

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
Tuesday, 3 March, 1981

Time — 8:00 p.m.

**SUPPLY — CONSUMER AND CORPORATE
AFFAIRS
AND ENVIRONMENT**

MR. CHAIRMAN, Abe Kovnats (Radisson): This committee will come to order. I would direct the honourable members' attention to Page 31 of the Main Estimates, Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Environment. Resolution No. 36. Item 1.(b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries — pass; (2) — pass; (b) — pass. (c) Information Services (1) — pass — the Honourable Member for Logan.

MR. WILLIAM JENKINS: Mr. Chairman, I just wonder if the Minister is prepared to make a brief statement on what is covered under Information Services. I think that's the way we've been working in the other committees that I have been in. I don't know what the modus operandi here is this evening, how the Minister is prepared to deal with the various items, but it would be helpful if the Minister could give us a brief outline of what happens in Information Services, if there have been any changes in the staff man years or re-assignment of personnel or anything in that way, shape or form.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister.

HON. GARY FILMON (River Heights): Mr. Chairman, under the Information Services there are no additional SMYs this year over last year. As members opposite are aware, the Information Services Branch functions as the central news and information agency of the Provincial Government, preparing and distributing factual information about the policies, programs and activities of the Provincial Government in various agencies, boards and commissions for the news media and the public.

The only things that are perhaps slightly different and might be of interest to members opposite that are covered in this year's Estimates, I'd like to direct the attention of members to the activity of the Citizens Inquiry Service, which operates as an extension of the Information Services Branch. This service provides information to members of the public who seek direction to the appropriate branch of government for information on any specific government service. The information supplied covers Federal as well as Provincial Government Services and the costs are shared 50-50 with the Federal Government.

In 1978, as a matter of interest, there were 58,600 calls; in 1979, there were 77,000 calls; in 1980, there were 94,500 calls. Queries on Federal Government services represented between 40 and 45 percent of the total. Although the Citizens Inquiry Service is relatively small, but nevertheless an important function of the department, I'm making special mention of it to advise you of an important experimental extension of the service to deaf persons in Manitoba. This is a trial installation of the so-called visual ear equipment in our Citizens Inquiry

Service Office. The visual ear has an electronic keyboard on it and the words appear at the top of both the sending and receiving. The visual ear has an electronic keyboard on it and the words appear at the top of both the sending and receiving equipment, in much the same way that messages run along the news bulletin signs.

It is appropriate that this department should go forward in this, The International Year of the Disabled, with this experiment. I sincerely hope that this experiment will prove practical and economically feasible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. BRIAN CORRIN: Yes, on this item, Mr. Chairman, we wanted to ask the Minister if he could advise us whether any policy guidelines had been drawn with respect to what constitutes proper information to be communicated through this particular branch.

I'm wondering whether there's any operative guideline that defines what sort of communications the government can publish or disseminate through this branch and what sort of access various departments have to route informational releases to the public, through this particular branch.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, in general terms, we are following the same guidelines that have been followed in the past, for 25 years, as a matter of fact. The general purposes of the Information Services is to co-ordinate news conferences and all news releases to the media, in any form from government departments. And as I say, this has been the policy or the general guidelines that have been followed for at least 25 years, I'm informed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (1) — pass — the Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Yes, in this regard, Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Minister, whether there is any effort undertaken by members of the departmental branch, to review the information that's being published and forwarded to the public, through the auspices of the branch.

Does anybody attempt to establish whether or not the releases are factually and informatively accurate and correct?

MR. FILMON: I'm advised, Mr. Chairman, that the Information Services Branch checks with the program directors in each of the departments, to ensure as completely as possible, that the information provided for press releases and news releases is factual.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (1) — pass — the Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, it's either my hearing or the background noise or the low amplification or projection of the speaker, but I

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didn't hear the first part, the first two or three sentences I missed. I'm sorry. I apologize. Could we ask the Minister to repeat the first part of his statement?

MR. FILMON: The Information Services Branch, Mr. Chairman, checks with program directors in each department from which the information emanates to ensure that the information is factual and correct. They check as closely as they can.

MR. CORRIN: Mr. Chairman, in this regard, I wanted to ask whether or not there was any requirement that certain sorts of information be routed through this particular agency or branch. I am wondering, Mr. Chairman, for instance whether or not certain information such as the advertising campaign launched by the Economic Development Department might not more properly have been disseminated via this particular branch. I am wondering why the government has skirted the usual format that is established for this sort of informational release, and I was wondering whether there has been any discussion within the department of reviewing this matter and discussing the propriety of that sort of campaign, or that sort of approach.

One of my colleagues, unnamed because I didn't hear it quite — I can't attribute it to the member, but one of the members indicated that he felt it might be a government propaganda campaign that was launched by the Economic Development Department. Can we have some advice as to what the position of the Department is, and whether or not there will be any effort in the future to clamp down on perhaps the abusive privilege shown by this particular department in this respect?

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, that particular campaign was routed and placed through the Advertising Audit Office and therefore comes under the Department of Government Services, which portion I should say comes under Government Services. The particular campaign was a special program of advertising designed, of course, to attract and stimulate investment and development in Manitoba and did properly come under the guidelines of the Department of Economic Development, so there would be no reason for Information Services Branch to have been involved in it.

MR. CORRIN: I am unclear, Mr. Chairman, as to what then falls within the purview of the agency. We're told that the campaign launched by the Economic Development Department, came within the terms of reference of that particular department's responsibility, so that apparently, the department could circumvent the normal processes of releasing information, distributing publishing information and do so independently as it were in House. But on the other hand, we're told that generally there is a requirement that all departments route material for publication through the Information Services Branch and that department then undertakes to confer with various officials, in order to establish the accuracy of the information, before it's published.

I can't quite understand why the government has seen fit to use this sort of optional method. I am wondering why there isn't some central clearing

house that has responsibility for the distribution of government information.

I'm wondering if there's any explanation as to why departments are allowed this special latitude and if so, I guess I'm wondering how much we're really paying for Information Services. We have a rather modest allocation in the Estimates, but I'm wondering on a global basis, if we include all the 18 or whatever number of departments there now are, if we include all those departments, how much are we really paying for Information Services?

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I think the member should be aware that the advertising audit office was set up by his government in their previous term of office, and that there was a separation between the advertising audit office which purchases advertising on behalf of all government departments and places the advertising with the various media and coordinates these campaigns, and the Information Services Branch, which does not handle paid advertising, but issues news releases for publication in various media. They are in the form of public service announcements and public information announcements which are not paid advertising and the separation, I think, was clear during the days when his party was in government, and remains clear as a separation between that which is paid advertising and that which is public information provided by the Information Services Branch of the government.

MR. CORRIN: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'm having a little difficulty in appreciating the significance of the distinction between what constitutes advertising, and I presume that there is a distinction. I presume then, we're being told that what the Economic Development Department did, was in fact advertising that fell within the purview of this advertising audit office and the release of information. I don't understand that. I guess what I'm driving at, is I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, that we aren't dealing really with a dead horse, something that's really quite redundant. I think, practically speaking, Mr. Chairman, it can be said, and accurately, that the government will and does find ways of putting out whatever information it wishes to the public. And if it can't route something through the Information Services Branch, it finds other ways to get around that, to skirt the guidelines that this government, or previous governments, have established for the administration of this office.

So what happens, Mr. Chairman, is we have a \$61,000 campaign going on in the Economic Development Department, Community Services Department is running lovely advertisements for day care and the Manitoba supplement for the elderly, all of this at public expense but not included in the appropriation we're discussing; we have Harry Mardon now on the payroll of I believe it's the Economic Development Department, we have various other people who were formerly associated with the news media working from the inside as it were, for various Ministers, and really, Mr. Chairman, I think this should be subject to fairly sharp scrutiny. I question the propriety, Mr. Chairman, of this sort of activity.

It makes a bit of a mockery of this sort of discussion of a particular budgetary allocation and it

makes a mockery of any discussion we might have of guidelines that serve to set out ethical bounds and proper conduct with respect to the distribution and dissemination of information. The truth is, Mr. Chairman, that this government has found ways to tell the story it wants to tell, regardless of whether or not they've set up an agency that will monitor the veracity, credibility and accuracy of information emanating from departments.

So Mr. Chairman, I quite sincerely am here tonight to question whether it is appropriate to continue having an Information Services Branch in the context of this particular government's rather blas disregard for the structure that it has assumed and maintained. And I say that in some sincerity. I think members present this evening should be engaging in a serious and substantive debate on the merits of continuing this particular appropriation.

I personally think that we're wasting a lot of money. We might as well confront reality, let the government run the show and do it as it wishes, and recognize the real facts as they exist in Manitoba today.

Mr. Chairman, unless the Minister or one of his colleagues is willing to defend the retention of all these public relations consultants, defend the rather extensive advertising campaigns that have been launched in the past five, six or seven months by the government, willing to even defend the sheer nonsense, the audacious nonsense that's been perpetrated by the Minister of Economic Development.

Then, Mr. Chairman, I think it behooves us to discuss the appropriateness of this particular item and whether we want to continue appropriating money for its maintenance.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, the distinction is very clear, as far as I'm concerned and I'm sure that other members can understand the distinction between advertising is something you pay for, space or time in the media that you pay for or the public information dissemination that's provided by Information Services.

And they do a wide variety of different functions to do with, for instance, setting up press conferences or holding receptions for visiting dignitaries. A member might recall when Mr. Taylor, the former Ambassador to Iran was here and we had a reception for him, and all those arrangements are done by people from Information Services.

Similarly, when such things as the opening of the building today take place, the Technical Services Laboratory, when that was opened, a lot of the arrangements are made and the photographers supplied and, you know, the microphones in the podium and all that, through people from Information Services; all those kinds of arrangements, so that the media are aware, so that the public is aware of these facilities being opened and their significance and the information that's distributed to the public and that's done without cost to the Provincial Government, in terms of buying advertising or buying media time, because we have this branch available to us, to arrange for these kinds of services.

At the same time when we have a Dominion Day celebration and things that happen at the legislature, all sorts of functions that happen as a result of activities in our department, throughout the

government, that we want the public to be aware of, and we don't want to have to pay for advertising in all the media in order to make the public aware of it, our Information Services Branch can arrange for all these things and we do get the proper coverage as a result of their efforts. And the public becomes aware of it and the public gains the information that I think they're interested in, because of the efforts of our Information Services Branch. And I think the distinction is clear and I think that there's a place for each.

If the member is critical of various forms of advertising that may or may not have been purchased by various government departments, I think he should cover those in the Estimates of each individual department; make his comments known to each Minister in conjunction with their Estimates review and debate and that's fair commentary, but I don't think it's fair to suggest that we don't need an Information Services Branch, because we through various departments, have purchased advertising during the past year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (1) — pass; — the Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to know whether there's been any consideration given to using this particular agency as a freedom of information branch, and I say that sincerely, not facetiously. Several jurisdictions have now set up either by regulation or legislation mechanisms which afford the public access to government information. In other words, they provide access to a government office where people can come and request certain types of information either on order or on demand, eventually attempt to receive it. I am wondering if we are considering this particular agency in the contemporary sense and context, whether the government is giving consideration to extending its jurisdiction of purview in such a way that it could be used in this manner, whether it could serve as a central clearing house or distribution branch for information that people want from government.

It seems to me that as a Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs, that the honourable member, and particularly as a new Minister, must have a desire to break some new ground to do something meaningful with this particular department that has hitherto been undone and unexplored, and I would regard him as the Minister, certainly the Minister that would be responsible for freedom of information legislation if it were enacted in this province.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would like to know whether the Minister is giving consideration to bringing forward that sort of legislation, or for that matter, bringing forward the general concept by some mechanism or other, so as to implement that particular approach to government, which as I have said, is being adopted by many other jurisdictions and has been for that matter debated in this House on numerous occasions over the past four years, Mr. Chairman.

Could we have some advice with respect to that important matter, Mr. Chairman?

MR. FILMON: Any information that is disseminated by the Information Services Branch is available to the entire public. There are no restrictions on who

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may receive it once it's made available through the various departments to the Information Services Branch for public dissemination. It's made freely available to all the public, so there are no restrictions on that. There are government policies in each department which dictate what information is to be made available to the public. I don't regard the matter of freedom of information as being a responsibility of any one Minister in this government. That's a policy decision that would be based on legislation that could be developed and come forward from our government, from any member of this House, but I don't see any special significance to this Ministry as being responsible for bringing forward that kind of legislation, and I will leave it at that.

MR. CORRIN: Mr. Chairman, the Minister has indicated that he doesn't see his Ministry as being directly responsible for the implementation of this sort of concept. I would ask the Minister if he can indicate, as a new Minister, whether or not he as the Minister responsible for consumer protection, for protection of the public, and that I read as including providing the public and the taxpayer with information about government and government activities; does this Minister regard the freedom of information concept as being a meritorious one? Does he approve of that particular approach to government? Will he act in such a way as to advance the concept that we're discussing and try and do something to advance it's early implementation. What sort of priority does it have, if any, on his personal time table as a Minister of the Crown?

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure if my concept of freedom of information and the member's concept would in any way be similar, but I would say that if I were to make any statement on that it would be a personal opinion; it would not be as a member of the government or the Cabinet of this province. My own view is that before I were to take any public position, should I have strong feelings, I would certainly discuss them and make my feelings known within my own government and would not go making public statements about something on a personal basis. I don't see that it has any relevance to the discussion of my Estimates here today, and I'm not prepared to take any public position on that matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (1) — pass — the Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Just in response to what the Minister has said, Mr. Chairman, I don't know why he feels impelled to live within such a strict discipline; it's not one that most caucuses exact. It seems, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister is refusing to be forthcoming. I presume that his reticence is motivated perhaps by some —(Interjection)— I'd imagine, Mr. Chairman, that there must be a few more candidates for the Progressive Party in the back benches of the government members opposite.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please, order please. Might I suggest to the honourable members on both sides of the House that I have allowed a great deal of latitude. Candidates for the Progressive Party are not under discussion. The Freedom of Information Act is

not under discussion, and I would advise the honourable members, let's stick to the subject which is Information Services, Salaries. The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was asking the Minister in the context of Information Services whether or not we would have any extension of that particular branch's role in government. He's indicated that — perhaps this should be a point of order, but I won't make it one — he has indicated that he's appreciative of the role it plays in government and the significance of that role. He has indicated a certain reticence in expressing his own view as to what role that department or that agency should play in the future, and suggests that he would prefer to be bound by government caucus dictate in that respect.

I am not asking him to give us the nuts and bolts and any sort of substantive detail of the sort of freedom of information philosophy that he might particularly espouse. What I am asking him, Mr. Chairman, is simply whether we might in the next year, in the remainder of the tenure of this government, see any initiative with respect to the implementation of freedom of information legislation or the extension of that principle in government. Mr. Chairman, I don't think that there's anything wrong with that. I'm not asking him to break ranks, I'm simply asking him to give us some idea of his general feelings on the general subject matter, as members so often do with respect to answers during the course of Question Period, opinions tendered during the course of Private Members' Debate, and so on and so forth.

The Member for Inkster seems to be agitated and desirous of speaking, Mr. Chairman, so perhaps we should give him an opportunity to participate in this discussion. We know how he indeed enjoys his participation and his time is indeed now precious and short.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. SIDNEY GREEN: Mr. Chairman, I have not asked any honourable member to yield the floor to me and I'm glad that the honourable member sees some precedence in allowing me to take the floor. He still had some time and I was prepared to let him continue, but I also must admit that I accept the fact that he sat down because it will permit somebody else to get into the discussion.

I'd like to make a contribution on the debate with regard to Information Service. I would like, Mr. Chairman, to make it quite clear that I am now going to adopt the same position that I adopted for a period of 12 years, although in different form, I admit it, between 1966 and 1969, and 1969 and 1979, I continually asked for the elimination of Information Services. I want less information, Mr. Chairman, I want less freedom to the government to use my tax dollar to disseminate their propaganda, and if there was ever an area, Mr. Chairman, in which the people of the Province of Manitoba could save money without losing anything that relates to their well-being, it would be the elimination of \$597,500 in the Information Services Branch.

I don't know how, by what logic, it is now included in the Department of Consumer and Corporate

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Affairs. Is that new? I believe it used to be in the Department of Government Services. (Interjection)— Always in Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Well, Mr. Chairman, the place that it's under is rather irrelevant. What is relevant is that it's under somewhere, and frankly, Mr. Chairman, I make the opposite plea to the Member for Wellington, I want less information, I want less junk disseminated to the public from the government, and the material that we are getting from Information Services is of absolutely no consequence and Mr. Chairman, is usually supplied gratuitously. The method of the supply of information from the Government Information Service Branch has traditionally been that they get the OCs, or they get the Cabinet Minutes, and they start writing racey little stories about what is happening, or they hear the Minister of Natural Resources, or the Minister of Finance make a speech, and they immediately crank out the rubbish that is foisted on the press and foisted on other members as information.

It's —(Interjection)— I'm sorry?

MR. ENNS: My speeches are always information, Sid.

MR. GREEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman, and I really have no objection to the Minister having in his department people who will help him put together his material so that it's presented in a reasonably coherent form; I have also no objection —(Interjection)— no objection, Mr. Chairman, to having available to the administration, a relatively easy manner of communicating with the media, which is part of the legislative process. I can tell the Honourable Minister that Information Services was, and you can check with them, instructed by the Department of Mines and Natural Resources; instructed by the Department of Urban Affairs when I was the Minister; instructed by the Health and Social Development when I was the Minister; that they are not to prepare any material for my department.

We used Information Services. If we wanted to do something, we generally prepared that release, and they, from time to time had to be prepared. Sometimes it was a Ministerial Statement, sometimes it was the preparation of a press conference, the material prepared was prepared in our office, and there are people within the ministerial office that can do it. Then Information Services was asked to communicate with the media or to take what we had prepared and disseminate it if that was what was necessary, or to communicate with the media and tell them that the Minister wished to hold a press conference, and the press conference was held, and that was the extent to which Information Services was involved.

The material that is sent week-by-week to the Ministers, and Mr. Chairman, I can tell you that I used to read the material hoping that I would find some screwball announcement that I could then use as a political issue, but I found that the number of issues that I could get out of that material was so little as to make the time in reading it counter-productive, and now it goes — I could tell the department that generally it goes straight out of the envelope, with a glance into the waste paper basket.

I have the opposite problem, therefore, to the Member for Wellington. I want less information. I

want this information that is now being disseminated to cease; that by and large, Mr. Chairman, it is government propaganda. The best evidence that a government is in decay is the amount of money that it starts spending, not on providing goods, services, to the people of the province, but the amount of money that it starts spending to enhance its own image. Of course, Mr. Chairman, the most blatant example of that — and it's been done by other people — but the most blatant example of that was the message that was disseminated by the Minister of Economic Affairs in his program, Stay in Manitoba.

But the Information Services Branch, here is a savings, Mr. Chairman, of \$597,000, which the government can well use to keep down the mounting rates of expenditures that have been assumed by this government.

Mr. Chairman, I know that this has been of great — or at least claimed to be of great assistance to the non-present media, that this is the way in which they have been able to get material. That, Mr. Chairman, I believe is not a government function, that it is not a government function to provide press releases, an agency that supplies press releases — I'm not suggesting that the Minister can't make his own releases — but to have a government agency cranking out, writing and supplying press releases in the way that it is being done by Information Services is completely without value. It is a total waste of money and the department should be removed.

Insofar as the other point that was raised by the Member for Wellington about consumers getting information, I would like to know, because it has been a problem with me over the years; I would like to know whether there are complaints that somebody has sought information from the government and has been told that they cannot have it. I would like to have instances of when that occurred. I would like to know what information was involved because some information is surely not to be made available. I do not believe that the record of continuing negotiations between Hydro and a purchaser of power in the United States is information that I would want to have available generally to the public. That is not the way a Hydro utility can negotiate. I would not want to have had information on Flyer's negotiations with its purchasers available to the public. I know that members of the Conservative Party came in and opened Flyer Minutes to the public and that was information that I did not want to have revealed in the same way as the honourable member would not want to have the affairs of a commercial corporation revealed. But I would be interested to know, what if any, information has been requested from the government and has not been provided, and I'm not talking about the Orders-for-Return, but those surely are things that members of the Legislature requested and if they didn't get it then they certainly should have, and if the public is made aware that the government is not fulfilling its responsibility in this area, it can do so.

I am interested, Mr. Chairman, as a priority, I am much more concerned with the amount of information that has been given free at the expense of the public of Manitoba than I am at this point without knowing what is being requested and not given about a so-called freedom of information bill

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which will enable a citizen in my constituency to hire a lawyer, go to a judge, to get a document which I should be able to get in this House, and if I can't get it, I want to know the reason why.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Mr. Chairman, I for one, and I think I have said it several times in various ways, am not by nature, a parliamentary supremacist. My honourable friend says that he can stand up in this House and he can get whatever information he wants and if he can't he'll defeat the government and he'll walk into the Minister's office and he'll get whatever information he demands and requires.

Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of people in this province that don't have that sort of ability. For a variety of reasons they are not in a position to take on that sort of challenge, and frankly, Mr. Chairman, a lot of them don't have representatives who are desirous of moving mountains to accommodate them and their requests.

Mr. Chairman, I say that it's time to do it a better way, and other jurisdictions are showing that way. They are moving in the field of freedom of information legislation and regulations. They are opening government up. They are making information and the affairs of government accessible to the taxpaying public. We shouldn't forget, Mr. Chairman, who pays the shot. Occasionally, I think, cloistered as we are in this beautiful environment, we forget that although we are elected here, each for short terms of varying durations, we don't have any sort of proprietary interests here. We're here for but a short time and only to do our best.

I say, Mr. Chairman, that we are caught in an absurd paradox. We have a situation where the government can appropriate as much money as it wants to disseminate propaganda, and the more desperate this government becomes, Mr. Chairman, the more propaganda is published. Mr. Chairman, there isn't an honest member on the other side that would deny — Mr. Chairman, there isn't a member that would deny that they have trumped the Civil Service with former media personnel, and I have named one tonight, Mr. Mardon, formerly of the Tribune, who's political disposition, everyone knows, Mr. Chairman. They are throwing money at their problem, Mr. Chairman, and it's irresponsible.

Mr. Chairman, I say that the responsible thing to do, and I agree with the Member for Inkster, is to take this appropriation from Information Services and throw it in the waste basket because, Mr. Chairman, they're spending probably twice that amount of money on disseminating public relations material, advertising material, propaganda, Mr. Chairman, propaganda, which is self-serving and designed only, Mr. Chairman, to re-elect that rotten government.

Mr. Chairman, the truth hurts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Honourable Minister of Highways on a point of order.

HON. DONALD ORCHARD (Pembina): Mr. Chairman, the Member for Wellington, put out the challenge. If anyone on this side of the House would get up and deny that we have — if I can paraphrase

him correctly, anyone can deny that we have plumped the Civil Service, I think he said, with people who are spreading propaganda. I would like to deny that is happening, Mr. Chairman. If the Honourable Member for Wellington would recall back to some of the glorious days of true propaganda in this province, where many things were hidden from the people of Manitoba, as has been disclosed in the Tritschler Inquiry for the Hydro development in Manitoba, etc., etc., etc.

Mr. Chairman, it's only fair to point out that the Member for Wellington whilst part of the legal backup for that previous administration was part of a number of things that never quite surfaced and the whole information package never quite surfaced for the people of Manitoba until after the election. They had media experts as well who weren't explaining to the people of Manitoba what a dismal job they were doing in government. They continue to sit here and cry about . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. On a point of order, if you would state your point of order without going into a long debate I would be happy to recognize it.

MR. ORCHARD: I didn't have a point of order. I didn't stand on a point of order. The honourable member invited someone from this side of the House to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. I recognized the Honourable Minister on a point of order. Does the Honourable Member for Wellington wish to continue?

The Honourable Member for Logan on a point of order.

MR. JENKINS: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'm rising on a point of order, because the Minister did rise on a point of order. The Minister got the floor fraudulently by stating to you that he had a point of order, and I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that is a point of order. The question that I am raising with you now is absolutely a point of order, and if you are not prepared to deal with it, then look at your rule book . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Sit down. Order please. I ruled the Honourable Minister out of order on his point of order, and I am acknowledging the Member for Wellington to continue his speech. The Honourable Member for Logan.

MR. JENKINS: Mr. Chairman, you did not rule the member out of order, not till I raised it as a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. I rule the Minister out of order. I would ask the honourable members for a little co-operation here this evening. I think that it's the intention of this committee to investigate the Estimates of the Minister, and I tell you, if we are going to play games this isn't the place to play them. I would ask the honourable members to please stick to the subject. We are on Information Services and I've made a statement before that if we're not going to stick on it, I don't think that I'm going to sit in this bloody Committee. The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Well, Mr. Chairman, with . . .

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MR. JENKINS: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Logan on a point of order.

MR. JENKINS: I think that you should reconsider the statement that you just made. That you referred to this assembly as a bloody committee] I think, Mr. Chairman, that you should really, seriously reconsider the statement that you just made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rather than withdraw my remarks, I'll leave the Chair.

If you're going to demand it, I will leave the Chair.

The Honourable Member for Logan.

MR. JENKINS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not demanding anything off you. I'm just asking you to reconsider what you just said.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the tempo had got me to a point where I had lost a little bit of control, which is not a normal thing with me, but I have been listening to the debate and I did lose a little bit of control and I apologize for losing control. To withdraw my remarks, I will not do so.

The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Mr. Chairman, dealing with the subject at hand. Mr. Chairman, I was saying that I found it an absurd paradox that we have hundreds of thousand of dollars being spent on the dissemination of information, government propaganda, and we have a situation where the public is being forced, through the public media, to be exposed to the government's side of the story, the government's position, and yet there is no appropriate mechanism, no counter-balancing mechanism, that allows the individual taxpayer to go to the government and get a particular piece of information on a factual and documented basis.

I really, Mr. Chairman, I for one feel that although I regret the government would appropriate funds for this sort of advertising propaganda campaign, I feel that it's an appropriate matter for debate, an appropriate subject for debate and it's certainly within the capacity of the government. The government has the power to appropriate funds for that purpose.

I cannot understand why we continue to delude the public by setting up the pretence that there is an independent information office that monitors screens and reviews all information releases from the departments and prior to getting them to the public, through the media, assures that they're all accurate and inclusive only of accurate, honest information.

It's a bit of a sham, it's a farcical pretence, Mr. Chairman. There is no reason, there is no rhyme or reason why, in the context of what actually is happening, the reality that confronts this particular government, that they should want to appropriate \$597,000 for an Information Service.

Mr. Chairman, when they want to spend \$61,000 on revamping their image, they do it. They don't come to the Legislature and include an additional appropriation for Information Services. They simply snap their fingers, presumably the advertising and P.R. people come in and a campaign is launched.

The same goes, Mr. Chairman, as I said before, for the Day Care Program, the Manitoba Supplement for

the Elderly Advertising Campaign. They've done this on numerous occasions. They've gone out and they've hired people who are formally associated with the media. These people are now presumably guiding the government's public relations efforts; presumably they're writing the press releases; they're producing the show; they're giving guidance and advice as to how the government can embellish its somewhat tarnished image.

Mr. Chairman, they're spending a fortune on propping up this limp-kneed government. So I think the reality is that we should confront this particular item and we should vote it down. On that, Mr. Chairman, I agree with the Member for Inkster. I think we should simply vote the item down and get down to brass tacks and unless I hear some compelling argument to the contrary, that's what I intend to do.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I'm tempted to call the question and to move along, but I don't think it would be fair to leave on that unfortunate note that has been presented by the member opposite.

To suggest that a group of people, dedicated, loyal staff of the Government of Manitoba, who are professionals in their field, of providing information through the various media sources in this province, information about the things that they should know about the government of their province, to suggest that they would allow themselves to be placed in a position of footing forward false information to make a government look good, just defies belief, as far as I'm concerned.

And to further suggest that because they are providing this through the media the radio, the television, in an unpaid form, that the media would be drawn into this great conspiracy and further join with them to prostitute themselves to provide the public with false information, just to make a government look good, defies my imagination, because there are largely the same people who worked for your party when they were in government and provided the same services in a very dedicated and loyal manner. I suggest to you that you're doing a disservice to these people by the suggestions you've made.

MR. CORRIN: I don't know, but it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that Harry Mardon didn't work for the New Democratic Party Government.

MEMBERS: He doesn't work for Information Services.

MR. CORRIN: He should, because if there's a place in government for someone like that, in an ethical government, it should be in Information Services, not seconded off to some Minister's department. And that goes for Ron Kustra and all the rest of that rotten crowd

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Honourable Minister on a point of order.

HON. BRIAN RANSOM (Souris-Killarney): Yes, Mr. Chairman, the gentlemen being referred to by the Member for Wellington in such derogatory terms have nothing to do with the subject under discussion. They are not members of Information Services. They

work at other parts of the government. They have been recruited to the government through the Civil Service, and not by government appointment and the member should withdraw the insinuation that he's made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To the Honourable Minister on the point of order. I think that what the Honourable Member for Wellington stated was that the gentleman named should be in this particular department. I don't think that I heard him say that he was in this particular department.

The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I wouldn't withdraw, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, these are political operatives that I'm describing, and they should be recognized as being extensions of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party, nothing more.

Information Services, Mr. Chairman, is strictly superfluous in the contemporary context. There is no purpose in having this appropriation any more. With Harry Mardon writing the releases; with Harry Mardon having the Minister's ear with him calling the shots, cosmetically cleverly, cosmetically disguising; this government's true intent.

Mr. Chairman, I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that I will not withdraw any of my remarks. It's a disgraceful situation, and it's an abuse of the public purse and there is no honourable gentleman opposite who can defend it.

Mr. Chairman, in the course of their opposition, I remember that they were quite critical of certain people that were employed by us, and I think to some extent they may have had a case. I think with respect to a few of the instances they cited, they may have had solid cases.

Mr. Chairman, they're going to have to accept and acknowledge the fact that they have fallen into the same trap, only on a much grander scale, a much more expensive scale, because their people, their producers, seem to choreograph much bigger shows. They're into \$61,000 media extravaganzas.

Mr. Chairman, the truth is that it's not going to help and it's a waste of money. It's waste and mismanagement in government. and it's evidence of waste and mismanagement. It has little to do with common-sense restraint, it has little to do with political ethics, it has everything to do with political survival and pragmatics, and there is no way that they are going to avoid the consequences of this sort of discussion and debate. If they think that they can bring all these people into the Civil Service and manage to isolate them away from the Information Service Office and then have them all channeling information at Information Services Offices, they're sorely mistaken. We're not going to put up with that, we weren't born yesterday, we appreciate what they're attempting to do and we recognize it for what it is. It's a form of chicanery and it won't pass. The public does not respect that sort of behaviour, they won't condone it.

Eventually, Mr. Chairman, it becomes itself an issue, as I think it already has, and I think members opposite, if they were to join the discussion would agree that these people are now themselves becoming issues in the next election campaign. Why are they there? How much are they paid? Who do

they take orders from? Why did they get these special jobs? Why were jobs created for them? Why is the government playing around pretending that there is an objective independent Information Service when they're going outside to advertising offices? I wonder, Mr. Chairman, whether they even bother to go to any sort of public tender when they advertise? It wouldn't surprise me that if you looked at it very carefully and could get some true freedom of information, if you could get access to some of that information, you'd find out that some of the things that were happening were pretty astounding and astonishing.

I would like to know how much McKim Advertising is charging for all the work it's doing and I'd like to know what correlations there are between the Progressive Conservative Party and Foster Advertising and McKim Advertising. I'd like to know, I'd like to have some background in that respect, Mr. Chairman.

Somebody suggests that we're paranoid. I don't think we're paranoid. I think we've hit the nail right on the head, Mr. Chairman. I think that they're acutely sensitive on this point because they have a lot to be defensive about. Mr. Chairman, they are bringing a new breed of political operative into the political realm of Manitoba. This is a very sophisticated sort of animal that's used to operating in the independent media, somebody who has contacts in the media, somebody that is normally associated with the independent media, who suddenly is found to be at the doorstep of the government and in the employ of the government.

Mr. Chairman, it won't wash. As I said, we're putting the government on notice, it's an issue, as far as we're concerned it's an issue in the next election, just like rent controls and many other things that will come up.

So they can do what they will to skirt the issue but it'll be around until the day the election is held, and that's going to be a fact of life for this government, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (1) — pass — the Honourable Member for Logan.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the Minister a couple of questions. It's been very interesting, the debate that's been going on here this evening, but I am not prepared at this time to get involved in what seems to be a very defensive position that the government seems to be finding themselves in; that's their problem, they're going to have to solve that problem. I think the people of Manitoba are quite aware of what is going on. They don't need a propaganda program on television and radio, \$62,000 worth, telling them what a wonderful place Manitoba is to live in, because the people of Manitoba already know it's a wonderful place to live. The only thing that's wrong with Manitoba right now is that we have a Progressive Conservative Government, and that's very easily solved, Mr. Chairman, when the next general election will be called. That's a very easy, solvable problem for the people of Manitoba, a very, very easy solvable problem.

But the question I want to ask to the Minister is, he said that Information Services is using a relay system of relaying inquiries from citizens of

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information that they require to Federal departments. I ask the Minister if his department has given any thought of extending that downwards because many of the requests that MLAs receive, we are already an information service of relaying people to the proper authority who will deal with the problem that they have, be they city government, municipal government, or be they school board. I would encourage the Minister to look at that and make sure that the expansion of that program goes down as well as up, because I think that's a real problem that most citizens have when they have an inquiry. They phone either their MLA or they might phone their city councillor, and Mr. Chairman, there's a very simple method of getting some of the information out. That is, and I know it's not in your department, but phone bills go out every month, and there can be information.

I'm not satisfied with Information Services as it is set up. I think Information Services should be dealing with, and since it comes under the Minister's department, it should be dealing with consumer problems.

We get all kinds of propaganda, and I have to agree with the two members that have spoken, the information, when we as MLAs receive it, is already old news. We have read it in the newspaper. We've read it. In the main, most of the blurbs that are put out, by the time we receive them, we as MLAs receive them, is already old hat. But there are consumer problems, there are environmental problems, there are insurance problems, they all come under the Minister's portfolio; if you're going to use an Information Services, that Information Services, Mr. Chairman, should be geared to problems that the department itself is responsible for. I don't think that the department should be the propaganda mouthpiece for various departments, because we've already seen what's happened.

Last year, last fall it was a little old lady running around with a shopping cart — that, I guess, was the Minister of Community Services, with no input, I am sure, from the Department of Consumer Affairs, no checking for authenticity of what the little old lady was saying, because lo and behold, once the people started receiving those application forms and they started comparing what was being said, you know that particular little item disappeared off television. That's not the type of information that I think — (Interjection)— She went on to do her Income Tax form, from the Member for St. Vital. Perhaps, that's where she is gone, I don't know, but that isn't the type of information that I think this department should be responsible for. This department is responsible for Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Environment. And if you're putting out information it should be on the problems that people are having. People are having environmental problems. We have already heard of one, I guess it's your department, or, yes, you're Environment . . . the town of Stonewall, and only because an inter-departmental memo has been made public, got out to the public and that always happens. You're not going to stop that, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Ministers; that'll always happen. But a fertilizer plant, gas storage plant, were placed near a person's home, who had been there. It's poisoning his atmosphere, his environmental atmosphere, for the fact that his water supply is not being threatened.

Now, I say to you, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, that you want to look at your Information Services, make sure there's all kinds of things that Information Services should be telling people. Toys for children, that comes under your department; some of them are terrible, you know, they're actually lethal weapons. I don't know what testing is done, I guess maybe the only testing is done is perhaps at the federal level, but even passing on the information that standards set for toys, standards set for various products that come on to the market. There's a tremendous propaganda machine outside of government which are telling consumers: Buy brand x, buy brand z, buy brand y because my brand is better than your brand. Do you really want to do a job for consumers, and that is your responsibility, you should be doing some investigation and if the product is harmful to the populace as a whole, that is the type of information that is coming forth from your Information Services.

It's not a propaganda machine for the various Ministry. Well, the Minister of Highways says ho hum; he'd better go and fill one of his potholes up because if he's not happy here, he can go somewhere else. But I quite honestly say to the Minister that is what you should be using your Information Services for, not as a propaganda department. The Minister has staff in his own office, the other Ministers have staff in their own offices, who can put out the blurbs? They don't need the Information Services; you're just using it as a form and I'm sure that the half-a-million dollars that we have here could be spent much better, much better than it is at the present time, making people aware of environmental problems, consumer problems, corporate affairs problems, those are the problems that you are to deal with.

I don't know if you are the propaganda Minister but I would say that under the circumstances as your portfolio dictates, and I know that you're a new Minister, and I wish to take the opportunity at this time to congratulate the Minister. I'm sorry that I didn't do so earlier but I hadn't had the opportunity to do so but I do at this time congratulate him on assuming that Portfolio. And it's an important portfolio because if anybody, we have consumer groups outside, that they haven't the facilities, they haven't the information gathering services that you have, and with you're federal counterpart, and things that are harmful to the consumers. You know, there are many things that you can be doing and you should be doing but you're not doing with this Information Services. I think the Information Services is a misnomer. If Information Services are required for each department than it should be in that department and dealing with their own department, but not have one that is just handing out press releases because if it's a press release committee, I'm sure you can do that with one or two people. You don't need an Information Services Branch.

That Information Services Branch, Mr. Chairman, should be geared to what your department is doing, what is bad for the consumer. That is what you should be looking into; what is bad in the environment. And that's the type of Information Services, I would like to see; not a propaganda machine, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (1) — pass; (2) — pass; (c) — pass — the Honourable Minister.

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MR. FILMON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I was being optimistic. I would like to thank the Member for Logan for the comments that he's made and also assure him that for the most part, virtually every item that he suggested needs to be presented to the public, needs to have information provided to the public for the purposes of protecting the consumer, or informing the consumer. Virtually every item is being looked after under one aspect or another. It's my department's responsibilities, with the possible exception of the suggestion that he has made about providing information on the civic government, the civic level of government in addition to the Federal and Provincial Government under our Citizens Inquiry Service and I have some sympathy with that suggestion and some understanding of what he's saying as a former member of City Council. I know that I was always being phoned and asked about a particular item and would have to tell the caller that perhaps it wasn't under the purview of the Civic Government that it was a responsibility of the Province or the Federal Government.

Similarly, now that I'm with the Provincial Government, constituents call and they ask about a certain problem and I have to tell them that it's not a provincial matter but it's a civic matter and it has to do with sewer and water or refuse collection or it might have to do with a zoning issue or police or fire or any number of things. So that is a logical extension of the service that is being provided by the Citizens Enquiry Service and I'm sure that the member appreciates that they are doing an excellent job. They handled some 94,500 calls this past year. We are of course funding that jointly with the Federal Government and at the moment we're providing a complete referral system to all departments federally and provincially. To do that, to extend that to the Civic Government would require of course, a great deal more time and effort in training the people. At the moment, if a call comes in about a matter that has to do with the Civic Government they're told that that is a matter under the jurisdiction of the Civic Government. Admittedly, they don't go to the extent of looking up the phone number or having the phone number handy of District 6 Refuse Collection or District 4 Police or whatever, and that would be a quantum jump into an additional service level to be provided and I think because it's being shared cost-wise federally, we would have to go into negotiation with them over it and see whether they had any interest in extending the service to provide complete information to Civic Government on civic departments to callers.

So, it is a matter, I suppose, could be considered in the future, but I assure the member that to the extent that we are providing on Federal and Provincial levels of government, a very thorough job is being done and the level of satisfaction and the cause is very high, because we are able to direct them to the source of solution to their problem quickly, easily and efficiently, by this service that is being provided. Six out of 22 SMYs in this department are involved in that particular service.

So it's a very integral part of what we are providing and it is not just the other areas. And in fact, I have to say, because it's been repeated so often, that members opposite continue to refer to the advertising campaigns that are under the jurisdiction

and are the responsibility of the various Ministers in the various departments, who have commissioned those advertising campaigns, and are not the responsibility of this department and I don't think that we should continue to discuss them.

Nor should we continue to discuss information officers or community relations officers, who have been appointed by various departments or are hired through the Civil Service Commission for various departments, in their efforts to achieve better communications with the public they serve. Regardless of whether or not I agree or disagree, and I happen to disagree with the remarks that were made by the members opposite, they should not be debated in the estimates for this department.

Returning to the various suggestions that the Member for Logan has made with respect to providing information on various consumer matters; we do try to enlist the assistance and support the various groups that are out there in the public. For instance, the Consumers Association of Canada receives a grant from our department for the provision of product information to the general public. The public calls and says what about this toy or what about this vacuum cleaner, or whatever, they are referred to the Consumers Association of Canada, who are able to provide this kind of information, as I say partially under a grant from our department.

Over and above that, if products that are hazardous are being considered, then through our Consumer Affairs Branch, we are referring callers to the Federal Government, to the local office that deals with The Hazardous Products Act and again this is part of the information that can be obtained, either through the Citizens Inquiry Service or the community relations group of our Consumer Affairs Branch.

So all of these sources of information are available and as much as possible there is an outreach campaign that goes on from our Consumers Bureau, in which they provide folders that tell people what their rights and responsibilities are under various aspects of consumer protection legislation in this province, what the rights and responsibilities are of the various stores that they deal with or the various salespeople and so on and so forth.

That outreach campaign includes going out to speaking engagements and high schools, and again I'm getting off this particular topic, because it really isn't part of the Information Services Branch, but I will tell you more about it as we come into that line under our estimates in the Consumer and Affairs Branch.

I'll leave it at that and I'll assure the member that in every aspect of request for information that he has suggested, other than that matter of being able to refer people to specific departments in the Civic Government, they are being looked after by our department.

MR. JENKINS: Well, there was one other thing that I mentioned to the Minister and I wondered if he would take it under consideration.

Most people in the Province of Manitoba, or a large number of the people of Manitoba, receive telephone bills from the Manitoba Telephone System. The City of Winnipeg already does it for its department with hydro bills and water bills,

information. The simple — they don't have to be great big, large sheets of paper. You know they can be quite concise and to the point and I think that it would be a good procedure to follow and since the Minister was a former member of City Council, he's well aware of what I am talking about. Since this is, — well, it's also Manitoba Hydro, as well, because hydro bills are going out. It's not for the old City of Winnipeg, but using those two agencies of the Crown — maybe there will be some manipulation required, but since postage is being paid for the sending out of telephone bills and Manitoba Hydro bills, that information not only from his department, but from other departments that are of curt interest to the population of Manitoba, that this would be an area that the Minister and Members of the Cabinet could consider, and if the Minister has any thoughts on that suggestion that I threw out to him.

MR. FILMON: Well, it's certainly a suggestion that I think there's consideration. I know that we found it very effective in the City to be able to include certain public service information, public service announcements, within the billings that went out under the waterworks, water and sewer bills, but for instance, we had the problem with the hydro that only one-half of the City of Winnipeg was covered by the Winnipeg Hydro distribution system, whereas the other half was covered by Manitoba Hydro, so we couldn't use that as an effective means. I'm sure that we'd have the same problems with using it provincially.

The telephone system is the one common carrier, shall we say, that covers the whole province and if there is certain public information that can be economically and easily distributed to all citizens of Manitoba through that vehicle, then perhaps there's something that can be taken up in Cabinet or with our government and I'd be happy to place the matter under discussion in the future.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

MR. A.R.(Pete) ADAM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to congratulate the Minister on his new portfolio.

I have a couple of questions I would like to ask him in regard to Information Services and I would like to know how the information gets compiled into a news release? Where does the first instance, if a Minister decides he wants to issue some kind of information, how does the process take place and who does the research? Who does the research to compile the accuracy and who verifies to the accuracy of the information that is finally compiled? I would ask the Minister whether or not the Minister whose department — the information is meant to be from, does the Minister check over these releases to see that they are in fact satisfactory to his own satisfaction, whether the information contained therein is correct or factual?

MR. FILMON: Well, as I understand it, Mr. Chairman, the research and the fact finding is generally started within a department that wants to provide information to the public. It's provided in some raw form to the Information Services Branch, who then put it in a form that is acceptable to be

disseminated to the public. In other words, they write it. But in some cases, they may go to the department and just simply interview officials of the department to illicit the information they need to make up a press release, and then they verify that information with senior person in the department — a Deputy Minister, Minister — and ensure themselves that the information is factual and accurate. They then put it into a form that is readily readable, understandable, usable for a news release in whatever form of media it is going to be used. That's the manner in which it normally takes place. So it's a co-operative effort, but there's no question that the Information Services Branch has to verify that the information is correct and factual, before they allow it go to into a press release and it's double checked back with the department from which it originated to ensure that it is.

MR. ADAM: Yes, I presume then that the final drafting of a news release would go back to the Deputy Minister or the Minister. To the Minister or the Deputy Minister.

MR. FILMON: Well, the standard practice is that it goes back to the Minister, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ADAM: Yes, well the information that is coming forward from the Minister in regard to the facts of any news release, is what I'm trying to get at, because we've had some problems in the Department of Agriculture in regard to releases.

I notice that the Minister is turning around, his colleague is sitting right behind him. There was a release and this disagreement came up in the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, where the Minister issued a press release in regard to the net farm income for 1980, and the press release that he issued in October was that the best ever farmer earnings for Manitoba . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Shouldn't that come under the Department of Agriculture, I would remind the honourable member.

MR. ADAM: No, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It appears that it's all agriculture that's being discussed. The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

MR. ADAM: Just let me explain. I am trying to find out the authenticity of the information and the facts that are in a news release that this Minister's responsible for. It's his department that prepares these news releases, and I want to know who is making errors, Mr. Chairman.

Now, if I can't discuss it here, I can't discuss it anywhere, because this is the only place that I can deal with it, and I respectively submit to you Sir, that that is where I have to deal with it. I see the Minister agrees that this is where it should be discussed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister agrees? The Honourable Minister.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, yes, I understand that the member is attempting to indicate that he has a press release that was prepared by Information

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Services, that contained some information that he believes is not correct or not factual, and certainly the onus for verifying the information contained in the press release, would be the Minister of the department from which that information originated, and in that case it would be the Minister of Agriculture, judging by what he has said in the course of the discussion.

MR. ADAM: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm trying to determine how the information comes through the system and where it ends up and how it gets to the public, because in the final analysis it's the consumer that receives this information and he has to digest it. If he is digesting information that is not correct, then you know, he's being taken for a ride with misinformation. Because the information, and I'm sorry, I have to explain what happened in order for the Minister to understand what I'm getting at.

One of the press releases, it was issued by the Minister, and I'm not saying it's the Minister's fault or whose fault it is, I'm trying to determine how this kind of thing happens, how it happens and why it should happen. We should try and attempt that it doesn't happen again.

The first news release that went out from the Minister was that the expected earnings would be the best ever and that it would be \$410 million in farm income for the farmers in Manitoba. When the information finally came out, the final release came out it was \$348 million. You know, almost \$60 million of an error, Mr. Chairman. But that information went all throughout the province, and maybe in other provinces as well, and deluded a lot of people. It deluded a lot of farmers. It made all the farmers feel that they were much better off than they actually were. It made a lot of businessmen, who had tractors sitting on their lots, feel, well I'm okay, I'm going to be able to move these machines, Mr. Chairman. This is why we should address ourselves to this situation so that this thing doesn't happen.

I'm trying to find out who made the error. Is it the Department of Agriculture? Is it the people who compile the information in its final detail to get it out to the public, because there's a discrepancy of \$60 million approximately? When the Minister was questioned on the accuracy of these figures, here's what he replied and I hope the Minister responsible will listen and I am going to read from Hansard. This is the Minister of Agriculture speaking now, he says, "the first release he is referring to was released by Information Services of the Government." So I ask the Minister now, I ask the Minister responsible for news releases which he has just said that he has gone back to the Deputy Minister, to the Minister, and come back, and now the Minister of Agriculture says that he had no part of it; it was prepared by the news release people. I would like the Minister to please clarify that because there has to be something drastically wrong when you send out releases throughout the province which are completely erroneous. That's not disseminating information, that's decimating information. That's what it is.

I point this out to the Minister because it's a very serious problem. I'm not sure; I want answers. The agricultural critic, my colleague from St. George, he wants the answer too. He wasn't able to get it from the Minister of Agriculture. The only way that the

Minister got out of it was by saying I didn't do it, I'm sorry it's not my fault, it's the news release information that did it; it's not my fault.

I say, Mr. Chairman, that if I was a Minister and any news release went out under my heading, under my Ministry, I would take my full responsibility; I would take the full responsibility for that news release. I wouldn't slough it off on somebody else but I don't know who's to blame here. The Minister says that the news bulletin services are to blame for this. I want to know if the Minister has any answers.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I can just reconfirm that the Information Services prepare their news releases based on information obtained from sources within the department for which they are preparing the release or sources that are approved by that department. If we are speaking of the Department of Agriculture, normally the information would come from that department or sources which they approve of and in that case it could be that the information came from Statistics Canada or the Conference Board or the Fraser Institute, or some normally reliable source. The Minister of Agriculture would say, well, if that information comes from that source then it must be legitimate and so he would approve it being the basis of a news release prepared by Information Services. They wouldn't knowingly provide information, I can assure you, that's based on incorrect facts or erroneous material. They would have it verified and checked out by the Minister of the Department for whom the release has been prepared, and that's the way the system works.

MR. ADAM: Mr. Chairman, I have to tell the Minister that's not what happened. The fact is that there was an erroneous news bulletin that was issued by the Department of Agriculture, apparently prepared by the news services. What we would like to have is the working paper that compiled that information to arrive at a figure of \$410 million. That's the working paper that we want to get our hands on. Would the Minister be prepared to find that document, to table it here, so we can see how the Minister of Agriculture or whoever . . . When the people from the news services went to the Minister and asked for the information to see if it was accurate, they must have looked at some document, Mr. Chairman. I would like to know if the Minister just plucked those figures out of the air because he felt like deluding the farmers and the people of this province, and then when he got caught at it he turned around and blamed the news services.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I am sure my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, wouldn't knowingly blame any of that on my department; I am sure he wouldn't. We have a good working relationship and I am sure that he would take responsibility for anything that his Department put forward. At the same time, I repeat that it is possible that the information provided came from external sources such as Statistics Canada and resulted in that news release being prepared based on information provided from a usually reliable external source. The Minister might have verified that if the information came from a usually reliable external source, it was acceptable to him to be used in a press release.

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In response to his original suggestion that there might be some working document or original copy that would give us a clue, I am informed that kind of document would not normally be kept or retained once the press release was approved by the Minister.

MR. ADAM: I know that we are never going to get to the bottom of this and it appears that we won't anyway. I would ask the Minister if the news services were involved in compiling the information or had any involvement with the information that was in the White Paper.

MR. FILMON: No, the Information Services Branch did not prepare the White Paper material. They did news releases based on information that was in the White Paper, but they did not prepare the White Paper material. That too, I think, has been discussed and verified in debate that I've been involved with or sitting in on during the past Session of the Legislature.

MR. ADAM: Was this document prepared by a news printer or was it printed by the Queen's Printer?

MR. FILMON: I couldn't verify that, Mr. Chairman. The Queen's Printer does not come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Environment, so I couldn't verify whether that was printed by the Queen's Printer.

MR. ADAM: Who does it come under?

MR. FILMON: Government Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. HOWARD PAWLEY (Selkirk): Mr. Chairman, to the Minister. Can the Minister define for us the responsibilities of the communicators insofar as the high-priced communicators relate to the work that is being done in Information Services? For instance what kinds of press releases are issued by the high-priced \$30,000 communicators, and what kind of press releases are issued by personnel working within this Department?

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, that was the same matter that's been under discussion prior to the Leader of the Opposition's question on a number of occasions during the evening, but basically the people to whom the Leader of the Opposition refers are not members of the Information Services staff. They are members of individual department staff. They are termed various different terms, information officers, community relations officers, or what have you, and they are hired by virtue of Civil Service competitions in the normal way as staff of each of those departments, and I think that it would be more appropriate to ask that question of each individual Minister in his Estimates referring to the specific individual that the leader would like to identify.

MR. PAWLEY: Mr. Chairman, back to the communicators, as the Minister refers to them, I would sooner refer to them as the propagandists. Can the Minister describe for us the kind of press

release, communicator, or department propagandist releases in relationship to the kind of press release an individual within Information Services releases? It's my understanding, Mr. Chairman, that indeed the defining of the actual function of the communicator in relationship to a writer in Information Services, has not yet been defined by the Minister. Where does one commence, where does the other start?

MR. FILMON: I am informed that certainly many of the press releases, in fact perhaps most of them, are still being done by our department, but they do accept in draft form, releases from within other departments. Whether or not these draft releases are being prepared by people to whom you are referring, I couldn't say; that would vary I would assume from department to department. If draft releases come to us from a department, they are subject to the same checking, scrutiny, editing, and re-drafting that would normally occur by virtue of any information provided to Information Services for release to the public.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

MR. SAUL CHERNIACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We were just discussing the answer that the Minister gave, and the question then occurs that with the use of these communicators who supply draft material to this department, to what extent has the burden on this department been reduced?

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, during the course of the last hour and-a-half I have outlined many many functions that take place within the Information Services Branch. The development of press releases is a very small part of their responsibility. I refer to the fact that there are six full SMYs on citizens enquiry service. There are 9 people who are technicians who are involved in various sorts of technical matters including working with sound equipment, recording equipment, filming equipment, photography, and so on. The people who are involved solely in writing amount to three full-time and four part-time staff. As a consequence of the addition of people in various areas of responsibility and various departments, whose responsibilities may include some draft preparation of material, it hasn't significantly obviously altered this department's responsibilities, because they are not solely involved in preparation of press releases, nor are all the communications people who are referred to by the Member for St. Johns or the Leader of the Opposition. They have a wide variety of duties and responsibilities, and I think more appropriately their duties and responsibilities should be asked for in the discussion of the Estimates of the other departments.

With respect to Information Services, since only a small portion of the people in this branch are actually writers, there obviously hasn't been that great a change in their responsibilities.

MR. CHERNIACK: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is becoming clear. The Minister, I believe is correct in not wanting to, and not I guess being able to give a complete description of the work that is being done by these communicators that are — I think some 8 of them that were hired by various Ministers — (Interjection)— Are there more than 8?

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In any event whatever number they are, and I understand, how could he report on that, and yet we know that there job is to communicate on behalf of the Minister and on behalf of the Department to the public or to any other body that would have some relationship with the Minister. But I would have hoped that because of the need of this government to hire these additional people, who are specialists in the field of communication, that there would have been a reduction in this particular department, and I would have hoped that this Minister who must be concerned about the costs of operating all parts of his department, would have investigated to see whether or not he could achieve certain savings rather than the possibility of duplication.

For example, Mr. Chairman, he described to us that there are people in this department who are involved in photography and the sound, which has to do with TV, and when one thinks about all the advertising that is coming through the TV stations now on behalf of the Conservative Party, or rather on behalf of the government as required by the Conservative Party to carry on its program, that that too should be a reduction of the burden placed on this department for the job it does, because otherwise it is a duplication. I wonder if the Minister can tell us the extent to which he investigated the possibility of reducing — I don't mean firing anybody, because I would be the last to recommend to a Conservative that they fire, because the way they do it has proven to be unacceptable to me — but at least to see whether or not the staff person years could be reduced by the fact that other departments have taken over a certain amount of work of this type.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I think that members opposite will agree that if you listen to people in all walks of life, in all areas of the public in society today, there's always the theme of — I've heard speech after speech delivered by people in business, in government, in professions, in industry and so on, saying there is a need for greater communication, for better communication in our society. The biggest weakness in society today is that we don't have enough good communications. I think it is just a natural thing for any government to be concerned about communicating with the public it serves, providing better information, and providing the public with a better understanding of what goes on in government. In that way, I think we can avoid many of our problems and we can in fact by better communications save money in other areas of the government. I think that good communication is an investment on behalf of any government, as it is a good investment on behalf of business, industry, public, whatever sector of our society you want to look into.

MR. CHERNIACK: Mr. Chairman, I was so anxious to ask the few questions I asked of the Minister, at the time I was recognized, I neglected to do what I wanted to do earlier and that is to wish the Minister good fortune in his work. I am glad that he realized that he started off a little poorly earlier this afternoon and did apologize for the manner in which he responded to one of the — and it was an arrogant thing, he said he didn't mean it to be, but it couldn't have been anything other than arrogant, and I

recognized it as such, because in my day I too have been guilty of exactly the same kind of response. I believe I felt just as embarrassed as he appeared this afternoon.

I do want to welcome him to this portfolio and stress what is the belief, I think, of most of us on this side, that he was really necessary for the political future of his Party, to replace the other Minister who I believe was equally competent, but whose attitude in his portfolio, in this portfolio, gave the impression that he really didn't want the department to be doing much in the objectives of consumer protection and that kind of work. If it is image alone, and I guess that's useful to the political party he represents, if it is truly a change, then it's good for the people of Manitoba.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your letting me say that, because I want to come back to a specific. It seems to me that if the Minister takes seriously, and I believe he does, the description he just gave us of the importance, the value of communication of government like any other enterprise, with its constituents, that he might give consideration, and after reviewing some of the work done by this department, where a news release might say, the Minister of so and so has given a speech somewhere, where he has announced that, and then he gives statistics, and then he says and this is part of the successful program of this government in promoting the welfare of the people of Manitoba and confirming that this government is the government which does things for various sections, whether he should not in the interests of communication see to it that an opportunity is given to other members of the Legislature, who may not quite agree with the statement, to be able to issue their own release in the same envelope saying, the Leader of the Opposition having reviewed the speech reported on by this Minister does not agree with the way in which the Minister has reported his program. In that way you could give to the people of Manitoba the opportunity, at taxpayer's expense, of seeing both sides of the picture, not just the one side.

In saying that, Mr. Chairman, I do not suggest that the news releases issued by this department are not carefully framed so as not to appear to be partisan, nevertheless when they are reports of what a Minister said, then they can be as partisan as anything because they are in quotations. It would be useful, I think, in the light of the way the Minister described the function of communication, to provide space where the other point of view could be expressed and specifically, would it not be of some value for the citizens of Manitoba to make available to the Leader of the Opposition, once a week, an opportunity to put that insert into the envelope that goes to all the newspapers and in that way be able to better communicate?

Mr. Chairman, I assume this is a completely new idea, because I know that when we were in government, we never did anything like that, and I know that when the Conservatives were in government before we were in government, they never did anything like that, but I am saying it to this Minister because he is a new Minister and because he has already indicated to us the great value of communication, that maybe this is a good time to depart from the old tradition of partisan

communications and bring in this aspect of fuller public relations with the people of Manitoba.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I will accept the fact that it is a new idea that's just come to the Member for St. Johns in the last three years perhaps, and I will certainly take it under advisement.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, Albert Driedger (Emerson): (e)(1) — pass — the Member for Rossmere.

MR. VIC SCHROEDER: The Minister had indicated earlier that some of the people in the Information Department or in this particular group did some photography and that kind of thing, and that, of course, brought back the image of the little old lady with the grocery cart talking about the Manitoba Supplement for the Elderly. It reminded me of that little game that was being played in the House here just very recently between one of the backbenchers and the Minister in charge of that particular area that the Member for St. James — I don't remember which portfolio it is —(Interjection)— No, Community Services. He indicated that he was going to get some kind of an information group together to fight this propaganda and I'm just wondering whether that may be in this particular group.

The question that was asked of that particular Minister had something to do with a pamphlet or a letter produced by the Leader of our party. Afterwards I went and took a look at that particular document, and it stated that the new program is providing 7.82 a month to pensioners, and that is a fact. There was another program, a previous program, which supplied 7.82 a month. This new program supplied an additional 7.82 a month and that's all it did. It may be that the particular member who raised that might have preferred that we say 15.64 a month total, new and old. But in fact, it's a matter of fact, a matter of record, that the new program provides an additional 7.82 a month and there was nothing improper about that. But here that government is threatening to use its services, and I'm just wondering whether it's going to be the Minister's group, whether it's going to be this Information Service that is going to send out letters refuting that particular document. I am just wondering whether the Minister has any comments on that.

MR. FILMON: No, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (c)(1) — pass — The Member for Rossmere.

MR. SCHROEDER: Is the Minister then saying that he is not going to be instructing Information Services to send out letters throughout the province? The other Minister had indicated that they were going to check to see where this document had been presented to determine . . . The other Minister had indicated that you were going to do some checking to determine where this document had gone so you could use your propaganda services to somehow set out a different set of facts. I am just wondering whether the Minister is now telling us that if this does happen, that it will not be done by Information Services.

MR. FILMON: No, it would not be the responsibility of Information Services to send out folders refuting some claims or whatever throughout the province. We're responsible for the preparation of news releases in the standard news release form to the media —(Interjection)— To the standard distribution lists, but not sending them out to members of the public individually as I think the member is suggesting, and we would not be involved in that type of thing.

MR. SCHROEDER: I want the Minister to know that I'm not suggesting that it be done, but what I also want the Minister to know is that another Minister of the Crown has indicated in this House that he wants to send out some documents to the public, at the public expense, to refute statements made at our own expense by the leader of our party. If it is not Information Services who is going to be sending this out, then I would like to know who it is? I would like to know what other group is being formed elsewhere in this government to provide those kinds of propaganda services for this government.

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the member that it will not be Information Services, and I would suggest that he would have to ask the Minister who may have made that statement in the course of discussion of his Estimates, because I am not aware of the Minister to whom he's referring.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: (c)(1) — pass — The Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Mr. Chairman, we're discussing the question of the reliability of information releases and my colleague and friend from Ste. Rose made mention of one particular release which he took exception to, which certainly evidenced an error on the part of the departmental staff, in that they didn't discern and recognize an erroneous statement, an erroneous figure, that was included in the material.

What concerns me, Mr. Chairman, is not just the obvious errors; what concerns me is the implied misrepresentations, and I'll explain what I mean, and this, Mr. Chairman, is why I have trouble believing that this particular agency is absolutely independent of government control and the various propaganda operatives that are employed by the government.

Here's a press release that I just happened to pick up this afternoon when I was doing some research on the subject of growth taxes. I was interested about that and I went through one of our Caucus files and I found a release dated July 11, 1980, put out by the Information Services Branch. And you know, Mr. Chairman, I think members of the committee should be the best judge of what is accurate and what is not accurate, what is fair play and what is not fair play.

This particular release sets out as follows, it says: "Municipalities, Indian bands in unorganized territories will begin," and I stress those words, I want to underscore those words, "will begin receiving a total of \$24,072,798 at the end of July under the province's program to provide them a share of growth taxes from the individual corporate income tax field." It goes on to say that, "Mr. Gourlay said the payments involved the allocation of 2.2 points of personal income tax and 1 point of corporation income tax to local governments."

Well, I'm not suggesting, Mr. Chairman, that there's anything explicitly inaccurate about that particular statement. I think we can all agree that factually, it's correct. What I take exception to, Mr. Chairman, is the implication that these funds, this particular program was begun under this particular government and that it has somehow, in some way, been embellished.

The truth is, Mr. Chairman, as I understand it and I'll stand corrected if I'm in error, that this particular program was begun in 1975 or 1976. I believe it was begun under the aegis of the now Leader of the Opposition, when he was Minister of Municipal Affairs. I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the share of growth taxes from the "individual corporate income tax field" was indeed allocated in the same percentage, and the same one point was allocated by the then Schreyer government.

Now a municipal official or some person, Mr. Chairman, reading that particular release might be misled to believe that the Progressive Conservative Government of Manitoba had initiated this particular progressive program and had indeed, Mr. Chairman, expanded it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, we all know that's not true. They might argue but, Mr. Chairman, they might note that the program initially began with two points of personal income tax and has been extended to 2.2, but I think, Mr. Chairman, a study of the relevant legislation will indicate that this is simply a question of matching certain federal contributions and it's a question of doing the increase in points in order to meet the federal contribution mark.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'm not suggesting that this is an overt misrepresentation, a fraudulent type of misrepresentation but, Mr. Chairman, I think that there's a form of prevarication there. There's a form of implied misrepresentation, however innocent it might be, that concerns me as a member of the Opposition and would certainly concern me if I were a taxpayer, which I am, but as a taxpayer alone, not a member of the Opposition. And I can't understand it if we're told that these releases are monitored for accuracy. I can't understand why this sort of release in the form that it takes was allowed to be sent out to the various communications media in the province. And that, Mr. Chairman, as I said is just a random selection based on something I happened to be looking at at 4:00 this afternoon doing some research for one of our Private Members' Bills.

So one wonders, whether any explanation can be given as to how that might occur and why such a biased position would be evinced by the Information Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Johns.

MR. CHERNIACK: Mr. Chairman, I listened to what was said by my colleague from Wellington, because I think it was two years ago, and I'm glad Mr. Hyman is present with us — about two years ago I took up this similar news release with the Attorney-General, who was then the Minister for Urban Affairs and I challenged the wording and I may have to look up the record to make sure I'm reporting correctly. I said that the impression was being given that this was a government program and that in fact, it was the law, and the government had no choice, that the

law was passed by the New Democratic Party saying that, government, party government and this legislature, saying that 2.2 percent of personal income tax would be allocated to the municipalities and one point of corporation income tax. The proportions would be decided on by the Cabinet. And I believe that I can show the — from Hansard — that the Attorney-General agreed that the impression given, was that it was a government program, a government's decision, this government's decision made on this occasion. That this money be distributed to the municipalities. And I think that he agreed that the wording could have been better used, that indeed and I'll read to you exactly what this one says, and this is July 11, 1980. The announcement is that, "the municipalities, etc., will begin receiving the money under the province's program to provide them a share of growth taxes."

Mr. Chairman, it is the law of the Province of Manitoba that 2.2 points of the income tax, personal income tax, shall be given to the municipalities. It is no government program. It's on the Statute Books. And I ask the Minister to consider at his leisure and with Mr. Hyman, whether these words are correctly put or whether they do not give the impression that the Member for Wellington drew from it.

I think that the Member for Wellington was correct and I am distressed to learn that this matter was raised, I'm sure it was two years ago, with the Attorney-General, who was then responsible for the statement, who agreed that it was wrongly put and I'm unhappy to notice again, that it seems to be continued. And while I'm on that . . .

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, if I may. I was just going to say that I recall the Member for St. Johns bringing it forward and I only sat in the House the past Session, so it would have been some time during the past Session.

MR. CHERNIACK: I thank the Minister for confirming that I had raised the point and I hope it will be looked into — (Interjection) — I doubt it very much because it was during the Estimates and surely we were through with the Attorney-General before July the, whatever the date was last. I think it was the year before, frankly.

But, Mr. Chairman, while I was sitting here sorting my mail, as many of us do, I ran across the latest news service bulletins and I leafed through it and this is one I find and the Minister of Fitness is present. So here is the report dated February 27th, 1981, which reads: "Manitoba Marathon III is to receive \$12,800 from lottery funds for this year's operation as announced by the Fitness Recreation Sports Minister, Bob Banman." And he said quote, "Once again we encourage Manitobans to participate in the marathon and to engage in training for parity fitness activities. With over 4,400 participants, it is one of the biggest fitness events of the year, blessed with a community spirit."

I accept that, Mr. Chairman. I believe that is an actual report of what was said by the Minister of Fitness in order for it to be printed in this bulletin. I don't know that he made the speech anywhere, but that is the practise. And it's acceptable to me that if it's in quotes, it is presumed that he said it and therefore it's reported, but then the next paragraph makes me wonder.

The next paragraph says in quotes: "Without government assistance we'd be in dire straits, said race Director Matthew Quinn." Again quote: "We make good use of the lottery money. It helps us to defray massive printing and mailing costs as to entry forms. It also enables us to get things done, that we normally wouldn't be able to do."

Now, Mr. Chairman, this is propaganda. I believe that when the Minister makes an announcement of what he's doing, that's legitimate news release. But when then we get printed the response by the recipient, praising the government for whatever it did, that becomes propaganda. It's not as blatant as what is being done by the Minister of Economic Affairs on TV, day after day. But nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to the Minister that he look at a release such as this to decide the extent to which there is propaganda involved in printing responses for mothers, that speak of well, without quote, "without government assistance we'd be in dire straits."

I question very much, Mr. Chairman, I'd like the Minister to consider and I'll send this across to him so he doesn't have to look it up, and I don't need a response from him now or ever, I suppose, but I would like to rely on him to have a look and see whether the nature of what is distributed does not go beyond straight communication, information such as he spoke about earlier, about 20 minutes or half-an-hour ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (c) — pass. Resolution No. 37, Clause 2. Consumer Affairs, (a) Salaries — pass — the Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Yes, I'm concerned, Mr. Chairman, that we should receive a reply. I think that it's incumbent on the Minister to give us some idea of what he intends to do about these errors. Does he feel that they should be . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. On which subject are you talking? I just moved to Consumer's Affairs, Salaries.

MR. WILSON PARASIUK: We were standing and you were not recognizing us. (Interjections)—

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Order please. The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: We're on Information Services, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're still on Information Services.

MR. CORRIN: I would like some response, Mr. Chairman, First of all I would like the Honourable Minister to tell us, whether he approves of that sort of misleading language, as has been brought to his attention. I'd like some indication of whether or not that sort of statement is within the terms of reference and guidelines of the department.

I would like some indication of what his intention will be with respect to this sort of release. I feel that as a new Minister, if necessary, he can redefine the departmental regulations and revamp procedures in such a way as to assure that sort of misleading

information is not published in the future. So we would ask whether the Minister can give us some advice, as to what his plans are in order to assure that this situation will not repeat itself in the future?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister

MR. FILMON: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say that the Member for St. John's specifically indicated during his discussion that he did not think that it was necessary for me to respond, and so consequently I did not respond and the Member for Wellington took umbrage with that and I think he should have listened to his own colleague's discussion before he stood up to speak, but on the other hand if he wants a response to the questions that he's put forward, I'll will say very simply that he has not demonstrated any factual inaccuracies, that he has merely demonstrated a lack of understanding or lack of agreement with the wording of a particular news release. He suggested that it implies something that he does not think it should imply, but I can tell him that that's a matter of opinion, that's a matter of semantics.

I just recently have reviewed some information provided for me by a lawyer and I found it very, very difficult to believe that it wasn't misleading information or statements that were being provided in very, very correct legal terminology. They were in my view misleading, but it was a difference of opinion between me and the person who wrote the information and I think that we're faced with a difference of opinion in the manner in which releases should be written by this department. I said before that I do not believe that in any way, shape or form that they are acting in a partisan political sense when they put together these news releases. I repeat that they are people that largely who were providing and putting together the news releases when that group were in government some time ago, and I don't believe that it's fair to suggest that these loyal, dedicated Civil Servants are all of a sudden becoming partisan in the information that they're disseminating through the Information Services.

Further to that I will go one step further and agree that I will compare the news releases that are being written now, with the ones that were being written say between 1970 and 1977 to see whether or not there is a difference in the use of terminology and semantics today over what was done during those years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: In a constructive vein, Mr. Chairman, I would like to suggest to the Member that he consider a new format, a new approach to this particular branch of government. I would like to put on the table, Mr. Chairman, the suggestion that there be a name to the post of director of this particular branch, a person appointed by the Legislative Assembly, who would be responsible to this Assembly and whose responsibility it would be to review and assess, evaluate each press release in order to assure that it's, both in its language and its tone, accurate and reflects unbiased objective information.

I'm going to suggest that, Mr. Chairman, because I think that we should take cognizance of the fact, as

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has been mentioned in the course of this Debate, that there are politically active people working within the departments of the government, and I'm not suggesting that this can ever not be the case. We know, Mr. Chairman, that from time to time people do become over zealous, and I think in order to assure the public that they are receiving accurate information, and in order to appease the Opposition, who I think is justifiably concerned, that accurate information be disseminated, since, Mr. Chairman, we do not have access to all the machinery of government of the money that is available to the governmental departments, I would think that it would appropriate for somebody who is serving this Assembly to be responsible for this particular branch of government. Otherwise, Mr. Chairman, I think much of what we've said in the course of this evening's debate is quite pertinent and relevant. Confronting a situation where the Harry Martin's et al are all in various sinecures interspersed about the Civil Service, given that situation where we have that insinuation of political operatives into the departments, I think it behooves the government to protect the public purse and the public interest by setting up a system that will be perceived by the public and by the opposition as being both independent and objective. Mr. Chairman, anything short of some person who serves this Assembly probably will be unsatisfactory and actually puts the staff in a very embarrassing and probably invidious position. I think it's very difficult for them given the fact that they must experience the transitions of government as governments change hands and cycle on, very difficult for them to have to work in this sort of environment.

So I am suggesting and I'm asking the Minister, Mr. Chairman, whether he would consider as a viable proposal the possibility of a director serving this Legislature having responsibility for this particular branch of government.

MR. FILMON: I thank the member for his suggestion and I will certainly take the matter into consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (c) — pass; Resolution 37, Clause 2. Consumer Affairs (a) Salaries — pass — the Honourable Member for Wellington.

MR. CORRIN: Dealing with this item, Mr. Chairman, I would like the yeas and nays on the Information Services. As indicated earlier, I am not satisfied that these people are allowed to do independent work; I'm not satisfied that these people are independent of government influence; I'm not satisfied that these people are anything but superfluous . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. I have passed the item. I have given the members consideration as I have done in the past, even allowing members from the other locations to come to their seats and be recognized at their seats. The item is passed, we are on Resolution 37, Clause 2. Salaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable for St. Vital.

MR. D. JAMES WALDING: I note that the time is 10:20 and we've just completed one item and we're coming to another one that could somewhat

lengthier, and I wonder if there's inclination for the House to adjourn at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do I have a motion?

MR. FILMON: Committee rise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committee rise.