



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
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, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley, Hon.	St. Vital	P.C.
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ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
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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, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 28, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon fifteen Grade 5 to 12 students from Parkview School under the direction of Mr. Harvey Walker, Mr. Alford Wollman and Mr. Kenny Wollman. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings).

We also have seventeen Grades 9 to 12 students from Windy Bay School under the direction of Mr. Greg Lee. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Sexual Offenders Plea Bargaining

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Beginning at age 12, Eva Rutherford [phonetic] was molested, raped, exploited by Harold Welsh, who was in his late 30s at the time, and when she eventually discloses this to the justice system, the minister's department plea bargained a deal allowing Welsh to go about his job for almost a year and a half before facing justice, without so much as checking this sex offender's contention that he was essential to a research project and that he would be in a prison-like environment. He was not essential; he wine and dined and gained prestige.

My question to the minister: is this negligent, casual treatment of such a traumatic, sinister crime the minister's standard for prosecuting child abuse cases?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I have been apprised of the facts surrounding that particular situation, and of course it was a difficult situation. I do not want to get into any particular names in case there are any ongoing proceedings or, in fact, if there was an order of prohibition in respect of mentioning any names, but I do want to point out that that was a particularly difficult case in many respects. As I understand it, it involved a crime that had been committed many, many years ago, and I can appreciate the point of view of the prosecutors in these cases in their efforts to obtain a conviction so that the public is in fact protected. I understand that the prosecutors did in fact their very best in this particular case to ensure that the public interest in terms of public safety was met. If the member has any specific issues with respect to how that decision was taken, I am certain that the members of my department who made the decision would be prepared to sit down and discuss that with him.

* (1335)

Mr. Mackintosh: A simple question to the minister: why is the minister, in this Legislature today, defending this plea bargain, this arrangement entered into with this sex offender? Why?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, my job as the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice is to ensure that justice is in fact done within the laws that we have that guide the conduct of the prosecutor. If this member is suggesting that our prosecutors somehow broke the law or broke some kind of a standard that is not acceptable, why does he not say it directly instead of again making these kinds of broad allegations against hard-working members of my department who only have the best interests of the people of Manitoba at heart?

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this minister please try to understand the torment caused to this victim, understand the wrong message given by this bargain based on untested, unconfirmed information given by a sex offender? Would he not admit that this is not some isolated incident but like cases like the Bauder babysitter case, a plea bargain that the minister again defended, like cases I brought in here on Monday? There is a pattern of child sexual abuse cases that are not being vigorously prosecuted?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, my prosecutors prosecute thousands of cases, and I know how difficult these types of cases are, especially cases that involve children who have been sexually abused many, many years ago. If this member, for one moment, thinks that it is easy for the police or if he thinks that it is easy for the prosecutors to make the tough decisions that they have to do, why does he not go back to law school? Why does he not go see what it takes to prosecute a case?

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that our police forces and our—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I would like to on a point of order cite Beauchesne's 417: the answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

I listened to all three questions very carefully by the member for St. Johns in which he asked the minister specific questions relating to a prosecution and/or a botched prosecution with respect to the Department of Justice, and on all three occasions the minister has insulted the member, the minister has chosen to not answer the question. I ask you to call the minister to order as you called the member to order when he posed the question. Ask him to either answer the question as posed and not provoke debate, Madam Speaker, or sit down.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

Mr Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, there was a question that was put to me in respect of policy. I answered the issue in respect of policy. In respect of the specific case, I said, rather than make general, vague accusations about the conduct of the case—and notice he does not bring any details of the types of decisions that had to be made along the way. Then I invited the member to sit down with members of my department as to why they made the decisions they did. I support that kind of interaction between the member and members of my department who are responsible for the prosecution. So I will facilitate that kind of meeting, and I made that very clear in answer to his question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, I would agree with the honourable member for Kildonan. I would remind the honourable Minister of Justice to not provoke debate when responding to a question.

Workers Compensation Survivor Pensions

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, today is the internationally recognized day of mourning for those workers who have been injured or killed on the job. We not only mourn for the workers killed, but we fight for the living, including survivors of workers who were killed on the job.

Today we are joined by some 20 members of the WCB Widows Action Group who have joined us and are sitting here in the gallery today. These widows and many others have had their survivor pensions terminated by the Workers Compensation Board due to remarriage, which is contrary to the Manitoba Human Rights Code and is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I want to ask—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member for Transcona please pose his question now?

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For all those acting premiers over there, I will pose the question to them.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The member was asked to pose his question now, not debate with the members opposite.

* (1340)

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the Acting Premier—whoever that person is today—to please explain to the widows why for 11 years this government and the Workers Compensation Board have treated widows as ping-pong balls, bounce back and forth, refusing to deal with the restoration of widows' pensions, as was recommended by the King' commission report in May of 1987. I will table a copy of that recommendation that this government did not act on when they amended the act in 1992.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Transcona for this opportunity to answer that question and to speak through this Chamber to the individuals in question.

I do not want to cast any aspersions upon any government, whether it was the honourable member's party that was in power in 1985 or anybody else who was in power in 1985, as to why this issue was or was not appropriately addressed in 1985. The law up till 1985 was very clear, and in the values and times of the pre-1985 pre-Charter issue, if anybody remarried as a widow after having lost a partner or widower having lost a partner, then they automatically lost their compensation rights. Post-1985, there was basically a means test instituted, and in 1992 the regime was changed again to issue compensation over a term of years.

I can tell this Chamber that I have met with the widows. I have taken legal counsel on this issue, and we are at the present time reconsidering the entire issue. I, in fact, had an opportunity to speak to these individuals today at the Union Centre to share this information with them.

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the Acting Premier or the Minister of Labour to explain why, in 11 years, his government has not brought forward legislation to restore these widows' pensions, since the WCB states that the restoration of these

pensions for some of the widows will require a further amendment of The Workers Compensation Act to restore those pensions. Why in 11 years has your government not acted on that information?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I think it is futile and perhaps even feckless to go back and try to effect revisionist thinking on the issue. I think that we are looking at a problem today, and we have an issue that has been brought to my office today. I am prepared to tell this Chamber, my colleagues in this Chamber and the individuals in question that I am prepared to look at this matter today and come up with a solution today.

To go back and be recriminatory, I think solves no positive issue.

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the same minister, Madam Speaker, since he refused to give this commitment to the widows when he met with them earlier—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Transcona, there is no—[interjection] Would the honourable member please pose his question now?

Mr. Reid: Will the Minister of Labour, who refused to act on the request of the widows some years ago when they made this request and as recently as this year, Madam Speaker, indicate if all of the widows whose pensions were terminated will be reinstated back to the date of marriage or to the date of Charter compliance, and is he prepared to bring forward legislation in this sitting of the Legislature before the coming provincial general election to restore those widows' pension benefits?

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I take great pleasure in advising the member for Transcona that at the present time the Workers Compensation Board have made a reserve of a significant amount of money in order to address some of the deficiencies of the program that was instituted under a previous administration, and the Workers Compensation Board adjudicators

will be working through the group of individuals in question.

As to my honourable colleague's second part to his question, at this point in time I can tell honourable colleagues that what was initially posed to me within the last month was, in fact, not a matter of compassion, not a matter of need—and that is a direct quote from the interview that I had with the individuals in question—they posed a Charter argument. I have satisfied myself that, in fact, there is no merit to the Charter argument that is posed; however, I think that there is a human issue which supervenes the allegations that were made or the request that was made, and it is to that human issue and the human need that we are rising to meet.

* (1345)

Government Advertising Guidelines

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would like to table a copy of a Freedom of Information request that we received that details the close to \$500,000 worth of advertising put in place by this government in a desperate attempt to prop up its political fortunes. I would like to ask the Acting Premier if they can explain to Manitobans why they saw fit to spend this close to \$500,000 instead of putting it where it is needed, fixing our health care system, not trying to prop up this failing government.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Acting Premier): Madam Speaker, it has to be with his tongue firmly clenched in his cheek that the member opposite asks that question, considering the record of his government and the public dollars that were spent in promotions during the sad time that they were in government. The people of Manitoba have a right to know the correct information and the progress that is being made in health care in this problem and that we are dealing with actively. I suggest that he should not hurt himself by biting on his tongue when he asks a question like that.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, the only people hurting are the people of Manitoba who want money spent on health care, not on politically motivated ads.

My supplementary, Madam Speaker, is: I wonder if the Acting Premier can explain how the Winnipeg Health Authority ends up being part of this advertising campaign, but when it is convenient for them they say it is arm's length. What is it? Are they arm's length, or when it came to this, are they a direct part of this propaganda campaign by the Conservative government?

Mr. Cummings: Obviously, they believe that the people of this province deserve the facts, and they have undertaken to make sure that they are provided with that.

Mr. Ashton: My final question is in regard to whether there is any policy—and I want to ask the Acting Premier if when the then Minister of Finance, now Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), said that he had staff working on this issue, we are undertaking it, we take it very seriously—that was in 1994—I am just wondering when we are ever going to get a policy on advertising from this government, or is it going to be conveniently after the next election when once again we have seen them spending \$500,000 of the people's money for what should have been paid for by the Conservative Party?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, obviously the member for Thompson takes some umbrage when he realizes that the people of Manitoba, when they are apprised of the full facts, understand the changes that are underway in health care and understand the requirements of any responsible government to deal with that and to keep them informed.

Organized Crime Joint Forces Intelligence Unit

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, a question to the Minister of Justice. Yesterday the minister held a press conference about a joint police force's intelligent unit on gangs. It is regrettable that the province known as the gang capital of Canada is one of the last to get a joint forces unit, and even now it is still talk.

My question to the minister is: would he admit that there is no agreement with any municipal police forces, with any First Nations

police forces, with any Canada Customs, with the city of Winnipeg police? What kind of a joint operation is one police force?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I wanted to avoid the mistakes that his counterparts the NDP government in B.C. made when their joint forces task force fell apart. What we want to do in this particular case is to work with the RCMP, which is our provincial police force, and give them the assurance that we are committed to an ongoing joint forces intelligence unit, not simply on an operational basis but an ongoing basis. The agreement between the RCMP, as our provincial police force indicates, is that they now continue to work with the other municipal police forces who in fact have drafted a plan for the consideration of the department and for further discussion between police forces, and very importantly the city councils that fund the municipal police forces.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who also knows there is no funding arrangement or commitment, there is no agreement on a time limit, there is no technology deal, there is no guarantee of anything, explain to Manitobans why the chiefs of police of the Winnipeg Police Service and Brandon police, who comprise the executive of the Criminal Intelligence Service of Manitoba, who put forward this proposal, were neither invited nor, more importantly, were not signatories to this agreement, especially when Winnipeg—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, again the member seems to misunderstand the role of the RCMP vis-a-vis the provincial government in this province. The RCMP is our provincial police force. The province does not run municipal police forces, and that is a very clear understanding that I have with the mayors of the communities and indeed the mayor of Winnipeg and the specific councillor who is responsible directly for the police. So my role as Minister of Justice is to ensure that the police force that we fund, the RCMP, \$53 million a year, fulfills the mandate of public safety and works in the best interests of all Manitobans. Some of that then

ensures that working together with the municipal police forces in implementing this plan on an ongoing basis is taken care of. I know that both the assistant commissioner and the chief of Winnipeg and other chiefs will work together on the implementation of a plan.

* (1350)

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister admit that this answer and his announcement could in fact harm a co-operative effort on gangs, that yesterday's announcement was a photo op for the purposes of an election to make it look like the government was concerned about a problem it helped create?

Mr. Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, it was interesting that it was the RCMP that proposed the establishment of this ongoing unit and that we had discussions on that. I said to the RCMP, bring forward a plan. The RCMP consulted with other municipal police forces. They brought forward a plan and as the Justice minister of the province of Manitoba, on behalf of the government of Manitoba and the people of Manitoba, said to the RCMP, this is a good direction to be going in. We want this kind of a unit in Manitoba. Please work together with all of the heads of CISM, the Criminal Intelligence Service of Manitoba, and the municipal police forces to see that this becomes a reality.

Gaming Control Commission Independence

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is for the Minister responsible for Manitoba Lotteries.

Recently, Madam Speaker, it was brought to my attention by a constituent that the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission released the '97-98 annual report. As all members of this Chamber know, this particular commission is supposed to be independent, in particular independent of Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. Yet, if you read the annual report, you will find that the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation has indeed given a \$240,000 grant to the commission. My question to the minister is: what does that grant do to the so-called independence of the Gaming Commission?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, as a new minister coming into this portfolio, it would be my understanding that that is the means by which the Gaming Commission is funded in its operation. It is not, I believe, a conditional grant made in which the Lotteries Commission would have discretion, but rather it is a means of ensuring that the Gaming Control—at least that is my understanding. I will endeavour to confirm that with my staff and report back to the member.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the question to the minister responsible is for him to recognize that there is a budget of \$1.5 million, of which they got a \$240,000 donation.

Madam Speaker: Question.

Mr. Lamoureux: My question to the minister is: was it not the government's policy that the Gaming Commission be independent of Manitoba Lotteries, and if in fact that is the case, then why are they receiving money from the Manitoba Lotteries?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the member is correct in his observation that the purpose of the Gaming Control Commission is to be independent, is not part of the Lotteries Commission. In fact, it answers to this Assembly via a different minister, that being the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. Render). There is quite likely a very logical reason for that. It could be the pension benefits, one of my colleagues outlines. It could be part of that establishment of their funding or operation.

I will endeavour to get an answer for the member as to the specifics of that matter, but I can assure him it is not meant in any way by the Lotteries Commission to be some sort of an inducement to produce decisions that the Lotteries Corporation would desire.

Gaming Policy Impact on Charitable Organizations

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, a final supplementary. In the annual report, it indicates very clearly that the number

of charitable licensed events has gone down considerably year over year. Is the minister aware of the gaming policy that this government has brought in and the impact it has had on charitable organizations' abilities to be able to generate funds?

* (1355)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, having in one way or another, as an MLA, over a decade, been involved with the lottery issues, I can remember, when I first stood for public office, one of the issues had been actually the government getting involved—and it had been a previous administration—in gaming and lotteries and taking over the role of an organization that used to be called, I think, Total Community Involvement that had initially the responsibility for dealing with all of these ticket sales and things for community organizations. Government has taken over because the interest in the public in other various forms of gaming and lottery tickets and like consumers looking for new products has certainly grown. I think in all jurisdictions we have seen an increasing role.

In terms of supporting community organizations, a fairly sizeable portion of dollars or revenues from the Lotteries Corporation does go back into the communities through things like the Community Places Program, through a variety of grants to communities that are made out of that fund. So there is a return to communities.

Office of the Fire Commissioner Fire Code Inspections—Schools

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I would like to rise at this point and respond to a question that was put to the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon) yesterday which he took as notice and directed the Minister of Labour to return. It was a question levelled from the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), where I quote from the record: "Will the Premier explain why the Fire Commissioner's office can provide services to Libya, to Cuba, to Chile, to Brazil, to Argentina, but they cannot ensure that the inspections of our

very schools to which our children go every single day are inspected by the Fire Commissioner's office? Is this the way you operate your government?" That was the question.

Madam Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that there has been no relationship with Libya and our Fire Commissioner's office. There has been no relationship with Argentina and our Fire Commissioner's office. In fact, what the Fire Commissioner's office did was gather together some excess fire equipment and send it off to South America as charity. Further, I mentioned yesterday that the Fire Commissioner's office is an education resource, and there were some members who came from Cuba, paid for by the Cuban government, to our Fire Commissioner's office for instruction, for knowledge, for improvement so that they could take our knowledge from Manitoba back and help their people in the Caribbean.

Madam Speaker, in addition, the Fire Commissioner's office will, on request from any municipality or any facility, do an inspection. If there is a request by the facility, there will be a charge.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, the member just indicated and confirmed what we had said yesterday, that, in fact, the Fire Commissioner's office is inspecting the schools, the daycares, the personal care homes and other facilities involving the public on a fee-for-service or a profit basis. He just confirmed our comments of yesterday.

I want to ask this minister then: who is telling the truth? The previous Minister of Labour, now Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), when he said in Estimates last year—and I will quote the date, Thursday, April 16, 1998, when the minister said that there are efforts on behalf of the Fire Commissioner's office to contract to the services that I mentioned yesterday, including the very countries that the minister just referenced: Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Cuba and others.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Prior to recognizing the honourable Minister of Labour, I

would like to remind all honourable members that when one is either posing a question or responding to a question, the words "to tell the truth" have been ruled unparliamentary on numerous, numerous occasions. So I would suggest the honourable member pick and choose his words very carefully.

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I wanted to continue to advise my honourable colleague that if there is a request from a local fire department to the Fire Commissioner's office for any sort of support, this support is furnished free of charge. There is no charge for a fire inspection, for a building inspection, on account of fire if it comes from a local fire department or from a municipality. So I am sure that my honourable colleague will be enlightened with the truth of this matter, and I would ask him to take this to heart.

Madam Speaker, The Fire Prevention Act has never mandated that the Fire Commissioner's office do these sorts of fire inspections. They do it as a matter of courtesy. They do it because they are a centre for knowledge. They are a resource in our province, and they should be congratulated and lauded rather than criticized by members opposite. I take umbrage at the aspersions levelled by the member opposite to the Fire Commissioner's office on this issue.

* (1400)

Mr. Reid: Then, Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister because yesterday the concern was for the safety of the staff and the schoolchildren that attend our schools in every part of this province—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the minister to confirm—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his question.

Mr. Reid: I want to ask the minister then: which one is being straight up with Manitobans—the minister who says that he will provide these services for free, or the former Minister of Labour, now Minister of Finance, who said on

Wednesday, May 21, '97, "The objective, of course, is to balance the budget and even turn a profit if we can."?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I think that certainly there are aspects of the honourable member's question that should be viewed by all of us in a very serious way. All public schools are constructed or renovated according to applicable standards and codes of the province or local government authority. After that, the ongoing safety and maintenance considerations accruing to schools, including fire inspections, become the responsibility of the owners of the buildings, that being the school divisions or districts, and their administrative offices.

School divisions and districts, as owners of permanent school buildings and some portable structures, are also the insured parties with respect to fire insurance and other related policies. Consequently, it will be up to the school boards, doubtless in consultation with the MAST, Manitoba Association of School Trustees, to establish—[interjection] Well, Madam Speaker, I thought the honourable member for Transcona was serious about the safety of our children when he asked the question. I am serious about the safety of our children. I am trying to share some information with my colleagues in this House.

There should, of course, be established a mechanism and a schedule for inspections of schools and for fire safety planning generally. MAST currently recommends that all public schools be inspected annually by a competent qualified fire inspector, and there is some discussion about raising the standards to two inspections per year. My department, in response—and I thank the honourable member for Transcona for this—to this issue is following this up with the MAST to find out the present status of their recommendation.

Pine Falls Paper Company Development—Impact on First Nations

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

At least nine First Nations have a direct interest and need for economic development on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. A draft agreement with Pine Falls Paper Company would increase cutting rates by 700,000 cubic metres extending north of Berens River and could have long-term economic implications for these bands; yet they have been told the agreement is to be signed with or without their input.

I would like to table a copy of the memorandum of understanding, unsigned memorandum, and also a letter from Chief Louis Young of the Bloodvein First Nation. In Chief Young's letter he indicates that the signing of the memorandum of understanding without our direct participation would be a breach of our constitutional rights.

Can the minister indicate what the legal implications for the project are if First Nations are not brought to the table?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, the member brings forward an issue that is quite troublesome and one which perhaps he has been a little bit ill-informed on because, in the most recent meeting that occurred, the company that now owns Pine Falls Paper was interested in having signatories which would include equity investors which would include the First Nations communities who were prepared to become involved in the future operations on the east side of the lake. The meeting did not reach a conclusion, and there was no meeting of the minds on where they wanted to go with this.

I hope the member would be broad-minded enough to appreciate the fact that Pine Falls, as they were traditionally known, is making a sincere and ongoing effort to co-operate and to involve the First Nations and the northern communities on that side of the lake because undoubtedly this is very important for their future and the development of that opportunity they need to be part of.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, this government's track record of including First Nations is not a good one.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member was recognized for a supplementary question to which there should be no preamble.

Mr. Struthers: Will the minister indicate what the timelines are for the signing of this memorandum and whether the signing will be conditional on First Nations participation in the memorandum?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, I think the member for Dauphin—and I would hope everyone else who is concerned about this—would appreciate that there are no deadlines, that this is a development opportunity that the people on the east side of the lake in conjunction with this major pulp and paper company, along with a possibility for sawmill operations, can change and move forward in the future opportunities within that area. We have set no deadlines. We are not dictating the conditions of an agreement. We are saying, even in the development of the road on that side, which is very much tied to the opportunity for harvesting of forest for either lumber or pulp or a combination of the two, that we intend to seek and receive co-operation and sign-off in those areas so that we are not seen to be treading in areas where we would be unwelcome or where the opportunity is not wanted. It is intended to be a process that would be very inclusive.

Mr. Struthers: Does the minister not understand, given recent court decisions like *Delgamuukw* on the west coast and others, that he puts at risk the opportunities and the jobs that he talks about if he continues to leave out First Nations and ignore their constitutional concerns?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, I am disappointed and frankly hurt that the member would indicate that he believes we would proceed to put deadlines and force development in this area without significant input and without opportunity for the communities. That is one of the basic tenets of a potential agreement: the communities are part of it, do have an opportunity for a buy-in. In fact, the problem is, as the member knows full well, and I believe he is trying to exploit the differences between the communities themselves on what they see for their future opportunity, because there are some

of these communities prepared to be co-investors; they want to be equity holders, they want to participate, but there are other communities that have not yet reached that agreement, and we are going to have to work with them.

* (1410)

Education System Physical Education Curriculum

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I want to raise again with the government its contribution to the growing problem of inactive and unfit young people in our province. The Minister of Education may know that his home school division in Brandon has approved a reduction of physical education and health teaching time that is far below the curriculum recommendation guideline of 180 minutes per six-day cycle. Grades 1 to 6 will only receive 90 minutes or half the recommended amounts in the curriculum. Given that we have been waiting three years for a new curriculum which would help reverse this trend and clarify what is expected in Manitoba in physical education and health education, I want to ask the minister why his department is planning to release the long-awaited new curriculum next October rather than prior to the beginning of the school year in September so we do not go another year in Manitoba in this vacuum of no curriculum in health and physical education?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, it is interesting the honourable member should raise that. I was just in the grocery store last weekend getting some groceries and happened to discuss this very matter with one of our teachers in the Brandon School Division. I listened to what this teacher had to say and suggested that is a good topic for discussion at the local level. My concern is also in response to the honourable member's question that whatever it is that is mandated by the provincial authority, it is something that needs to be carried out, and I think what I am hearing in the honourable member's question is that maybe that is not happening. I do need to address that if that is the allegation. I would certainly want to take that up with the school division.

With respect to the second part of the honourable member's question, I need to get some sense from her, I suppose, where it is the opposition wants us to go. I am not always sure I want to go where they want me to go, I am pretty certain I do not want to go where they want to take me, but I would at least like to understand where it is they want me to go, and that is something that is very unclear from honourable members opposite.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I am going to table a study from the University of Winnipeg for the minister that shows that over 50 percent of the grades in Manitoba are below the 180 minutes for phys ed and health education that is required.

I want to ask the minister: is he aware of this, and how will he ensure that the new curriculum, which is going to recommend 180 minutes of phys ed and has a number of outcomes requiring 180 minutes of instruction, how is that curriculum going to be met when some schools are only teaching for 60 minutes?

Mr. McCrae: I am sure, in due course when this curriculum does come forward, that the issues raised in the honourable member's question will no doubt be addressed. The reason I say that is the curriculum that we have been developing in this province has been the result of an extremely inclusive process.

I hear honourable members, for example, complaining about various aspects of curriculum, and I have to remind them that it is Manitoba teachers building Manitoba curriculum in Manitoba for Manitoba students, and we will be guided by that input. We will be assisted greatly by that input. But I do believe that if there are any shortcomings in the present situation, and I am not saying there are or are not because so often we are led to believe certain things in this place that do not really turn out to be that way. I simply say that, as we implement the curriculum, I am sure some of the concerns the honourable member has will be addressed.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Day of Mourning—Workplace Accidents

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, at noon today I was pleased to join with many others in our annual walk along Broadway. I joined with the Winnipeg Labour Council and the Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club in talking to many Winnipeggers about the importance of the Day of Mourning. During our walk we handed out Day of Mourning lapel stickers and spoke to members of the public about the significance of the day. Of course, as many members know, the symbol displayed on the sticker is the internationally recognized canary in a cage, which represents the emergency warning system used by 19th Century miners.

This day, April 28, was set aside to recognize the sacrifices that Canadians have made to earn a living for themselves and their families. Eighty-five years ago, in 1914, the first comprehensive Workers Compensation Act in Canada received third reading in the Ontario Legislature. Rod Murphy, the former M.P. for Churchill, was instrumental in having the Parliament of Canada recognize this day as the Day of Mourning, and we appreciate Mr. Murphy's efforts.

Each and every year of the past 10 years, over one million Canadians suffered workplace injuries. Every year 1,000 Canadians die from occupational diseases. One worker in 15 is injured on the job each year. On average, three Canadian workers are killed every single working day. Manitoba working people are a part of this statistical information. Last year 45,999 Manitobans sustained workplace injuries and filed claims with the Compensation Board, an increase of 5 percent over the previous year. Last year, 22 Manitobans unfortunately lost their lives in workplace accidents or through occupationally caused diseases.

In the last 10 years, Madam Speaker, 211 Manitobans have died in workplace accidents, and their survivors had filed claims with the Compensation Board. Many more claims were rejected by the Compensation Board over the same period. Widows of survivors continue to have their pensions terminated by this

government contrary to, we believe, the Manitoba Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

If as many police officers had died in the line of duty, Madam Speaker, in their daily work, there would have been a moral outrage, but when a single worker dies it gathers little more than a small column in the daily newspaper.

Madam Speaker, we mourn for the dead; we fight for the living.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone): April 28 is designated as a national Day of Mourning for those who have been injured or who have died as a result of workplace accidents in Canada. We all agree that even one injury or fatality in the workplace is too many, and we must work to prevent these tragedies from happening in the future.

Every life is precious and all injuries are preventable. Any workplace injury or fatality is a serious matter and of great concern. We have all been touched by a workplace incident, whether the person injured is old or young, male or female, worked as a farmer, a logger, a miner, on construction, on the assembly line or in some other line of work. From each incident that occurs, whether it results in serious injury or not, we must learn the cause so that we can prevent similar accidents from taking place.

In the last decade there have been significant reductions in accident rates and traumatic fatality rates in Manitoba. Employers and workers have been working in partnership to ensure that workplaces become safer. This partnership must continue. As long as any worker is injured or killed in a workplace accident, there is room for improvement. We must remain diligent in continuing to make Manitoba's workplaces even safer and healthier. Injury and death in the workplace bring pain and suffering to co-workers, families and friends. This Day of Mourning gives all of us a chance to consider the serious nature of work and to consider how we can all work towards the goal of eliminating all workplace accidents. Thank you.

* (1420)

Cathy Keenan

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Cathy Keenan, 1999 recipient of the Exceptional Early Childhood Award given by the Manitoba Child Care Association conference last April 24 at the Ramada Marlborough Inn here in Winnipeg. The conference was also addressed by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), who graciously acknowledged my presence there—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I cannot hear what the member is saying on a very important statement honouring someone. I wonder if you could call the members to order.

Madam Speaker: I agree that the honourable member for Crescentwood indeed does have a point of order. I also was experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Broadway.

I would ask that all those having private meetings do so in the loge or outside the Chamber.

* * *

Mr. Santos: It is written: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for such is the kingdom of Heaven.

Quality health care is an investment in our common future. Manitoba used to be a leader in child care support in the 1980s. Regrettably, this has not kept pace during the past decade under the current government. In 1989, Manitoba child care fees were, on average, the lowest in the entire country. Child care fees now have nearly doubled since then.

Today, many daycare centres are facing serious challenges. Low wages, lack of funding make it difficult to keep and find qualified daycare workers. Operating grants do not always reflect the actual cost of operations. Affordability, accessibility, quality care should

be the chief aim of a good provincial government. Paying lip service to child care is not the same thing as actively supporting child care in this province.

The New Democratic Party has a much better vision for children and parents. We listen to parents; we listen to child care workers. Our task force on child care travelled across the province to see first-hand what needs to be done. We understand the importance of quality child care. We are committed to acting on this issue.

Palliative Care Expansion

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand in this House today and talk about a recent initiative of this government. Our government has announced \$3 million in funding for the expansion of palliative care services over a two-year period. This will help the terminally ill, whether in hospital or home settings, to be eased into the final stages of life with respect and dignity. Funds will be divided between the regional health authorities and the Winnipeg Health Authority.

Here in Winnipeg, the WHA will use their funds to redevelop a 15-bed palliative care unit at St. Boniface General Hospital. The first year of the program will see Brandon, northern and rural RHAs hire a palliative care resource person who will co-ordinate the regional palliative care program. They will educate people who work with the terminally ill and provide support to palliative care workers.

In the second year of the program, a 24-hour response team will be ushered in as well as expanded home care services. This will allow patients to receive more services in their home. As a former nurse, I recognize the significance of this initiative. This announcement illustrates this government's commitment to provide appropriate health care services for all segments of this province's population. We care about the needs of Manitobans and will work hard to ensure that these needs are met.

Vaclav Havel

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Vaclav Havel, the Czech philosopher, poet and

statesman and current president of the Czech Republic, is in our city today. Mr. Havel is one of the great figures of our time, and it is indeed an honour for Manitobans that he has come to our province in order to receive an honorary degree. For his literary endeavours and for his political ideals and morality, Havel is internationally admired. His opposition to political totalitarianism is well known as is his willingness to be imprisoned for the causes of freedom, justice and morality.

From his activities during the Prague spring in 1968 to his leadership during the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and to his election as president of Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic, Havel has demonstrated the behaviour and high moral standards politicians should strive to achieve.

Events of recent months in Manitoba have altered the perception that many of our citizens have of politicians. We as politicians and as citizens would do well to hear the words that Havel wrote in 1991: "Despite the political distress that I face every day, I am still deeply convinced that politics is not essentially a disreputable business, and to the extent that it is, it is only disreputable people who make it so. I would concede that it can, more than any other sphere of human activity, tempt one to disreputable practices, and it therefore places higher demands on people, but it is simply not true that a politician must lie or intrigue. It is utter nonsense spread about by people who, for whatever reason, wish to discourage others from taking an interest in public life."

The work and life of Vaclav Havel are reminders to us all of the higher calling of politics and of how fortunate we are to have people like Vaclav Havel exist today to encourage us in our dark days. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): I would ask if you would call first of all the motion with respect to the report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections respecting judicial compensation which was

received this April 7, 1999. That would be followed by continuation of debate on third reading of Bill 17.

I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that, in accordance with subsections 11.1(5) and 11.1(6) of The Provincial Court Act, the report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections respecting judicial compensation received on April 7, 1999, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as I have requested, if you could call Bill 17 for continuation of third reading. Should the House give that third reading this afternoon, I think you would find agreement then to proceed to private members' hour, to call it five o'clock. I think there would be agreement of the House to do that. I would also advise the House that should that bill receive third reading in this Chamber this afternoon, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor will be available to give it Royal Assent at a quarter to five. So I imagine the House would be prepared to interrupt whatever proceedings are taking place at that time to allow His Honour to attend at the Chamber for that purpose.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 17—The Elections Amendment and Elections Finances Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable First Minister, Bill 17, The Elections Amendment and Elections Finances Amendment Act; Loi Modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des campagnes électorales, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington, who has nine minutes remaining.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I, at the close of business yesterday, was concluding my remarks on Bill 17 and talking about the various recommendations of the Monnin report that were to be found in Bill 17. There is one other outstanding recommendation that I would like to speak to, and I think it is also, as they all are, quite important.

The Monnin report talked about the fact that it is important not only to have processes in place that give the Chief Electoral Officer and all parties to elections and political activity the tools with which to make informed decisions and good choices about whether they are going to go forward with an accusation or not of wrongdoing under the act, but also recommendations that come from the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Manitoba as a result of elections and as a result of situations which I hope we never have again like we have been faced with today as an outcome of the Monnin report. The recommendation states that the legislative committee that deals with The Elections Act and The Elections Finances Act must sit within 60 days of receipt of recommendations from the Chief Electoral Office whenever those recommendations come forward. There would be no time lag allowed longer than two months, whether the House is sitting or not.

* (1430)

So, Madam Speaker, the recommendation of Monnin has been accepted, and Bill 17 does provide for the timely consideration of any recommendations coming from the Chief Electoral Office, and that is within 60 days of laying the recommendation before the Legislature. So there will not be an opportunity for any government to delay consideration of recommendations that come before it from the Chief Electoral Office. I think it is incredibly important that this part of the legislation be enacted because historically the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer have been timely. They have been all designed to make the electoral process more open, more accessible, and the people who participate in the electoral process, whether they be candidates, chief financial officers, auditors or political parties, more accountable. Openness and accountability is what we should strive for as people who are involved in the political process. It is what people like Mr. Havel, whom we are honouring today, have fought for, have gone to prison for, and many people throughout the history of this world have died for—a system of government that looks very much like ours.

I think, Madam Speaker, in concluding my remarks on Bill 17, as I started, it is very

unfortunate that we had to have a situation that ended in the Monnin report and Bill 17. Many people have spoken on that, and I am sure the people of Manitoba, in their wisdom, will speak on that very shortly. But the one positive thing that has come out of this whole dreadful situation is that we have in Bill 17 some exceptionally good amendments which will make our electoral process more open and accountable and will, with good will on all parts of everybody who works in the vineyards of public service, ensure that nothing, nothing like what has happened to the people of this province in the last four years as a result of this vote-rigging scandal ever happens again.

So we are pleased and delighted to be able to support Bill 17, its process and its contents.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): It is a pleasure for me to rise today and speak on Bill 17. When it came through second reading I did talk in essence about the principles, as our rules indicate we are supposed to on the bill, and went through the different recommendations that came out of the Monnin inquiry, the party's position. The thing that I would like to again reinforce in third reading is one of the recommendations in which I think it is absolutely critical that we see action, some sort of concrete, tangible action taking place. In part there was an, albeit short, bit of a discussion in committee in regard to the issue.

I think that it is imperative that political parties have some form of code of conduct or code of behaviour or code of ethics, whatever one might want to call it. I look for not only leadership in all political parties to be able to demonstrate to that good will. We also believe that there is a need for Elections Manitoba ultimately to provide some base or some core of values that would be reflective of what expectations Manitobans would have of their political parties. We are really talking more of the mores that Manitobans would have as a whole in regard to codes of ethics and behaviour.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, the other recommendations I commented on during second reading, what I wanted to go to was the committee meeting. I have always, as in the past, felt that there is a great deal of benefit

whenever you go into committee meetings, committee hearings, where you have members of the public that come forward and make presentation. There is always something that quite often triggers a number of ideas and thoughts. There was one presenter that I thought was quite interesting, and both presenters expressed some valid concerns, but it was Mr. Nielson that really intrigued me in the way in which he addressed this particular bill.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Nielson went on to talk about areas of concern that he and through his contacts—and I must say, they seem to be fairly excessive in terms of the Internet and so forth. He talked about ways in which we would have a better democracy. In good part, it was in reference directly to the bill. As I had pointed out in my comments to Mr. Nielson, that even though in Manitoba we do have an excellent system, many, including myself, at least in part, would argue that it is second to no other in the world.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, there is so much room for improvement in making our system a better, a more democratic system. There were a couple that maybe, I thought, this would be an appropriate time to talk about. That is one that has always been somewhat of a surprise, and this is more so at the local level.

I, in most part, believe that there are certain expenditures that are not taken into account in a provincial election that should be taken into account. I can only feel safe in commenting on my own area, because that is the area in which I have gone through a number of campaigns, and comment on that particular experience. You know, like all candidates that live in their ridings, they put up signs. I too had a sign, and my sign, I guess, was in the backyard because it faced Keewatin at the time. That is where I put my sign and so we did not have one necessarily on the front lawn. So canvassers would come through, and it was interesting that my wife, who was at home taking care of our children, made reference twice to individuals from the NDP party who were knocking on doors. One was a union individual from B.C. Another was a union individual, I believe it was from Alberta or Saskatchewan, I am not sure. The reason why I say that is because I think that there are many

expenditures that should be taken into consideration. I would think that this might be occurring in all political parties to some degree, but I qualified it by commenting on—I am talking about the riding which I represent, the riding which I am most familiar with.

Madam Speaker, if there are indeed paid individuals, paid lobbyists, representatives that are working at a local campaign, that is a legitimate thing for them to be doing. I do not question that, but I do question whether or not that should be reported as an election expense. I would suggest to you that if you have organized, whether it is organized labour or other organized interest groups that are providing or making available individuals, whether it is on a part-time or a full-time basis, there has to be some mechanism that takes that into account because there is an advantage when that occurs.

* (1440)

I look at individuals that put efforts in my campaign, and I can, with all honesty, indicate to this House that, you know, membership on my campaign involves a great deal of union individuals, people who are heavily involved. My campaign manager, or former campaign manager, Jhun Martin, was one of the poster—can I call it poster boys for promotion for the CIA, the Canadian international union.

An Honourable Member: Which one?

Mr. Lamoureux: Jhun Martin.

An Honourable Member: CIA, what union is that?

Mr. Lamoureux: The union for the Transcona yards. [interjection] Well, this individual worked out at the CN yards in Transcona. Many of my constituents actually work throughout Winnipeg, are participants in unions. My apologies if I used the wrong acronym for the union.

Madam Speaker, the point is—and I know that it is a sensitive issue, but I am appealing to Elections Manitoba. I had an individual who indicated that he was given opportunities to be trained through the union on campaigning and then asked to go into a particular campaign to

work against different political parties. I would share, you know, my provincial campaigns cost me, personally, money. There is no corporation that donates thousands of dollars to me. I believe the landlord of my campaign office has given me a larger than average donation, but you will find that all my campaign donations—and I am quite open to provide wherever possible an open accounting for where I receive my money from, but I can assure the Leader of the official opposition—

An Honourable Member: Who paid for that Free Press one day there?

Mr. Lamoureux: —that the advertising, or I should not say—the member is throwing me off here. Not the advertising, the campaign, the people that volunteer in my campaign and the efforts that they put in is fairly great, fairly given. [interjection] Madam Speaker, the leader is throwing me off. I will just pause for a quick second so I can catch the gist of his question.

An Honourable Member: The Free Press ad.

Mr. Lamoureux: Are you talking about the Free Press survey that was sent out to all Manitobans? That was paid by the Liberal Party, from what I understand.

Well, I get the gist of what the Leader is now trying to say. Madam Speaker, to the member for Selkirk. One should never be presumptuous. He just heckled: we will miss you, implying that the NDP will take over in the riding of Inkster. I will give a little bit of advice that I can give him, and that is never to take one's constituents for granted. I will never take my constituents for granted. I hope and trust that the member for Selkirk, by what he just said, does not take his constituents for granted. If he wants to take his constituents for granted, I would ask him not to take the constituents that I represent for granted because not only is he doing a disservice to my constituents, he is also doing a disservice to the individual that might be an opponent for me in the next provincial election.

But, Madam Speaker, as members can tell, it is a very sensitive issue, and that is the reason why I bring it up because I do believe there is a

responsibility for Manitoba Elections to continue in a very proactive way to find out how campaigns at the local level are in fact run, that there is a responsibility for Elections Manitoba to ensure that all candidates as much as possible are put on an equal playing field. That is in fact what I am arguing for, that if in fact there are organizations that are third party that contribute indirectly, that directly assist a particular candidate, that that is something at the very least that is worthy of looking into because it does have an impact, and I have seen that first-hand.

I know, going into the next provincial election, that there will be an organized attempt from a sector that does not necessarily reflect the wishes of a union membership, as an example, and it saddens me. It saddens many of my campaign workers that are very actively involved in unions. I say it because it is there. It is very real, and I use it as an example in Inkster because that is the area which I am most familiar with. I would suggest to you that in fact the same sorts of things might be occurring in other areas. It is not to pinpoint and say it is just the union elite or select union elite that are doing it. There, quite frankly, could be the same sort of tactics that would be used in other areas through other interest groups.

I would suggest to you that what is important here is that when we go into a provincial election, we are asking individuals or Manitobans to look at the candidates that are being provided for them to address or to look up, whether it is through the web site or making the connection through the media what the political parties are saying. We are expecting, and that expectation is there because we, in part, say that we want a democratic system that is fair. We do that by what laws we currently have in place by putting in election expenses, by putting in caps.

Well, I would suggest to you that there are many loopholes that are there, and those loopholes need to be addressed whenever possible. The reason why they have to be addressed is that I really believe that it should not be up to an interest group of whatever, whether it is the Chamber of Commerce or the Manitoba Federation of Labour. It should be up to the candidates to be able to communicate their messages through their volunteers or if they have

paid individuals, that those paid individuals are, in fact, registered with Elections Manitoba through the donation that you have to give.

I believe that by doing it in that sort of a fashion that we will have a better system. That is the reason why I bring it up. I do not bring it up to take cheap shots at a political party or an outside organization. I bring it up because Mr. Nielson, in reporting to the committee on these amendments, talked about a number of different things that he believes are important in order to make us have a better government, a better form of democracy.

He talked about issues such as what happens inside the Chamber. He was disappointed, for example, that so little time was given for that individual to prepare on such an important issue and make better comment on the legislation that was before us.

Well, I agree. I agree wholeheartedly. Not only do we need to look at Elections Manitoba and the role that they have to play in ensuring that what change is necessary, and change is necessary, that that change be continual and continuously moving forward so we get a better democratic system, but we also need and have a responsibility to look internally. One of the examples that Mr. Nielson made reference to was, of course, an orderly fashion within this Chamber.

* (1450)

Well, there were a number of us who served on a committee, and it was alluded to at the committee hearing, of the provisional rules. In the provisional rules, there was a process that would have seen us sit in the falltime, sit in the springtime. The idea was that in the springtime we would actually have legislation brought in. The summertime provided ample opportunity for individuals to digest the legislation that has been brought forward and then in the falltime have those committee meetings and third readings. In the springtime we would have dealt with the Estimates or the budget process.

Well, I bring it up because there are not as many opportunities to be able to talk on an issue that is as important as the one that we have

today. We talk about the pillars of democracy or the foundations. In the last year I have really been somewhat disappointed. It is difficult for me to explain that disappointment, saddened by what I have seen. I really, for example, believe that we should have sat last fall, that we raise and spend billions of dollars every year. There is a responsibility on all members of this Chamber to be in here and to ensure better accountability of those expenditures, of those revenues that are being generated. Both political parties are to blame for that not taking place. Both the official opposition and the government could be soundly criticized for that. When I look at The Elections Act, The Elections Finances Act, Madam Speaker, again I would suggest to you that not only both but all political parties have to share in the blame in how we, far too often, in my opinion, are too partisan in approaching this issue. With the issue that I raised just a few minutes ago, I have had New Democrats agree with me that that is in fact something that has to be dealt with.

When you sit down with people in a very apolitical way, Madam Speaker, you will find that the room for consensus building is overwhelming. As parliamentarians, we recognize many of the deficiencies that are in fact there. That is the reason why I had suggested that, as with Mr. Nielson and others, there is a role for outside organizations and individuals also to lobby Elections Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I, as an individual, as an MLA, have attempted to express concerns that I have had with the elections. Third-party advertising is another concern. Again, we have to be very, very careful. We have to respect the rights. When I look at, for example, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, they have a role to play in informing Manitobans in elections. There is no doubt about that. Our nurses' union has a role to play in informing Manitobans what is actually happening. But there is a role for Elections Manitoba to start, at the very least, looking at some of the issues that can have impacts on provincial elections, and if in fact there is a need for Elections Manitoba to be more involved.

Madam Speaker, I say that and I caution, and I trust that other members will not exploit

those particular comments, because it is easy to say something in opposition and say that endless amounts of dollars should and could be expended. Government, it goes without saying, is going to try to limit some of those expenditures, especially on the record. I would find that equally as repulsive. I do believe the government in terms of the expenditures—and that question, I think, was either raised today or yesterday: advertising. You know there is a huge amount of speculation that the election could be called as early as May 4, possibly May 11, and we see a lot of advertising taking place. Well, again, that is an issue in which one has to be very diligent. You cannot use government dollars in order to prop up a government, or you should not be using government dollars in order to prop up a government leading into a provincial election.

You know, this time the government, which is Conservative, is being soundly criticized for the dollars that they are spending. Well, 11 years ago, the roles were reversed, that you had the then Conservatives criticizing the government of the day, which happened to be NDP, on the advertising that they were spending using government tax dollars.

What that means, I would suggest, is that we need to be more diligent and more proactive in trying to come up with guidelines that will ensure that abuse of that nature will be marginalized.

I am not sure if Elections Manitoba has a role to play in that area, but it is definitely an issue that does have to be addressed because it is not fair. It is not appropriate for governments to be using tax dollars when, in fact, they should be using party dollars. That is something which causes a great deal of concern, I believe, not only for me, Madam Speaker, but also would be a concern of my constituents.

I believe when we talk about our Elections Acts, whether it is the Elections Act of Manitoba or The Elections Finances Act or the boundary redistribution, what Manitobans want first and foremost is a sense of fairness of no political interference in the process. That is something in which I, as much as possible, have advocated for. I would assure this House whenever I have

had discussions to the best of my knowledge with Elections Manitoba that I do approach those discussions in a very apolitical fashion. I believe that there is a role for political parties to lobby Elections Manitoba, and to that extent Elections Manitoba does meet with party representatives to get feedback on legislative changes. I think that is a positive.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Where we really need to improve is the way in which the local campaigns are ran, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would encourage, and I could not encourage in strong enough words how Elections Manitoba, I believe, has a role to look at the microlevel of campaign, how those campaigns are financed, and how those campaigns are ran. Because there is no doubt in the minds of Manitobans that they want to see fair elections. That has been clearly demonstrated with the Monnin report—very clear in the Monnin report. That, I would argue, is the macro. That is something in which Elections Manitoba has been very aggressive in addressing the macro, the party at the larger level, but if there is an area in which Elections Manitoba needs to improve, I would suggest to you it is at the microlevel. Again, I have personal examples of that and I am more than happy to share that with Elections Manitoba at any time. At another time, I would like to have another opportunity to go into more details.

* (1500)

I made reference to the financing aspect of the microcampaign. There are other things that occur at the constituency level during campaigns that Elections Manitoba has an obligation to look at, at the very least look at, and hopefully come up with a way that would see legislation brought into this Chamber and passed much in a fashion that it is today in the sense of all political parties or all MLAs support and being very much aware that after I sit down that there will likely be other speakers who might want to address the finances and how the Liberal Party's finances actually come about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think that there is room for improvement in all three political parties in the whole area of

fundraising and how fundraising takes place for parties. I do not need to be given a lesson on how it is done, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know how it is done and I am not impressed. I think that there is room for huge improvement on that front. There is no political party, at least inside this Chamber, that could escape or come out clean on this particular issue. There is a real need to visit that issue, but I would suggest to you that that is an issue that Elections Manitoba is, in fact, looking at or I trust is looking at.

Part of the reason why I am standing today is more so that microlevel. That microlevel is where I have the concern, because in the long run it is the constituency by constituency and what happens inside those constituencies that is going to ensure that we have a sense of democracy which Manitobans can feel comfortable and confident in, and that is critical. We do not want people to lose confidence in the system that we have.

In conclusion, I trust—[interjection] The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) wants me to continue, but I do not have to fill the 40 minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, the primary push for me this afternoon, I believe—

An Honourable Member: Is to get re-elected.

Mr. Lamoureux: —is not necessarily to get re-elected, even though it would be nice. My constituents will determine that. It is more so to emphasize the importance of looking at the local campaigns, and it is absolutely critical to see Elections Manitoba more proactive on what takes place at those local campaigns and come up—[interjection] The member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) brings up an excellent point, independent returning officers.

That is a recommendation from Elections Manitoba. It is a good recommendation, and there are many other things such as that that could be done, that there is a responsibility to see done, and I hope to be given the privilege to be able to continue on as an MLA to ensure as much as possible that we will have a better sense of democracy at the local level and at the macrolevel.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to say it.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Yes, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to enter into this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had occasion to hear some of the comments of members of this House, and I think there have been some very valid points put on the record. Some points I agree with. Some points I agree with in sentiment. Some points I think, particularly of the preceding speaker, are inaccurate. I actually would like to spend some time, although I am limited in my time, in dealing with some of the inaccuracies I think that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) or previously the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) had put on the record with respect to this act.

I do not want to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I want to focus on the essence of why we are here and why we are occasioned to deal with the particular amendments that we are dealing with with respect to this bill. We are not talking about a minor issue. We are talking about an attempt by a political organization, by a group of individuals in a political party, to fix an election campaign. That is something that is unprecedented in this jurisdiction.

Now, I appreciate the comments of the members for Inkster, The Maples and others with respect to things that go on at the local level. Things go on by all political parties that I do not agree with, that I do not think are appropriate. I think those that are appropriately discussed and reviewed and made to ensure that this system is more democratic and fair, I agree with that 100 percent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are talking about here is the most significant political scandal in Manitoba history since the Rodmond Roblin government was brought down in 1917. I do not think that we should lose sight of that. I want to cite an instance when I met a constituent of mine. I do not know how that constituent votes. I was on the street and I was surprised with the fierceness and the anger that he approached the issue of the Monnin inquiry. He said to me, these people cheated. These people

went against every democratic principle that we represent.

Now this individual is of Polish extraction. He said for years we fought in Poland to have a democratic state. Manitoba has sent observers to democratic elections across the world in order to demonstrate what democracy is all about, and yet we have these same individuals involved in the government who attempted to fix an election campaign.

* (1510)

I can hardly talk about it in this Chamber, because I think it is so disgusting. I go further. It is one of the most tragic and saddest episodes in political history. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do I think that the Roblin government, or anyone associated with the Roblin government, would have hatched a scheme to fix elections as happened under the present regime? I say not. Do I think the Walter Weir government would have done that? I say not. Do I think the Ed Schreyer government would have done that? I say not. Do I think that the Sterling Lyon government? As much as I disagree with Sterling Lyon on so many issues, I always felt that Mr. Lyon was a man of principle. I do not think the Conservatives under leadership of Sterling Lyon would have done that. I do not think the Conservatives under the leadership of Sidney Spivak would have done that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Conservative group under the leadership of Premier Gary Filmon not only did that but was allowed to do that and allowed to cover up on that, and I think that is disgusting. I think the Premier ought to have resigned. I think the honourable thing he should have done would have been to resign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, reference was made by the member for The Maples when I heard his comments on previous reading that candidates and individuals from political parties sometimes say things and do things that we cannot control, and that is true. All of us are caught in situations or are involved in situation where people around us in the zeal and in their best intentions perhaps do things that we do not approve of. It happens to all of us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have your key, your No. 1, campaign organizer together with the head of your Treasury Board, together with lifetime members of the party hatch a plot to launch a political party in order to steal votes away from another political party in order to win an election is one of the most disgusting things that could be done in a democratic process. Many of us, most of us are second or third generation from countries where we never had access to democracy. In fact, the institutions are so worshipped—I know when I go to any Ukrainian hall anywhere in Manitoba, there is always the picture of Taras Shevchenko on one side and Queen Elizabeth on the other, and I know that those people in that hall fundamentally worship the democratic system and honour the democratic system that we have—that to have a government and key government officials attempt to subvert the system is nothing short of disgusting.

I welcome these amendments, and I know that these amendments will go some way towards preventing this kind of action from happening in the future and perhaps would have gone some way from preventing this action to go as far as it did. But I tell you, what went on literally makes my stomach upset. My constituent, whom I met on the street and told me about that, was just disgusted.

I do not know how members on that side of the House can—I do not know how they deal with it. I do not accuse, by the way, because I have a lot of respect for members on the opposite side of the House. I consider myself a friend with most members on the other side of the House, but I do not know how they can go into meetings and caucus meetings with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and not be self-absorbed in trying to get to the bottom of how this could happen to a political party that I believe would not have done it under Walter Weir, would not have done it under Sidney Spivak, would not have done it under Sterling Lyon, would not have done it under Duff Roblin and further back, but somehow were able to do it under the leadership of the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon). I think that question mark will remain, and regardless of what happens in the future, that question mark, that asterisk will be beside the

member for Tuxedo for the rest of his political and after-career because it is such a disgusting and horrible episode.

Now, if this was the first time that this plot—if this plot had materialized out of nowhere, perhaps I would not have been as critical, but I just want to go back to an episode which appeared to be isolated at one time, and that was during the by-elections, which, I believe, occurred in 1992. It was not the '93 by-elections, it was '92 when two members of the Premier's staff phoned an open-line show. They phoned an open-line show and criticized a Liberal candidate. That was bad enough, and I suppose, again, all of us might have zealots and have others that would do something like that, but let me continue. Those individuals phoned the open-line show, and then when confronted, denied that they had phoned the open-line show. It was then found to be that there were two individuals in the Premier's Office who had done the phoning. Now that perhaps was an isolated event. Perhaps.

An Honourable Member: Then they wrote letters to the editor.

Mr. Chomiak: My colleague indicates that letters were written, but let us look at this. They phoned. Okay. I would accept that. They then were caught, and they lied. Then they subsequently were found to be working in the Premier's Office and were disciplined. Okay, that will happen with all political parties.

Subsequent to that, the Premier for New Brunswick attended the Olympics, and it became a national issue that the Premier for New Brunswick was attending the Olympics and was being sponsored by IBM. Now our Premier, the member for Tuxedo, was also attending the Olympics, and he was interviewed by an open-line host in Winnipeg and asked: Who is paying for it? He indicated it was the Pan Am Games. Subsequently we discovered that the Premier's hotel was being paid for by IBM. Now, let me add, this was a national scandal. The Premier of New Brunswick was forced to apologize and return the money. And the member for Tuxedo, the Premier, came back to Manitoba and said: I sent the money back; I did not do anything wrong. End of issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, first, assistants in the Premier's Office phone, lie, and then own up. Then the Premier gets caught in the IBM scandal, then he owns up. Then we have the incident for which we are dealing with the amendments to the act, which has precipitated this entire debate.

I frankly do not believe the First Minister. I regret having to say that, because I do not think I could have said that about Duff Roblin, about Sidney Spivak, about Walter Weir, about Sterling Lyon. I would not have said that about them, but I can say that about the present incumbent in the office, and that is sad.

You know, the Premier, well, I do not want to go on, because I just find it disgusting. I do not want to relive that history, because I find it so distasteful. But the point I want to make—

An Honourable Member: You are loving every second of it.

Mr. Chomiak: The member for Assiniboia says: "loving every second of it." I find this entire episode disgusting.

An Honourable Member: So do I.

Mr. Chomiak: I am glad the member for Assiniboia finds it disgusting, and I am curious to see what her comments will be about these amendments, and I would be hopeful that she would ask her Leader some of these questions that we are raising here today. I hope she will ask the Premier, whom she worked for directly, the same questions that we are asking today, because I think we ought to get to the bottom of this.

I think a concerted plot on the part of the chief election official for the Conservative Party, on the part of the secretary of the Treasury Board, on the part of lifetime Conservatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is beyond pale, anything that we have dealt with in this Legislature. It is beyond—sure the \$500,000 is a ridiculous amount of money to spend on health advertising, and sure the sign campaign stuff is not acceptable, but to hatch a plot outside of the Premier, inside the Premier's Office to launch a political campaign, to take votes away, to cheat and to fix

an election is beyond and is in a category all of its own, which is why I have sat here and not dealt with this issue.

* (1520)

Will these amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, get to the bottom of the issue? I do not think so. Perhaps if these amendments had been in place we would have dealt with this scandal and the taint of this scandal a lot sooner.

Drafting a code of ethics by an individual who leads a party, you know, is to me a nonstarter. The present Premier has to step aside when it comes to a code of ethics if he intends to—I do not think we would have needed a code of ethics when this party was led by other individuals. We did not need a code of ethics when Sterling Lyon led the party or Sidney Spivak led the party or Walter Weir led the party or Duff Roblin led the party, but when Gary Filmon leads this party, they have got to have a code of ethics, but frankly a code of ethics is too late.

I think the Premier ought to have resigned. I think the Premier's reputation is tarnished by virtue of this. Again, I was so struck, I was struck on the doorstep by the comments of my constituents to this matter. You know, I am used to hearing concerns about health care, and I am used to hearing concerns about taxation, and I am used to hearing concerns about education and concerns about public safety, but I did not expect, I did not expect the anger on the doorstep with the present Premier, Premier Filmon, and the scandal.

I am sorry to say that the scandal taints all of us. That has been canvassed in this Chamber and we have talked about it, but I was surprised at the extent of the anger that the public has towards our Premier as a result of this scandal. Do I think it is justified? Yes, I do. Do I think it should be resolved? Yes, I do. How should it be resolved? The Premier should honourably resign as a result of his leadership and what he allowed to happen.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Premier did not know, and that is a big if, in my opinion, I guess the question would be—and again I want

to emphasize that we all have people around us who, through their zeal and efforts, wish to do the best they can. All of us, I am sure, have been guilty at some time of having people do things that we did not think was appropriate. But when questions were posed and questions were raised, and when this leader did not follow through, as he did, then I think he has no choice but to resign.

An Honourable Member: He called a full inquiry.

Mr. Chomiak: Now, I am glad the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) indicated the Premier called a full inquiry, because I want to relate to her an episode that was witnessed by the media in this House. [interjection] Yes, the Premier called a full inquiry after he told me personally he would never call a full judicial inquiry. I said to him: "You will call a judicial inquiry." And her Leader and good friend, the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) said: "No, never." And I said: "You will call a judicial inquiry." He said: "No, never."

The only reason he called a full judicial inquiry was he was forced by day after day of questioning in the Legislature by members in this House. He had no choice but to call for a judicial inquiry, and he would not have if we had not pushed him. He told me so himself, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He told me he would not call a full judicial inquiry. I told him he would. He called a full inquiry, and the member attempts to use that as a defence for the Premier? Good heavens, the Premier did everything but stand on his head and spit nickels to avoid calling a judicial inquiry, and only when he was forced into a corner did he do so, and he has been backpedalling and doing everything in his power to remove himself from the accountability as a result of that.

You know, it is hard to believe that in the 1990s in Manitoba, of all places, this sounds like something that would come up maybe 60, 70 years ago, perhaps in other jurisdictions. But to think that we are in the same category as other jurisdictions where there was a planned, concerted effort to circumvent the rules of democracy is absolutely disgusting.

It is hard to believe that we can go to other jurisdictions and review their elections when we have, on the record, in Manitoba, a scandal of this proportion.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these amendments will assist us in preventing perhaps something of this kind from happening, but I cannot think of a political party or political figure in Manitoba history over the past 25 or 30 years that I have been directly involved that I think—and I am thinking very carefully—was capable of doing this. I cannot think of a political figure that I think would go as far as the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) allowed to happen with his group.

Now I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I have said to members opposite that I do not believe members opposite knew of this. You know I am quite surprised at the anger some members opposite express—

An Honourable Member: It is not anger, it is annoyance.

Mr. Chomiak: And the annoyance, as the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) expresses, when a judicial inquiry has found as many significant things: In all my years on the Bench I never encountered as many 'blank' in one proceeding as I did in this inquiry.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker: In all of my years on the bench, I never encountered as many 'blank' in one proceeding as I did this inquiry.

How can members opposite defend that? If the apology is sincere, then I think the member for Assiniboia would accept it as such.

As I said, is it not ironic that I am speaking today during a day when one of the great political statesmen of this century is visiting our province and our city, indeed an individual whose statements and whose books I have read and whom I have quoted, and it is ironic and perhaps a bit sad that on a day like this I have to talk about a scandal that has served to denigrate Manitoba and all of us through its intensity and through its bitterness and through its disgusting follow-up. You know, for the member for

Assiniboia, I would rather win the elections on the straight issues than have to deal with this kind of stuff, and if the member for Assiniboia could call her party to order and if she could somehow rein them in, perhaps we could deal with the issues as they relate.

I suppose members opposite would rather we not speak on it. I would rather not speak on it. I find this disgusting. I find it disgusting, and when I was quoted at the press conference saying it was one of the saddest days in the political history of this province when this report came out, I meant that, and it was, and I think members in this House feel that. So I guess the question is where do we go from here. We have these amendments to build on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They will go some way, I suppose, to restoring the tarnished image of this province as a result of the neglect and the malfeasance of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and those members of the Conservative Party who participated in the scandal and in the plot.

But I think it is a sad statement on perhaps—and I would wish to have this question answered: Is it the Conservative Party today or is it the leadership of the Conservative Party that have allowed this to happen? That is an interesting question because I do not think the old Tory philosophy would have sustained this kind of scandal, and, as I said previously, I do not think any of the previous leaders of the Conservative Party whom I am familiar with, Duff Roblin, Walter Weir, Sidney Spivak, Sterling Lyon—

An Honourable Member: When did you change your mind about them? You hated them when they were here.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) is chirping from her seat. It reminds me of a former member who sat in that particular seat. The only difference was I used to pay attention to what the comments were of that former member, because he had some interesting suggestions.

* (1530)

But as I said previously in my comments, I do not think that the previous leadership of the Conservative Party would have allowed themselves to be dragged into this morass. I dare say if any of those leaders were caught in this kind of a scandal, I think they would have done what the parliamentary system demanded. They would have done the honourable thing, and they would have resigned and saved their party and saved the public and saved the process from having to go through what we have had to go through in this jurisdiction as a result of hanging on for purposes, of what I do not know—for what I do not know, self-vindication, perhaps. I do not know and I am not going to speculate as to why the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did not do the honourable thing and did not resign as a result of what happened, because no matter how you mince it, no matter how you cut it, no matter how you try to dance around the issue, it still goes back to what my constituent said on the street, that he could not believe that a party could do this, could get away with it and could stay in office as a result of a scandal of this kind.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been urged by members on my side of the House to refer to some of the quotes from this report, but I do not even like reading these quotes anymore. I mean, I cannot believe that in Manitoba in the 1990s we would have a Chief Justice accusing a political party of this kind of activity. It is absolutely disgusting. When I anticipated the report coming out, I never thought I would see words like this written on a piece of paper about a political party led by the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon). I think it is an indictment of the leadership, and it is an indictment of perhaps 11 years of far too long in office. I do not care who the political figure is, whether it was the figures I referred to, whether it was Duff Roblin or Sidney Spivak or Walter Weir or Sterling Lyon. Even those individuals I think after 11 years in office would have realized that their time was up and would have realized after 11 years in office matters creep in and cracks appear and a renewal is necessary, otherwise corruption, which is inevitable, sets in. The problem is it set in a lot earlier in this particular regime, and perhaps it set in at the very onset for all that I know, in reference to the comments I said earlier. There is much, much more that I could put on the record that I choose not to, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

because I do not want to continue dealing with some of these issues.

I close by saying I think these amendments will do something to right the wrongs that have occurred in Manitoba, that the honourable thing for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to have done in the parliamentary system would have been to resign. The decent and correct thing, and something that would have removed the tarnish from, the stain from all Conservative members, would have been for the Premier to resign and do the honourable thing and not worry about clinging into office for whatever reason I do not know.

The Premier no longer has the confidence or the legitimacy to continue one day longer. After 11 years he does not have the legitimacy or the confidence in this House or the people of Manitoba. The Premier could go a long way towards improving the situation in the province by doing the honourable thing, and that is stepping aside and doing the right thing for the people of Manitoba, not clinging to office, not hiding behind the defences, not having to defend the activities of his friends and associates on the plot, on the worst scandal to hit this province since the Rodmond Roblin scandal that brought down that government—the worst. Think about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In 70 years we have not had a scandal of this kind until this government. [interjection]

The member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) can say all that she wants, but I just reiterate to her that I do not think Duff Roblin, Sidney Spivak, Sterling Lyon or Walter Weir would have been involved in a plot or allowed a plot like this to be hatched under their leadership. I do not believe it. As much as I disliked Sterling Lyon—good heavens, and I had my disagreements with Sterling Lyon—I thought he was an honourable man and I say he is an honourable man. I do not think Sterling Lyon would have allowed that to happen. If Sterling Lyon was caught in the position that this Premier was caught in, he would have done the honourable thing and he would have resigned whether he knew about the plot or not, whether he knew about IBM paying or not, whether he knew his assistants were phoning an open-line show and denied it or not. The honourable thing would

have been for this Premier to resign, not cling to power, and he would have removed the taint from all of us in Manitoba.

When we have someone like Mr. Havel in Manitoba, we would not have to sort of hold our heads because we have just gone through a political scandal that threatened to undermine democracy at a time when his nation is coming into a system of democracy. We all come from second and third generations, from countries where our parents and grandparents cherished our democratic system and fought for a democratic system, and now we have a leadership that sought to undermine our democratic system.

An Honourable Member: That is unfair.

Mr. Chomiak: That is unfair, the member for Assiniboia says. For the secretary of the Treasury Board, for the head of the Conservative campaign, for the leadership of this political party to allow to happen what happened did not undermine democracy. Then you did not read the Monnin report. You did not read those quotes, and perhaps I should read those quotes from the Monnin report, because that is the most indicting part of the Monnin report, where he used the individuals who are vulnerable to try to subvert the democratic system, individuals whom you do not have the time of day for most of the time, but if you want to use them in a political campaign, you do it. That is why I hate talking about this report, because it is disgusting. If we think Saskatchewan was bad, that was financial corruption, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They did not try to fix a campaign. Show me another jurisdiction in the past 50 years where they tried to fix a campaign. Show me.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

An Honourable Member: British Columbia.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, put it on the record for the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik). He talks about other provinces. I know the Socreds did a lot in British Columbia, but I do not even think that the Socreds in British Columbia tried to fix a campaign like this party and the leadership of this party did, Madam Speaker.

Having made my comments on this bill, I hope not to have to speak about this report again. I hope that in our political future we do not have an episode of this kind. Frankly, I do not think any member who took over leadership of that party whom I am looking across would allow themselves to get involved in this kind of a despicable, corruptible act.

With those comments, unless I should—perhaps, members opposite are asking for more, but I know members on this side of the House wish to put their comments on the record. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I rise to add a few remarks, to make a few remarks, add a few comments to the debate on Bill 17. I, like the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak, do not necessarily relish a debate on this particular subject, although there are various elements in the bill that are worthwhile supporting. I am sure none of us in the House have difficulty in supporting the passage of the bill because the specific recommendations in it are based on the recommendations of the Monnin inquiry.

I think, Madam Speaker, that Manitobans, by and large, are well served by their public representatives. I think, by and large, this is true whether you are talking about MLAs, M.P.s or city councillors or municipal councillors. I think, by and large, I as a Manitoban and we as Manitobans are well served by people who are elected and who, I believe, are basically good people, honest people, who want to do a conscientious job.

* (1540)

Now, we may have terrific conflict in terms of policies. We may not agree on the policies in education or health care or social services. Yet I am sure we all have the same goals, same objectives, and that is the welfare of the people of Manitoba. We all have the same objectives of wanting to ensure that the people of Manitoba enjoy the highest standard of living possible; that they have quality public services, quality education, quality health care, and so on.

Our differences, of course, are how we get there. Our policy differences are quite

legitimate, so we can disagree, as we often do and as we usually do, on the policy approaches, left and right and whatever, nevertheless, I think whoever—and I speak as one who has been here about 30 years. I have been on both sides of the House—15 years on the government side and 15 years more or less on this side—and I know what it is like to be in government. I know what it is like to have that responsibility, and it is difficult. You do your best, and you think you are making the right decisions; but, as I have said to some of my colleagues on occasion when I think back, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Sometimes when you think you are bringing in a great program or a great policy, you find that people get upset about it or it does not work the way it was initially envisaged.

There is no question that this whole episode has really grown. It has become much bigger than anyone here, I am sure, anticipated initially. Of course, once the inquiry got rolling and all the presentations were made and the reports in the media, everyone in the province, including myself, became more aware of what was involved. I did not pay that much attention initially. I did not think it was that much of an issue. It was a concern, of course. Vote rigging should not be condoned by any means, but, at the same time, I thought, well, it is a problem. I did not think that it would be expanded as it has been obviously with the Monnin inquiry and of course with all the statements that have been made to the inquiry and all the information that the inquiry uncovered.

We should be concerned that this whole episode is a kind of an episode that does undermine our democratic system. It undermines the confidence that people have in their elected representatives. It undermines the confidence that people have in the party system, and this is very sad. I become very concerned whenever I read in the papers or hear on the media, hear on the news about problems that a particular representative may have, whether it is in Quebec or Saskatchewan or wherever, the whole episode of the Saskatchewan Conservative MLAs. This is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for those individuals. It is a tragedy for the province of Manitoba, but I say it is a tragedy for all of us. It is one of those episodes that also is undermining the confidence that the public have in our system.

So if any of us err or go astray, it does reflect on all of us whether we like it or not, because people very cynically say: oh, well, those damned politicians, what do you expect? This is really sad. Public office, in my view, is among the highest callings that one can pursue. It is a public office. Holding a public office, you have the trust of the people, you have the responsibility to serve your fellow citizens. It is one that is not a selfish calling, it is a selfless calling. It is one that you give of yourself. Indeed, many members, and particularly those in the cabinet, do sacrifice, and I know of many instances, their personal lives, their family lives, because of the time and effort and energy they put into performing their duties as an administrator, as an elected official, many a family has paid the price for that.

I tell people who cynically say to me, well, what do you expect, you people? There are some people, it just boggles my mind the comments they will make about elected representatives. They are not talking about any party, they are just talking about elected people, and they make such horrible statements, I would not even want to stand up here and repeat them. They are terribly negative, terribly uninformed. I like to ask them, well, what do you suggest? If you do not like our democratic system that we have where we have people who stand for office and try to do their best and for some reason or other there is a failing or they pursue a policy you do not like, you complain about it, but what do you suggest? What was your alternative? I like to urge them to get into politics themselves. I mean, do not sit there and complain.

Many people, incidentally, who do complain are the people who have the least amount of knowledge as to how the system works, whether I am talking whether it is provincial, federal or municipal. So I say to them: get into politics yourself and do what you can, whatever party you choose. Get involved and make it even more democratic, bring more people in. It is far better than any alternative. I often say, well, if you do not like this system, you can have Hitler. You can have a dictatorial system. You can have a Franco Spain or you can have a Stalin. He did not worry about public opinion. They did not worry about all kinds of individuals and

their particular concerns. They did not have to feel that they responded. You can have a dictatorship if you do not like what we have.

There are a number of threats to our political system. There are a number of threats to what we offer the people in the system we have. Incidentally, I would say, Madam Speaker, I think the parliamentary system that we have, for all its failings, is perhaps one of the best systems we have in the world. Our neighbours to the south of course have what I would call the congressional system, where you have a division of powers between the executive and legislative branches, and you have a system whereby, although there are parties, they do not have the firm, strict caucus system that we have. Therefore it leads to a lot of difficulties, namely the opening up of individual members making them vulnerable to lobbies by various individuals and groups within the United States. I think it is really sad when you find that many American senators and representatives are influenced unduly by specific lobbies. There are all kinds of areas where lobbies are very effective. There is a gun lobby; there is a tobacco lobby; there are lobbies on oil and gas; there are lobbies on just about everything under the sun.

I am reminded, when I speak of the gun lobby, about a program I heard a few days ago where a U.S. state senator in Colorado was speaking, I think it was on *As It Happens*, and she was talking about the National Rifle Association and it, as a very powerful lobby, influencing the state legislators in Colorado where this tragedy occurred last week, where a massacre occurred in this high school. At any rate, before the Colorado State Legislature is—and I do not know whether it has now been withdrawn, but she said there is a bill, she was talking last week, before this state legislature that is going to allow anyone in the State of Colorado to carry a hidden weapon. Anyone can carry a hidden weapon, and that law will countermand and overrule any municipal or regional restriction on guns because a lot of the cities and towns in Colorado have certain restrictions. This law will countermand that, will override that, and everyone will be able, once the law is passed, to carry a hidden gun.

She was asked by the moderator, well, surely this is not going to pass, or what is going to happen? She said it is going to pass, and she said one of the reasons it is going to pass is because of the influence of the National Rifle Association, the gun lobby. Specific members, in effect, were in the pockets of the gun lobby. This is sad. You see other examples in the U.S. Senate and in the U.S. House of Representatives where the tobacco lobby has a great influence and is preventing laws to be passed that would curtail the use of tobacco in the United States. At any rate, I am saying that even though we have our difficulties with the parliamentary system, I think it is far better than what we see in the congressional system that is operating south of the border.

We have problems and deficiencies, and I think one which I would like to highlight is that there is probably too much executive control in the parliamentary system. A premier or a prime minister, let us say a prime minister, has far more control than a president of the United States. The president of the United States has to balance off his power against the Congress, both the Senate and the House of Representatives. A prime minister in this country, once he is elected with a majority, has infinitely superior powers, and we can see this with Mr. Chretien right now. What Mr. Chretien says is what goes in the Government of Canada, and I think that is sad. That is far, far too much executive control.

* (1550)

You see that in this Legislature, as well, where there is too much control in the hands of a premier, and I say that no matter what the intentions are of any premier. They may be very good intentions, but there is a lot of control in that person's hands, perhaps too much control. Maybe we should have a system of freer votes where people can vote on the basis of their conscience, on the basis of what they believe represents the interests of their particular constituents rather than being bound, as we are, so closely and strictly by caucus solidarity on just about every issue. There is room for more free votes.

But, having said that, Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that we are all concerned about

the comments made in the Monnin report, and one, of course, is the knowledge of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this whole episode. If the Premier tells me to my face that he knew not of it, I would believe him and I would take him at his word. But what is happening, and I can tell you, people on the street do not believe that he was totally ignorant of what was happening. These are people in Winnipeg, in Brandon, who just on their own bring it up and said that he knew of it and if he did not know of it he should have known of it because he was the Premier. He was the boss, he was on top, and because the people involved in the scandal were very close to the Premier.

Taras Sokolyk was campaign manager and the chief of the Premier's staff and had known the Premier for 15 years. There was Jules Benson who was a key political strategist and head of the Treasury Board, which is a civil service position. Admittedly, I recall back in the Schreyer years, we amended I guess it was The Civil Service Act to allow civil servants to be more engaged in politics, but it was never meant that the very senior people, key people, you know, would be in that. I mean if somebody was working in the Highways department on a road, or somebody was providing some technical service in the Department of Health or Agriculture or whatever, we did not feel that we should restrict that person from participating in politics, providing certain rules were followed, you know, taking leave of absence, et cetera.

But here the head of the Treasury Board is a very key civil service position. It is a very key position in the government, period. Many a person has said to me that the head of the Treasury Board is probably the most powerful person in government, even more powerful than a lot of cabinet ministers. Then there is Gordon McFarlane, the party comptroller. There was a Susan Hoplock mentioned in the report and of course involved in this, who is a top appointments official and campaign office manager. Then, of course, Allan Aitken, who is the Inter-lake campaign manager. Cubby Barrett, former PC Manitoba Fund board member and honorary lifetime PC member.

As far as Mr. Aitken and Mr. Barrett concerned me, I would consider them sort of

local people. When I first heard about this, I thought, well, this is a local thing. Something is happening in the riding, whereby they are attempting to run another so-called native party candidate to take votes away from the NDP and come up the middle sort of thing. But then when you get these other names that I mentioned—Sokolyk, Benson, McFarlane, Hoplock—this is beyond a constituency matter. This is involving the party itself, including the others who are volunteers like Arni Thorsteinson the PC Manitoba Fund chair and also head of some government boards, then Bob Kozminski, a long-time fundraiser for the PC party. So these are key people who were involved with the central party organization and in some instances with the central government.

So to that extent I was surprised, and I think this is why people are concerned, because of who was involved. It was not simply a few people at the constituency level who ran away with some enthusiasm and did what they did. Mr. Justice Monnin makes a number of quotes that I found very surprising. Page 16, he says: "In all my years on the Bench, I never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry." This is incredible. [interjection] It is a quote. Another quote: "It is disheartening indeed to realize that an oath to tell the truth means so little to some people."

Another one: "A vote-rigging plot constitutes an unconscionable debasement of the citizen's right to vote. To reduce the voting rights of individuals is a violation of our democratic system." Another quote: the basic premise of the vote-rigging plot "was that aboriginal people in these ridings had historically voted for the NDP, but the 'aboriginal vote' would be split if there were aboriginal candidates running. The attempt here at vote splitting . . . was in my opinion clearly unethical and morally reprehensible."

This is Chief Justice Monnin's statement. These are not my statements. These are statements from the report. Page 11 from his inquiry, Judge Monnin says: "Political *mores* have reached a dangerous low when one party member can actively support his party, but sees nothing objectionable in helping to finance and

organize the candidate of a second party in order to harm a third party."

Another quote: "I cannot ignore the fact that throughout this episode, especially during the investigation and at the hearings, some of these witnesses exhibited a degree of arrogance or 'I know better' attitude."

And then another quote: "A considerable amount of time, effort and money was expended by this Commission in order to confirm what should have been freely admitted at the outset." "The bank records and other documentation of the PC Party of Manitoba (Election) account of other individuals had to be obtained and examined to find out what really had occurred."

So these are comments made by the Chief Justice, and they are actually very shocking. We can go on to all kinds of details. He goes into all kinds of details. On page 18, "I believe that this plot had its origin in mid-March 1995 during a meeting held in Winnipeg in Sokolyk's office at Party headquarters. In addition to Sokolyk, Aitken, Barrett and Trachuk were present."

At any rate, he refers to Gordon McFarlane who "breached the law in causing a false statement to be filed with Elections Manitoba contrary to secs. 81 and 83(b) of the *Act*." He asks: "Why did he, Benson, as the top civil servant who was supposed to be out of the political realm, ask for the records, bank statements and cancelled cheques of a political party and proceed to mark and note these entries? He had no business being there in the first place." That is a quote from page 45.

Another quote from page 56: "Of these 350 cheques, an estimated 127 were flagged as indicating that the date, year, name of payee, and the amount payable in figures and letters were in Benson's handwriting. A similar number of coding slips or vouchers were prepared by Benson as well. It would appear from an examination of exhibit 52, that Benson went to PC campaign headquarters and prepared cheques and vouchers on least nine separate occasions."

Then on page 57, another quote: "Benson obviously did not tell the whole truth regarding the extent of his involvement in the 1995

election campaign." "I am of the view that Benson's involvement was improper, and that certain party members failed to see the clear distinction between a civil servant and a party volunteer."

At any rate, Madam Speaker, there is a lot of shocking detail in the report. I am referring to information that is public, has been published for all to read and see. He goes into detail on many members, many Conservative members, party members that were involved. He talks about cover-up, about lying, about breaking the law and obstructing justice to inquiry lawyers and investigators and including committing perjury under oath.

* (1600)

At any rate, Madam Speaker, I will not go on and on about this. Others have dealt with this at some length. I just say that I am shocked. I just in conclusion say that I am shocked. I thought originally it was not the right thing to do. I thought it was a local constituency matter. It turned out to be centrally organized and coordinated. It is a sad day for the Conservative Party. It is a sad day for Manitoba. It is a sad incident for Manitoba.

I agree with all the recommendations in the bill. It comes out of the inquiry. I have just one comment, though. He talks about a code of ethics that should be incorporated in each party's constitution, and I think this is sad. This really should not be necessary. It should not be necessary to have a code of ethics, no more than it should be necessary for each member to sign a code of ethics for her or his own conduct. It should not be necessary. People are elected, they have responsibilities, or they are appointed to party positions and they have responsibilities. We should expect the highest standards of honesty and integrity from those people. It should not be necessary for someone to put in the code of a party what is right and what is wrong. This is sad as well.

There are other recommendations. Some of them are minor. Some of them are much more significant. I would have liked to have seen one suggestion, and that is the setting up of an

independent returning officer. I had mentioned this to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) earlier. I think my experience has been that returning officers are usually defeated candidates from former elections or people who are very active for the party in power. It would be far better, it would be the right thing to do, if we could somehow or other change the act so that in future we have returning officers who are trained and who are selected in an unbiased way and provide independent service.

I can tell you from my own experience, although I survived, in the last election the person who was the returning officer in my constituency was a person I had run against about 10 years before, and it made me a little bit nervous. It made me a bit nervous. Especially, I can remember I came with about three to four times the number of signatures I had needed on my nomination papers, and I presented them in plenty of time, and the returning officer is supposed to give you a certificate, a receipt. He refused to give me the receipt then because he said he had to study them to make sure they were truly citizens and resident in Brandon East, even though by that time I had been a member for 25 years, and, I mean, you could see, obviously, these were people who live in the riding, signed three times the number, four times the number that I needed. So he gave me a temporary receipt instead of the official receipt. It made me a little bit nervous because it was a lot of work to get those names. At any rate, the election came off, but that sort of thing—and who knows what else has happened or did happen because we did not have a totally unbiased and independent returning officer. He or she can make things difficult for certain candidates.

At any rate, Madam Speaker, I put those few thoughts on the record. I believe there are others in the Chamber who would like to contribute to the debate, and I certainly look forward to their remarks. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record today in support of Bill 17. I want to begin by saying that this is a very sad time for people in this House; in fact, for people in the province.

You know, Madam Speaker, this plot, this vote-splitting plot that brought on the Monnin inquiry and the subsequent report, this plot was hatched at the highest levels of the Tory party. We are not talking about some low-level person in a constituency who got out of hand; we are talking about people as high as you can get in the Conservative Party, people who were running the campaign. So it is no surprise to me that the Conservatives say, well, you know, this is no big deal, that it was not successful. That seems to be their reason for saying that it is not serious. They say, well, it was not successful.

Well, Madam Speaker, let us take a look at Swan River, as an example. In Swan River, the successful candidate, Rosann Wowchuk from the NDP, won by only 36 votes. Now, had this candidate been a little bit more successful, the MLA would have been one Fred Betcher, PC candidate, with no credibility, and we would have been sitting here four years later trying to unscramble the omelet that these people created. So this is not a minor happening. This could very well have been successful in that riding.

The other problem or the observation I have here is what would happen if these people had gotten real serious? What would have happened if they had brought out some of that real Tory money? If Big Bob had pulled in the wheelbarrow and rolled out \$100,000 to independent candidates, they could have been successful.

As a matter of fact, when you listen to Bob Kozminski's comments in the Monnin inquiry where he says, essentially, that he would do anything that it took. So using that as a mentality that runs these people, then it is not inconceivable that this time around they might use some real money, that they might find some real candidates and that they would attempt to vote split, vote fracture, on a larger scale than they did in the past.

I guess that is probably what would have happened had we not uncovered this scandal at this point, because you see they would have done a bit of studying. They would have studied what went wrong with the previous program, and they would have decided—[interjection] That is right. As the member for Wolseley (Ms.

Friesen) says, they would have learned how to do it right. They would have theorized that Nelson Contois had received 118 votes for a \$5,000 expenditure. Well, you know, if we could just double that to \$10,000 maybe we could double the vote total to 240, and that would have been, sort of, the ground rules would have been established. So this time Taras and the rest of the high level Conservatives who ran this operation would have had kind of the basis of how to proceed here. They could have expanded it into more constituencies. They could have increased the amount of money involved, and they could have found themselves more serious candidates.

So I think that the people who brought this whole scandal to the public did the public, did the whole system a very big service to nip this thing in the bud now before it became a real serious and permanent aspect of the electoral process in this province.

An Honourable Member: Did we get thanked?

Mr. Maloway: The member for Crescentwood asks: "did we get thanked?" That is a very good question because the people in this party sitting across from us should be thankful that this was discovered at this point before it got any worse.

* (1610)

But you know, Madam Speaker, it is all part of this win-at-all-cost mentality in this government. We only have to look back at the Premier's history in politics to discover that that is basically his modus operandi, win at all costs. And, you know, so far this Premier has been—you know, he reminds me of the cat with the nine lives, the Houdini. He wins his leadership against big odds, and I think he kind of developed a formula there on how to do it. He was criticized at that time. He was criticized at that time in the leadership with doing all sorts of irregular things, but he managed to get through that process successfully. Then a couple of years later when his own party were trying to do him in, the former member for Pembina was trying to do him in and other members in the caucus, he was saved by a snowstorm that time. So he had a natural disaster to save his skin.

Well, now he has a different set of challenges, and I am not so sure that he is going to be successful this time. I talk to a lot of people in a day and I can tell you definitely the bloom is off the rose with this Leader. I do not know how they are going to conduct this next campaign, but certainly you know with PC off the signs and now the Filmon Team off the signs, my suspicion is this is going to be the Donovan Bailey campaign or it is going to be the local candidate will be on the signs. It will be the Vic Toews campaign and Filmon will disappear. But once again, that is their problem. They will have to sort out how they plan to deal with the Premier, who in fact may be not the positive force that he was in the past campaigns and in fact he may drag them down in this election.

He may in fact pay the price from the cumulative effects of all of the different activities that have gone on on his behalf over the years. I say "on his behalf" because I do not pretend to know or to be able to say definitively that he knew or he did not know about these things, but clearly what we see here is a culture that promotes that kind of activity, that rewards in fact that kind of activity. In fact, when the people that helped him in his leadership campaign, once he was successful he proceeded to reward them with jobs. Of course, there were other messes that came out of that process, so he is basically I think kind of operating on a limited time at this point and he may survive this. We do not know, time will tell.

Another area that we are going to have to take a look at sometime, what happened back in 1988, the famous Jim Walding story that is yet to be told, and who was the leader of the party when all that was happening and who did not know, did not know what was going on. [interjection] And, yes, what did Frank Clark know? That is right. So the leadership has to start at the top and what we have got here is a very loose style of leadership, a delegation of responsibility to people around and the whole concept of plausible deniability. You know, I guess back in 1973, Richard Nixon found out how far he could take that, that whole process.

A number of years ago, and I think that where we are today came about over a whole

process. You know, years ago elections were fought and it is well documented in different parts of the country where it was common for people to buy votes of people, where in the Maritimes, I believe, people would be paid in rum or paid in money, and the system was so sophisticated that they would send somebody in and he would bring the ballot out and they would mark it outside the polling station, and then they would give it to the next voter, and the next voter would go in. That way they always knew how the person had voted.

Through a series of changes over the years we thought anyway that we had brought the process into a more reputable type of environment and put some limits on what people could do. In 1958, I believe, in Manitoba we established an Independent Boundaries Commission and on the Boundaries Commission were three independent people. That Boundaries Commission, we might have some arguments about it over the years as to what we think of the boundaries. That Boundaries Commission has probably been a plus in the sense it has taken some of the suspicion out of the process, unlike B.C., where we had Gracie's finger. A number of years ago where we had—if we were in B.C., Armstrong's Point and Wolseley would end up over in Crescentwood or Fort Rouge. They cut the boundaries across rivers and stuff like that, so we can all agree that an independent boundaries commission is a good idea, served us well, worked well and perhaps there are some changes that are required there too and we could maybe look at those in the future.

But once we got into the '70s, the federal government brought in the new Elections Financing Act I believe it was '72 and, at that time, the first time we had public financing. We actually had people getting tax credits for donations to parties, and we also had a rebate system whereby if you got more than 10 or 15 percent of the vote, you got 50 percent of your expenses back, and in return for that concession we were forced to follow some rules.

This only makes sense. There were limits placed on how much parties and candidates could spend in campaigns, and there were other rules that had to be followed. The rules were

there because we were talking about public money in the system. I think that we are now at just another stage in that system where we are tightening up, where we have to tighten up the rules on how that money is spent and basically establish a trail to follow the money so we know that it is being spent properly.

You know that is an inconvenience and something that we have to live with and some more complications and bookwork that we all will have to follow now, partly because of what comes out of this scandal with the Conservatives. It is interesting to note that federally, the Reform Party who were dead set against all this public financing, once they got elected, they were very, very reluctant to send those cheques back from Elections Canada. I think some of them may have and I think some of them may have kept them at the end of the day. So that is the price we have had.

Now, in the 1980s, we developed a provincial public financing scheme similar to the federal, at which time there were tight limits brought in on what we could do with the money. Once again, we are simply making some improvements in this area. But what we are going to see, I think, and I do not know how far this is going to go because when you look at countries—and I am told, I think, it was Jamaica a number of years ago brought in a public financing scheme that was so comprehensive that people would not put up election signs unless they were paid for them. I mean that is the extreme. That practically takes you to the silly season, but that is where you could ultimately, if you followed it through its natural progression, end up with public financing. So there is this tug of war in the system over whether we should proceed further in public financing, whether we should stay where we are, or whether we should as the Reform Party suggested back off further or completely. I think at the end of the day, the Reform Party decided to sacrifice its exuberance and early philosophical approach in favour of the cash.

But, having said that, if we are going to work within a system like this, then we have to take extra care with the way we conduct our affairs, because the public should not be financing campaigns in which there are all sorts

of improprieties going on. Now the people involved in this scandal, I indicated that they went to the top of the Conservative Party. You know, Madam Speaker, it is even worse than that. We are talking about nothing short of cronyism in this party. When I saw the list of people that were involved in this scandal, it is as if these people do not trust anybody in their own party. Like it is the husband-and-wife team here. You have got Mr. Benson in a high position in the organization and signing cheques, I believe, and his wife is signing cheques. I mean talk about keeping it in the family; in fact, it is in the same bed.

An Honourable Member: It is all in the family.

* (1620)

Mr. Maloway: It is all in the family, the member for Brandon East says. Then we have Gord McFarlane being, I believe, the comptroller, and his wife is the official Tory lawyer. I mean, get a life. Can you guys not find anybody out there, other than husband-and-wife teams, to take all these top jobs? Conservative members, it does not give a very good signal to all these up and coming young Tories that are hoping to achieve positions of influence and power in the party. How can they have a good feeling for this when they see these top positions all being held by husband-and-wife teams? Not only that, but just friends of the Leader.

For example, did you know that when these people pick candidates, the qualifications seem to be, like, what the connection is directly to the Leader? They ran the Leader's, the Premier's (Mr. Filmon), barber/hairdresser against me last time. Right? They have the Premier's hunting partner in Rossmere, the Premier's dentist's wife in Fort Garry. That is another story. The official agent of the dentist's wife in Fort Garry is Gord McFarlane, whose brother is the Deputy Attorney General. And, who is the Attorney General? Gord is vetting the liquor licence applications, and who is the minister? I mean the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) just must shake his head because he has been in that party for centuries, a long time, and he has seen all of the skullduggery and no doubt participated in

some of it years ago, so he would be a good barometer as to whether things have gotten worse or better.

I know back in the old days, the Spivak-Lyon fights. There was no picnic. These people were fighting each other tooth and nail every bit as tough as now, so they certainly know how the system works. To me, this is just the same thing that has been going on for years, but I doubt that in those days, in the Lyon government and the previous Tory governments, you had this cronyism that you do now with the husband-and-wife teams running the top positions in the party. I think it just points to the paranoia of the existing Leader, of the Premier, in this province.

I could go on for quite a long time here. I have only finished a few pages. The acting Whip is suggesting that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) wants to talk about this problem. I think I will save a little bit for another day. I hope to be around after the next election, so maybe there will be another occasion where I can complete my speech on this subject.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I, like the rest of my colleagues on this side, have listened to members opposite not just in this Chamber but for the past four or five months on this issue. Allow me to put on the record very clearly that I am mad, I am embarrassed, and I am sorry that some party members participated, in Judge Monnin's words, in a stupid, wooden-headed, dumb plot, or however else he might want to describe it.

That all took place, and I am mad about it, but I take some comfort at the same time that the sheer clumsiness of it, the sheer stupidity of people who have otherwise shown themselves to be adept business people, comptrollers, accountants, demonstrates beyond all proof necessary that the Conservative Party of Manitoba does not do these kinds of things.

This conduct is alien to us, or else how could you explain how stupid, how clumsily it was done as compared to the New Democrats, who only seven months ago wanted to make sure that a former colleague of ours, of mine, return to this Chamber one Harvey Smith in the

municipal election. They only had one problem. He could not win that seat in the municipal council seat of Daniel McIntyre because, among other things, there was a popular Liberal councillor, Amaro Silva. But they knew how to do that.

In Daniel McIntyre, there is a large Filipino-Canadian community. They knew they had to split that vote, so they found one of their members in good standing who had, in fact, run for them, of Filipino background, and put him on the ballot, printed the signs for him in the same party colors, black and green, then proceeded to vote for Harvey Smith, then successfully succeeded to split the Filipino vote in Daniel McIntyre and did it successfully. And they do not even blush, because they do it all the time, and they do it successfully.

My party does not know how to do it. They demonstrated that very clearly. That, Madam Speaker, is vote rigging of the highest order and done very, very successfully. I compliment the hierarchy of the New Democrats in showing us how it should be done, if you want to engage in that kind of politics.

Now, Madam Speaker, does anybody doubt my word? Does somebody want to phone ex-Councillor Silva to see whether everything I have put on the record is not actually the way it occurred. They connived in the hierarchy of the New Democratic leadership and said they are going to get their former colleague of the Legislature back on the City Council. But they did their demographics. They looked at the constituency. They knew that Amaro Silva had proven himself to be a capable councillor and would not be defeated easily.

So then they came up with a scheme. They found a candidate to run as an independent, although the New Democrats printed their signs, the same colors even, black and green. In fact, the person who was the patsy for them, he was just paying off some past debts, because he was a prominent member of the New Democrats. He had run for the New Democrats before. Then the party callously disregarded him and instructed everybody to vote for Harvey Smith. That is how the Liberal councillor was defeated. Talk about callous use of an ethnic minority.

Now, just take away Filipino and substitute aboriginal. Talk about callous disregard for an ethnic minority. You hypocrites. Shame on you. You show us how it is done. You do it successfully. You do it successfully. That is the difference. That is the difference between you and us. The very concept of it is so alien to the Conservative Party that otherwise competent people demonstrated how clumsily, how stupidly they—[interjection]

Well, how else do you explain people who have been tremendously successful in business and other walks of life, how could they have handled it that way? And for that matter, on this issue, let me—with the sanctity of this Chamber, I want to be careful not to suggest anything of Justice Monnin, who, after all, has not experienced the political arena.

The idea of individuals contributing to more than one political party is not new. I sat in this Chamber and it always bothered me that a lot of the business community, people who have contributed to my party, to my own elections, for eight years contributed to Ed Schreyer's New Democratic government. We know that. There is, in fact, an unstated business policy among the business community, and there is nothing wrong with it. In terms of them contributing and playing a role in public affairs, there are many businesses that say that if we have \$1,000 to give for politics, they will give 60 percent to the ruling party and 40 percent to the opposition party. That has been mighty tough on the Liberal Party lately. That has been kind of tough on the Liberal Party, except that the Liberal Party has that one great advantage. They are the God-given, meant-to-rule party of Canada most years, and aspiring judges and others will always be found to run for the candidates of their party, and their coffers do get amply replenished from time to time.

* (1630)

But what is immoral, what is unethical about a Bob Kozminski or an Arni Thorsteinson handing out some money for people of other parties? What is there? I had an insurance man who has since deceased, an insurance man, an agent in Stonewall, and he would not have minded me using it. He has since deceased, but

I am going to be having my nomination meeting in Stonewall. He was the Liberal organizer. He was, in fact, a vice-president of the provincial Liberal Party, but he contributed to my campaign, at least five campaigns that I ran, while he was living. He would say: Harry, here is \$50 or here is \$100. You are doing a good job; I want you to keep on fighting. Is there something unethical about it? Is there something immoral about that? Of course there is nothing immoral.

So let us cut a little bit of the "we are holier than thou" attitude and like that. Let us at least acknowledge and put on the record that only seven or eight months ago in the last municipal election the most successful vote-rigging scheme ever perpetuated in the city of Winnipeg was carried out by the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is always a tough act to follow.

I wanted to make a few comments on Bill 17. I can understand why the members opposite are very sensitive on this matter and on this issue. Their party has left a black mark on democracy in our province. It amazes me in listening to this debate some of the defensiveness and some of the arguments for defence that they are coming up with.

When I look at what we are dealing with in Bill 17, the recommendations are trying to ensure that the kind of vote-rigging scheme that went on in the '95 election never comes to be again. I think Elections Manitoba—and their name has also been tarnished—now has to come up with recommendations that we see in Bill 17, or amendments to The Elections Act as we see in Bill 17, to try and reduce the likelihood that, if there was ever something like this again in the province of Manitoba in an election, they would be more effective in trying to deal with it.

So the amendments are there so that Elections Manitoba can more effectively get documents that would be required for an inquiry, so that they would have a longer period of time open to them. There would not be the same statute of limitations of limiting them if there

was a question to occur again similar as in the '95 elections where allegations are made and there is a reasonable possibility to believe that there has been some kind of vote rigging or bribing or buying of an election as we have seen in this case.

There are more provisions for improvements in the auditing of financial records and ensuring that records are kept because, as we have seen in the Tory party, there must have been big holes in the files because records were there, records were lost, records were found, records were missing again. So we have improvements in the requirement to ensure that records are kept.

Then there is the whole area of ethics, the recommendations now that parties are going to have to come forward with policies for ethics, it is interesting to think that any kind of code of ethics could have stopped this. If a party such as the governing Conservative Party in Manitoba is so willing to step over The Elections Act in Manitoba, what is to lead us to believe that they are going to follow a simple party code of ethics or code of conduct? So those things may be put in place.

Some of the processes I think that could also be put in place would be to ensure that parties have information about what The Elections Act are given to candidates that are seeking nomination and candidates that are indeed nominated by their party. As we have seen since then, just in this sitting in the House, maybe these things occur somewhat innocently, somewhat without malice or intent of wrong doing, but people just do not know better, and that is often what ethics are about—are you going to make sure when there is a question that you find out what is actually in the law, or are you just going to assume that there is nothing wrong, for example, using the public lists of medical clients, chiropractor clients, in order to do fundraising for a party.

We can say that members opposite and their candidates who are nominees are doing this innocently and that they may not realize what they are doing. So in that sense, having political parties put some of these things out front, make sure that people who are running for nomination have the information. If those kinds of things

are going to be in the code of conduct or the ethical codes, then that hopefully will help. But, as I said earlier, if the ruling political party in a government is willing to ignore a law that is a statutory law in a province, I would say that codes of conduct are going to be quite easy for them to ignore.

It is interesting when you become an MLA or you seek public office. We are just regular people. A lot of us have had jobs that are not very special. We are teachers, we are mechanics and machinists, we are lawyers, we are salespeople, we are farmers, we are nurses, regular people, and I do not think that we are expected to have any sort of abilities or expertise or any other higher ethical or moral standard than anyone else. Once we do become elected and we do seek office, there is an expectation by the public that we are going to rise to a standard of moral and ethical behaviour that is going to be an example. That is what is so disconcerting about this because when you talk to people, it is not just the fact that this vote-rigging scandal occurred, but it is the extent to try and cover it up. So at least come forward, and when there is a mistake to admit that, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has said, it is wrong-headed, it is stupid, it is clumsy. If that had been done at the beginning, a lot of expense and a lot of problems would have been dealt with. The question I have when I look at this is how could something like this in a provincial party with a long history of the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba, how could it go this far?

And you would have to wonder where did it first come from? In whose mind, in which group of people was this first concocted, or imagined or envisioned?

An Honourable Member: Allan Aitken

Ms. Cerilli: The minister for Lakeside can put that on the record, if he likes. When it comes to be known that it is not just a small minority group in a constituency, when it does go right to the top of the ruling party in power in a provincial government, that is also when it raises serious concerns. When the extent has been gone to to try and hide it and to shift the responsibility, when we look at the people who have had their careers ruined, who have had their

names dragged through the mud on this, some of them must be sitting back know and scratching their heads, because when we come into the House every day, who is still here? The man in charge, the Premier (Mr. Filmon). The one who should be ultimately responsible has had everyone around him fall in order that he can still remain the head of the government and the head of his party. I am sure that that point is not being lost on many of the rank-and-file members of the Conservative Party.

The other thing that I want to mention that I think is really deplorable—and I listened to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) speak on the bill and a number of the adjectives that he used, of the distaste, the fact that a lot of us were not even planning on speaking on this bill because a lot of us realized that this is making people more and more cynical about politics all the time.

* (1640)

But I want to mention the fact that this was an attempt to take advantage of aboriginal people, who are often feeling very disenfranchised in the electoral system as it is—the demonstrations that go on across the province by aboriginal people who are trying to have some type of voice and influence, the political decision making that goes on, yet again in the Chamber today we heard the fact that on another proposal on resource extraction, that aboriginal people are not at the table. They are not being consulted. So it speaks to the attitude by the governing party to aboriginal people, and do not forget it was the Minister of Northern Affairs who at one time said: people in the North and aboriginal communities, they do not vote right. So to think that this was an attempt to manipulate aboriginal people, I think that is the other thing that is really galling and really disturbing and distasteful about this.

When people read about this type of thing in the paper and the media, I think it makes it more difficult for any party to try and recruit volunteers to take on those important positions, like being an official agent for a constituency campaign, when they look at the fact that people surrounding the Premier, some of whom are in volunteer positions in their party, have had to

have their names disputed, and then the Premier, the one who should be responsible, is left, and I think that he may feel, the Premier may feel that he has gotten away with this.

I have a number of other issues, how, as members on our side of the House have also talked about, this is part of a trend, that it is not an isolated incident. But, Madam Speaker, I will just close by saying that in this day and age I think that we have gotten away from election campaigns and politics being about trying to have debate with dignity and about influencing people to cast their ballot based on a persuasive argument and to vote for policies that are going to be in the best interests of all people. I hope that with these new amendments, that the next election, the coming election in 1999, is going to be a fair election, and it is going to be fought on the basis of policy. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I rise to close debate on Bill 17. I just want to put on the record that the allegations of the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) are absolutely ridiculous and untrue. I would challenge him to repeat them outside the Chamber which I think would be highly unlikely, and with those few remarks we are going to pass Bill 17 and, in fact, give it Royal Assent. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 17. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered. The Lieutenant Governor will be arriving shortly to give Royal Assent to the bill.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): I look to my colleagues opposite. Do they want a few minutes to allow for the Lieutenant Governor to arrive, or would they like to proceed into Private Members? He should be available in about three or four minutes, given the time that he indicated. So we may just wait his arrival then, Madam Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Recess.

Madam Speaker: Is there agreement? [agreed]

The House recessed at 4:45 p.m.

—————
After Recess

The House resumed at 4:49 p.m.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

His Honour Peter Liba, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour in the following words:

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly, at its present session, passed a bill, which in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which bill I respectfully request Your Honour's assent:

Bill 17—The Elections Amendment and Elections Finances Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des campagnes électorales.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I look to the opposition benches if there is a will to call it six o'clock.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Praznik: No. Then, Madam Speaker, is there a will to call it five o'clock for private members' hour?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? [agreed]

The hour being 5 p.m., private members' hour.

* (1650)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—School Taxes

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I move, seconded by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale),

"WHEREAS in 1988, the Provincial Government was paying 76 percent of the total cost of education—the rest being the special levy or school tax; and

"WHEREAS in 1998, the Provincial Government was contributing only 67 percent of the total public education bill; and

"WHEREAS school divisions have been forced to reduce classroom opportunities and increase school taxes to backfill the cuts; and

"WHEREAS in the lead up to the 1990 election, the Premier told Manitobans that it would be the goal of his Government to increase the Provincial Government's contribution to 80 percent; and

"WHEREAS as a result of these cuts, school taxes all across the province have been escalating, causing a great burden on Manitoba families; and

"WHEREAS residents of communities like Selkirk, Neepawa and Brandon have averaged double digit increases in the last two years; and

"WHEREAS early in its mandate, the Provincial Government reduced the property tax credit from \$325 to \$250, which translated into a \$75 property tax increase; and

"WHEREAS according to the Provincial Auditor, there is a \$565 million 'Fiscal Stabilization Fund' which has been built up in part because education has been underfunded.

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier to take responsibility for this unnecessary financial burden on Manitoba families; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Minister of Education to consider providing adequate and stable funding to public education."

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, one of the things that I have noticed with this government is a very unaccountable way in which it talks about its funding levels to priorities such as education and to health care and to some others. One of the examples that I want to put forth is the way one Education minister after the next, on behalf of this government, misuses percentages to try to make their funding levels look bigger than what they are. They use percentages to try to cover the fact that they are actually putting fewer dollars into education each and every year that this government has been in power.

The current Education minister (Mr. McCrae) falls into this trap, unfortunately, as well. It was just last week, again, I heard this minister refer to the percentage of the budget that is spent on education. Madam Speaker, a percent is a relative term. They are able to talk about a percent increase in the education part of their budget, because the rest of their budget has been hacked and slashed. The total budget is smaller, and even though the amount of money being put into education is smaller too, it only seems as if it takes up a larger percent of the budget. It does not mean there is an increase of 19 or 20 or 21 percent, like the Education minister likes to say. It means that part of the budget having to be spent on education rises relative to what they have cut in agriculture and natural resources and environment and highways and health care and all the rest. It does not have anything to do with anything else other than wanting to cover up the cuts that this government have foisted upon the people of Manitoba. It is a dishonest way of doing things.

Let us take a look at some figures that are not based on phoney percentages like the

Education minister (Mr. McCrae) likes to talk about. Let us talk about real dollars for real students in real classrooms being taught by real teachers. This government has cut over \$482 per pupil in purchasing power from our public schools. That is not a phoney percentage like the minister tries to use; that is an actual amount of money; that is \$482 less for every pupil in Manitoba's public schools.

Since 1993-94, provincial revenues have increased by a billion dollars per year. Of course, whether it is the current Finance minister or the previous Finance minister, we have trouble following all the little moves that they make to try to hide some of the surplus that they have been seeing every year because they cannot have the people of Manitoba think that they are running a surplus every year, huge surpluses, and still reducing funding to education, which is what they are doing. So what we have seen happen is over the course of 10 years, the amount of school division tax collected in 1988 being \$208 million, in 1998 rising to \$377 million. It makes sense that as this government backs out of its commitments to fund public schools, somebody has to pick up that slack. Who would that be? Well, in a lot of cases, in most cases, it has to be the local school division, so they have to raise taxes or cut programs to make up for this government's cutting.

Madam Speaker, if you take a look at the increases that school divisions in our province have had to backfill for the cuts of this government, that would translate, that would be equivalent to an 8-point increase in provincial income tax. Now, this is the government who talks about, who bragged last year in the budget of reducing the income tax from 52 percent of the federal level to 50 percent.

Let us look at the whole picture. The backfill that school divisions have to do to make up for this government's cuts relates to an 8-point increase in Manitoba's income tax rate. Well, Madam Speaker, in the city of Winnipeg, the average home has seen an increase of over 55 percent in school division taxes since 1990, a 55 percent increase. That represents the number of increases that local school divisions have had to approve in order to backfill the cuts that this government has made to public education.

It is not just happening in the city of Winnipeg. Those of us living in rural Manitoba have been faced with the same kind of lack of support for public schools from this government as they see here in our capital city. For example, Brandon School Division taxes jumped 14 percent in 1998. The Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) will know that. The next year, this year, they increased by 9 percent. That means that this Minister of Education, the member for Brandon West, and his colleague before him, have reduced the real dollars to schools in Brandon School Division, and they have been forcing the local Brandon School Division to take one of two courses: one, cut in order that you do not have to raise taxes; or two, raise the taxes yourself.

No doubt in the next provincial election, there will be signs around Brandon saying re-elect the Filmon team because we have not raised taxes. Madam Speaker, under that sign, I would suggest that the member seeking re-election in Brandon West put up another sign straightening out the false claim that they have not raised taxes. The sign underneath should say we got the school division to raise taxes for us because that is what is happening.

It is not just Brandon. Neepawa, part of Beautiful Plains School Division, Neepawa saw an 8-percent increase this year, 8 percent on top of 11 percent the year before, 20 percent over two years because this government cut the funding for public schools. Not a phoney percentage like the minister talks about, these are real dollars being taken out of our public schools. That is not being committed to an investment in education. That is simply offloading your problems onto somebody else, so that you can be re-elected in the next election. People are seeing through this, Madam Speaker. Thompson residents saw their bill increase by 10 percent in '98 and 4 percent this year in 1999.

*(1700)

Madam Speaker, I had mentioned already that in 1988 school division taxes amounted to \$208 million and that in 1998 they amounted to \$377 million. That represents \$169 million, and that is an increase that this government has offloaded over its course of power in Manitoba,

not just the current minister, but it has been a policy of this government. One Education minister after the next has done the same thing to taxpayers in this province. That represents a 7.7 point increase in income tax. Of course, to make up that difference, school divisions have had to raise their levies.

As well, Madam Speaker, this is the same government that reduced the property tax credit. They did that back in 1993. That is a tax increase. You can cut it up any way you like; you can put whatever fancy rationale around it, but it is a tax increase. You increased the tax by \$75 by decreasing the tax credit from \$325 to \$250. You can cut it and slice it any way you like; you raised taxes.

Madam Speaker, there are several ways that school divisions and schools have had to cope with this government's lack of commitment to public education. On the one hand, school divisions are forced with either cutting programs, laying off teachers, laying off teachers' aides, not ordering textbooks that are needed, cancelling computer orders, or they have to raise their own taxes. In some divisions, they have done that. Most divisions have done a combination of the two, but they are getting to the point now where they cannot cut any further and they know that. So they have had to turn to the local taxpayer on behalf of this government.

There is another way that this is playing out, Madam Speaker, in our schools. More and more of our students are being asked to pay for the things that are absolutely necessary for learning to take place in classrooms. More students are selling chocolate bars than I can ever remember, and I have been involved in education for awhile. More students are organizing yard sales. Students and teachers and parent advisory councils are having to organize garage sales. They are doing walkathons. They are doing all sorts of fundraisers, car washes to pay for textbooks. You know, if this government doubts what I am saying, go check it out. Talk to the parent advisory councils, and they will tell you that they have gone from parent advisory councils that were advising on education and the needs of the students to simply being asked to contribute to their children's education by fundraising.

You know, the other day in Question Period the government tried to make a big deal, that, oh, it has always happened this way; there has always been fundraising at the school level; students have always been asked to go whether it was a Liberal government or an NDP government or a Conservative government. Well, that is just not right, Madam Speaker.

I think back to when I was in high school. The Swan Valley School band was taking a trip to Europe. The band was over there for a good part of the summer in 1977, and they raised money for that. They raised money in a variety of different ways, raffles, you name it. It was an expensive trip. The difference between then and now is that in 1977 students were raising money to go to Europe to play their instruments in a band and today they are raising money to buy textbooks to read about Europe. That is the difference.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) can ignore it all he likes. He can put all kinds of excuses around this if he wants. The cold, hard facts are that in 1977 they were raising money to go to Europe. In 1999 they are raising money to read about Europe because now—

An Honourable Member: Get on the Internet.

Mr. Struthers: The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed) just thinks that everybody in the province can automatically get on the Internet. That is a total lack of knowledge of what is going on out there in rural Manitoba. The minister should go to Pelican Rapids or the minister should go to Valley River First Nation. The minister should go to many of my constituents in Dauphin and tell them that attitude that he just used now. It tells me that this government supports an inaccessible, out-of-date, old-fashioned view of education.

Madam Speaker, they are out of touch, and I think the government should make this a high priority going into the next election campaign and let the people of Manitoba decide whether or not they enjoying backfilling through their property taxes the cuts of this government to public schools.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am sure you can imagine how delighted I was that the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) should raise this matter in the way that he has because he is sitting beside the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), whom I have on record as telling us that people are not taxed to the limit in this province and there is lots of room to tax people more. The honourable member for Crescentwood will not take issue with that because he knows darn well that is his position and has been for some time.

That is why I am pleased because this debate this afternoon sets out some very defining matters that show the clear differentiation that people can make between my honourable colleagues opposite and the colleagues that I am so pleased to work with on this side of the House. I and my government are clearly and totally committed to the education of our children. We have demonstrated that for 11 years on this side of the House. Each of our budgets demonstrates that education continues to be the No. 2 spending priority of government, following only Health department spending, so with that in mind I am interested to hear the honourable member for Dauphin because he tears to shreds the platform, the key election platform policy being vaunted these days by the New Democrats.

I say "these days" because it is a late conversion to that concept that we are going to keep the things that Filmon got right. All of a sudden, after all these years of opposing balanced budgets, that is one of the things they have zeroed in on. They are going to have a little trouble with this because the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) today, the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) daily and other honourable members on the opposition side of this House demand more spending from government.

Now what is really interesting about it is that their demands do not add up, their rhetoric does not add up to what is achievable. They know it, and the more this is talked about, the louder the heckling becomes because they are very sensitive about this. This is a very, very serious

debate going on within the back rooms of the New Democratic Party. I wish I had my clippings today, because we know that Errol Black from Brandon is a known New Democrat and he writes often. He is a councillor and a contributing and good councillor in the City of Brandon, but he does not share the same point of view as I do on a number of issues. We both know that and respect that. He writes often in the Brandon Sun, and more recently he has been quoted more often because he is a member of our City Council. But Errol Black says very clearly—balanced budgets, it is not right for Manitoba. We should not be trying to buy down our debt, because we are trying to do it too fast and this takes away—the same thing the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) said just a couple of years ago—the flexibility that governments need to spend money.

They are not today's New Democrats. They are the same old same old, Madam Speaker, and this is what is embarrassing to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) who wants to be believed. We all want to be believed, but the Leader of the Opposition especially wants to be believed because he wants after several attempts and several failures to occupy this side of the House, so he is going to tell the people whatever he thinks they want to hear.

Now, what is interesting here is that—and I am listening with great respect to the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), but he is going to talk today about how we should be spending more money, and he has done so in education. Okay, fair ball. The thing is that tomorrow if there is a debate on health, he is going to tell us about all the money we should be spending on health. The next day if there is a debate on agriculture, he is going to say we are not spending anywhere near enough money on agriculture and we should be spending more money on agriculture. Then as many days as there are, he is going to have a different topic. The honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) knows this. I can see it in her face and in her eyes. She knows what I am talking about.

* (1710)

Oh, let us not forget highways, because there is an area where a lot of spending could well be done. Everybody knows that, just like I know that more spending could happen in all these other areas. But are we spending it effectively is a whole other question. But on day four, the honourable member for Dauphin, who often speaks about highways—as do other colleagues of his on that side—he would say there should be millions, millions, millions more spent on highways.

Nobody has to be accountable, Madam Speaker, except the honourable members on this side of the House. The trouble with honourable members opposite is they do not want accountability. Why? Because they cannot handle the truth. They cannot handle the truth about their own policy about balanced budgets. This is going to be a very major deciding issue for the people of Manitoba, and they are going to look at the record of 11 years of the Filmon administration, compare it to the rhetoric of honourable members opposite, and they are going to be left with the irresistible, inescapable conclusion that you simply cannot believe a New Democrat.

The member for Concordia, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), does not like this because he accuses me of refighting old elections against Howard Pawley, but he forgets who sat right at the same table with Howard Pawley in those days when they were increasing income taxes. Remember 1987? I do, very well. [interjection] Who was the godfather of the surtax, the 2 percent surtax on our income tax form? Well, that was Eugene Kostyra, Dr. Debt we used to call him. Who were the godparents of the payroll tax in this province? Who is it that increased the corporate capital tax, the gasoline tax? Who was it, Madam Speaker? Who speaks out of one side of their mouth about how they would like to save and enhance the railroading industry in this province, but who is it brought in a locomotive fuel tax or increased the locomotive fuel tax? Sorry about that, Darryl, but that needed to be said.

An Honourable Member: I was not here then.

Mr. McCrae: That is right. He was not here then. Oh, but those were glorious days, were

they not, because we had an NDP government. Workers Compensation—[interjection] You know, they even taxed the life-giving water that we need to sustain life. I shiver when I think about what they might have been thinking about taxing next. They do not like it when I talk; in fact, it has been said of the honourable members opposite, they never met a tax they did not like and never met a tax they did not hike when they had an opportunity.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Dauphin, I do not know where he is coming from. He does not like us to refer to percentages, because it does not make his argument very well. The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) is a master at these things. The honourable member for Dauphin should listen to him. He knows how to manipulate figures and come to the wrong conclusions and make them sound, you know, maybe okay.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Dauphin hates that we use percentages to talk about our commitment to education. How else do you want to demonstrate a commitment? You see, you can take the pie and the way you divide up that pie will demonstrate more clearly than anything else where your commitments are. But you know what we know about honourable members opposite, never mind what they are promising about balanced budgets, they just want to make the pie bigger. Manitobans do not want the pie bigger, they want the pie smaller; they want their government to be effective and efficient with their dollars. But while we are doing that, Manitobans are watching us closely, and that is fair, that is the way it should be, because we believe in accountability.

If you look at 19.3 percent of our spending being on education and compare that with the 17.7 percent left to us by the previous government, pretty easy to show where the commitment is, given the size of the pie. The size of the pie is a whole other debate, but the honourable member does not want to get into that debate. He just wants to say, well, you are not dividing it up right, but he will say that when we are talking about education. Then we will go to the health debate, but you are not dividing the pie up right. You see, by the time it comes all

the way around—pies are generally round—that round pie, there ain't nothing left. It does not add up, does it? Do the math, Madam Speaker, do the math.

In terms of commitment, I would like to talk about commitment as opposed to the approach used by the member for Dauphin. If it works for him, fine, but the point is it is not correct because it does not—

An Honourable Member: The only reason they oppose standards is that they do not want the people to know how to add up the figures.

Mr. McCrae: Right. My honourable colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), is absolutely right. The New Democrats simply do not want the people to know the truth, and this is somewhat disturbing to me because I am interested in laying it all out. Warts and all. There is nobody here who is going to say that perfection is not an elusive thing. I certainly am ready to suggest that perfection has eluded me all my life, and I am looking at the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) over there, and maybe he can help me somehow but I doubt it. [interjection] Through a glass darkly, through a glass darkly.

That being said, given the realities of life at a time when, Madam Speaker, we have experienced the second worst recession in the history of this century, at a time when we have experienced the flood of the century, at a time when we have experienced forest fires, conflagration of the like, no one can remember in this province, at a time when the federal partner in health and education has virtually walked away from the table leaving Manitoba taxpayers holding the bag, at a time when we are left as a result of the profligacy of the previous government paying out over half a billion dollars every year in debt financing charges, I say shame on honourable members opposite.

I would love to have more than \$500 million more to deal with an education system, and I can tell you so would all of my colleagues. That would make life too easy for us in public life, however. No matter how many dollars are available to us, the people of this province expect us to be responsible with their hard-

earned dollars. I do not get that message every day in this House from honourable members opposite. I get an entirely different message from honourable members opposite day in and day out, and it does not add up.

In my humble opinion, I know they never want to take any advice from me, but maybe they should not have been so quick to move to adherence to balancing budgets and living within our means as a people. Maybe they should not have done that because they simply are not committed to it, and that shows day in and day out. They are not committed to that; they have resorted to gimmickry which the people of Manitoba quite simply are too smart for honourable members opposite.

So I say I will compare our 19.3 percent commitment to education with the 17.7 percent commitment to education of the New Democrats any day of the week. I would like to point out that the over \$500 million being spent annually on debt occasioned by honourable members opposite, if you add that up over 11 years, you are looking at something in the neighbourhood of \$6 billion we could have had at our disposal these last years.

An Honourable Member: I was not here then.

Mr. McCrae: I know the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) was not here for that so I do not hold him personally responsible, but he supports a party that goes in for that sort of thing, Madam Speaker, and I do not.

Education support levy on farmland. Just thought I would mention that the people in Manitoba are carrying around \$160 million as a result of the government backing away from that tax. I recognize there is a challenge for school divisions. I recognize there is a challenge for taxpayers at the municipal level and taxpayers at the provincial level and taxpayers at the federal level. They are all the same taxpayers after all, and many of them are the fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers of the children we all love very dearly, so I am quite happy to accept the comments of the honourable member.

* (1720)

I am not happy to accept his resolution because I simply do not agree with it, and I cannot. The best examination I can make of the way he makes his case simply does not add up, and you do not have to be very smart, Madam Speaker, to notice. Thank you very much.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I want to comment on the Minister of Education's (Mr. McCrae) inability to understand his own government's memos and those pieces of arithmetic he talks about that come from the Federal-Provincial Relations branch.

I want to start by talking about a little memo that was issued pursuant to a report in the Free Press after the budget in the spring of 1993 when a Free Press reporter apparently got some numbers wrong. That upset the Minister of Finance something terrible so he had his Federal-Provincial Relations folks recalculate the cost of the 1993-94 budget for an average taxpayer and they put together a memo. I do not know how it happened, but we just seem to have a copy of that memo.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sale: No, I have no idea how it happened because it arrived before my time here, you see. At that point, I was working in the private sector as a successful consultant running a small business. So I think they probably sent it to us in error but, of course, I was not here at that point having not been elected until April '95.

Now, what does this memo show? The civil servants, who are always ever helpful to the Minister of Finance and did not want him to be embarrassed by wrong information in the Free Press, very carefully showed what the tax increases in the 1993-94 budget were all about. Those members will perhaps have to cast their memories back a bit. They broadened the sales tax, taxed things like baby bottle nipples, stuff like that. Things that, you know, one would sort of wonder what the point was.

An Honourable Member: Extras.

Mr. Sale: The little extras, yes, like baby bottles and stuff, nonessentials. They also, of

course, cut the property tax credit by \$75 million—\$75 rather, \$53 million. The civil servants, ever helpful, calculated the total impact of those tax increases. The Filmon government tax increases in 1993-94, \$114 million, not, you know, \$3 million or \$4 million—\$114 million. They said, helpfully, I think, they said, now, look, we have achieved this by broadening the sales tax base; we have achieved it by cutting the property tax credits; we made some other incidental changes. They said, you know, to achieve this change by other means would, for example, require, and then they calculated two figures. One figure was how much you would have to raise your income tax by to raise this amount of taxes. The other was how much you would have to raise your sales tax by. They said, in two little lines right at the bottom of this memo, to raise \$114 million on income tax would require an increase of 5.7 points of personal income tax. So the Filmon government that never raised taxes in 1993-94 alone raised taxes by the equivalent of 5.7 points of personal income tax. They said, oh, the other way you could do it would be to raise the sales tax by a little over one point, from 7 to 8.2.

Now, that was just 1993-94, Madam Speaker. In 1993-94 the Filmon government raised its taxes by the equivalent of 5.7 points of personal income tax. Now they were not satisfied with that little bit of increase. They offloaded—[interjection] No, no, no, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) just does not get it. These are not figures from the NDP. These are figures from the Federal-Provincial Relations and Research branch of the Department of Finance. Not our figures, your figures.

An Honourable Member: He was sneaking the brown envelopes under the door for you.

Mr. Sale: I do not know who slipped the brown envelope under the door, Harry. I have no idea. It could have been Vic. Vic was working as a civil servant then. Who knows? Were you over at Great Waste of Life by then? Who knows?

Well, you see, they were not satisfied with just that increase of 5.7 points of personal income tax. They went on to cut funding to school divisions from \$732 million in 1992-93 to \$709 million this year. Real dollars—22 million

of them—cut out of our kids' classrooms, out of our kids' libraries, out of our kids' Internet connections, out of special needs students. Twenty-two million real dollars cut by your government in the last seven years.

During that same period of time, the special levy went up by about \$160 million. Now our research staff, who are, I think, very capable people, took that \$160 million and said: How much would that be in personal income tax? Well, the government tells us that one income tax point is worth about \$23 million. They did the math, and they came up with about 7.7 points of personal income tax, the equivalent of that special levy increase. Now remember in '93-94 they have already increased by the equivalent of 5.7; here is another 7.7. You know, we are kind of over the 12 point mark now. This is the government that did not raise taxes, right? Did not raise taxes. They are already at the equivalent of 12 points on personal income tax., and during their entire time of office they claim that have cut personal income tax. They have. They have reduced the rate by four points, but they have increased other taxes by the equivalent of three times their tax reductions—three times.

So this government is now taking in a billion dollars more in revenue than they were about nine or 10 years ago. They are taking in \$500 million more in personal income tax than they were at the beginning of their time in office. They have increased taxes by the equivalent of more than 12 points of personal income tax and cut it by four. So the net increase is eight points personal income tax. This is the government that wants to have a referendum on tax increases, and it is so dishonest, Madam Speaker, that it achieves its tax increases by burying them in the base of the sales tax, by offloading onto municipalities, by offloading onto school divisions.

The Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) is the minister of a government that has cut funding to schools by \$22 million since 1992-93, actual real dollars,, FRAME report, read it. So the motion of my honourable friend to condemn what is happening in education finance—the minister shakes his head. The minister knows that the FRAME report shows that \$22 million less is going into classrooms today than it was in

1992-93. He knows that is the truth, and it is very embarrassing, so he tries to hide it by concocting percentage figures to show increases.

You know, if he were a little more forthright with the truth, he would tell Manitobans that those increases have come—

Point of Order

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I do not know if you caught it, but the honourable member made a reference to my not being forthcoming or forthright with—

An Honourable Member: He said if you were a little more forthcoming with the truth—

Mr. McCrae: Yes, and I have to say I resent that quite a bit. The fact is that Public Accounts demonstrate very clearly, no matter which way you want to argue the point, how much has been made available for the different appropriations. I am not hiding anything, nor would I try. The honourable member knows that overall expenditures of government on a per capita basis in Manitoba are down from what it was in the NDP days. We know that. I accept that; in fact, I am quite proud of that. But I do not think the honourable member meant to offend, and I would appreciate it if he would withdraw that statement.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood, on the same point of order.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the last thing I would want to do would be to offend the poor Minister of Education, but I think that using a conditional "if he would be more forthcoming with the truth" is hardly a breach of the rules of the House. I do not think that it is a point of order. I think he wanted to debate the facts and that is what he started to do. But I certainly would not want to hurt his feelings.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Education and Training, I will indeed take the matter under advisement to research the Hansard transcript and report back to the Chamber. I would advise all members to use caution with the word "truth" when addressing another

member in the Chamber. I raised the caution earlier today. All members in this Chamber are honourable members, so I would suggest that members exercise due caution in the choice of their words.

* * *

Mr. Sale: Well, Madam Speaker, what I was hoping the minister would be willing to do would be to bring forward the actual reports of his own department that are in fact audited and part of the public record that show that the only increases in funding to Education have come because he is paying out a bunch more money for teachers' pensions, he is paying out a bunch more money for his Assessment branch, and he is paying out perhaps a little bit more money, not very much, in capital. But in terms of any support to schools, the actual place where the rubber hits the road for our kids, he is paying out less money.

*(1730)

If he were forthright with Manitobans, he would tell them that and explain why it was appropriate for his government to give less money today to schools than it did in 1993. That is the puzzle that most Manitobans have. They see their property taxes going up sharply. They see funding to their schools going down, and they wonder why this government tells them the reverse. The government tells them they have not increased taxes. People are not stupid. They know that taxes have gone up. The government tells them there is more money coming to their schools. People are not stupid. They can read the Frame reports. They know that is not true. So they wonder why their government is not more honest and forthright with them about the real facts. The facts are indisputable, as the Frame report makes them. So I would just invite the minister to share the real facts with people and to explain what priority it is that has caused his government to reduce its funding to kids at the classroom level.

What is the priority here? The priority seems to be to spend more money on bureaucracy, to force people to raise money selling chocolates, and to force up school taxes so that you can claim somehow that you are

more prudent with your finances. Manitobans know differently. They know that you have increased taxes by the equivalent of 12 points plus of income tax. You have cut them by four points. Your net increase is more than eight points of personal income tax. Our taxes are much higher today than they were, and it was because your government raised them.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this excellent resolution.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): It is my privilege to be able to put a few comments on the record with regard to this resolution. Looking at the resolution, Madam Speaker, just the WHEREASes, the last two WHEREASes, as far as the honourable member has presented to us, that:

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier to take responsibility for this unnecessary financial burden on Manitoba families; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Minister of Education to consider providing adequate and stable funding to public education."

Madam Speaker, I could say that that has already been achieved. The member certainly knows very well that that has been achieved when we consider the amount of money that has been put into the Education budget over the last 11 years.

It is really interesting when I look at the comments that are coming across from the other side there. We are really in a situation here where we are manipulating and working and trying to massage and manipulate the numbers and twisting and turning, and it is really interesting how the members across the way even almost appear to have convinced themselves that they are actually making some sense.

It is also interesting, Madam Speaker, where we have the two reverends, who represent their various constituencies over there, talk about truth, and I really understand. I have difficulty in coming to grips with this and actually

appreciating where they are coming from. I am a God-loving Christian individual, and I would expect that they would demonstrate and show the way, but the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), just less than an hour ago, challenged our dean of the House that the information that he put on with complete accuracy, stood up, without any knowledge or anything like that, and said it was completely false.

I challenge people who are in positions like that, who are representing the divinity of this Legislature, people who stand in places and hold themselves out. I am troubled by that. We know that there are many things that are going on and have gone on, and I have chosen not to bring them to the Chamber, but we have heard nothing other than what they have put on the record for the last two weeks in chastising people and this government.

On this particular resolution, there is no basis for what they are offering in terms of suggestions. Education is a key component and a key priority of this government, and the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) has put truthful and honest facts on the record here. The people of Manitoba recognize that.

I represent a constituency in an area that has closed 15 schools. The number of children in our education today has severely dropped in St. James-Assiniboia School Division alone. There was a time when they were building schools and we had a population in the school system of something like 22,000, 23,000 children. Today, we have somewhere in the area of around 9,000. That is more than a 50-percent drop in enrollment.

Still we, as a government, have put more money into the education system, far more than what the NDP did, and what they are advocating in saying that they were the saviours and they will serve the education system of this province, well, Madam Speaker, I think the people know too well that will not happen.

Despite the federal cuts in funding, we have maintained one of the finest education systems in the country, and we will compare that to any province across the country. The honourable

member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) comes to this Legislature, his background is in the education system, he should know better. There is more to this representation in this Legislature than criticizing, but I sit and listen day after day after day and that is all I get. That is the only message. They twist and they do all these things to the point that people get confused. The public gets confused. They are saying, well, where are they coming from? That is not what we need. That is not what we talk about in good representation.

In the last provincial budget, almost 19.3 percent of funding was devoted to education, totalling \$779 million. This is an increase of over \$147 million, and the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), he talks about cuts. Where is the cut? Is this some more of their manoeuvring and twisting and distorting numbers? That is what I interpret from their comments and their remarks.

Our government has also announced that this year's public school funding levels will be increased by at least 2 percent in the next budget. I would expect that the honourable members across the way would get up and applaud that. When we look at the aspect of the numbers in terms of enrollment in the province of Manitoba, they have shrunk considerably. Yet we continue to put more money in. Now, where is this extra money going? They talk about funding in Question Periods over the last few weeks, saying that parents are having to go out and raise funds to buy textbooks. Well, then, we find out a few days later that that is absolutely false. Where are they coming from, Madam Speaker?

As one of the key priorities of this government, support for education has continued to increase; 1999-2000 is the second year in a row that funding for education has increased overall by more than 2 percent and represents an increase of \$34.4 million. These increases can be directly related to our government's responsible balancing of the budget.

That is an interesting aspect now in terms of their playing with the numbers again, Madam Speaker. They are starting to say that they support balanced budgets, yet they voted every

time that we presented a budget to this Legislature—are they all of a sudden going to say now that they are going to vote in favour of this budget that is going to be brought to this Chamber tomorrow? Well, we will just have to wait and see, because if what they are saying in this resolution has any accuracy and credibility at all, then they should be voting for an increase of 2 percent to the education budget.

Manitoba has a strong and adequately funded education system, Madam Speaker. I think over the last 11 years that has been shown. I think that we can attest to that. Our province boasts one of the lowest pupil-teacher ratios in the country—I think it is about 17, I believe, is the actual number per classroom, is the average, as well as the fourth highest per pupil expenditure in elementary and secondary schools.

* (1740)

You know, maybe the honourable members should go back into the classroom and start to really talk to the people who are there and listen to what these people are saying. I spent a good part of the time in elementary schools over the last little while. I love to read and things like that. The teachers are talking. They are not anywhere near what these people are saying over there. You know, I think all they are interested in, they are more interested in being in government than they are about bringing truth to the Legislature and bringing in responsible information that could assist and give this government—and help in the direction of this government.

When compared in terms of a percentage of the gross domestic product per capita, Manitoba ranks third in per pupil expenditures. These statistics show that the quality of education in Manitoba remains among the highest levels in Canada. I do not think I can say that enough because I think I would have to say it maybe six or seven times in order for people to understand that. That is what they say anyway. Maybe if I were to repeat that six or seven times as they do in fidgeting the numbers that they play with to convince themselves, maybe they could be convinced if I was to tell them that, yes,

Manitoba has one of the best education systems in the country compared to other provinces, Madam Speaker.

This government has implemented a number of key components to improve the quality of education in this province. The opposition knows it, this government knows it, and the people in Manitoba know it as well. I look at the honourable members across the way, and they have smiles on their faces. They know that this is true, but what comes out of their mouths is different. It is different in their hearts. The only thing is that too often they do not want to admit it, for whatever reason. I can respect that— [interjection] Yes, the honourable members do have hearts over there. I will be the first one to attest to that, Madam Speaker.

Our vision for education renewal is very clear. Manitoba students in an environment of inclusion, care, support, safety and rigor will be among the best educated in Canada. When we talk about support and safety in our schools, it brings to mind the date just a couple of weeks ago in Colorado, and now I hear of another situation in Taber, Alberta, where there were shootings. This is a very serious thing to have to deal with. The people in the education system certainly need our support as a government, and, Madam Speaker, we have been doing that by putting more money into this because this is what they are saying to us. We look to the education administrators and the people who have an understanding and are the professionals in that portfolio. They are giving us good advice, and we are taking that advice. We are not listening to what the NDP through this resolution is saying because they have taken us down that road before, and we are just now being able to dig ourselves out of this hole.

So the people in Manitoba recognize that this government is on the right track with our education system, and lo and behold, it will be a doomsday in Manitoba if the NDP have any say in what is going to happen over the next 10, 15 years with the education system, and this resolution demonstrates their integrity in this education portfolio.

Madam Speaker, with those words, I understand that my time has pretty much

expired. With that information on the record, I want to offer my congratulations to the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) and this government in terms of the vision and the foresight and the attention that they are giving to education in Manitoba and to the children of Manitoba.

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, let me say at the outset that this government has provided adequate and stable funding to education with total education support currently at \$1.13 billion. Education has been and remains one of the top priorities of government and represents 19.3 percent of total provincial expenditures; in fact, this year represents a third consecutive year of increased funding to public schools. As a direct result of this government's responsible fiscal approach and sound management practices, we have been able to increase funding to education despite massive reductions in transfer payments from the federal government. My government has been able to do this without compromising our future under the weight of an onerous debt load.

Before this government came to office, education funding represented only 17.2 of the provincial budget. The NDP government strategy of deficit financing and other misguided public policy approaches of that time are clearly not strategies that would have resulted in a balanced budget and the strong Manitoba economy that we enjoy today. Let us not forget it is this government's vision and fortitude that balanced the budget and placed us in a better position to enhance our investments in areas of spending priorities such as health, education and services to families.

We are committed to delivering a high quality of education—

* (1750)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) will have 13 minutes remaining.

As previously agreed, the hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

