements and help in the education system that have been—[interjection] I am very pleased, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) is listening attentively and perhaps is even taking notes during the course of my comments, but I think I flatter myself by suggesting that, and that is said actually in—

To continue, the pattern seems to be that the government purports to consult, receives a report and then generally files the report, and then the minister comes out with a decree from on high as to how things should operate. That in fact is totally contrary to what should be happening in education and does not reflect the spirit and does not reflect the reality of what is happening within the public.

It is not appropriate if we are going to move into a new era in education where we will work together and we will listen to those who are most actively and most directly involved in the school system, and by that I

mean teachers and parents and students and administrators and the public in general who are all involved.

If we are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to move within our education system to improve the quality of our education system, then we ought to listen to those recommendations that have been made by members of the public, by those involved in the education system. That spirit is missing from this particular amendment. In fact, that philosophy is missing from this amendment, and rather we see the dictates and the recommendations by decree, by fiat, from the Minister of Education as to how school councils shall be composed, how discipline shall be managed with regard to students in the classroom.

How is it possible, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the Minister of Education to decree what province-wide standards with respect to discipline shall be if the Minister of Education is not prepared to listen to those who are involved in the education system on a daily and on a regular basis? For example, if the Minister of Education is not listening to what the teachers have to say, is not listening to what the parents have to say, then how can the minister purport to, by fiat, declare what discipline standards should be across the province?

I go further to suggest, what standards and what discipline procedures will be determined by regulation by the Department of Education that will be appropriate and would be functional across the province of Manitoba, which varies in regions, varies in composition and varies in type of school, type of student, type of region. That is why so much of what has come out of the Department of Education has not worked in the recent past, particularly since 1988 when the Conservatives began to make their mark in the education system in Manitoba.

The other concern, of course, is when legitimate concerns are raised by representatives in the community, by the teachers, by the superintendents, by the students, by the parents, the government chooses to ignore, and one example, one very classic example is the recommendations that were made in December of 1991 by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees,

the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

At that time they recommended a system of co-ordinating services and activities to children. [interjection] I am corrected, actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe it was the summer of 1991 that this report came out, and at that time it recommended a course of action to better operate our schools, to co-ordinate the activities and to help students in general. At that time, we asked the then Minister of Education to put together a plan by December 1991 to deal with this very, very important initiative. Of course, we have not had any plan since then, and it is now September 1995, and we have still no plan from this government. Still this government has chosen to ignore those particular recommendations, despite the fact that there are recommendations for a similar program to be put in place by the recent study undertaken by Dr. Brian Postl concerning children's health and initiatives in that regard, and yet the government has still chosen not to act on those particular recommendations.

Now the government has put in place I believe one protocol in this regard, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one protocol hardly makes for a government-wide initiative or a government-wide program. There are so many serious deficiencies and so many problems as they relate to children, you would think it would be a top priority of this government, but this government has chosen not to listen to those involved in education and not to listen to recommendations that a system be put in place to permit a better co-ordination of services to children.

So we have on the one hand, as I have indicated, a government that, by fiat, makes recommendations and on the other hand a government which does not listen to the public when valid suggestions are forwarded to it and continues to proceed on the basis that the minister knows best. The minister, by fiat, can determine what shall happen in education. This is, of course, reflected quite directly in the amendments that are before us today concerning The Education Administration Amendment Act.

Now let me be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we in the New Democratic Party support wholeheartedly

school councils and representation. That is very clear from all of our comments and very clear from our policy statements. We encourage that at all points.

The point that I am trying to make, however, is that this government was not aware of what was happening in the school system, had some difficulty when it originally brought in the amendment which purported to establish school councils of this kind and has now come back with recommendations regarding these particular school councils and by fiat has now decreed that the minister shall determine how these shall be composed.

* (1500)

I wonder how that is to be done. Will the minister by fiat make a regulation as to how all school divisions will compose their student councils despite the differences, for example, in northern Manitoba or the differences in rural Manitoba or the differences in the city of Winnipeg? Are we going to have different regulations varying across the province as they relate to school councils? Are we going to have by fiat one decree as to how this process shall work? Will flexibility be allowed? Will there be flexibility to reflect different conditions and different schools or different school divisions or will it be from, on high, recommendations that have been determined by the Minister of Education? This is an interesting point because much depends upon who occupies the seat of the Minister of Education.

I dare say from my experience in this Chamber and from dealings with the previous ministers, the former member for Morris and the current minister, that their ideas as to how councils, for example, might be composed are probably quite different. So we will have by fiat a declaration as to how schools shall be run by one minister, as happens on a very regular basis in Manitoba, when the next Minister of Education comes up to be appointed by the Premier.

The new Minister of Education, by fiat, will declare their version of how school councils ought to be composed, and the subsequent minister will declare their version of how school councils ought to be imposed and their version of how discipline ought to be

maintained and their version about what standards should be province-wide. That will vary by virtue of the person occupying that particular portfolio.

That is totally contradictory to what we should be doing in this province and that is trying to reflect what conditions are, what local representatives say, what local teachers say, what local parents say. In other words, it will come from on high and will vary by virtue and by nature of the fact who occupies the particular seat at that time.

So this is a very interesting demonstration again by this government about how it shall approach education in Manitoba, and it will be very interesting to see what regulations come down from the particular minister occupying the portfolio at the time as to how these very significant issues will be dealt with by schools and by those involved in the education system.

Now turning to another point. The curious nature of both The Public Schools Act and The Education Administration Act, which are in fact outdated and ought to be renewed, is that we have an outmoded archaic act trying to deal with education in the 1990s and in the years to come. Part of the dilemma here is we are superimposing again on this outmoded act, on this Education Administration Act and on the education system in Manitoba.

We are grasping onto that—another example of some contradictory legislation. It suggests to me that it is high time for this province and for this Minister of Education to do something that has been promised by the previous three occupiers of that portfolio and that is to renew and to update and to have a new version of a public schools act, something that has been done in literally every jurisdiction in Canada but which has only been studied and the studies shelved by minister after minister in the Province of Manitoba.

In fact, the previous to the previous to the previous Minister of Education had a task force that went out and examined the act and held hearings and the like, talked about renewing The Public Schools Act and then subsequently, as is common in the education field in Manitoba, we saw those particular recommendations made from the public shelved and placed deeply into

the bowels of the Department of Education never to be heard from again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly appreciate your direction in this regard as we continue during the course of these comments. It seems to me that this kind of amendment and this kind of change ought to be considered in the context of a more comprehensive look and a more comprehensive view of the education system in Manitoba and more specifically with regard to The Public Schools Act and how The Public Schools Act ought to be brought into the 1990s.

Now I commenced my discussion with the comment that The Education Act, The Public Schools Act and this particular amendment continue a tradition in Manitoba, a paternalistic approach to education, that being the minister decreeing from on high how things shall be in the province of Manitoba.

That is precisely one of the problems that we have in education in Manitoba, not just because the ministers of Education generally in Manitoba under this regime have occupied very short tenures, very short time spans in the Education portfolio but because of the changing nature of education.

Our Public Schools Act was last amended and last changed, I believe, in 1980 and before that some time previous. It certainly does not reflect conditions as they exist in schools today. In fact, a point of fact, if I recall correctly, The Public Schools Act does not even make mention of the words "child" or "student." Yes, it does not make mention of the word "child" at all in The Education Act because it is an anachronistic act and because it has been an act that has been largely unchanged in many ways since early in the century and contains many portions of the act that are totally outdated.

So you have a paternalistic act that is outmoded and in need of change, and now we have an amendment to The Education Administration Act which is tangential to The Public Schools Act that continues this pattern and this Manitoba tradition of a paternalistic approach, a top-down approach, an approach by fiat in education. Surely that does not reflect conditions in the school system today and conditions in Manitoba.

All members of this House who have recently been through the experience of the provincial election will know that education was one of the fundamental issues discussed by the voters, and we are dealing with a public who is very concerned. One can make the statement that the public is always concerned about education but, particularly in these changing times, in these times of economic uncertainty, in these times of severe unemployment, in these times of marketplace domination, I am afraid, in these changing times, education has become almost a touchstone for many individuals and many parents as to the only means and the only way for people to make a go of things in our society.

Education has become a touchstone for individuals, parents and children as the only way that they can see their way clear to make some progress in our present society. We are dealing with a population which sees education as absolutely fundamental and crucial to the development of our society in the years to come. That runs totally contradictory, that feeling and that spirit run totally contradictory to the attitude of the minister declaring by fiat and by decree how things shall be in the Department of Education, how things shall be at school and how things shall be undertaken by school boards and by others.

* (1510)

We are not just dealing therefore with an amendment that suggests the minister knows best. We are dealing with a continuing, confused and outdated approach to education that has been adopted and continues to be adopted by this government. We are dealing with a government that has chosen—and certainly I must say that I have great hopes for the new Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). I think she is experienced in education matters. I think she brings much good will to the portfolio. I think she will try very hard to do what is best. However, I suggest that the pattern of this government in its approach to education has not been kind to those particular attitudes in education and so, while I have great admiration for the present occupier of that portfolio, I am not optimistic that that spirit can prevail against some of the attitudes that have been exhibited by this particular government as it deals with education.

So we have a government that has proposed amendments to enact that—and let it not be mistaken on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we support strongly student councils. Of course, no one does not support proper and appropriate discipline in a classroom. The point that I wish to make is that this department and this administration have not been in touch with the views and the wishes of the population of Manitoba and have not reflected those views as they relate to education and, consequently, are now proposing amendments which could have significant effect on decisions made by educators and by those involved in the education system.

I am concerned about where education is going in Manitoba, particularly in light of the fact that we have seen some dramatic shifts and some rather outspoken comments, to say the least, by the former Minister of Education, the former member for Morris, who, I believe, notwithstanding his good will, which I do not question, certainly seemed to be of the impression that he knew exactly what ought to take place in education. So those kinds of concerns and the changes and shifts in policy that we have seen through four previous ministers and the fact that so much that has been done in education, so many reports have been shelved, so many recommendations have been ignored, so much public discussion has been simply put aside leads me to question how this government in an overall sense will deal with the whole question of education in the future and not just how the government of Manitoba is approaching the issues as amended in this particular amendment, Bill 5, relating to the appointment of school advisory councils and discipline in the classroom.

Now, I have outlined in the course of my discussion some suggestions as to what I think this government ought to do in the area of education, and perhaps I will take the opportunity to summarize for you some of these suggestions.

Firstly, I believe that the government ought to look at some of the very valid recommendations that have been made by teachers, by parents, by students and others to deal with some of the needs that are in our classrooms today. The myriad of studies and reports that have found their way onto the shelf had some very valid and

meaningful suggestions and ought to be considered and ought to be reviewed, both specifically as I pointed out earlier, recommendations for the co-ordination of services to children and the institution of the utilization of protocols by the departments as well as some of the recommendations concerning special needs students and others in our school system.

Secondly, I suggest that The Public Schools Act ought to be revised and ought to be renewed to reflect conditions in Manitoba at present.

Thirdly, that the amendments as suggested by Bill 5 are illustrative of the approach taken by this government in matters of education and generally throughout the Department of Education which consist of a paternalistic approach and a suggestion that government, that the minister by decree or by fiat shall dictate how education shall be conducted in the province of Manitoba.

Fourth, that if the government is truly listening, that they ought to listen to the concerns as expressed by parents, by teachers, by students, by all those involved in education and provide a meaningful acknowledgement of the concerns raised by these individuals and these organizations concerning education in Manitoba.

Fifth, that if the government is truly listening, it ought to provide those individuals who have concerns on such matters as things as school boundaries to have adequate opportunity to express their viewpoints and express their concerns with regard to boundary issues and how matters of governance shall be determined by these particular bodies.

Sixth, that the government, when it considers the regulations that it is going to determine, ought to consider not only the viewpoint of those members of the public who wish to make comment with regard to the matters of discipline in school councils but have to be cognizant of the fact of the varying regions, the varying make-up and the varying differences in approached education throughout the province of Manitoba. By way of example, I suggest that certain decrees or regulations that relate to inner city schools may not be appropriate for schools in, for example,

rural Manitoba, as certain rules as they apply in northern Manitoba may not be appropriate to conditions in a suburban school in the city of Winnipeg. This diversity and these differences ought to be considered by the minister when making regulations under this particular act as it concerns the matters to amend The Education Administration Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I note that my time is quickly expiring in terms of this particular opportunity to speak. I guess I will close my comments by suggesting to members opposite that if they really believe in the public education system in Manitoba, they ought to listen to all of those involved in the education system in Manitoba and not dismiss the comments of parents, teachers and others involved in the system. They ought to examine the system to see what works and what has worked in the past and ought not to be tricked by believing that only the decrees or the fiat by the minister and proclamations by the minister is the only way to operate the schools or is the only way that things ought to run in the province of Manitoba, and finally that they take a look at the overall approach in Manitoba to education and consider some of the suggestions that have been made by members in this House and by members of the public concerning modernizing, providing for more input from the public of Manitoba into education as managed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (1520)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill, and I want to put the bill in context because this is not the first bill that we have dealt with which deals with a number of the issues before us. This is the latest version brought in by the new Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). As my colleague pointed out, there has been somewhat of a turnover in this particular portfolio over the last number of years. While there is some reference to a change, I do not know if change is as good as a rest—fine, that is exactly what I thought was the reference.

There has been a great deal of concern about the dramatic shifts of direction that this government has

taken in terms of education policy, much of it personalized by particular ministers of Education. I think anyone who knows the policies that were put forward by, for example, the current Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) or the current Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) will recognize some particular emphasis. Certainly the former member for Morris had a very distinctive approach to Education that shifted dramatically, certainly in some areas, away from what had been the normal policies and procedures followed by previous ministers of Education.

Now, of course, we are seeing yet another Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and, in this case, a Minister of Education who, I will say, to her credit does have a significant background on the educational side coming from her previous involvements in terms of schools boards, MAST, et cetera, and I think brings that particular focus. Quite frankly, I think that this bill reflects that.

I find it interesting too, and I find it something that should be noted here, we raised concerns in the original bill that was brought in by this government about the direct power of suspension that teachers were going to be given and indicated at the time that many teachers were very concerned about this because of the position it placed them in, unlike the procedures that are followed by most school districts currently of putting them in the front, not only of having the power but also the accountability that many people expressed concern about it.

I remember when the previous member for Rossmere raised this in the House, himself a teacher of long standing, and there was howling from members opposite. I remember very well because it was almost like they could not believe that our member would say that.

You know, it is interesting, and I point this out for the record, that he was right and now the government itself has changed its view. I think that should be noted for the record, because Mr. Schellenberg did this Chamber a very great favour by being the first one to place on the record the fact that this was a significant concern with teachers out there. I think it was very obvious to anyone that could net out the desire of the

government to do something dramatic before the election. I think it was very obvious that this was not workable.

I note that this bill essentially accomplishes what the member for Rossmere at the time, the previous member, stated, was very forceful in stating, and I think it is to his credit that this is done. I think it is rather appropriate because sometimes I know we all wonder about our ability to influence events, but here we have a member who is no longer part of this House, certainly in this current Legislature. I suspect he may not have finished his political involvements, but be that as it may, here is a former member of the House who has had a very significant impact on an important policy issue in terms of Education. So I wanted to put that on the record right from the start.

What I want to do, though, is I want to go and put the whole issue into context. This specific bill deals with a number of particular issues. It increases the power of ministers over principals—my colleague just outlined that particular aspect—ministerial control in terms of the composition and role of school councils over school discipline policies, and diminishes the roles of local authorities. A number of other issues are dealt with. I mentioned the suspension issue.

I want to go and put this in context, because what I found very interesting about the original Education Administration Act that we were dealing with was that the previous Minister of Education, the government going in the election, took a rather unusual approach, but you know I think it was a very deliberate approach, and it is being followed by other governments.

It is interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you know we would hear on a regular basis, we hear from the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who is very sensitive to criticism nowadays, a lot of times will be accusing members opposite of saying things that were critical. I heard this again today.

You know, the interesting thing is, in education, the previous Minister of Education was the one that was saying there was a crisis in education. Was that just an accident? Quite frankly, I found it interesting that I happened to be watching the state of the state address

given by the Governor of Michigan some time ago, and you know what was interesting was, the rhetoric was very similar. It was almost identical to the rhetoric that was being used by the previous Minister of Education and the government. It was almost identical, and it runs this way. You say there is a crisis in education and what you do is you bring in all sorts of changes that are in many cases not supported by those who are involved in the educational community, but you bring in a whole series of changes, and I would say the previous member for Morris would probably have said this himself, basically aimed at turning back the clock, back to the good old days.

I see various organizations lobbying for that. I found it very interesting when the taxpayers' federation put out an article recently suggesting that we return our education system to the way it was in 1972. Now this was very interesting because in my community, we are the hardest hit by school cuts, but they wanted to roll back the clock, and I found that interesting because I graduated from R.D. Parker Collegiate in Thompson in 1972, and my kids now are in the Thompson school system. My daughter will be going into high school next year, and you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know what they have available to them today. They have this band program, technical vocational training, the many options they have in the school, and I know what I had access to in 1972, which was a lot less than it is today, believe you me, and I look around here at members.

For many members, particularly, I am sure, who grew up in rural and northern areas, it is very much the same story, but, you know, this is part of the whole sort of fiscal and educational philosophy that we are dealing with, and I disagree with the taxpayers' federation. If they think that we can roll back the clock to 1972 and we are going to be better off in terms of education, they are wrong.

Not only that, I would point to the much publicized UN study that was put out that showed that we were No. 1 in terms of quality of life. One of the reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are No. 1 is because of what we do in terms of education. The Royal Bank just came out recently showing we are the second richest nation. If you look at what the underlying factors are,

part of it is in terms of—and I mentioned this yesterday—our investment and infrastructure, our inherent wealth, but part of it is human capital, which is what? It is the skills of our people, the productivity of our people, the ability of our people to deal with the challenges of the 1990s, and it is based essentially on our investment in education.

So I want to put this in context. This is one minister who said there was a crisis, very similar to what they were saying in Michigan. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has anybody been watching what has been happening in Ontario with the Mike Harris government? Here is the Minister of Education in Ontario who is in some difficulty right now, because you know what he did? He went to a meeting of senior officials in this department, and he said, we have to create a crisis in education. He made one mistake. He said it on video. Now it is all over the province.

He is a very interesting individual because he is someone without a formal education himself, which is fine. I do not have any difficulty with that, but here he is now, as the Minister of Education within a month or two of taking office, saying there has to be a crisis created in education. Why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because that is the only way you get change in an organization. So you invent the crisis and you come up with a solution.

* (1530)

Coincidentally, the solution is what you had in mind all the way along, and he has a very set agenda, the government in Ontario, and that was what drove the agenda for education in this province. Invent a crisis and come up with a solution. I find it interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are accused of inventing crises in the opposition, but right-wing governments, when it comes to education, they are the ones—and this is what the Minister of Education in Ontario said directly. He said, we have to invent a crisis in education, so we can solve the problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that not interesting? Because what I think it is, I think it is indicative of just how much ideology is tied up in education nowadays when it comes to right-wing governments and this—

An Honourable Member: Fortunately, we do not have a right-wing government here.

Mr. Ashton: The member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) says we do not have a right-wing government here. I would suggest to the member for Rossmere that he is in the wrong party. He is going to have some difficulty with his own members with that statement, because I think most members on that side ran for the Conservative Party because it is a right-wing party, because it has a right-wing agenda. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a party that is moving increasingly away from the roots of people like John Diefenbaker.

I thought it was kind of interesting. It was the 100th birthday of Dief, somebody I really respected politically. John Diefenbaker must be rolling over in his grave today looking at what this kind of government is doing to the parliamentary system, to our Crown corporations, privatizing Crown corporation, many of which were actually nationalized by Conservative governments. Conservatives of 30 or 40 years ago would not recognize this party today in office. It is a Republican north party. We have a Premier (Mr. Filmon) who also I think—I bet you, in his office there must be a big picture of Richard Nixon put away somewhere, because he is following very Nixonian tactics on other issues such as the Jets, but I digress.

The fact is this government has a right-wing approach which is very similar to the Republican Party of the United States: the balanced budget bill, what it is doing on education. You can run through the list and it is straight out of the pages of the right-wing movements in the United States. It is straight out of the pages that are now being followed in Ontario. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us put the cards on the table, so to speak, and be up-front and honest about that.

The former Minister of Education was very clear about that. He was an individual I had a lot of respect for. I do not think we agreed very much on issues, but you know in the time he was in this House, he said what he meant, and he meant what he said. This bill now interestingly enough is attempting to take out some of the features that were pushed through by the previous minister as part of this right-wing agenda,

because even this government does not have the stomach to follow through with some of the things that are being pushed as part of this ideological agenda, and it is an ideological agenda.

When this government wants to roll back the clock, it is interesting what comes and what goes in terms of education, because many of the initiatives of the '70s and '80s, particularly in terms of accessibility of education, they are the first ones that are hit. I mean, New Careers has been decimated. The Access programs have been shifted now away from student support to Access to individuals who have outside sponsorship, which is in violation of many of the principles of the Access programs. But is it a coincidence that of the '70s and '80s, those types of initiatives, many of which were brought in by NDP governments, many of these initiatives, by the way, which pioneered in education in this country, those are being cut?

What we have on the other hand is an agenda, and let us look at what the key—you know what the Governor of Michigan talked about? Pillars. Interestingly enough, the former Minister of Education I think had 16 pillars of education, pillars. It is based on a number of things.

First of all, it is based on a mistrust of the system as it exists today. It is based on some sense that the education system today is not working. It is not like it used to be. It was better in the old days. The further we get back to the good old days, the better off we are. That is the sort of underlying basic principle of these educational philosophies. But it goes beyond that. Part of this whole approach is an attack on the teaching profession, and I have never seen relations between a government and teachers in this province sink to a lower level than I have in the last number of years.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Actually, they were not too well in '69.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) mentions 1969, and I defer to him in that they may have been rather difficult in 1969. Of course, that may have been one of the underlying factors in the election which was the election of the first Schreyer

government. Even in the Sterling Lyon period the relationship between the government and the teaching profession, I would suggest, was better than it has been under the tenure of this government.

Mr. Enns: Yes, but Sterling was a compassionate pussycat.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the member for Lakeside says that Sterling Lyon was compassionate. You know, this is a scary thought here, but when I see what this government is doing today and this Premier, I am almost tempted to agree with him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the thing about Sterling Lyon was he said what he meant and he meant what he said, and whether you liked what he said or not you knew where he stood. This has changed.

The current government is led by a First Minister who ducks any controversy. He stayed out of the education controversy. He stayed out of the health controversy, and now is trying to claim he stayed out of the Jets controversy which I find hard to believe. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have shifted. It is a very different style of government. It is only different in style to my mind because what the government has learned is that if you push your agenda but you pretend that you are moderate, you talk in moderate terms, some people will believe that.

I really believe one of the reasons why this government was re-elected, apart from some of the things that happened with the Jets—I have to be very careful with the words I use. I think all of the words I could think of to describe what happened were basically words that would be considered unparliamentary.

One of the reasons the government was able to get elected in other areas was that people bought this idea that they were not really all that ideological. They were not all that right wing. You know, education is the key area word. We see that is not the case, because this is an attempt to roll back the clock to the good old days when those that could afford an education got it. I hate to say it, but that is where we are headed with some of the dismantling that is taking place with Access and New Careers programs.

The government wants to move back, and this is very clear in the educational reforms proposed by the minister. So where we value certain skills, the basics, which have a role, but where are other skills in terms of problem solving, for example? In terms of dealing with the challenges of this decade and the next century, they are not important.

Mr. Enns: There is no future in basket weaving.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) talks about basket weaving, and I defer to him again. He may be an expert in that area. I do not know.

The point is, the interesting thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is when you look at what is happening with education, the Japanese who for many years have been held up as an example that we should follow are shifting to a far more North American style of education. They are shifting away from rote learning. They are shifting away from focusing only on the basics

They are moving into problem solving, because the interesting thing is that North America and Canada in particular are doing very well internationally, in large part because of the type of education our young people have received. We are dealing with the changes in society far better than many other countries. There are many European countries that are learning from our approach.

Many of those initiatives of the '70s and '80s in terms of education that were criticized by people at the time as not being something that happened in the good old days are the reasons why we are positioned well, I believe, internationally in terms of human resources. Because we learned problem solving starting in schools, we do not treat it as something that is not part of the basic curriculum.

I think this is where it surprised me, when the government pushes so much on this right-wing agenda, because, you know, there is a constituent group out there that buys that—the taxpayers federation—Conservative line on rolling back the education system. There are people out there who buy that.

I do not believe the vast majority of Manitobans do buy that very specific right-wing ideological agenda. I suspect that this current Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), in fact, I will say, is certainly not as ideological as the previous minister. I do not mean that as a criticism for either one of them. I think it is a fair evaluation.

* (1540)

I find it rather interesting that political staff from this government were suggesting that the departure of the member for Morris and the member for Pembina, the previous members, would somehow change the style of this government. They would not be right wing anymore. Maybe that is why the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) says he is not a right-winger, but I look across the way and the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), whom I know from other political fights, I think would have some difficulty in not describing himself as a right-winger. I would be very surprised if he did not, because certainly anybody I know who has been in the political arena with the member knows him to be a very committed right-winger, a committed Conservative.

I look around at other members on that side, and I think that is something they are quite proud of. They are right-wing. They are Conservative. [interjection] The member for Riel (Mr. Newman) agrees. There are other members, too. The only reason I mentioned the member for Riel was because I have had some—well, the member talks about right and wrong. I certainly think though he would acknowledge that his politics would be very much on the right of the political spectrum.

I do not think anybody has accused the member for Riel of being a left-winger, let us put it that way, a centrist territory that is somewhat strange. Perhaps the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews), his politics are cut from a different cloth, and I accept that. [interjection] Now I am really worried because the member for Rossmere says he and the member for Riel (Mr. Newman) get along really well politically. If that is the case, then I would be interested to see what happens in the Department of Labour in the next period of time because I know the member's views. He knows mine

on labour issues in this province. It is an ongoing debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with Bill 5 and it is on education. A little bit of relevancy would be appreciated.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my point was the fact that this is part of the right-wing agenda.

I want to deal with a question: Is there is crisis in our school system? Not, are there problems? There are problems. I can list some of the problems from my own committee.

First of all, some of the funding formulas that we have in place are not fair. My school district was the hardest hit last year of any school district in the province, and it fluctuates quite significantly. That is part of the problem with the funding formula.

A number of years ago they obtained additional funds, they were cut by about two or three times the amount of funding, the additional they received. Another previous minister of Education here knows of what I speak in terms of the funding formula.

The funding formula is very dependant on assessments. The assessment in Thompson increased 41 percent in one year, which I think is totally unreasonable when it is then transferred to a 41-percent increase in one year to the support levy. Money which flowed out of the community, which did not allow for the return of those funds, when also it took away the tax base of the school board indirectly, because there is only so much money the taxpayers are willing to pay, and they do not care which level of government it goes to, in this case for school taxes, whether it is from the support levy or from the local district levy. So there is a problem with the funding formula, and I have raised this in the House. I have brought in petitions that were signed by thousands of my constituents. That is one problem that does exist.

Another one is violence in our schools. I think we have to recognize there is a problem. It varies. I know in Thompson a number of parents are quite concerned

about the level of violence. I know many teachers feel it is perhaps not as bad as many parents feel, but I think if you look at the degree of violence that exists in our schools it probably has increased over time, certainly from when I was in school, and I think there is a concern amongst students and parents. I notice, for example, there is a school now here in Winnipeg, the R.B. Russell School, that has put in surveillance in its hallways. So there is a problem with violence.

I think the solution is adopting the zero tolerance policy that has been adopted in many of the areas in terms of justice. I think it is a good model, and many school districts are doing that. Many jurisdictions are. I believe that is the approach that should be followed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather than this approach in this bill, which is giving the Minister of Education a fair amount of authority, but it is not getting, I think, the solution where the solution can come from, which is from the community level and the grassroots level. I believe that is how you deal with violence in the schools.

There are cases where suspensions are needed, but that is only one way in which you deal with it. In many schools, including my high school in Thompson, the involvement of the local police, in this case the RCMP, has been very significant in terms of having a presence in the school. The RCMP is in the school every week, and it has made a significant difference. There is a problem with violence in schools. We have to recognize it.

So I have mentioned funding formulas and I have mentioned the violence. In terms of curriculum, I think there is a problem with some of the shifts that have taken place, and there is a problem when you transpose on top of that the fact that there has been an erosion in many cases of in-service days.

There certainly was with the government's legislated ability for school districts to apply the Filmon Fridays, in many cases being applied through the reduction in terms of the amount of in-services. You cannot expect teachers and school systems to change every two or three years depending on the shift and the Minister of Education. There has to be some consistency. So that is a problem that I see in our school system.

In terms of curriculum itself, quite frankly, I think we need to be doing a lot more to keep up with the times. There are many schools that are pioneering in terms of the use of computers, access on the Internet, for example, but I think in general we are starting to fall behind. In many cases for budgetary reasons, because it is difficult to keep up, certainly with the hardware investment that is necessary. I think there are some positive things happening, especially with the MTS initiative, for example, in establishing Internet access in a number of communities. That is a problem in our school systems, and I think we are not keeping up with the times, and I think that is a reasonable concern.

In terms of educational standards, I mentioned before that I do not use strictly the barometer of the three Rs, but I do believe that there are some needs to upgrade in terms of basic literacy, quite frankly. I think a lot of students want that kind of assistance. I think in many cases it is not necessarily something that has to be done in the curriculum itself but through other supports.

I will give you an example just briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In terms of the Access programs, they have pioneered the model of assistance to students, not just financial, but assistance to students in terms of academic upgrading. I will tell you what has happened. There have been people who have not completed a high school education and been able to upgrade and then succeed and completing a four-year Bachelor of Social Work program, Bachelor of Education degree. There are many Access programs that have given them that opportunity. Nursing at the community college level, the R.N. level. The reason is because of those supports, and that is what concerns me with what is happening in our school system.

Class size is another one. There is an increasing problem. A lot of it is because of the funding pressures, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In my own school district, for example, my kids now are in class sizes of 28. My daughter is in a class of 30. This is Grade 8, and believe you me the kids that will suffer are the ones that need that additional attention and additional help. That has been eroded in my own school district, not only in the increased size but also the loss of the number of options. What used to happen was that many times there would be students who would use

spares or times when other kids were taking options to upgrade their academic skills.

So there are problems out there. Part of it is a funding problem, part of it is a resource allocation problem, but there could be a lot more done in that particular area.

In terms of special needs, I think there is going to be a growing problem in this area, because special needs is an area that is being affected by the budget cuts. Do not kid yourself. It is not necessarily the L2s and the L3s that are going to be affected, those at the higher level. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have admitted those and I have indicated those particular problems. But I want to compare that with this right-wing suggestion that there is a crisis in education, and something I think was fundamental in the original Education Administration Act, none of those particular issues to my mind lead anyone to be able to make the argument that there is a crisis in education in this province.

I would go one step further. I would say, the argument has never been established in this province that there is a crisis in education. Problems, things that can be done better, challenges, you can apply whatever label you want, but I challenge anyone to document the crisis of education that the former Minister of Education and this government essentially campaigned on in the election. You do not have to take my word for it, I mean, the fact that those problems I identified and challenges.

Look at performance, some of the standardized testing that members opposite really like to hang their hat on when it comes to educational centres. I find it amazing that when Manitoba did do well, they did do well on a number of tests, the former Minister of Education, said, well, yes, but. That did not fit in with the agenda. You know, when you do well, it does not fit in well with the agenda.

I would make the suggestion and I could focus this on a local level, having gone to high school. I have been to a number of school districts. I graduated from R.D. Parker in Thompson. I got a good education. I really received a good education from the Thompson

school system, but it is better today. I think we have a lot going for us in this province. I think we have fewer problems than a lot of other jurisdictions in any of the issues I have mentioned, and we have had a generally progressive educational philosophy. I think in large part there is some politics involved. I think there has been a significant impact from NDP governments, but you know, it is our educational community as well. I believe we have a very progressive educational community in this province.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

So let us put aside these artificially created crises. That is the first thing we have to do and then get down to dealing co-operatively with solving the problem. That is why I wanted to speak on The Education Administration Act today, because I think to a certain extent one small step has been taken by the deletion of the ability of teachers to suspend unilaterally. In a way it is partly the personality of the minister in this case, because the minister and I, we probably do not agree on a lot of issues that we have had many debates on in this House, but I have seen on a number of occasions, I note on non-potable intoxicants there was an issue a number of years ago.

The member for Point Douglas made some excellent suggestions that were put into place by the minister in one of her previous roles and were adopted and that has happened on a couple of other areas, and you know, quite frankly, Madam Speaker that is the way it should be.

* (1550)

But simply removing the one item, which this bill does, simply removing the one item does not, I think, take away from the overall philosophy of this government that we are seeing increasingly. I mentioned the funding issues, it is certainly a concern. I mentioned the confrontation with our teachers.

I know another issue that has come up recently is the public-private school controversy, but I believe underlying this bill and other bills is the continued attempt by the Conservative government to cling to the idea that our education system is in crisis and we need

radical, and you can put that in brackets, right-wing changes.

It took perhaps the Minister of Education in Ontario who really put his foot in his mouth when he made that recent comment about inventing the crisis. I think that really put it all into perspective. That is why, while we certainly support the initiative to take out that section, which is very much the work of our party in working with the education of the community, and our former member for Rossmere who raised this issue, I think, first and foremost in this House and was criticized by the government for doing so. While we certainly acknowledge that is a positive improvement in this bill, I do not think the bill goes far enough in dealing with those concerns.

Quite frankly, as the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who was a former Education critic for our party, pointed out, it has substituted now this unilateral power of teachers, something that many teachers did not want, to suspend, by a new system that is increasing the role of the minister and is decreasing the role of local administrations.

I want to finish by suggesting that is the exact opposite direction that we should be following, and it is really something that does not really keep—it is not consistent with what the government was stating in its philosophy. You know, one of the issues, the pillars, that the previous Minister of Education talked about was the school council, and I believe there is a role for the school councils.

I will give you a recent example. We in our own elementary school in Thompson had a combination of meet-the-teacher night and the kick-off of the year for the parent council which has been active for the last number of years. There were 280 people that showed up. Just an elementary school with not the greatest enrolment. I think that is great when there is that degree of parental involvement. I feel much better about my ability to make sure my son and daughter get the best education because there is an active parent council.

But this is where the government, I do not think, is really interested so much in the grassroots involvement

as it was making itself out to be. I believe the government felt that it could use the parent councils to bring in much of its right-wing agenda. It is interesting, Madam Speaker, if you were to get on the Internet today, there are many right-wing groups based in United States providing information on how to get involved at that grassroots level and put their agenda in place. It is right on the Internet.

You can contact many discussion groups and what pages—[interjection] In fact, as the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) points out, there are many extreme right-wing groups. What they advise is to get involved at that level, and that is what is happening in the United States. That is what the agenda is, and what they are doing is that they are changing things at that level and they are relying on the fact that many people do not get involved or they take for granted that there is a certain kind of education to be offered. They get involved at that level and then they input their agenda.

Madam Speaker, the democratic system. There are limits, obviously, when one is talking about the far right-wing organizations, but that is what is happening. You know, that is what the government's agenda was. They knew they could not change everything at the provincial level, so they wanted it to happen at the local level, and they wanted that to be something that was facilitated.

I suggest to you, one of the reasons we are seeing in this bill a shift back to a more paternalistic approach, as the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) pointed out, is that they realize that they cannot impact totally at that level because you get real grassroots involvement and parents are not going to accept the narrow right-wing agenda. They are not going to accept any ideological agenda, quite frankly. I think most parents view education in nonideological terms. They are interested in the best education for their kids.

So this is the underlying philosophy of the government, this is the underlying philosophy of the bill. That puts us in a bit of a dilemma, quite frankly, as to what we do in this particular bill, because we have an amendment in here that is our amendment. It is an amendment that was suggested right from Day One by the former member for Rossmere, so we can certainly

support that, but there are some other problems with the bill, and quite frankly there are problems with the fact that the government has picked one issue only out of its 16 pillars brought in by the previous member. It has demolished one pillar. That leaves 15, not all of which I disagree with, but it leaves some of the key underlying assumptions in place as to where our education system should head.

I want to make a prediction in conclusion, Madam Speaker, because I really think that over the next number of years we are going to be dealing with issues that I think we always need to deal with. I mean the health-care system. There are major changes taking place there, and regardless of where we stand on those changes and the kind of health-care system we want, that is clear. That is going to be one of the key issues. The economy is always an issue; we know that, government knows that, and governments, as the political sands shift, a lot of times they do well or they are defeated based on economic issues.

Education is the kind of area where I think people have taken it for granted for years. You ask people, they may even say that education is an issue, but it is not something that you sit down and you say, well, it is a vote-determining issue in many cases. I would suggest that is going to change, and I would suggest that I think many parents in this province, many students, are starting to realize that education is that much more important as we increasingly face a dramatically changing world.

That is what has placed us well internationally, but you know we cannot take it for granted, because just as, as I said, the Japanese are learning from our education system, we better be learning from others, we better be learning from ourselves about how to improve that system. The only way we are going to succeed as a province in the future, to my mind, is going to be if we can stay ahead of the pack in terms of education. It is the only way.

And we are not just competing internationally. There are other provinces I think who are doing some very innovative things. British Columbia has done some very interesting things in terms of education. But that is what is at stake, and that is why I am suggesting

education should be a more important issue, because it affects other things, and it particularly affects our economic competitiveness.

That is why I am concerned that our government has not yet taken off those ideological blinkers. It has not admitted completely that its agenda of the last couple of years is not working and that it is not in keeping with what the people of Manitoba want.

There is one small indication in this bill, but there is a lot more that needs to be done, and I want to suggest to the government that if it does not change its policies, whether it be the priority given to private schools over public schools, or its policies in terms of overall funding, its policies in terms of dealing with the educational community, I really believe in the next election they will find that education will no longer be the sort of issue that everybody takes for granted, that people will start deciding that this is an issue they have to take a stand on.

You know, Madam Speaker, I say this as a warning. I do not know if the government will heed this. Its policies in terms of education are clearly not the policies for the late '90s and going into the next century. That is why, as I said, we are in a real dilemma on this bill. We support aspects of it. We do not support other aspects. It does not go far enough, and we will be considering our position further, depending on what happens in committee.

We may reserve the right to move in some amendments to try and improve the bill, but my message to the government is, be careful on education. There is a lot at stake there, and there is a lot that can be done, but do not try and put the right-wing agenda in place here in this province for education.

It is not supported by the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker, and it will not work as we head into the next century.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, there are a few things that I would like to deal with and get on the record with respect to Bill 5. In the current legislation, teachers' duties are defined. This amendment adds the duties of principals to allow

ministers to make a clear distinction in the roles of these two professions.

The legislation also allows for the creation of advisory councils for school leadership. The councils will have parent, community and business representation, and will provide advice to school principals on the day-to-day operation of schools.

The most important and controversial component of the bill allows teachers to suspend students from the classroom to re-establish the teacher's control over the classroom.

Madam Speaker, this is in fact an area in which I used to be the critic for the party, and I have had actually many different sorts of discussions with all sorts of stakeholders in the education background—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Inkster will have 39 minutes remaining. As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River.

As previously agreed, the hour being 4 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

* (1600)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 7—Task Force on Poverty

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest level of child poverty in Canada; and

WHEREAS such poverty is found disproportionately among single-parent families for whom the risk of poverty exceeds 80 percent; and

WHEREAS child poverty is well understood to be closely linked to higher incidences of illness, lifelong poverty, higher rates of accidents and accidental death, high drop-out rates and poor academic attainment; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has brought forth a budget which ignores the 40 percent cuts in federal transfer payments over the next three years, of which some \$8 billion is related to Canada Assistance Plan and \$6.3 billion is related to health care; and

WHEREAS the provincial government intends to balance its fiscal budget without addressing in any manner the tragic human deficit of child and other poverty in this province; and

WHEREAS many community groups and national organizations have put forward creative and appropriate measures to address child poverty in Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier to consider the immediate creation of an all-party task force on poverty whose mandate will be to develop an action plan to end poverty among children and their families by seeking the fullest co-operation of all community groups and organizations as well as government departments.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, in addressing this resolution, I hope that all members of the House of all parties will see the urgency of joining together with the community groups that have worked so hard in Winnipeg and Manitoba to try and address the issue of poverty so that we might finally be able to move into the millennium with a substantial improvement in the rate of child poverty in this province.

Madam Speaker, I am not so naive as to think that even with the best will and concerted action of all parties in the House that we will eliminate child poverty, but I am absolutely convinced that with appropriate action, with discipline and with commitment we can do much better for our children and, incidentally, by doing so we will do much better for our community, for our future.

We will lower the workload of the Minister of Justice. We will lower the workload of the Minister of Family Services. We will make it possible for families, once again, to nurture their children in peaceful communities in ways that allow them to reach their full potential. So I hope that I can count on the good will of all members to see children as a nonpartisan and community target for concerted action, stringent kinds of careful thinking about the policies that will lead to the betterment of their condition.

I would like to review for honourable members the situation of poverty in Canada. Between 1992 and '93, there was the largest single increase since 1980 in the overall poverty rate for families in this country. The increase was approximately 9 percent in that one year so that, in 1993, 14.8 percent of all of our families in this country lived below the poverty line.

A bit later in my remarks I will address the question of how low below the poverty line they exist because I think that some members opposite may be those who read the work of Christopher Sarlo and the Fraser Institute, who try to make a case that, like the former minister federally, we should simply redefine poverty so that we define it to a very low level, or even perhaps Barbara Greene's proposal would be to define it right out of existence. I will show the intellectual dishonesty of that approach a little later in my remarks.

So, first of all, in an overall sense, we have approximately 1.1 million Canadian families living below the poverty line in the year for which most recent data are available, 1993. However, I think, as most members know, there is one particular group of Canadian families that suffer disproportionate levels of poverty, and that is single-parent families and particularly single-parent, female-headed families.

In an overall sense, in 1993, 59.8 percent of all such families lived below the poverty line. Those kind of numbers rattle off the tongue fairly easily, but think if you would about facing a classroom where three out of five children were living below the poverty line. What sort of stimulation in the way of good reading material, good play material; what sort of life experiences in terms of visits to museums, visits to cultural events, visits simply to the country; what sort of recreational

opportunities are available in a situation where three out of five children are living below the poverty line?

I think if we do not concern ourselves with the dignity of their lives, at least let us think of the economic reality. By continuing to allow them to exist in such a state of poverty, we penalize our economy, we penalize our cities in terms of their safety, we penalize ourselves in terms of the overall well-being of the communities in which we live.

First of all, remember that three out of every five children in single-parent families will live all of their years as a child below the poverty line. This in a country whose gross domestic product has never been higher, a country whose gross domestic product is over \$730 billion this year, a country whose wealth has continued to increase almost without exception, though the recession that was caused by the former Conservative government in Ottawa is a bit of an exception to that pattern, but generally speaking our wealth has increased consistently since the Second World War and yet poverty for these families is higher than it was in 1980.

In 1980, 57.7 percent of single-parent families lived below the poverty line, now it is 59.8 percent. No progress at all and in fact a bit of sliding backwards towards an increased rate of poverty.

* (1610)

Within these overall statistics, Manitoba has some particular problems. I want first to break down the area of single-parent families into three categories. If we look at poverty rates for single-parent mothers—that is female-headed, single-parent families—and look at, first of all, those who have one child, we will find that 67 percent of all of those with a child under seven live below the poverty line. When the child is older, seven to 17, many of these women immediately join the workforce and the poverty rate drops from 67 percent to 42 percent, a 25-percent improvement simply by virtue of the child reaching the age at which they would attend school on a full-day basis.

Madam Speaker, there could not be any stronger indication of the need for available, affordable child

care than that statistic. In the one year in which children suddenly become able to attend school, the poverty rate for single-parent families drops by 25 percent, that is the social assistance rate drops, the demand on the community's resources drops simply by virtue of the fact that child care is available in the form of elementary schooling.

I would urge members opposite to join with us in seeing the priority of affordable, accessible child care for all single-parent families, indeed for all families, but in particular for single-parent families with young children.

Madam Speaker, if we move on to a slightly different family type, families with two children, we will find that where a single parent—whether they were never married or previously married does not matter—has two children under the age of seven, the poverty rate is a staggering 88.9 percent. Almost nine out of 10 children in those families are living below the poverty line and will do so for all of their younger years.

Where there is a child under seven and a child over seven the rate improves, again, I would suggest, because it becomes more possible for the mother in this case to find some work. The rate improves by some 14 percent to only 75 percent on the poverty line, three out of four children living below the poverty line.

Again, and I draw particular attention to members opposite who are concerned with the policy around child care, as soon as the youngest child reaches seven, the poverty rate drops sharply, almost in half, to 48.1 percent, still a shocking level, still an unacceptably high level, but immensely better than 90 percent, where it was for children under seven. So the priority of child care is obvious from these statistics.

We see the need for young, single parents to have access to family life education and birth control in the next set of numbers. When three or more children are present in a family the poverty rate again skyrockets to over 76 percent if they are young children and over 58 percent if they are slightly older.

Madam Speaker, I think these numbers make it very clear that the provision of and access to quality child

care is a vital antipoverty measure. In terms of the actual situation in Manitoba, we see that in Manitoba we have a somewhat higher rate of poverty among our single-parent families than in the national picture, not drastically different, but significantly different. I would also point out that the total poverty gap between the—the poverty gap is the number of dollars it would take to raise all those below the poverty line to the poverty line—the poverty gap has reached the figure of \$14.5 billion in this county.

I want to close my remarks by referring to the scale of the poverty gap in Manitoba. Where we are looking at the poverty gap for children under 18 in single-parent families, we are looking at approximately \$8,500 below the poverty line for these families. That is, it is sometimes said by those who attack single-parent people and low-income people in general, they are just below the poverty line, that we could just redefine the poverty line and most of that would just disappear.

The fact is that single-parent mothers with children under 18 are \$8,500 below the poverty line, not a mere \$75 or \$100. For couples, not single parents, but for intact families that are poor with children under 18, they are \$7,600 on average below the poverty line.

The poverty lines some people criticize as being too high, \$18,000 or \$19,000 a year for these families. Well, these families are not living at \$16,000 or \$17,000, they are living at \$10,000 and \$11,000 and trying to raise two children on that kind of income.

Madam Speaker, I hope that the members opposite have been convinced by our arguments that a task force on poverty would be a very appropriate measure, particularly as we are so soon at the end of the year of the child, just a year or so ago, and are approaching the millennium only four years from now.

Would it not be a wonderful thing if Manitoba could go into the year 2000 having reduced its poverty rate from the unacceptably high level that it has now? In particular, would it not be a wonderful thing if those children most at risk could receive most of our supports so that they would have an opportunity to attain a good level of education, a reasonable quality of life, a

reasonable employment opportunity and could become the contributing and productive citizens that I know they are able to be but for the life chances that they were dealt that brought them into a family that was headed by a single parent, or that brought them into a family that, through no fault of its own, found itself below the poverty line, found itself without employment, without adequate housing, perhaps without the skills and abilities to attain work in a situation where our economy is showing consistently that, although the official unemployment is in the 7 percent region, the true unemployment rate in our economy is around 13 percent or 14 percent, and many of those are the families of which we are speaking, single parent families, poor families. They need our support. I ask the House to support this resolution.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): I rise this afternoon to respond to those remarks of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) on this resolution.

One of the reflections that I would wish to put to this House on the remarks of the honourable member is that Her Majesty's loyal opposition seemed to be trying to equate low income to poverty, and I note from the tones of derision coming from the opposition benches that they have completely missed the point of my remark. The honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) seems to be having a fit of laughter at this point in time over these remarks.

What I want to address this Chamber about and the Honourable Speaker today is poverty of spirit. We can play with figures, and we have all heard the old truisms that fools figure and you can figure with fools, but I would not lay any of those remarks at the feet of our learned friends across the House here.

What I would suggest, though, Madam Speaker, is that we cannot take figures from Toronto or Montreal or the larger urban centres in this country and apply those figures to Winnipeg and to the reality of Winnipeg and say that there are families living in poverty because—and because they fall below any given arbitrary level of income.

What I would suggest, Madam Speaker, is that what our government is doing is we are addressing the issues of poverty in areas of the population which have no hope, have no resources and have no ability or education to rise above an unacceptable life style. What we are doing in that respect is that we have initiated a program called Taking Charge!

Taking Charge! is a shared or a balanced proposal coming from the federal government and from the Province of Manitoba. Taking Charge! has initiated a perspective and mandated a commission or a group of people who will go into the community, targeted at single-parent families, and it will assess needs. It will offer counselling.

It will establish the ability of individuals to perform a function and fulfill a job, and then they will take the problem in hand and search for appropriate employment for that individual with the educable level that they have attained at that point in time and follow through so that this will be an on-the-street program that is doing practical advice. It is not just a point of throwing more money at a problem.

Madam Speaker, too long in this Assembly we have been advised by the learned opposition to just throw more money at the problems of poverty and build up a bigger bureaucracy so that we can pat ourselves on the back and say, oh, well, we have gone out and done good because we are spending more money. That is not good enough. We can look back to the closing years of the Pawley administration—

An Honourable Member: Bad years.

Mr. Radcliffe: Bad years, Madam Speaker, because all they did, those were high-spending years. They were under the misapprehension that all they had to do was be sports and be big spenders. You know what, because there was not the thinking and the perception and the sensitivity going into those programs, all they did was hire more of their friends to swell the ranks of the bureaucracy. I am not slamming the bureaucracy today. I think that we have in the Department of Education and in the Department of Health and in the Department of Family Services and in our Justice department, we have dedicated hardworking people

who are truly concerned about the problems of poverty in our community.

In compliance with that concern, I would point out to this Chamber today and to our honourable friends on the left of the Speaker, that we have established a Child and Youth Secretariat, and the purpose of this Child and Youth Secretariat is to co-ordinate services for children and families in those four departments that I have just mentioned.

We have discerned that there may very well be overlap or in other cases on the alternative there may be people who fall through the boards and are not looked after and picked up by the social safety network. Therefore, this honourable government has deemed, in its wisdom, that it is appropriate in order to give full service to our underprivileged that we will co-ordinate all the mandate and the services of these four departments, namely, Justice, Health, Education and Family Services.

I want now to dwell for a moment on a very personal level, that when I was growing up in my own personal home our income—and this would be in the '50s and the '60s—probably did not exceed \$10,000 a year, and yet we did not think ourselves poor. This was a family of four. I would suggest to this honourable Chamber that one could travel up and down the roads of rural Manitoba and find many proud residents of this fair province, and those people, Madam Speaker, have pride of spirit. These people are self-reliant and they have a focus and they have a direction and they are inspired. What the job of this government must be is to bring hope and inspiration and focus back to these people, to all our people who have lost this drive.

Now, another thing which I am pleased to advise this honourable Chamber today, Madam Speaker, is that although it is true, and the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has cited that there has been a diminution in the subsidy payments coming or the transfer payments coming from Ottawa and we have had no direction from the federal government as to how they wish us to apply this diminution, however, we have the wisdom of being the people on the spot and we—I can tell that as I am speaking today, there is a meeting of the ministers of Family Services, who will

be considering this heinous cutback that we are suffering in this country from our friends in Ottawa—perhaps not friends, I use that loosely.

Nonetheless, they have underlined the principle that we in this Chamber must address and we as government are saying to the people of Manitoba that spending money on a project in itself is not the answer. There has to be perception and there has to be a direction to this and to this end, Madam Speaker, because the resolution today is merely a simple band-aid to the problem that we are facing.

We do not decry, we do not deny for a moment that there is a problem in our community amongst certain people, but the problem is not the lack of money, it is lack of jobs, it is lack of opportunity, and what we have done in order—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Radcliffe: I think we are getting a little difficulty from the kindergarten side of the House here, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, what I want to also submit to this House today with great respect is that we are approaching this problem with balance.

We are balancing with some of the resources we are getting from the federal government. We are balancing it with our own research that we are taking from the people of the province, but also most importantly, Madam Speaker, we are providing the people of Manitoba with a balanced budget so that there will be a strong economy in this province.

We have just heard from our honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) today of an increase in jobs that is coming into the fair city of Portage la Prairie. This is an indication, because we are delivering sound economic opportunity and a sound

economic environment that we are going to provide the answers to these all-pervading problems that some elements of the society are facing. [interjection]

Well, it is happening right away. The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has asked me when this is going to occur. Well, I can tell him that it is happening now. We have the results. We are now starting to reap some of the hard work that this government is doing by virtue of the fact that companies are choosing to open up in Manitoba and to employ Manitobans.

To this end, Madam Speaker, I would like to propose an amendment to the proposition, the resolution which has been advanced by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

The amendment that I would propose comes in several levels. First of all, in the first WHEREAS clause, I would ask that the House accept a proposal to change the word "highest" in the first sentence to "unacceptable."

I would move this amendment as follows:

THAT the word "highest" be deleted and substitute the word "unacceptable"; and the words "in Canada" in the second line be deleted; and

I would move

THAT the clauses "WHEREAS the provincial government has brought forth . . . ; WHEREAS the provincial government intends to balance . . . ; WHEREAS many community groups and national organizations . . . ; and THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED . . ." all those clauses be deleted from this resolution, and we substitute the following amendment:

WHEREAS the federal government is reducing funding to priority health, education and social services;

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has demonstrated its commitment to fighting poverty through increased funding to social allowances, child care and other support services; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba continues, in consultation with the community, to introduce innovative measures to fight poverty, such as the Taking Charge!, which is a pilot project for single parents;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly for Manitoba support continued efforts to ensure Manitoba receives its fair share of funding under any federal changes to transfer payments; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly work with the provincial government and in partnership with the community to support families in increasing their self-reliance and securing better futures for their children.

* (1630)

Madam Speaker, this amendment is seconded by the honourable Minister for Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer).

My remarks are addressed to the issues of balance. They are addressed to poverty of spirit. They are addressed to the issues of sensitivity and listening.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I would ask the Chair to rule on the admissibility of one of the most incoherent motions that I have ever been privileged to hear in this House. I have no idea what the amendment is. I would ask the Chair if the Chair has any idea of what the amendment is and ask her to rule on the amendment.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood indeed does have a point of order. The Speaker was experiencing great difficulty in also deciphering the amendment. However, I will wait until the table officer has received the amendment, so that we can take a cursory glance at it as to whether I will indeed rule on it today or deal with it. Would the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) please submit his amendment to the table officers.

In the interest of fairness to all members, the clock is running. We have considerable problems with the

amendment. I will take the amendment under advisement. The honourable member for River Heights' time has expired.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of the original resolution as so eloquently—[interjection] It has not yet been amended as far as I understand, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment has not been accepted by the Speaker at this point in time. It has been taken under advisement. All continuing debate will be on the original proposed resolution.

Mr. Jennissen: Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), especially the balance part. Being a northerner, we often talk about stew when we talk about a rabbit-elephant stew. We are going to have a 50-50 mixture: one rabbit, one elephant. That sort of seems like to me to be the kind of Tory stew that the member is advocating. The elephant is obviously the rich and the powerful and the rabbit is the poor. So it is not equal at all.

I think we cannot avoid the tragedy of the wasted potential when we talk about poverty-stricken children. Child poverty is a reality, and it is a vicious cycle as well, because poverty and hopelessness breeds more poverty and hopelessness. It just does not go away. It goes from generation to generation and we have to intervene; we cannot simply leave it to the tender mercies of the marketplace.

The figures are staggering, and the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has already alluded—in fact, quoted some of those figures: possibly 60,000 children in this province living below the poverty line; 80 percent of single-parent families being poor. Those rates are unacceptable in a civilized country where the hallmark of civilization should be how we treat those most in need of our help, those most poor, those most defenceless, and it seems to be the other way around.

That concerns me, Madam Speaker, because child poverty is a very serious business, and I am worried, concerned about the ideological context in which this debate is taking place as if poverty was an isolated

event, as if there are no antecedents, as if there is nothing connecting A to B. Well, it is not a random event; it has a history; it is embedded in a matrix.

I just cannot believe that we would allow the current ideological context to prevail, that is, that poor people simply have to take what is being dished out to them. I think that we have to intervene. We cannot leave it to market-driven laissez-faire forces no matter how well presented they might be by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe).

I think the poor deserve better than that. I think it is disgraceful that in this rich and powerful country and in this fairly well-to-do province we have the kind of poverty rates for children, and adults as well, that we do have. This is not acceptable. I think the approach that the government seems to be advocating is not only unfair, it is unjust, it is undemocratic, because those least able to speak for themselves are being penalized. Those are the ones we should be intervening on their behalf.

I guess I lament the lack of compassion as if we are saying that the ultimate rule is the dollar rule, that being in the black is important. I admit there are deficits and there are budgets, those dollar problems, but somehow or other it seems to me that when somebody much wiser than me said you feed the poor, he did not say we will feed the poor if it is fiscally responsible. I do not remember him saying you clothe the naked if it is fiscally responsible, let us check the budget first. I never heard that. You simply feed the poor. We are putting qualifications on it now saying well, we will do that if.

In other words, we have a pretty good or a rather pure rationalization to keep the rich rich and to keep the poor poor. That is disturbing and that is frightening. I hope, Madam Speaker, that in this era of balanced budgets we think seriously about that. I do not want to overuse the "B" word, but I do not want balanced budgets on the backs of babies. I really do not want that, and I am sure that the honourable member opposite does not want that either.

I think also that we are ringing the criteria a little bit when we are saying that we should only be looking at

factors that are easy to measure. It is pretty easy to measure dollars, because apparently members opposite have lots of them to count. I do not have that many. It is not so easy to measure the effect on poor children. It is not so easy to measure the loss to this country. It is not so easy to measure the fact that you are doomed for life.

Madam Speaker, if I can just make a small aside, I have seen teachers say to four-year-olds and five-year-olds, when they spoke to me later about this four-year-old or five-year-old, that kid is already doomed, that kid will never make it, that kid will be a criminal, that child might become a prostitute, whatever. Already when they are four years old we are saying that, an age of innocence. It is frightening; it is scary.

When you talk about intervention, you are darned right I believe in intervention. I have never accepted the theory that the least intervention in this country is the best. Maybe the members opposite believe that, but we have to be very careful. I do not believe we are on this Earth or even in this Chamber for that matter to speak on behalf of those powerful voices that often control the media that are already rich. We are speaking on behalf—I hope that I am speaking on behalf of the northerners, many who live in conditions of impoverishment that you cannot even imagine.

* (1640)

I will give you simply one example, and I wish the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) would have joined the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and myself in the trip to Pukatawagan. In one house, 10 adults and 20 children, and it was not a very good house. We are talking about 231 houses on that reserve, and I think we have 2,000 people living there.

Now you can blame the feds all you like. These are Manitobans. These are women. These are children.

An Honourable Member: No running water.

Mr. Jennissen: There is no running water. It is incredible conditions that these people live in. We simply cannot wash our hands like Pontius Pilate and

say, this does not involve me. I have nothing to do with that. I make the economy run. I balance the budget. Look, you bleeding hearts out there, liberal and otherwise, you guys are not in the real world. The real world belongs to the accountants.

The real world belongs to all and especially to the children. The children will inherit the Earth. Speak on behalf of the children, and do not speak on behalf of capital. I am ashamed sometimes to hear some of the members opposite.

Furthermore, I would like to go on to point out how this government with its fetish, with its, I guess, its focus, with its total obsession with balanced budgets and money has let the poor children down.

Take a look at education. Private school funding is up. What happens to the public school system, the system that deals with all the children, not just the elite, not just the cream of the crop? Zamboni machines for—what is it—St. John's-Ravenscourt? They got the money to buy that. What happens to maybe a breakfast program for poor children? Do the poor not deserve a chance in the sun? I think they do. Do the northerners not deserve a chance in the sun, because over there we are poor and we have very little sun?

The cuts this government makes in Access programs and education programs and BUNTEP programs, New Careers programs, programs that we know that in seven years pay for themselves and will continue paying for themselves ever after—you want to help the poor? Take them out of the pit of poverty. Give them a chance. Give them hope. Give them education.

But you are cutting the education. You are cutting it. Cuts to community colleges. Cuts to the curriculum services. Cuts away from the educational system. Meanwhile, while the cuts are happening to where people can use the money, the grants go. Where do the grants go?—they go to IBM, Centra Gas, Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald's, private golf courses, et cetera. These people really need money; I am sure McDonald's needs our money to create jobs. How about putting that money into the public system where the poor can participate and can have jobs?

Let us take a look at a few things in health care. Dental programs that could have saved us millions of dollars—cut. Now the poor have to pay for their children's dental program. I am referring to the program that covered dental care for children till they are 12 years old. Why was that cut?

User fees in the North—it is bad enough that they bounce us on a bus all the way south so that we can see a specialist who will tell us come back next week, as if those 800 or 1,000 kilometres did not exist. That is bad enough. But on top of it, they nail us with a \$50 user fee and then pretend they are not doing it. That helps poverty if you want to increase poverty.

I could go into the suicide rates. I could go into the incredible suicide rate especially among native youth, four times higher than the provincial, or I think even than the federal average. If you are making the assumption there is no connection, you are wrong. The connections between suicide rates and poverty are well demonstrated.

Mental health in Flin Flon alone in the last year or year and a half—I am not sure of the exact time—some tragic happenings, murders and alleged suicide, which may or may not have been a suicide. We are not sure. It is still under investigation. Again, if those people could have had adequate help, if there had been the mental health facilities available, if they could have been steered to those facilities, perhaps those tragedies would not have occurred. Now this may not directly deal with poverty, but very often it is the poor that have their minds stressed and things do happen with tragic and violent results.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on. Injustice. The number of native people who are in jail results perhaps of broken homes, of poverty, of neglect, especially in the North.

We could talk about the VLTs that are supposed to solve our problem—

An Honourable Member: Solving our crime.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, solving our crime, the honourable member says—but instead they suck money

from our communities, they siphon money from our communities. I will give you one specific example. I phoned a northern community, and I was talking to the principal. He said, in former years, we could raise up to \$6,000 or \$7,000 for educational tours, for sports trips, to take our children south perhaps to see museums, whatever. Those \$6,000, \$7,000 are no longer available because, when we now run bingos, we lose money. We lost \$2,000 last year. So, in other words, a net drain from that system of 8,000 bucks possibly.

Where is that money going? That money is going south. It is not going back to those communities, and it is certainly not helping the children who now cannot go on those sports trips, who now cannot visit those museums, another example of how VLTs suck money away from the community, do not help the poor, do not help poor children. It is a net drain. Money is siphoned off.

Madam Speaker, I would like to end, but I would just like to make one quote that is from the Board of Governors of Keewatin Community College who cut the women's sponsorship program. This is the women's response, and I will just quote one line from it or a couple of lines. The women said—this is the women's sponsorship program in Keewatin Community College—quote: It is sad when the government is willing to support a hockey team and not the future of our province. The total amount of sponsorship is \$17,713 which is supporting 25 people in total, 16 of which are children, poor children. This is a drop in the bucket as compared to the amount of funds that are going to be needed in the future to keep single mothers on social assistance.

I beg you, Madam Speaker, that we take into account the poor of this country, the underprivileged and, instead of padding the wallets of the rich, take our job in this Assembly seriously. Thank you.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and to speak on this resolution that has been brought forward by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), but it really does amaze me when we sit on this side of the House and listen to the hypocrites on the other side

who profess to stand up for the poor and for the poverty-stricken children in Manitoba. Needless to say, I think that, for the most part, when we came through the election of 1995, the people did speak and chose not to believe what those people on the other side have been saying and attempting to do.

I take some exception to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) in his remarks in reference to the people in northern Manitoba living in households of strict poverty with no running water and no electricity and as many as 15 and 20 people living in a household. Well, you know, when we look back over history in this country and in this province, Madam Speaker, I think that if we were to look at the make-up of the families in terms of who built this great province and this great country, we came through a depression where people did not know anything different, but governments did not substitute for what people should be doing for themselves. This is the whole problem with society today. I just wanted to share with the members across the way in terms of my experience in terms of dealing with life, and I think that this is something that I learned a very long time ago, because my parents came through the depression. I am the youngest of 16 children and I know—[interjection]

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) chirps from her seat as she is the person who is solving all the issues as far as the poor are concerned. If the poor really knew what these hypocrites are doing to this province and to this country in terms of building—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if it would be appropriate to ask, or I would like you to ask the member for Sturgeon Creek to withdraw the word "hypocrites" in his reference to members opposite. Just because we hold different views does not mean we are hypocritical, and I would ask you to so direct the member.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wellington, indeed, does have a point of order. I explicitly heard the honourable member for Sturgeon

Creek use unparliamentary language directed at the member. I would ask that the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek withdraw the word unequivocally.

Mr. McAlpine: Madam Speaker, I will withdraw that unequivocally.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that.

* * *

* (1650)

Mr. McAlpine: I think it has to be said that when we deal in terms of talking to the people and the real issues of Manitobans, when we talk about poverty I think there has to be sincerity in what we are doing. I think that is one of the things that this government has always led to believe.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) talks about Jesus providing the advice of feeding the poor and dressing the naked, but Jesus also talked about making fishermen out of men so they could provide the food for themselves. I think that is lost on the socialistic side of this House. It is a shame that this is such a disservice to the people of Manitoba. I think the sooner we can understand that in society today, the better off we are going to be.

We must understand that when we try to substitute, and this is what they advocate all the time and what they talk about in terms of serving the people, but the more we do, it is no different than when we serve our own bodies, our own systems, the more we substitute for what our bodies are capable of doing, that weakens the system. The same thing happens in society. The more we do for society, the weaker the society gets, because that is a fact of life. That is the balance of nature.

Unfortunately, the people who profess to be the leaders and the supporters of nature who are across the way, they talk that way but they do not practice what they preach. They say, do as I say but not as I do. To me that is the message that the members across the way make reference to. Unfortunately, the people in

Manitoba, the poor are listening to that kind of rhetoric. We talk about what the socialists are providing. What did the socialists provide when they were in government for the people in northern Manitoba?

An Honourable Member: Hope.

Mr. McAlpine: Provided hope, but hope, you cannot feed the stomach of the people of the North on hope. That is unfortunate that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) has come into this Legislature on the hopes that he is going to be able to do that, but that is not happening today as far as the member in serving his community, in serving the people that he is elected to support and to feed. It is not government's responsibility to do all the things for all people, to create an environment that will enable these people to feed themselves, and we are doing that. We are doing that.

We are doing it in Portage la Prairie. We are doing it in Flin Flon, Manitoba, in terms of creating jobs, giving them the opportunity to feed themselves. Unfortunately, the members across the way do not understand that. I think the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) may have an appreciation for the idea of substitution, that substitution does not work in the households of Manitobans or the households anywhere. The more you feed, the more poverty you are going to create, and that is what has happened in this socialistic administration over the last 15, 20 years.

The Manitoba governments of the '70s and the '80s under Ed Schreyer and Howard Pawley, that was the mentality, and unfortunately we ended up with a debt and paying the interest—[interjection] choking the poor and not serving the people, and that is exactly what the problem is today. Unfortunately, our socialist friends do not see the way.

We are trying to make fishermen out of men instead of having to—[interjection] Well, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) says, what about the women of this province. The women of this province are quite capable of caring and looking after themselves, I dare say. I think that the women have shown the way. The women have shown the way in this province. I think that we only have to look in this Legislature to see that

that exists and will continue and that the women in this province can speak for themselves.

The member for Wellington certainly does not represent the women of this province, and I hope that she never will because she does not talk about representing the people in Manitoba, the women of Manitoba. She professes to represent them, but truly, is that what she is actually saying, or is that actually what she is doing?

Ms. Barrett: I am doing a hell of a lot better job than you are.

Mr. McAlpine: The honourable member for Wellington suggests that she is doing—bleep—a lot better than I am in Sturgeon Creek. Well, I guess we have to ask the women in Sturgeon Creek as to whether or not the representation from this government is being represented and my representation in Sturgeon Creek represents them.

I represent all people in my constituency, not excluding anybody, but the member for Wellington suggests that she is the saviour for all women here in the province of Manitoba. That is what she would like us to believe, but that we know is not true.

I think that it is important to try to communicate the message to all Manitobans, which is what we have been trying to do in creating an economy, a healthy economy to enable people to serve themselves and to serve the communities that they live in, because the more we do for people—and I am repeating myself in saying that the more we do for people—the weaker they will become. I think that is a fairly safe statement to make, and I think the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) could appreciate that.

I think it is incumbent upon us to show people how they can do things for themselves. I think that is a matter of responsibility for us as legislators, that is a responsibility for us to create that environment that businesses are able to thrive and to represent and provide jobs for the people in terms of serving their children and providing for their children. I think that when we do that, when we create a healthy economy and we create a healthy environment, I think that is a

key in terms of getting people off poverty or getting away from poverty.

I think when we look at people in society today, we measure and the socialists measure poverty in the way of dollars and cents. Well, I do not think that dollars and cents really have a lot to do with it. That does not make a person rich; it does not make a person rich. [interjection]

Well, if that is your measure of richness, the member for Crescentwood, then I think that you have a lot to learn about life. I mean that sincerely, because I think what we are trying to convey to you is that you cannot be all things to all people. Sooner or later the well is going to run dry, and it did. It did through the 1980s; it did run dry.

We know that in 1988 when we took over from government, we were probably, well, we were the highest-taxed province in this country. That was a disservice to the children of this province; that was a disservice to the constituents of Sturgeon Creek. [interjection]

The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) said put there by whom? Put there by Howard Pawley, and some of the members still sit in this House today. That was a disservice—[interjection] The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) says, what about today?

After seven years we are seeing a resurgence in the economy; we are seeing the number of jobs in this province increase, 22,000 jobs in one year—22,000 more jobs. I think that is something to be proud of.

But what do the members across the way talk about? They do not talk about the opportunities that are being made, that were made available to these families of these children. I think that—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek will have one minute remaining.

As previously agreed, the hour being 5 p.m., we will now proceed to the second private members' resolution, Resolution 8.

* (1700)

Res. 8—All-Party Committee on the Economy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Yes, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that

WHEREAS Manitobans consider the growth of the economy to be a priority issue and look to government as an important player in fostering a healthy and prosperous economy; and

WHEREAS Manitobans are concerned about the position of Manitoba's economy relative to other Canadian provinces, even during this expansionary phase of the economic cycle; and

WHEREAS according to Statistics Canada, the Manitoba economy has over the last seven years performed at a less than satisfactory level, leaving this province with the lowest annual average growth in the nation over the previous seven years; and

WHEREAS young Manitobans are genuinely concerned about their present and future employment prospects within this province, and are displaying this uncertainty by leaving Manitoba in massive numbers, draining the province of a promising and vital resource; and

WHEREAS Manitobans appreciate the type of co-operation that this Assembly showed in creating a made-in-Manitoba response to the constitutional questions of the late 1980s and would like to see this sort of approach taken with regard to the difficult economic problems we face today.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the government to consider acting immediately to establish an all-party committee to examine the current and probable future state of the Manitoba economy and propose solutions to improve economic prospects and conditions in our province.

Motion presented.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, thank you very much for allowing us to speak on this resolution today pursuant to our schedule of private members' resolutions.

This may be of some interest to the member that just spoke because this is a similar resolution to the resolution that we proposed, and solution that we proposed, to deal with the all-Manitoba approach to the loss or potential loss of military jobs and the air headquarters in Manitoba dealing with the federal budget. We had proposed this with Shilo. We had proposed this with the Canadian Forces Base at Portage. We have proposed this with other jobs dealing with the federal sector, and we had a couple of meetings before the election. We have not had any meetings after the election unfortunately.

Now I know the government can take issue with some of the statistics. I am sure the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has some comments about the statistics, and quite frankly some of the statistics may be four months out of date. I want to put that on the record right now because we have had a couple of good statistical months since this resolution was placed before the Order Paper, but I want the government to respond to this resolution in the spirit as being presented here.

I think that most Manitobans know that when we are in an election campaign, we are competing politically for government, for opposition, for our seats, for the political beliefs we have and we will disagree obviously about how we would run government and the philosophies we would have to make our various platforms work and get Manitobans working. Fair enough.

You know, the Liberals had certain proposals on the economy. I actually thought they went too far in cutting back some of the supports for things like the horse racing industry and some other industries that did not, at the end of the day, I think help out in terms of their scrutiny, but they had other proposals I think to get Manitobans working on the Apprenticeship Program, Access program, et cetera.

The Tories, I do not even know why they would disagree with this resolution. I was absolutely shocked

when I saw a Manitoba Works program announced in the election campaign. If they will go back to the alternative speech to the throne that we presented in November of 1994, the title of our employment programs is "Manitoba Works." I guess we did not have the fancy advertising that the members opposite had to sell that program, but I was pleased to see that imitation, I guess is the—I will not call it plagiarism. I guess imitation is one of the serious forms of flattery and, of course, we were pleased to see you using that title "Manitoba Works."

So why can we not agree to have a committee on the economy? Why do we just do it over the Air Command closing, Shilo, the other proposals when they come up? Why do we not have a committee after the election? Okay, you have a majority; I do not like it. We are in opposition; they do not like it. They are here, they do not like it. But why can we not, after the election campaign, work a lot more together? Why can we not, when there is a company looking at locating in Manitoba, why cannot all three parties work together to try to attract them? Someday you are not going to be in government, someday somebody else is going to be. They want to know there is a political stability and a cultural stability in this province that we speak as Manitobans first.

I have often thought that, you know, members opposite, I happen to believe that most of them care about this province and the future that our children will have in this province. I happen to believe the Liberals believe the same thing. I happen to believe we come out of a different methodology of how we would get there, but we all feel happy when good news comes about. We all feel good if our kids are able to stay in our province. We all feel good if we are able to work together, and I do not think we diminish our political representation by working together more.

I had the pleasure of working with the Premier and the former member for River Heights, now Senator Carstairs, on Meech Lake. I did not agree with everything the Premier was saying, and it would have been easy for me to take shots at him or at her in that very, very crucial week, and it would have been easy for him to take shots at us, but we worked together as Manitobans.

Manitoba was more important than, you know, the clip of the day. I agreed with the Premier; I did not agree with everything in Charlottetown. I had real problems with my own party. Quite frankly, I did not like that Senate proposal. I was public on it when it came out. I thought we should absolutely, absolutely get rid of the Senate, abolish the Senate.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

I felt even more sure of my position after the federal election when I just saw the same—I mean, the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) must be happy. I think he has got more senators in his riding than any other riding in Canada. You almost not only have to live in River Heights, you have got to live on Wellington Crescent to be appointed to the Senate. It crosses political lines. If you are a Tory or a Liberal—I mean, I thought it was rather ironic. Yes, you live in the wrong area of the province, you live in rural Manitoba.

I did not like the Senate proposal, but I thought the equalization proposals and some of the other things in the Charlottetown Accord—you know, I will put my political differences aside. Now, many people in our party did not agree with it, voted against it, many people in your party voted against it. Again, I think only River Heights voted for it, which is rather ironic, given that the member for River Heights was allegedly opposed to it, and it was the only constituency that voted in favour of it.

But what I am saying are the people of Manitoba, yes, we will have Question Period, yes, we will disagree, and yes, all that will happen. In an election campaign we should be very competitive for what we believe in. That is no problem, but what about the three years in between? Why do we always work against each other? Why do we not work more together on the bayline? Why do we not work more together on the transition on the Crow rate? Why do we not work more together on getting jobs and economic opportunities? Why do we not work together?

I have had private conversations with ministers who are worried about employee groups, unions, in a set of

negotiations of whether a place can close down. Privately, I go to them or sometimes I have a concern about a company, I go to the government and they go to somebody else, or I will go to the head of a company, back and forth quietly, but why do we not do this every day? What have we got to be afraid of of having an all-party committee working on our economy? If we are going to sell Manitoba as a place to live and raise a family, the quality of life we have to offer, I think we have a lot to offer, why are we not doing it together?

* (1710)

Why are we not working on tourism together? We all enjoy the beautiful places in our province. Why do we not work together on these things? Even outfitters work together. They may compete with each other to get the business, but they go to trade shows in Minneapolis and other places and they work together. What a novel idea.

I have pitched bales together outside of Neepawa long before the technology changed. I think it is the only way you can develop a decent wrist shot, and obviously I did not pitch enough bales because I did not have a good enough wrist shot. [interjection]

Well, I played left wing with the member, the Minister of Finance, who was centre; the leader of the Liberal Party was our right winger. We did beat the media. We did work together to beat the media. That in itself shows that we can co-operate and do things well if we work together. I think the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) was also on defence that game, and we had a goalie that was going to catch the puck with his teeth who happens to be in the Chair right now.

I really think that we should speak—and Mike Harcourt, Premier of B.C., had a good idea for Canada. This resolution I put in long before the proposal to go to China with the Prime Minister was in place, but Mike Harcourt said, why are all these premiers going to China and Asia separately? Why do we not go together as one group as Team Canada? We put this resolution in three years ago to be Team Manitoba, I guess, if you will, in a co-operative way.

I like working with the government on something like the Air Command. I would rather do that than criticize them every day. You know, I do not mind criticizing. I have lots of things to criticize, but, on the big issues of our economy, I want to work together. We want to work together. We started off as a party that was called the Co-operative Commonwealth movement. You know, we can even work with you on behalf of Manitobans and have our disagreements in a 35-day campaign or on big issues of philosophy that we will obviously disagree on.

So I say to the members opposite, we have big economic challenges ahead of us. In agriculture, we have tremendous challenges. In mining, we have tremendous challenges and opportunities, in the sustainability of many of our resources in forestry, many challenges. You know, why are we not working together on these challenges? We have many challenges in tourism and manufacturing.

Yes, we have the low dollar right now, and we have a lot of people working in manufacturing. That is good. I am glad to see the unemployment numbers down and more manufacturing jobs there right now. I think that is good. You do not hear us putting out press releases when things are going well. We like to see that. But what should we be doing about the change in the insurance industry? We are losing jobs out of our head offices, you know, 300 jobs in the next couple weeks to be gone, relocated out of this community from a head office to a merger.

What are we doing about getting other jobs here in Manitoba and keeping jobs in the transportation industry? We keep losing jobs without having an all-party approach. When the president of CN comes into town, all three parties should be meeting together with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the Minister of Industry (Mr. Downey) talking about what this means for all our communities. When companies come into this town, whether it is Crown corporations or private sector, to maintain jobs or new companies are going to be attracted here, we should be working together.

When we were working with some of the investors, Asian investors, that used to come and visit us, one of

the things they liked about Manitoba was that it was a more co-operative province than other—at that point, it was when the Socreds were in, and B.C. was considered a very, very confrontational province. There was always disagreement. There were always strikes and lockouts and disputes and unpredictability. Co-operative provinces, a co-operative labour-management relationship is good.

I suggest to members opposite that a co-operative all-party approach to the economy, where we are all pulling on the oars the same way on getting jobs here and keeping jobs here, we are all giving our own ideas and putting them forward, is a good idea.

So you can look at some of the statistics we have there, and they are outdated, look at the resolution. Let us work together. Let us pass a resolution to work together the same way—our best work has been done, I would suggest, as Manitobans, on Meech Lake. I think people believe their job and the jobs for the future opportunities for their kids are more important than some of the language in a Constitution. I believe that we can. I think maybe we were the same way in the government—I was not in cabinet very long—but we do not utilize our back bench very well. We do not utilize our opposition very well, or all our members very well.

At the end of the day, and I say this to the government and all of us, we all have one thing in common. We do care a lot about our province, and we do not have the means in an adversarial legislative system to put that, I think, into much more practical working ability for us to improve the humankind in our province. Yes, we will have disagreements about the way budgets are set up in terms of the distribution of income and some decisions government makes. Yes, we will have disagreements about the priorities of government in health and education, but, no, we do not have a disagreement of what a great place this province is to live in and a great place to raise a family and a great opportunity for people in the whole world. We are in a global economy. We should be working together in a global economy while we disagree the odd time, you know, in Question Period on this floor.

So, yes, the stats are a little outdated. I want to put that on the floor honestly. Let us do it. Let us just

work together. Let us get an all-party committee on the economy, and let us work the same way as outfitters do in northern Manitoba. They compete to get people to their lodge but they work together to get people to Manitoba. Let us just do it. Thank you.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this resolution that is before us, and it is an interesting approach that the Leader of the Opposition brings to the issue, the whole of his comments about spirit of co-operation and working together. I would like to think that that might work and there probably was a time when I actually thought that that could work, but now, having been here for approximately five years and seeing some of the actions of the opposition party and some of their positions on issues, I am no longer convinced that that could work, and I need look no further than today.

Today was a classic example. An outstanding announcement by our Minister of Rural Development, McCain's expansion in Portage la Prairie, 150 more jobs, major impact on the agricultural community here in Manitoba, what does the member for Crescentwood stand up? All doom and gloom, all negative, all reasons why it should not be proceeding, why we should not have expansion in our agricultural potato industry, why we should not have this kind of expansion.

I could cite another example that comes to mind very quickly talking about spirit of co-operation, and I am sure others could speak more knowledgeably about it, but issues like the PMU industry, again major economic impact here in Manitoba, tremendous opportunities throughout rural Manitoba. What kind of a position does the member for Radisson and the opposition take on that issue?

I could talk about one of the single most important things that I believe has to be done is the economic structure that exists in our province. We have worked hard for eight consecutive budgets to get that economic structure in a position that it can enhance and attract and allow industry and business to expand here in Manitoba, and I believe that is happening, and I certainly will put on the record the current statistics in terms of economic development here in Manitoba.

What has happened with the opposition? They voted against literally all of those budgets, all but one. But you look at their budgets and what happened for the six budgets brought down from 1982 to 1988, and I know the Leader of the Opposition was a part of that government for part of the time, not for the entire mandate, but he was certainly there for part of the time, and he has heard these before and I know he always enjoys hearing them again, what they did with taxes in Manitoba. What happened to taxes from 1982 to 1988?

From 1982 to 1988, retail sales tax goes from 5 percent to 7 percent; introduced and increased a payroll tax at 2.25 percent; introduced a personal net income and surtax; increased the corporation income tax from 15 percent to 17 percent, and on and on I go, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of what happened to taxes during that period of time, and what was basically becoming known across Canada as a hostile business environment here in Manitoba, a hostile business environment.

And what did we do in eight budgets? We not only controlled taxes, we have actually reduced taxes, reduced personal income taxes, we have increased the threshold on the payroll tax, we have doubled the exemption for the corporation capital tax. Also, many provinces have moved by us, so we are in positions today where our retail sales tax rate is tied for lowest with any province that levies a retail sales tax. Alberta does not levy one, British Columbia and Manitoba are the next lowest rate at 7 percent.

We have taken Manitoba from the second highest tax province in all of Canada during the '80s under the NDP to one of the lowest in all of Canada. What happened to provincial debt under the NDP from '82 to '88? Increased by 400 percent—400 percent. It quadrupled during the NDP, taking it from \$1 billion to approximately \$5 billion. [interjection]

I do not want to get too technical, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but their deficits ran at 3 percent on average for that six-year period, of our gross domestic product. Our deficits when we ran then for seven budgets ran at 1.3 percent, ran at 50 percent of what they ran during that period of time and ran at the lowest and the best percentage in all of Canada.

So that is why, when the Leader of the Opposition talks about spirit of co-operation and working together, I wish I could take him seriously and I wish that it would work, but the facts do not speak that way, in fact the actions point in an entirely different direction in terms of their actions on specific development and their actions on budget.

* (1720)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition referred to some of the economic stats and I know he did not have time to put all of them on the record, but I want to take a few minutes to talk about some of the economic statistics here in Manitoba today. Just today we received the retail sales figures for the year to date for the end of July, just as of today from Stats Canada. As is shown, Manitoba retail sales for the month of July 1995 were up 7 percent compared with 1994.

This was the largest increase of any province and much stronger than Canada's growth of .8 of a percent. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) always says, well, do not look at one month, look at a longer period of time. For the seven months to the end of July 1995, Manitoba's sales were up 5.3 percent above last year's total, the second strongest performance amongst provinces and well ahead of the national growth of 3 percent. Manitoba has now had six consecutive months of steady growth in sales, and that is something that no other province has managed to do so far this year.

Let us talk about employment. The employment stats came out not long ago, and, again, the Leader of the Opposition did not have time to put them on the record. In August 1995, Manitoba's employment rose to 527,000 people, an increase of 22,000 jobs or 4.4 percent from the same time last year, second best of the provinces and well above the national increase. Manitoba is the only province to have eight consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth this year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the highest level of employment since our all-time high of 530 jobs in April of 1990. For the first eight months of 1995, again, Manitoba's employment grew by 14,000 jobs or 2.8 percent over that same period from last year—again, better than the national average.

What is very important is most of Manitoba's gains have been private sector full-time jobs. In 1995, Manitoba and British Columbia are the only provinces where job growth has outpaced growth in the labour force. Since April of 1988—I know the Leader of the Opposition always likes to point to April of 1988 for some reason—Manitoba has gained 21,000 jobs, exceeding labour growth over this time, which was 19,000. There are approximately 40,000 more private sector jobs today than in April of 1988. Just think about that. That is the confidence that individuals and businesses have in our province, and it shows up on the job record.

Talk about unemployment rates, in August of 1995, Manitoba's unemployment rate stood at 7.4 percent, the lowest in all of Canada and well below the national rate of 9.6 percent. For the first eight months of 1995, the number of unemployed in Manitoba has declined by 12,000 people or 22.7 percent over the same period last year, again, the best improvement of any province in all of Canada.

Winnipeg's unemployment rate, for the period June to August 1995, was 8 percent, second best of Canada's 11 major centres. Its average unemployment rate for the first eight months of 1995 was 8.4 percent or 8.5 percent, fourth best. [interjection] That is a problem I am going to have, is to get it all in, I have to admit.

I want to move on to the growth of capital investment—in 1995, capital investment in Manitoba is expected to reach a record level of \$4.2 billion. In 1995, private capital investment is expected to grow by 3.4 percent. Manitoba's private sector investment growth has been above the national average in three of the last four years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us talk about the manufacturing sector for one minute. In August 1995, Manitoba's manufacturing employment was estimated at 71,000, the highest monthly level since August of 1981. For the first eight months of 1995, manufacturing employment has averaged 62,000 people, up 5,000, or 9 percent, over the same period, the second best of all provinces again in Canada. In 1994, Manitoba's manufacturing shipments grew by 11 percent over last year, the best increase in 13 years.

I want to move on to disposable income for 1994. We know the importance of disposable income, leaving more dollars in the pockets of Manitobans. For 1994, the Conference Board of Canada expects Manitoba's personal disposable income per capita to increase by 1.6 percent, which is above the national average and second best amongst all provinces.

For 1995, the Conference Board expects personal disposable income per capita to increase \$687 per capita after taxes, a growth of 4.2 percent above the national rate and the best amongst all of the provinces.

Let us talk exports for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In 1994, Manitoba's world exports boomed to a record level of \$4.7 billion, up 29 percent. This was well above the national average and the best performance of any province. Our strong export growth is continuing for the first half of 1995. Manitoba exports are up 22 percent this year over the same period last year. In 1994, exports to the United States, our largest trading partner, rose to a record level of \$3.3 billion, up 32 percent, much better than the national average and the best export performance in all of Canada.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) talks about tourism. For the first half of 1995, accommodation occupancy rates are up 4 percent in Winnipeg and 12 percent in rural Manitoba. In 1994, the number of overseas visitors clearing Customs in Manitoba was up 28 percent, the best increase in all of Canada.

For 1994, Manitoba's housing starts grew 32 percent, the best increase in Canada, due to strong growth in rural areas in particular.

Agriculture, my colleague will talk more about agriculture in Manitoba. In 1994, the Manitoba farm sector had another good year as farm cash receipts held steady at record levels after increasing 19 percent over the previous two years. For the first half of 1995, Manitoba farm cash receipts are up 8.2 percent, second best of all the provinces.

That is just some of the economic information, and you need look no further than companies like Builders Furniture Ltd. expanding with 45 incremental jobs; D W Friesen in Altona, 50 new jobs in exporting to the

United States; Loewen Windows, 236 new jobs; Laser West Fabrication, 55 more jobs; A F G Industries, 20 jobs; AT&T Transtech, increasing by some 200 jobs on top of the 443 they already have; Palliser Furniture, 284 more jobs; Tundra Manitoba, 121 more jobs; National Health Care, 50 more jobs here in Manitoba, along with McCain's and their 150; along with Nestle-Simplot.

The facts speak for themselves. The attitudes and the actions of Manitobans speak for themselves, and they show in the statistics that I have just put on the record.

So as much as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) can talk about the spirit of co-operation, we have seen very little evidence of it in many other areas over the course of the last several days, months and years, and why should we take him seriously here today?

With that, I want to move, seconded by the member for Ste. Rose du Lac (Mr. Cummings),

THAT Resolution 8 be amended by deleting all of the words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has over the last eight budgets created a foundation for strong economic growth and job creation; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government has frozen all major taxes for eight consecutive budgets and removed impediments to growth of private industry; and

WHEREAS the private sector has responded by creating thousands of new jobs for Manitobans; and

WHEREAS in August 1995, employment rose to 527,000, its highest level since April 1990; and

WHEREAS Manitoba recorded its eighth consecutive month of uninterrupted job growth in August of 1995, a record unmatched by any jurisdiction in Canada; and

WHEREAS in August 1995, Manitoba's unemployment rate stood at 7.4 percent, lowest in Canada and well below the national rate of 9.6 percent; and

WHEREAS Manitoba companies have diversified and developed into existing and new world markets resulting in record exports.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the government of Manitoba in their efforts to build a stronger climate for the development of new opportunities and the creation of more jobs for Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (1730)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to put some comments on the record in terms of whether this amendment is in order. While indeed it is in order for resolutions to be amended fairly significantly when they relate to that matter, I would suggest, in this case, that the effect of this amendment is essentially to deal with a completely different matter.

This resolution was a resolution on having an all-party committee. I would suggest that the appropriate thing for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) with this particular amendment would have been to introduce it as a resolution rather than bringing in an amendment on this particular bill which is very specific and deals with an all-party committee. I would therefore ask that you take under advisement as to whether this amendment is in order at the current time.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a private member, I have the responsibility and the right to bring various proposals forward to this Chamber and express a certain view of how I think this government, how all of us, can contribute to our own constituencies in a more positive way.

I respect the right of the government to amend the resolution, sometimes to even have self-serving

amendments. Sometimes the preambles in a resolution may be considered to be narrow, but I do not consider it appropriate and within our rules for a government to substitute, not amend but to substantially replace, i.e., a resolution calling for co-operation from all parties with a resolution that does the hallelujah chorus for their economic performance. That is not an amendment to a resolution. It is materially different than what was even in the original resolution. So the rights of private members to bring private members' resolution are subverted by an amendment that materially changes the whole resolution.

Now, the minister did not choose to amend the all-party committee to say a government dominated all-party committee or a multiparty committee to have agricultural representatives, labour representatives, business representatives on it. That would have been an amendment. But to just completely disregard the rights of individual members. You know, if you want to vote against it, have the intestinal fortitude to vote against it, fine. This resolution, I do not see a spot of evidence that shows me that it is consistent with or you were amending the resolution. I think you are absolutely changing it. I would cite Beauchesne 568, but I would also ask the Deputy Speaker, I was talking about the rights of private members to get involved more in the economy, and I think that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has gone way too far with his amendment. I believe strongly it should be ruled out of order by the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Environment, on the same point of order?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just listened to the Leader of the Opposition talk about whether or not the amendment was relative. We need to only look at a couple of areas in his motion that speak directly, expressing concerns and his opinion on behalf of Manitobans about the economy and residents in this province. It directly speaks to the amendments that have been put forward which respond in the manner which this government has in fact taken action, and, if he wishes to challenge that, I think the only reason he has to challenge that is it creates a great deal of discomfort when he has to sit and listen to the long list

of activities that have been taken to deal with the exact issue that is raised by his motion. If he does not want to debate that type of motion, he should not be putting it on the floor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like to thank all honourable members for their input on this. I am going to take this amendment under advisement and report back to the House.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Continuing debate on the amendment, the honourable member for Inkster, on the resolution.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the note of what we just finished witnessing, I am more inclined to concur actually with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) in the sense of how we have seen resolutions in the past. I understand you have taken it under advisement.

Dealing with the resolution in itself, and this is likely fairly unique for me, again, I think the Leader of the Opposition has in fact brought forward a genuine resolution which I think does deserve a great deal of merit. I know and I would like to be able to cite a couple of specific examples, but suffice it to say that opposition members and back bench members of government, each and every one of us, as the Leader of the New Democratic Party pointed out, would like to be able to represent the community as a whole and to be able to have some real input.

Unfortunately, too, in most part, the way in which our rules are set, the parliamentary tradition included, it does not really allow for us to be able to participate in ways which might be in the best interest of Manitobans. He made reference to Meech Lake. I could talk in terms about what would have been a very controversial issue, and LAMC was able to iron it through. It was able to iron it through because it was built on a consensus of the parties that were inside this Chamber, and that of course being the whole issue, for example, of pensions and what MLAs should be paid, and so forth. I did not have that issue brought up once

at the door during the last provincial election. I think the reason why it was successful was because, in essence, we had all parties working together to try to resolve.

Now you have two very extreme issues, the Constitution and you have pay and perks for the MLAs. I think that in fact there are, no doubt, virtually endless issues which I could point out and say, gee, would it not be wonderful to have an all-party task force or to try to apoliticize a particular issue. In all likelihood, 95 percent of the things I would like—health care would be on the top of it—probably would not happen, and it is not going to happen because of the way in which our parliamentary system works.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe that if in fact the will was there, it would be nice to see some rule changes that would allow for ideas in which maybe a backbencher or someone from the opposition, whether it is from an independent Liberal or from the official opposition that what we saw was a mechanism that allowed a good idea to be talked about so that an MLA, whoever he or she might be, can feel good about getting something accomplished.

I want to point out a couple of specific examples. Today I asked a question about the garment industry and the immigration bilateral agreement. The bilateral immigration agreement is very important to all of Manitoba. I believe personally that I could contribute a great deal to any sort of discussions that are out there because of the knowledge that I might have that other individuals inside this Chamber, including members in the cabinet, might not necessarily have.

Now, if the minister was wanting to be able to achieve a bilateral agreement and the minister is having some difficulties, maybe there is something, if I were wanting to make myself available, some mechanism that allows legislators, if you will, to say, look, maybe it is not LAMC, but maybe there is this other committee, whatever, we will just call it "Standing Committee A," if you like, in which any MLA or backbencher can take a particular issue and make the suggestion. Then, if the will of the Chamber is to allow that issue to go to that particular standing committee, well, maybe that standing committee could even be in

camera. I do not like using the words "in camera," but I have seen how effective LAMC has been in the past. If that needs to occur in order to get some of the things done in the best interests of Manitoba, I think that would be a positive, but it has to be inclusive.

* (1740)

Every member of the Chamber has to have the opportunity to be able to make the suggestion at this particular issue. Why do I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because I believe that each and every one of us wants to be able to contribute to the way in which our society is going to develop. I believe that I could be a wonderful ally, for example, with this government on what is a very important issue, not only to me personally but to many of the constituents that I represent. I would like to be taken advantage of with respect to this issue. Because we do not have that mechanism, if you will, I then have to take the traditional role of being in opposition and prodding the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) to sit down with the minister, the national minister, and work on this agreement and so forth.

Today I was somewhat surprised to see the letter that the Premier had tabled, but I must say, you know, that letter was sent shortly after I had brought the whole issue up back in the last session. I do not think it was a coincidence that after I was raising the issue back in May and June that the minister then issued a request.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe quite firmly that if in fact there was a mechanism that was there in which any MLA could appeal to, and it could be quite easily turned down, but if there is an MLA that wants to be able to try to do what they feel or they feel that they have something that they can contribute in a positive way, maybe they have experience which they feel would contribute to making something very successful, we should allow that to occur.

To a certain degree, it is already there. It is the informal relationships that MLAs, whether they are in the back bench or in opposition, create with specific ministers. For example, the Minister of Housing, I was able to work with the Minister of Housing, not only the

current, but ministers of Housing in the past in order to get some things happening in Gilbert Park, an area which I represent. The government is able to get credit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am able to get something done in my constituency. I think every one of us wants to be able, as I say, to contribute.

Last weekend I met with some individuals, again, from the Filipino community that have expertise in dealing with an issue which I think is very important to Manitoba, and that is pig waste. There seems to be great potential opportunity. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) talks about the opportunities of hogs in the future in the province of Manitoba. Well, here is a very creative idea on how the pig waste can actually be turned into fertilizer and the odour that is created from it would virtually disappear. If there is in fact, again, something that can be done, this particular issue is not maybe what I would recommend to this particular independent committee, but on this issue I would raise it with different members of government, which I have done, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The resolution talks about all-party committees, and we have seen that in terms of the child poverty issue and very interesting remarks regarding child poverty. I like to believe that both on this resolution and the former resolution I too could be very political and show where the Conservatives have many, many flaws. I know they have many, many flaws. I could also show where the New Democrats have many, many flaws. No doubt they might even be able to find some that we in the Liberal Party might have in terms of flaws.

The message that seems to be fairly consistent that is coming from the opposition is that they would like to see more co-operation, and I applaud the efforts of the official opposition in terms of trying to achieve that sense of more co-operation inside the Chamber. I am not entirely convinced that it is going to be an easy task to say, look, we want something on the economy. I just cannot see something like that happening, because there are going to be so many fundamental disagreements.

You know, I would find it extremely difficult to support a government budget for the simple reason that if I support the Conservative budget, well, does that

mean then I do not have anything to offer that would be different to Manitobans, that if in fact I were given the opportunity to be a minister in a government that that would be the budget that I would introduce? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find that the priorities of this government are wrong, and I believe that we have different priorities. Some of the things I agree with. Other things I do not agree with.

So when we talk about all-party committees and you deal with a subject matter that is so broad, it is not necessarily going to be successful primarily because of the way in which our parliamentary system works. We talked in terms about the saving of Portage, the base, in the all-party committee, the all-party committee on Air Command that was being talked about and so forth.

There are always going to be political optics that have to be looked at. Whether we want to admit them or not, in some cases, it is in a political party's best interest to make a particular issue apolitical. Quite frankly, I would argue that it is to my political advantage if health care was to become apolitical. Not only is it to my political advantage, but it is also something that I fundamentally believe we would be better off if it was more an apolitical issue.

All of those optics have to be taken into consideration when we talk about all parties coming together in order to achieve what is good and what is right for Manitobans. I believe I would be a very strong advocate for looking for that standing committee A, if you like, or something. Again who knows what the ideal system would be, but maybe what it entails is having some sort of discussion of members where we could see something or a process that is put into place in which an individual MLA, he or she, might be able to bring it to the table, a particular issue, and try to be able to contribute in a much more positive way, because I do believe each and every one of us want to do ultimately what is in the best interest of the province.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the resolution. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): I am pleased to join briefly in this debate. Mr. Deputy

Speaker, while I recognize that you are fast becoming a rules expert in this Chamber, I am going to ask your specific indulgence to just speak a little bit about private members' hour, in the first instance, partly because of the situation that we are in. I have no quarrel with it. By agreement with our House leaders on all sides of the House we are looking at spending two hours of virtually every day of our sitting in private members' debate.

* (1750)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that can either become a very kind of sterile exercise but it need not be. In my opinion it could be a very worthwhile time spent in this Chamber. I simply want to draw all members of the House attention to that fact. It is private members' hour. On an occasion where the Whips are on, certainly particularly if you are a government private member, and I remind all of us that we are all private members. Not the Minister of Finance, not the Minister of Agriculture, not the Minister of Environment speaking, when we engage in this debate we are private members.

It has been my observation that to some extent a quality of that has been lost. I want to just refer to a few particular occasions, highlights in private members' hours, particularly for the benefit of new members. Indeed, when I look about me, that includes just about everybody in this Chamber. For instance, when the first Premier that I served, the Honourable Duff Roblin, introduced the sales tax to Manitoba, a backbencher of his government—now we use the politically correct term "upperbencher"—introduced a resolution at private members' hour and said that was a lousy idea and took full advantage of his privileges as a private member to express that idea in this Chamber.

Perhaps more dramatically and very appropriate to an issue that is still high on the list of controversial issues discussed in this Chamber, when a Premier of this province who was committed to aid and support to private and independent schools, the Honourable Ed Schreyer, wanted to have that issue discussed in this Chamber, he could not convince his cabinet nor his caucus to bring it in as a government issue. He brought it in as a private members' resolution.

This is more current history, and some of you will remember. One of the most senior ministers of his cabinet resigned from his position so that he could fight on the opposite side of the issue with his Premier on that issue. That all occurred in private members' hour, and it was a divided House. I was in that House. The Premier got the support of the majority, I might say, of the opposition members, 13. Nine voted with Mr. Green on that issue.

My point in just repeating this history with your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is simply to remind us all that as we go into the next five or six weeks, I really think it is an opportunity for all of us, some of us that do not often succeed or do not always succeed in bringing about our own personal ideas to our caucuses and having them accepted use this as an opportunity: first of all, simply to become more adept at public speaking; secondly, now with the advent of the support that we have, letting our constituents know what we are saying in this Chamber; and, thirdly, and perhaps the most important thing, is that we can perhaps, by our eloquence or by the force of our argument, intellectual or academic background of facts, from time to time be able to convince those of us in this Chamber, and there are only 57 of our million Manitobans who are privileged to sit in this Chamber to represent them that have that opportunity.

So I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that rather than let the private members' hour become just, well, something that we have to go through and we have to, kind of by rote, support the party line, let us, for our own edification and, I believe, honestly and sincerely for the betterment of the people that we serve, make this into a meaningful two-hour debate where we can debate these issues.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before you rule me out of order, to the resolution at hand—and I want to demonstrate what I just said because I would like to support this resolution. When the Leader of the Opposition says, why cannot we have agreement on the economy? You know, really, why cannot we, because surely we are talking about the same thing? When we talk about the economy, what are we really talking about? We are talking about the buzzword things, jobs and all that, but we are talking about our standard of

living that we have, over the years, evolved. We are talking about medicare. We are talking about care. We are talking about looking after those less able to look after themselves than others. We are talking about just the basic services of roads and highways and telephones and all these other things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said I would, despite the spirited speech that I support wholly of my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), I would nonetheless be prepared to support this resolution of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), but there is always a tag line, eh, because, you see, the baggage that I carry shows that I have been around for a while.

I would sincerely have to ask—and, of course, this is the problem not of just our socialist friends opposite but around the world. It really is a problem for them because they have to, by and large, come to the conclusion, acknowledge the utter and total defeat of things that they have held near and dear throughout their lifetime and to now acknowledge that what they profess to did not work.

I will not take the few moments I have to engage in the global issues here, the fact that that great 70-year experience of my homeland, Russia, has come to a crashing end and along with it, regrettably, so many other satellite states that they enveloped.

I want to refer to some very specific things that happened right in this Chamber, beginning with that premier that I have already acknowledged, Mr. Ed Schreyer, who many of you still hold up as the white knight of New Democratic success in Manitoba. What was his formula? That nobody in Manitoba should get more than two and a half times the lowest paid person in Manitoba.

That means the brain surgeon, the teacher, the doctors, someone like that, if the minimum wage was \$5 an hour, then the brain surgeon at Health Sciences Centre should be getting \$12.50 or something like that an hour. Right? We remember that, two and a half times one. You were not there. I was here when he made the statement. That, by the way, is because Ed Schreyer actually was not a socialist. See, that was already watered down liberalism. Marx, of course, said

it differently. Marx said if your capacity is to be a janitor or to dig ditches, that is what you get paid for, that is your capacity, and if your capacity is to be a brain surgeon, you should be paid no more. It should be absolute. There was no two and a half times. It should be equal. Well, that is part of the baggage that the New Democratic Party of Manitoba has to forgo.

I sat in this Chamber when a Minister of Finance at private members' hour suggested, why is it that we have multicoloured toothbrushes. Would it not be cheaper if all toothbrushes were the same make, the same model and the same colour? I will name him, the late Saul Cherniack, sitting in the Minister of Environment's chair.

An Honourable Member: He is still alive.

Mr. Enns: He is still alive? I am sorry. I was thinking of Saul Miller, a colleague that I also sat with. I retract that part.

The gist of his speech, of course, was—this is the kind of fun we had in private members' hour—why are we making Fords and Chevs and Chryslers? Why are we making John Deere tractors and Case and Cockshots and Whites? There should only be one state car. There should only be one state toothbrush. There should only be one state toilet paper and the efficiencies of that should be apparent to everybody. Theoretically, of course, that is right and it should get printed. You know, half the world believed it for 70 years in Russia, but the problem is they do not have cars, they do not have tractors, they do not have toilet paper, they do not have toothbrushes. That is the net result.

Now and more recently, and I apologize because we did it with affection when we referred to the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) as Karla Marx; we really did. We did not mean any harm by that, but we have stopped doing that you have noticed. It was only a few years ago when she said french fries should all be the same size. There should not be big ones, small ones. They should all be the same size.

The point of all of this is we are being asked in this resolution to sit down in a joint committee to plan the future economic well-being of Manitoba. I am

prepared to do that if the next speaker on the opposition will acknowledge the nonsense of what they have spouting and like Paul on the road to Damascus, confess and convert.

More seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was in this Chamber when a Minister of Justice, Roland Penner, said that all he had ever learned in public policy was at the lap of his communist mom and dad, Jacob Penner, the longest-serving communist member of the City Council and he had no reason for one moment to

change his political beliefs. Cy Gonick, who still teaches our youngsters economics at the university—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow 1:30 p.m. (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 20, 1995

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