

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 16, 1989.

The House met at 8 p.m.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE (Cont'd)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (William Chornopyski): The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) has five minutes remaining.

The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Deputy Speaker, before six o'clock I was bemoaning the fact that we had spent so much time in this debate posturing and trying to score political points on the very important issue of child care, and that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) was fighting an American election, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) was fighting next year's Manitoba election, and we were not getting very far. I am glad that I still have a few minutes to talk about the nature of this crisis and, perhaps, even to suggest some paths that could lead to a solution.

It is disappointing that the Government has chosen a style of confrontation to deal with the child care workers. This is not the first time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they have chosen that route. We saw it with the foster parents. We have seen it with nurses. We saw it with their confrontation with the employees at Klinik and we are seeing it again. The Government does not seem to know when it is appropriate for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to intervene or when the ball should be left in the Minister's court. He decided that it was appropriate for the Premier to intervene when we had the crisis with foster parents, but he chooses not to intervene now, and the reason is because he wants there to be no threat of a walkout.

What does that say? Whose interests is the Premier defending in this issue? Is he defending the interests of those parents who have to scramble tomorrow to find child care for their children? Is he looking after the interests of the children who will have to have their schedules disrupted because of this walkout? Is he thinking of the community at large which is concerned about the impasse that this Government has now reached with child care workers? No.

I do not understand the Premier's motive when it seems so clear that the public interest is best served if the Premier would take a leadership role, sit down with child care workers and their representatives across this province, and come up with a long-term solution. That language, long-term solution, is the language that this Government likes to use. This is the Government that promised us multi-year budgeting. This is the Government that says it has long-term vision. This is a Government that wants to look beyond tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, child care workers in Manitoba are not unreasonable men and women. They are looking for an honourable solution to this crisis. They want to

be paid fairly for the work they do, work which we all acknowledge is some of the most important work that anyone in society is entrusted to do, and that is the care of our children. So it is not unreasonable, the position that they have taken. It is not just over these last few weeks or months, it is a position they have taken over the last number of years. Yet the Premier decides that it is not in his interests, whatever they may be, to sit down and talk with them.

* (2005)

How about the issues themselves, the issues of the salary enhancement grant and the whole question of child care? There are those on the Government side of the House who wander back in their minds to the old days, to those days when mom stayed home with the kids and dad went out to work and we were all a happy family. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, times have changed. Women are now looking for career opportunities of their own. Women find it necessary economically to work, and those two issues combine to create a much different economic climate today than we had in those bygone years.

The issue is options. No one is saying to some of the Honourable Members across the way that they cannot choose whatever lifestyle they want for their own families. No one is saying that if they choose to have one parent at home with the children they cannot.

What we are talking about here is a set of options for all women and all men in the contemporary economic environment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of those choices is child care. It is in all of our interests to ensure that those children are given the best child care possible.

The way we accomplish that is by funding the system properly, by creating more spaces and by paying child care workers what they are worth. It was the Minister's own task force. I am glad that the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Downey) agrees with me. It is a happy day in this House. It was the Minister's own task force which recommended a route which would take us to a salary that paid child care workers what these independent experts thought they deserved.

The Government is in no hurry to take us down that road. The Government is not even anxious to negotiate with these people, which by its very style is confrontational. I think it is unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to rise again today to debate a crisis in child care. It could have been avoided. We believe that what is missing from the mix is leadership from this Government in general and particularly from the Premier (Mr. Filmon). We hope that he will take some of the good advice that he is getting in this debate and come to a very swift conclusion of this very serious problem. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): It is indeed unfortunate that we find ourselves as a Legislature in the position of being forced to debate this very important issue twice in a short number of weeks. That debate revolves around the same issues in both instances. It is unfortunate because what that says to me is that the

Government is not caring to listen to those who are providing it with some very sound advice, those who are providing it with some encouragement, and those who are providing it with some constructive criticism through their words and their actions. That indeed has been the problem all throughout this crisis situation. The Government has refused to listen.

The fact that we find ourselves today debating the issue once again in an emergency format as we did not that long ago shows very clearly that not only were they not listening at the time of that first emergency debate, but since that time they have not taken the advice which was provided to them and begun to listen and to communicate with those in the child care community who want to see the best system in the country, a system which has been developed over a number of years, continue to be the best system in the country if not on this continent.

* (2010)

This debate today is all about two particular things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The first is responsibility and the second is responsiveness. It is about responsibility. The Members opposite continually try to undo or to neglect any responsibility they have by suggesting that the whole issue is not really an issue over which they have any control, that they indeed are doing everything as it should be done, that if people would only listen to them and understand them the situation would disappear, but that the situation is really one that is being fomented by a Member of the Legislature.

They consistently point fingers at the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) and say, if it were not for the Member for St. Johns, we would not have this problem, there would be no job action tomorrow. They imply by that that the child care workers in the day care centres would be satisfied, that there would be absolutely no problems in the child care sector if it were not for the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis). The Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) has indicated that by doing so they trivialize the situation. Indeed they do.

I also think they give a bit more credit to the Member for St. Johns than perhaps she would even give herself under these circumstances. As a matter of fact, I believe by doing so they give much more credit to her than she has been willing to take on, because I am certain she is very proud of the role that she has played in developing an awareness, a consciousness, a public awareness and consciousness, around the problems in the child care sector and some of the solutions that could deal with those problems. I think even she would say that her influence within that group of individuals does not extend to the point where she could make them do that which they did not want to do, and that they, going one step further, would not want to do something which they did not feel was in the best interests of the child care community.

So for them to suggest time and time again that it is the Member for St. Johns who is the problem here shows not only a total misunderstanding of the situation, a trivialization of the situation, but it also shows that

indeed they have still not come to grips with the real issues. They have not listened, they have not learned. So I have to suggest to them that they would probably spend their time better if they were to sit down and think about how to solve the problem rather than sit down from their seats and yell blame across the floor at any individual whether it be a Member of caucus or a combined group of Members in caucuses.

I think that really does a disservice to them as a Government, a disservice to those who expect them to govern responsibly and certainly disservice to all of the parents and the child care workers tomorrow who are going to undergo something that they would prefer to avoid, because this Government refuses to sit down and speak with them, listen to them, communicate with them to discuss and dialogue around problems and solutions. If all indicated, at least a lot of them in their speeches have indicated, they understand that there is a problem, and many of them said that day care workers are not paid enough money. Yet when it comes time to sit down and talk about how to resolve that problem, they become suddenly quite mute and silent, obstinate and, as some Members here have indicated earlier, somewhat arrogant. All of those attributes do not serve this situation at all.

So the debate is about the responsibility, and it is not just I who say that it is not the Member for St. Johns who is responsible for the crisis out there. I would like to read from the media release by the Manitoba Child Care Association themselves dated October 13, 1989, where they announced that the demonstration was going to take place. In that press release they did not say if it were not for the Member of St. Johns we would not find ourselves in this situation. No, they said and I quote, "The responsibility for this decision rests squarely on the shoulders of the provincial Government," and continuing to quote from the words from the child care association itself they say, "We have expressed our willingness to meet and negotiate a positive resolution to this impasse time and time again. The Government has responded with disregard for the centres who must continue to stretch their budgets to the breaking point in order to pay 1989 costs with 1985 dollars. They have responded with disrespect for dedicated professionals who give of themselves to care for our children, and they have responded with a blatant cynicism for the children to whom a quality care child care system is vital."

* (2015)

So the fact is, yes, there is a party that is responsible for the problem, and that party is not a Member of this Legislature, who has been trying to express concerns in a concise and a consistent and a forthright manner for the past number of weeks to bring the Government to its senses—if that is at all possible—but the responsibility according to the child care association and according to many of the parents with whom discussions have been held. I think the general perception out there lies squarely on the shoulders of the provincial Government. It lies there because they have not responded to the issue.

I said earlier that the debate is about responsibility and responsiveness because what is being requested

in the emergency debate today is for the Government not to come up magically with a solution to the problem. No one would expect them to do that even if they were a good Government much less the Government that they are. It is not asking them to solve all the problems overnight. No one would expect them to do that either, but what it is asking them to do is the same thing that the child care association has been asking them to do and many others have been asking them to do, and that is to sit down and discuss in a rational way how we get around the problems, how we solve them, how we work together over a period of time to make certain that the inequities in the system which exist today do not continue to exist, to make certain that the low wage scales which exist today do not continue to exist, to make certain that the best child care system in the world is made even better yet, and that is what they are being asked to do.

They can suggest that they inherited problems, and they can suggest that it was someone else's fault, and it still is someone else's fault that those problems exist today and that the job action is being taken tomorrow. The fact is that under previous administrations there was that dialogue. There was that discussion and there were not the type of job actions which are threatening to take place, not only tomorrow but over a period of time if this Government continues to refuse to live up to its responsibility and refuses to respond to the crisis situation that confronts them.

So they do have a choice. The choice is probably too late now for them to avert job action tomorrow but I would hope that they will learn from what has been said here today, and what will be said over the next number of days, and that they will sit down with the child care association and it will begin an honest dialogue, an open dialogue, a forthright dialogue that leads them not immediately to the solutions but to the path along which they will find those solutions, and they can over a period of time respond to the many urgent needs that are out there.

So let them not suggest that it is anyone else's fault but their own and let it be known very clearly that if they just sit down and respond in a positive way, rather than in a threatening way, or rather than in an arrogant way, rather than in an obstinate way, perhaps they will be able to communicate with those people out there who share our common goal, providing good day care, good child care to Manitoba's children and to our families and be able to resolve the issues over the longer term so that we do not have to, in a few weeks time, stand up in this House and undergo this process again. As unproductive as it may be, I think it is one that can find some solutions and can generate some solutions if the Government is willing to sit down and take that which they have learned today and apply it to the crisis that confronts them.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am prompted to put a few words on the record on this issue. I take from the Honourable Member for Churchill's (Mr. Cowan) comments, when he said that the best child care system in the country is what we have, or in the world, if that is what he said, that we have here in Manitoba, and simply add to it,

has been improved in an unprecedented manner within the 16-month lifespan of this Government by means of a 45 percent increase, a \$13 million injection of new money. That is the reality.

* (2020)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those of us who deal in the business of politics also understand, and particularly those of us who have been around awhile, that perception all too often is more important than reality. What we are seeing played out today, and have been for the last couple of weeks, is the cynical exploitation of that all too true fact of life that we have to live with that in politics and in public affairs, perception, regrettably, all too often is more important than reality.

Reality cannot be argued with. The reality is that this Government has done more for day care in 16 months. The reality is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Conservative Governments in Manitoba have done more for day care in the relatively short period of time that they have had the stewardship of the affairs of Manitoba. That includes the four years of the Lyon administration and the 16 months of this administration in the last 15 years in terms of dedication of provincial resources. That is the reality.

My honourable friends know that in the perception they have managed to portray that image that Conservatives do not care. In fact, they even manage to distort, and I acknowledge it, occasionally one hears from this side that quaint old fashioned concept, and I really do not even want to mention it, that somehow parents have some responsibility for children, but forget about it, expunge that from the record. Occasionally, I acknowledge, it does come from the mouths, I say, Sir, when it does, it does so for understandable reasons, because we, as I think all parents do, love their children and are worried about their care.

The simple fact of the matter, and that has to be said over and over and over again, and will be said over and over again, this administration has responded in a way that begs comparison.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no other division, no other segment, no other facet of Government has enjoyed the kind of percentage increase that child care has received. The overall priorities that we all recognize in the Department of Health, the importance of education, the importance of, yes, roads receiving certainly increases in the two budgets that this administration has presented to this House—

An Honourable Member: Including the Premier's staff.

Mr. Enns: —including that staff, that is referred to by the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) from his seat.

None of them as important as those priorities are have received the real increases in dedication of resources than child care.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what are we debating here? What is the issue here? The issue is that they believe they can build on that unfair and then correct

perception, that quite frankly, particularly our friends of the New Democratic Party have skillfully used in all too many elections, that Conservative Governments throw senior citizens out of housing, that we close down hospitals, that we do not build personal care homes, that in general we do not worry about the social safety net that a modern society, and particularly those of us living in Manitoba have, over the years, built together for the security of those in need in this province. They build on that general perception, and they have, I must acknowledge with some regret, all too often succeeded.

They are not succeeding in the current issue of day care, because the facts simply speak too loudly for themselves. At no time has my Premier (Mr. Filmon), at no time has the Minister responsible refused to sit down and talk, negotiate and discuss the overall plans, the longer-term plans, of the provision of day care in this province.

What my Premier has suggested, and I think a position that is accepted generally within the broader society of Manitoba, that one enters into these discussions in good faith and with a degree of reasonableness, not under the threat of strike action or withdrawal of services. That position has been made clear time and time again by the Premier, by the Minister. Every time that position has been stated, it has been clearly indicated that there was a willingness to meet with and in fact there is a working group meeting with the greater people involved in the provision of day care at this very time.

* (2025)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Opposition will do what they think they have to do. We will continue to rise in our places and take every advantage of stating the very obvious straightforward fact. We do so because there may be some down sides to it. I can think of many other facets of Government service that would be only too happy to have received that kind of attention, a 45 percent increase of dedication to their resources in 16 months, \$13 million in actual cash.

I think of people who are on waiting lists for cardiac surgery. I know my Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is struggling with those problems and will be announcing, if we can get onto his Health Estimates and start dealing with those important issues of the day and examine the plans he has for provision of improved health service in the Province of Manitoba, these kinds of issues. I can tell you that he and, I am sure, hospital administrators across this province would be only too happy with that kind of an increase to their respective budgets, as would the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), as would many other of the services that Government provides.

So I simply think that if we persist, as we will in constantly reminding the Manitoba taxpayer that in the 16 months that this Government has had the responsibility, they have in unmistakable terms shown their priority for the care of the children in this province. A 45 percent increase in actual funding, funding that these same taxpayers have had to pay because it does not come from some money tree in somebody's back

yard. When you ask people on the street, when you ask your neighbour over the coffee bar, and when I visit with my constituents whether it is teachers or nurses or farmers who I speak to, that kind of an increase in funding in a 16-month period simply cannot be in any way distorted, in any way construed as being insensitive to day care needs, as being insensitive to the needs of our children, as not caring for those who are very important to all of us in this province.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition Members can continue on this course, but they invite and give us the opportunity that we must and will take full advantage of, to remind Manitobans the outstanding record in terms of child care that this minority Government has undertaken in its short 16 months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Norbert, has the floor.

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): I thank the Members of the Chamber for this opportunity to address, and I would like to respond specifically to the most recent speaker in that if he asked and I suspect that he asked tongue-in-cheek, he asked facetiously, it is perhaps one of those rhetorical questions, why are we here?

The reason that we are here is that there is a crisis in the day care centre. Whether it is accurate, whether it is real, or whether it is perceived, we have serious, logical, honest, hard-working individual citizens having to resort to a demonstration to bring their point home to the Government. They have asked repeatedly, and they have suggested repeatedly that the Government has refused to meet with them.

* (2030)

Now nobody wants to negotiate and nobody can negotiate properly in good faith under duress. I respect the Government for suggesting that they are put in a difficult position when a group of individuals hang a threat over their head such as a strike. If they give in to a strike action, they give in to that type of radical behaviour. What is going to happen is ultimately every organization and every individual that has a cause or wants to motivate the Government to provide some benefits that they perceive they require are going to hold the same hammer to their head and that is not a good way. That is not a good way.- (interjection)-

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just through you to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), if he would shut his mouth and be quiet, he might learn something.

Unfortunately far too many of the Government bench Members are taking a far-right radical approach. We have a position tomorrow where we have a number of individuals who have voluntarily taken an action that is unprecedented. They do not want to take it. They do not want to walk out. They want to be able to sit down and negotiate a plan, and this Government when they came in, in their original throne speech, said they were prepared to review the processes.

They pointed guilty fingers at the NDP and suggested that it is clearly their fault, that they have left such a mess that we cannot do anything about it, and before

we take any serious action we are going to form a task force to review the whole situation, and they did. They formed a task force. I presume that they hand-picked the individuals to participate in that, because they are honest, they are knowledgeable, they are sincere, and they are probably Tories.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they toured this province. They spent a considerable amount of money and a considerable amount of time. It dragged on. I personally made representations at those committees. I went in and talked to them about what I felt were legitimate needs of those individuals who had legitimate needs for day care, and I also talked about those people who were ripping off the system and were abusing the system and should be charged more for the day care services that they are demanding.

This same group sat patiently and waited. They waited for the Government to do something. That task force went through the province, over an extended period of time, then took a considerable amount of time to write their report, then they submitted their report. Some of the very positive, legitimate, realistic recommendations included the concerns that were expressed about the staffing and the remuneration to the staff workers in those child care centres.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government was not satisfied with that particular report. They did not like those specific recommendations so they referred it to another group to interpret and to determine the specifics of those recommendations, and they are trying to work them out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people have been patient. They are getting no response, no co-operation, and no effort from the Government. They seem to get no positive reinforcement that there is any form of anything more than buck passing happening here and that is not right, and it is not fair.

(Mr. Roch, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I do not condone a work stoppage for any reason. There has got to be room in the system for individuals to be able to bring their concerns to a forum, to a round table, to sit down and logically discuss what the problems are and what they can be doing to resolve them.

When two sides entrench radical views, the Government refuses to budge, refuses to communicate, refuses to negotiate and talk, and the other group sees nothing for them to do but to have a symbolic strike for a one-day episode. It is a tragedy. It is poor management, Mr. Acting Speaker. If we cannot find common ground with these people, there is something drastically wrong. We do not do it behind closed doors. We do not do it by buck passing. We do it by sitting down and legitimately airing the concerns.

Mr. Acting Speaker, unless one of these sides, either the Government is prepared to make some concessions and sit down with these people, or the day care workers accept their fate and their lot, then the feet are going to be driven in and they are not going to be coming to some common ground. That will be a real tragedy, because we do have a large number of legitimate people who have children—

An Honourable Member: I think you are using the term "advised."

Mr. Angus: Mr. Acting Speaker, this is a very serious issue, and it is unfortunate that we have come to a situation where tomorrow there is going to be an awful lot of disruption in an awful lot of people's lives.

I find it is an unforgivable position to be in. I do not like the position that the day care centres have taken in terms of trying to force the hand, but when all else fails, when it comes down to a position, you have to use those rules that are at your fingertips to be able to press home your message. Just as we felt compelled to bring this message to the Government today by creating a matter of urgent public importance, it was a tool that was available to us to try and drive home and to try and force some common sense into the Government.

There have been numerous good suggestions from this side of the House in terms of trying to sit down and resolve this problem, an independent person established by both groups to sit down and review and come to a reasonable compromise, a reasonable understanding and/or a game plan that will bridge that gap between the concerns they have right now and the implementation or the beginning of the plan that the Government is going to be bringing in.

It sounds to me like a fairly concrete proposal, but perhaps, Mr. Acting Speaker, we can do one more. Maybe we can move to some form of an all-Party committee in an open session so we can hear what the people have to say and hear what the Government has to say as to what they are going to do.

It seems to me that the Government has closed their ears and closed their minds and decided, for whatever reasons, that they do not want to continue to negotiate with these people under any circumstances. Any opportunity they can find to delay, to put off, to not pay attention to their demands is what they are doing.

* (2040)

Problems do not go away by ignoring them. The problem is simply going to escalate and it is going to become a more serious problem unless we are prepared to come back to the table, sit down and look at this thing logically, look at it factually, look at it reasonably, and take a number of things into consideration. Yes, it may mean that the Government has to give some concessions to help these people bridge that gap, as I say, between the concerns they have right now and where the planning, the long-range plans that the Government intends to introduce, come into place.

Maybe the people who are making the demands, who are sitting at that table are going to have to make some concessions too. They are going to have to withdraw their threats of strikes and work stoppages and that sort of thing, because that is not going to get them very far.

They want to solve the problem. They want to come to the table. They want to talk intelligently and they want to hear what the Government has to say. They

want to hear what the Premier has to say; they want to hear what the front bench has to say. They want to hear what the Minister has to say, and they would like to see some concrete feedback as to where they can expect to be going and how they are going to work through this very unfortunate problem. Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern, and Native Affairs): Let me add some of the thoughts and concerns that I have, because I believe my colleague from Lakeside (Mr. Enns) probably placed it on the record very well.

What we have before us is the perception that has been pent up by the New Democratic Party, and now followed today by the Liberal Party again, to leave in the minds of the people that the Conservative Party and the Government are hard right wingers who really do not care about the care of children, that 45 percent increase, \$13 million increase over the last year and a half is some way being hard-hearted as it comes to dealing with the care workers, the workers who look after our children.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am sure that the majority of Manitobans out there are hearing that message. I am sure they are hearing very loud and clearly what we are saying, that there is a 45 percent increase and a \$13 million increase over the last year and a half of our Government. That is not falling on deaf ears. People are listening, and what they say when they hear that, they are saying, well, what else is wrong, what else is wrong?

If there are those major problems, they did not develop in the last year and a half. Maybe we have some other problems that have to be dealt with because it is not just money. It is not just money, it is the pent up exercising of the New Democratic Party who are now supported by the Liberals in this issue.

There is one other thing though that I have to put on the record today, and that is what is becoming more of the normal in this House, becoming a very normal practice of the two opposition Parties and that is to continually disobey and disregard the Rules of this Chamber. That is probably a far greater concern, I think, to this House than it is any other fact at this particular time.- (interjection)- Well, Stanley Knowles, the return of Stanley Knowles to the Chamber sitting in the back, from Thompson, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The bottom line is the disregard for the Speaker, disregard for the Rules to simply pent up this issue for the political purposes of the New Democratic Party and the Liberals, but let us go back specifically to the situation that we are at. We are at a situation where we have the Conservative Government of this province who our No. 1 concern is quality day care. I have not heard many people talk about that from the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Quality day care and availability of day care has to be paramount. To achieve that you have to pay the people who are carrying out the activities of caring for

the children adequately. What have we done, Mr. Speaker? We have added to the enhancement grant some \$550 for this year, raising the pay to some \$16,000 to \$18,000 for those people who are looking after the children. I think that is a significant move to correct an injustice that did not pop up in the last year and a half.

Why was there not a strike or a job action a year and a half ago, or two years ago when we were in Opposition? Why did it not happen then? That is the question, Mr. Speaker, because we were carrying out a responsible role in Opposition. Yes, we were carrying out a responsible role of Opposition. We cared about the children; we cared about the system. We did not use the kind of tactics that the current opposition Members are using.- (interjection)-

The Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said we rang bells for two weeks. We rang them for longer than that, and that was for 85 percent of the people of Manitoba that supported us on that particular issue. Because he was wrong-headed and did not want to listen to the people of Manitoba, because he was so wrong-headed and went in the opposite direction to 85 percent of the people did not mean to say we had to succumb to his socialist and his left-wing tactics of shoving down the throats of the people of Manitoba something that they did not want in a constitutional change. Yes, we won. It took us time, but we finally won and now we are sitting in the position of Government.

* (2050)

Mr. Speaker, I think that it has been very clear. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) has made very clear to all the representatives of the child care workers in this province that we are prepared to sit down and meet. We are prepared to sit down and meet in a responsible way and discuss their wages and any other issues that they want to talk about, but we are not going to do it with job action being their move that is evident. Well, why not, Mr. Speaker? Does that mean to say that every time we are to negotiate, somebody wants to walk out and create a job action, that we have to respond?

No, Mr. Speaker. Our position is very clear. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) has made our position very clear and we are very supportive of it. Let me tell you something else. I was upset today at the Leader of the Second Opposition Party (Mr. Doer)—and still falling by the way, we want to make that very clear—the New Democratic Party who once governed this province for so many years is now ready to go totally into oblivion. Well, that is true.

The point I want to make is the fact that we are prepared to meet. We are prepared to discuss the long-term solutions. We are prepared to do those things that will guarantee quality child care in the long term. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition put something on the record today that was very upsetting when he made reference to the fact, he almost made reference to the fact, that all Members were getting a tremendous number of phone calls about child care and that we should take some immediate action.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I have not received one phone call that would be supportive of the New Democratic position and/or the Liberal position either from northern Manitoba—in fact, I have had close communication with the people from northern Manitoba. Yes, they have some specific concerns, but I have never heard them come through the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). The only thing the Member for Thompson talks about is how small a raise they are getting. The worker needs more money. He has never talked about the particular child care or the interests of the overall community. That has never been put on the record. I have talked to them very carefully about some of their concerns. What are some of their concerns? Probably—(interjection)—well, if the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) does not have enough parliamentary experience to sit and listen, then he will continue to be the kind of poor representative that he has been over the last many years.

What is this light flashing for? Is that because the Member for Thompson does not know what he is talking about, that that light is flashing? I am sure that is what it is.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister has one minute remaining.

Mr. Downey: I will conclude in one minute by saying the people from Thompson want more day care spaces. That is what they are asking for. They want 24-hour day care spaces to look after those people who have to work night shifts. Twenty-five percent of them voted for pay increases. That is what the vote was several weeks ago. I think he is fomenting the issue probably greater than anybody else in this House. He is not truly reflecting what his constituents want. We will see what happens tomorrow when the walkout takes place in Thompson. We will watch very carefully what is happening there.

I find it unfortunate that Members of the Legislature would use the young people of this province to better their political positions. That is precisely what we are seeing happen from the New Democratic Party

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): I am pleased to rise today and put my few words on the record as well. I do not think anybody is trying to foment strikes. I do not think the people who voted in favour of the strikes really wanted to vote in favour of strikes. Unfortunately, they have to rattle the cages, so to speak, of the people who sit opposite us. That their concerns fall on deaf ears, that they are not being listened to—oh, sure, there are task forces, that is their style. Let us have a task force and let us get the report and let us look at it, and then we will reorganize another committee that will sit down and listen again and then we will have another committee that will sit down and put some things on paper. You really wonder whether, when they listen to the public, do they implement any of the things that these people have brought to them? If there are concerns that are raised, legitimate concerns, are they going to listen to them?

When the Honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) said something to the effect that child care should

be the responsibility of the parents, we agree with him. Certainly child care is the responsibility of the parents, and the responsible parent wants to find good day care spaces. They want to have individuals who are looking after their children paid in an appropriate manner, not less than the people who look after the animals in the zoo. That is in fact what they are paid.

I have often wondered what happens to the child when they are four years old, or three years old. The person responsible for them is paid around 16,000, 16,500, maybe 17,000 a year, but when that child reaches the magic age of five, all of a sudden the kindergarten teachers are paid \$24,000, or the average teacher's salary in Manitoba which is over \$39,000 a year, the average teacher's salary.

I wonder what the average day care worker's salary is. Somebody said to me just last week, why are you equating day care worker wages with teachers' salaries? Why are you not equating them with the salaries of babysitters? That is the impression that some of the people on the other side of the House have, that these are just babysitters. These are people who have gone to university, who have been students in human ecology, who have gone to Red River Community College, these are people who have had, some of them, a number of years of post-secondary education. They are well qualified, well educated young men and women.

Like many of the people opposite, I have a daughter or two. I am sure that some of the people on the other side of the House have as well. Are we encouraging our young women to go on to post-secondary education? I think probably the majority of you would agree, yes we are. Do we want these people to take two, three, five, seven, nine years of post-secondary education and not have the opportunity to utilize that education they have worked very hard to obtain? I would suggest probably, no. Like many of the other people in this House, I went on to school after high school and I was fortunate in that I was always able to have a part-time, albeit a part-time position.

I think it is very difficult for a young mother to stay at home with her children, which is where I think some of the Members opposite feel that all young mothers should be at home all day long, every day with their children, and then 20 years later miraculously reappear in the world of work outside the home. That is very difficult. There are some young mothers who are able to do that, but it is far easier—

An Honourable Member: Some choose to.

* (2100)

Mrs. Yeo: —and far better, some choose to, a Member says. Yes, some choose to and I do not knock that at all. I think that is tremendous if a young mother wishes to stay at home with her child.

Who are we to say that is what all young mothers must do? If those young women and young men choose to have careers outside the home, I think it is the responsibility of all of us here in this Chamber to be sure that there are adequate spaces for these children,

to be sure that the people who are entrusted to care for these children have an adequate wage, a wage that is appropriate to the level of education at which they have been educated.

I do not believe that is true today. I do not believe that \$16,000 a year adequately expresses the appreciation that we should have for these people who are looking after the citizens of tomorrow, the citizens who someday hopefully will be paying the pensions of all of the people here in this particular House.

I think that there have been grants, the Government has provided some grants, some start-up grants. I think that is important, but I think even more important than that, they have to look at what they are asking these people to do for what particular salary. I think it would be so easy for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) to sit down with representatives of this group and try and amicably work out some sort of plan, some plan for a month, two months, for year one down the road. I think the day care workers are saying, we do not see that kind of vision being put forward. That to me is unfortunate.

I agree it is unfortunate we have to stop the routine procedures of the House in order to get the point across, but that seems to be the only way that we can get the point across. The process of Estimates is an important one and I am looking forward to going through that particular area. I hope one of these days we will reach that, but unfortunately we have to sort of shake things up a bit in order for the Government to sit back and take some sort of notice.

I was upset, along with many others of us, when we heard about Mary Humphrey, the Director of the Child Day Care and her possible removal from her position. I think that is a really unfortunate situation.

Today I was briefly at the consumers reception downstairs. I must commend the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connery) for organizing that particular event.- (interjection)- The Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) asked, did he invite me? Yes, he did, because it was one of my constituents who was named the consumer of the year, and I am very, very proud of Joan Friesen.

But in the brief time that I was there I spoke with some of the Members of CAC and they said to me, you know, we are upset because of the Government's stand on the Child Care Worker III. Who is going to teach the child care workers of tomorrow? Who are going to be the administrators of the child care centres?

There are all kinds of things, mismanagement, that are brought to our attention. All kinds of people are saying to us, you know, the Government does not understand that we are moving into the year 2000. The years 2000 and 2001 and 2010 are rapidly approaching and we have to prepare for them. Instead of moving along at a snail's pace, could we not be in the forefront and could we not be, as we were a while ago, the model for Canadian child care worker programs and Canadian child care workers? Unfortunately, tomorrow we will be the model, but the type of model that we would rather

not be, the type of model that we would like to apologize for.

We have to look at monitoring of standards. Is the Government doing that? Are they concerned about the standards of the Child Care Worker Programs? One sometimes wonders when you hear about things like the Raggedy-Ann Day Care Centre. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Maureen Hemphill (Logan): Mr. Speaker, I rise, as other Members of this Chamber, to add some comments to this very important debate and one that we all are saying that we wish that we did not have to have, and one that is a little hard to understand why we are having and why we have to have. Since everybody in this Chamber is agreeing on the main point and that is that day care workers are underpaid, that they are not given an adequate salary right now for either their experience, their training, or the importance of the job that they are doing, and that something has to be done to make it better.

One would wonder, with that general consensus by everybody, why there is a problem in sitting down and coming up with a co-operative solution. One of the Members of Government said, you know, what is the issue and why are we here? The issue I think is this, that is, although they are saying the right words and that they recognize that more has to be done in this area, that there is not enough money in the salaries, and they are lauding themselves for what they have put in the other areas, and we can give them credit for that, but the question is not just the total amount of money, but where it is going. There is not an adequate amount going in to increasing the salaries of the day care workers.

What is missing is the Government's willingness to indicate their intentions, not to throw money on the table tomorrow or not to top up from the \$15,700 that is the average day care worker's salary, not the \$18,000 that has been suggested, which surely must include the administrators and the supervisors in averaging the salaries, because the average salary is \$15,700, is what is their intention to take it, to meet the recommendations and over what period of time. I think it is really unfortunate because they could have had this discussion prior to either the calling of the strike or even an indication by the industry that they felt they were being forced into that position. There was lots of time and lots of warning before the Government was forced into the position of having to state that we cannot be pressed against the wall. We cannot make a decision or go to the bargaining table when people are threatening.

I think if you ran around and threw millions of dollars at it that you might be raising some questions of people in the public in other areas where there are high needs and they are asking for money, but I think if this Government sat down even tomorrow morning, if they had sat down today, and said we will sit down to develop the plan and we will tell you what we are going to do in the next fiscal year. With a crisis like this looming, why cannot they say we put \$500 in last year at a certain point, and six months later we put another \$500 in, that was good, that was a good start. Now if you

had just been willing to say, this is what we are going to do in April, maybe you would put a thousand in, and maybe six months later you would give it another boost. What you would do in the second year, you might have had a package that would have been totally acceptable to the day care workers and that could have prevented this disruption in services.

You know when we look at the cost of training and the number of our workers who are taking the two-year training that we require because we decided when we set up the day care system that we wanted trained, qualified, professional standards and trained, professional, qualified people looking after children. The development of our young children is absolutely critical and cannot just be done by anybody. You have to know about the psychological, physical, social, and emotional development of children when you have got them for such a long period of the day and such an important time of their life.

So we made that decision that you have to be trained. We set up the training program and said, two years of training, and two-thirds of you in every day care system have to be trained. You have to meet those standards. It is important that in the package, the day care package, that when we are putting money into it we are addressing that in, say, this budget year, and addressing it in the long term and telling them what we intend to do.

* (2110)

Do you know what the salary is based on, Mr. Speaker? You will probably be surprised to hear this. It is not based on education, and it is not based on experience. No, it is based on whatever is left over after they have paid all of their other operating costs. They take that money and divide it up among the day care workers. Now if they decide to offer a hot lunch, as many of them in the inner city do because they feel it is very important and may be the only hot meal that some of those young children get, they make that decision and they are actually taking the hot lunch money out of the salary money, because if they do that then there is less money left to divide up to pay the salaries for workers. I think we have to find ways to allow hot lunches where they are needed and to allow decent salaries for the trained and educated staff.

It is not to our advantage to lose them. The other thing that is happening is we are training them two years. They want to look after children. They want to do that kind of service. They are trained, they are capable, they are highly committed and they are leaving, sometimes after they have only been in for a couple of years.

An Honourable Member: Why?

Ms. Hemphill: Because they cannot feed their own family. Because a lot of them are single parent mothers. A lot of them are the food providers for their own family, and they cannot raise their family and look after the family on the salary so they are leaving, and then we have to train somebody. It takes two more years to take that person's place while they are out in the field

doing a non-professional job for which they can get a usually much higher level of salary.

There is another area where this Government has shown, I think maybe even more so, a lack of care and concern for care giving agencies, because many of the parent and child centres, who are a day care centre of sorts, are going under for the lack of this Government's recognition of the important job they are doing and willingness to fund them while they try and decide whether it is an education function or a family service function. They are falling through the cracks and the day cares are going to close. Single-parent mothers who are getting tremendous support are going to be in a very difficult position, but they do not seem to care about that either, because they are just literally letting them go down the tube.

This is not a situation where the Government needs to be embarrassed about taking a reasonable fair position and just agreeing to meet and say, we will sit down and work out with you our plans for the next two or three years. We will tell you what the funding levels will be, and then we can see whether their intentions are to move towards the recommendations in their own task force report and the absence. What is causing the crisis right now is the lack of willingness of this Government to indicate their intentions.

Surely that is not such a big thing for a Government to be willing to do, under such circumstances, to indicate what their intentions are to the day care workers, and I think they will find them reasonable. I do not think they want to be out on strike. I think they would find them willing to sit down and willing to accept a reasonable package where they would move towards a reasonable salary over a period of time.

I ask them to reconsider this confrontationalist, antagonistic approach and to do what not only child care workers would like them to do, parents would like them to do, but the public would accept, that is, sit down and work out a reasonable plan.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation): Mr. Speaker, I have somewhat mixed feelings about standing to speak to this resolution, or whatever was introduced by the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), because I really do feel that we have had ample opportunity to discuss this issue.

I do believe that Government has made a commitment to the day care community and, Mr. Speaker, the walkout that is planned to take place tomorrow by the day care workers may in fact go ahead, but that is not going to stop this Government's commitment from sitting down and determining a long-range strategy for funding of day care.

When I talk about funding of day care, I am talking about the funding and the increased funding for day care workers. I am talking about making day care spaces more flexible and more accessible.

I have been out in my constituency knocking on doors over the last three weeks or so, and I have not come to one door in my constituency that has expressed a concern like the concern that the New Democratic Party

and the Liberal Party are fomenting in this Legislature about the crisis in the day care situation.

The concerns that my constituents have are the concerns about the lack of part-time spaces. A lot of nurses live in my constituency and they work on a part-time basis to supplement their family income. They do not choose to work on a full-time basis, but they still cannot find the part-time space available for those who work shift work and want to have the accessibility of a quality child care space that meets and suits their needs, and we are working towards resolving some of that problem.

It was a problem that the NDP, when they were in power, did not address at all, and that is one of the flaws within the system to this day. Mr. Speaker, we are attempting to address that. Along with the long-range plan for workers, we are going to look at a long-range plan for more spaces, more accessible spaces, and more flexible spaces for those women who want to get out in the work force and do not have the opportunity because there are not spaces there.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I would like to point out, and I do not think that it has been pointed out to date, the most a family can pay to this day in a non-profit subsidized space is, I believe, around \$14 per day to have their child looked after. When you break that down into an hourly salary, you have a family that is paying \$1.75 per hour to have their child looked after in a quality day care space with specialized qualified staff looking after their children.

The Member from the Liberal Party from Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) indicated that we had had at times compared day care workers to baby-sitters. Well, I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, I pay \$3 per hour to a 15-year-old unqualified person to baby-sit my children when I go out for an evening and maybe pay \$30 or \$40 or \$50 to go to a dinner or to a movie, or whatever. Mr. Speaker, I pay that unqualified person \$3 per hour, and yet we have families that make \$100,000 per year combined income, and they are paying \$1.75 per hour to have their children looked after in a quality day care space with qualified children (sic).

Now I ask you whether the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylcia-Leis) or the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill) or the Member for Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) feels that is an adequate amount to pay. Obviously, they are not giving full credit to those qualified workers who deserve more. I believe that if families are in the triple-income numbers—over \$100,000 per year—family income, it is the responsibility of those families to pay a little more than \$1.75 per hour to have their children looked after in a quality way while they go out to work when there are many people who can go out for an evening of fun of some sort and pay \$3 an hour to an unqualified, whoever that might be.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Minister.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Another comment, Mr. Speaker, that was made by the Member for Sturgeon Creek when

she said that someone, when they are four years old, has to accept being looked after by someone who only makes \$16,000 a year, but when you are five years old and you go into the school system, you are looked after by a teacher who makes \$30,000 a year. There are many babies, infants, one-year-old, two-year-old, three-year-old and four-year-old children who are looked after in their home by their own parents, and that parent is not making \$16,000 a year, they are making nothing, and they are looking after those children in a quality way in their own home. There are many mothers who might not have an excess of education, but they do know how to look after their own children. They are quite qualified and quite competent and can give their children the nurturing and the care that they need and that they deserve. So we are not comparing apples to apples when we say that a four-year-old child must be looked after by someone who earns an income of \$30,000 per year. Quite frankly, there are many women who are qualified and competent and capable of looking after children, who make much less than \$16,000 per year. As a matter of fact, they stay home and they look after their children.

* (2120)

Mr. Speaker, I happen to be one of those women who is a working mother and has a young family at home. I can afford to pay for quality care within my home and I choose to do that. There are many families, and large families, with five or six members who are presently with the subsidy, or the tax dollars that go to day care.

Mr. Speaker, \$42 million per year, we spend as a province on day care. So that means that a family of five who has no child in the day care system is paying over \$200 per year to subsidize somebody else's child or children in the day care system. There are women that choose to stay at home and only have one family income and yet they are subsidizing those that have two parents that are in the work force, subsidizing their children in day care. There has to be some consideration given.

Mr. Speaker, there is one point that I do want to make because I did hear a letter read on CJOB the other morning that indicated that there had to be some consideration given when we are looking at the whole day care picture. We are looking at increasing salaries for day care workers. We should also be looking at some type of subsidy for those mothers that are staying at home looking after their own children.

So I think in the overall picture and the overall context of caring for all children throughout the Province of Manitoba, there are many more things that need to be taken into consideration over the long range on the long term for the benefit of all children and for all parents.

So I think that we are on the right course. We are going to make the right decisions. We are going to make some long-range decisions. Even if the strike goes ahead tomorrow that does not mean that our commitment is not there as a Government to make the day care system a better system. We will continue

to work towards that no matter what threat is hung over our heads, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue as a responsible Government to make the decisions that are in the best interest of the children of this province of Manitoba no matter what happens tomorrow or what happens in subsequent times. So I would advise the child care community to sit down with Government as we have offered to do and look towards the long-term planning. Salaries for day care workers is only one issue.

There are many issues. As I have indicated before, there is flexibility, accessibility, day care spaces for part-time workers, and day care spaces for shift workers, that all have to be addressed in the overall context and the overall picture.

Mr. Speaker, when the day care community is ready to sit down with Government and address all of those issues in a common-sense approach, then we will be able to make some headway and some inroads into the problems that presently exist. I ask them to accept Government's offer to sit down and look at the long-term strategy for the benefit of all children in this province and all working parents. Thank you.

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate as some of the Members of the Government have said that this matter is for debate a second time, unfortunate in the sense that it is evident that although Members of the Government have been sitting here and sitting some time ago during the previous debate on this issue, were sitting, but were they actually hearing? They could have been listening, but were they actually hearing? This type of crisis management is becoming more and more and more often seen in this province, and how this Government is managing this province, and for a Party that ran last year in an election saying they were going to be the managers of this province. They were going to show us how to run a peanut stand.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not even sure if they would be able to organize a group of peanuts in a row, never mind run a whole stand. This is indeed a concern becoming an increasingly greater concern for all Manitobans, and we see very often in this House matters by this Government, as just discussed by the previous speaker the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson), issues being reduced to numbers. We hear in response to questions, this Government responding to various issues, well, we have had this many people employed more than we had last year. We have this number or that number, well, I think what is being forgotten in this issue as well as many others is that behind those numbers, Mr. Speaker, are people.

When we look through the whole list of issues raised in this House, we see crisis after crisis appearing before us. The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who often hops about in his seat, giggling, commenting and laughing at various issues raised by Members of the Opposition; how many crises keep appearing on a weekly if not daily basis in the Department of Health? The whole issue—the fiasco of the psychiatrists from Selkirk, that

is but one very crisp example of how this Government manages its services being provided to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, that is incredible for a group of people that prided themselves in running a peanut stand. Again what is being forgotten, what is one here, what is another number there, are the people that are being affected.

Another issue coming out of this same department that we have under debate today is the whole issue of foster parents, not very long ago. Is this again a repeat? It is incredible that, again out of the same department, we have another issue that is going to have to be raised on the steps of this Legislature and not dealt with before in a proper manner.

We looked at rural development, the Minister could not even respond on how his decentralization committee is being run. A plan of action was being suggested by the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak), and the Minister responsible for Rural Development (Mr. Penner) agreed that was a good plan of how they should run that committee. Indeed I certainly look to the Minister to respond and see how often that committee has actually met—another crisis.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

Too bad that Governments in this province and across Canada have gone to the point of waiting for crises to happen affecting many people adversely, perhaps for Ministers of the Crown to have photo opportunities, to then appear before the people and say I had that solution. That is a danger in our society that Governments are being run in that way. I believe Manitobans expect a little better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the great changes to society that we have seen is how the family looks after itself. As a barrister and solicitor in this province I have handled many a situation in the family law area where I have seen family breakdown, and the results of that on the spouses, on the children, on the extended family. I believe that these changes to families, and that is but one example, as well as an increase in the number of women in the work force is another impact on the family. I think that as society has changed over the years, Government has also had to change in that child care has indeed become one of the services being provided by Government to its citizens.

* (2130)

Another service that is a result from changes to families are things like home care services provided to our seniors. Where again, as my parents looked after me when I was younger, I certainly anticipate assisting them when they get a little older. They expect that, and I anticipate that. I feel that is also the responsibility that I have to my parents as they had to theirs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have to recognize that families indeed have changed, families have moved apart. Families now live across this country and indeed around the world, and that Government has had to respond to these changes with the result in an increase in services being provided to Manitobans. I do not think that anyone in this House has certainly argued about

this point, but I particularly object when some of the Government Members have raised the issue of abusing the Rules of this House.

The Opposition has indeed followed the Rules of this House, the people who have drafted the Rules of this House, and we, as those drafters, can indeed change them if so necessary. We can indeed change them, and yet when Members, including the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and others in the front and second and third row, constantly get up and say you are abusing the Rules of the House, when they know full well, as having spent a number of years here, and earlier last week we heard that it was an anniversary for a number of the Members who have used these same Rules of this House for their own purposes. Yet they have the audacity of standing and speaking that we have abused the Rules. The Rules are in place to bring forward into debate in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, various issues of importance to Members in this House. That is not an abuse of the Rules. The Rules indeed set out in black and white for all Members to see exactly how this House can be run.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it shows no disrespect, as some of the Members opposite like to point out, to the Honourable Speaker, and the occupant of the Chair at the front of this Chamber.

It is indeed unfortunate that Manitobans have before them a Government that operates from crisis to crisis so their Members, their Ministers, can then arrive before and say I now have the solution, because that provides them with a photo opportunity. Would it not indeed be better—and I would ask all Honourable Members of the Government, Members of the front and second and third bench—if Ministers of this Crown and this Government were to look in their department and understand. Perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the problem, they do not seem to understand their departments, and maybe the crises arise as a result of that.

I would certainly call on this Government to perhaps become a little bit more involved in their departments so they can indeed better manage these departments so that crises do not arise and Manitobans are not adversely affected.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I want tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to try and summarize the reasons for our caucus's decision to pursue this motion today and to call for this emergency debate, and to do so twice in a one-month period. I want to try, at this eleventh hour, on the eve of an unprecedented development in the history of this province, and indeed quite an unprecedented development in the history of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to spend my time tonight talking about the Liberals eating pizza late at night or the Conservatives trying to eat crow today. I do not want to talk about the ambivalence of the Liberals on this issue or the hard-line right-wing position of the Conservatives, and I do not want to talk about the NDP record because that record speaks for itself.

In doing so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in trying not to sidetrack from this serious issue or deflect attention

away from the serious issue at hand, I hope that Government Members and in fact all Members of this House will not prejudge the motives of Members on this side of the House, in the New Democratic Caucus, and will not continue to discredit the serious attempts on our part to do our job as legislators, to do our job representing the serious concerns of a significant number of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would be doing the same if there was one person involved expressing a serious concern about the direction of Government policy or if, as it is in this case, thousands of Manitobans up in arms. As it is, the issue at hand is one that is very urgent and of utmost public importance.

We are faced with an emergency situation. We are on the eve of a crisis, not only in the day care community but indeed a crisis facing all working families in Manitoba. It is a real issue, it is not something concocted by a few individuals for political purposes. We may disagree on the priority an issue must receive or on the policy responses to a particular issue, but let us not cast aspersions and assign motives to Members bringing forward those concerns.

I hope that all Members in this House will understand why the New Democratic Party Caucus is raising these issues on a consistent basis, why it has felt compelled to bring forward two emergency debates within a one-month period.

I know I speak for all Members of my caucus when I say I would not be able to hold my head high or sleep at night if I was not doing my utmost to represent the very grave and serious issues of Manitoba's families and the child care community. For me and for all Members of our caucus the issues of families, of working women, of children, are among the most compelling reasons for our very being as politicians, for our very decision to be in politics in the first place. We have all said time and time again that for too long those issues have been relegated to the personal sphere of decision-making and not treated as they should be at the top of the political agenda. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I make no apologies for representing those concerns. This motion and the debate today is part of an urgent and extremely important collective effort to provide the best for the precious resources in our society, to provide for our children, to strengthen our families, to strengthen our social fabric. I make no apologies for working with my caucus to do everything in our power to avert a crisis tomorrow or every day thereafter.

The fact of the matter is, tomorrow is an emergency situation. Tomorrow is a critical matter of the highest public importance that all of us in this Legislature should be concerned about and attempting to deal in a very constructive, meaningful, positive way. We have said time and time again that tomorrow and every day that this issue is before us, children are at risk. Thousands and thousands of children are at risk, thousands and thousands of parents are put in very difficult, awkward situations and faced with much hardship. The entire day care system for which we all have a great deal of pride is at risk and that creates an emergency situation that requires our urgent attention today.

I am hopeful, with the few hours remaining this evening yet, that we will be able to convince the

Government of the Day that action is imperative and action can avert the travesty that is happening right across our province, in every corner of our province.

The issue at hand, the emergency situation facing us tomorrow and potentially days after tomorrow, has emerged over a number of months. The crisis tomorrow has emerged because the Government of the Day has failed to recognize the seriousness of the expression of those concerns by the day care community.

Some Honourable Members: Right on. Shame. They are not listening.

* (2140)

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: It follows after months and months of many attempts on the part of the Manitoba Child Care Association, on the part of concerned parents, on the part of committed legislators to express their concerns to this Government and to plead with this Government to recognize the new situation at hand, the changing circumstances we are facing as a society, and to act on those changing circumstances in a responsible sensitive way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those concerns were expressed loudly and clearly to this Government's task force. That task force clearly enunciated a plan of action that if acted upon would have addressed the concerns of the child care community. Since then, the Manitoba Child Care Association has expressed to this Government time and time again a willingness to sit down and discuss those concerns and to negotiate a settlement that will help deal with the crisis in funding in day care at present.

The Government, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province, has chosen to ignore those pleas, those waving of the olive branch, those attempts to sit down with this Government and arrive at a reasonable solution not expecting a total solution to be found of the problem overnight, but realistically expecting some concrete action, a step-by-step plan for arriving at a solution to a most serious problem.

Their concerns are not frivolous. Their concerns are not trivial and they are very widespread. Mr. Deputy Speaker, throughout this debate we have heard from Members over and over again that this is an issue confined to a small group of people, that it is an issue being promoted by an advocacy association, that it is an issue being promoted by Members in this Legislature. The facts show otherwise. I hope tonight at this eleventh hour that the Government of Manitoba, that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province, will understand that the issues are widespread and the concerns are real, that he will understand that workers are raising these issues because they cannot accept a 24-cent-an-hour increase. They cannot continue to devote their lives and expend the energies and their resources at that level of commitment from this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasylycia-Leis: If I could just conclude my remarks?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that my time will be extended to take care of the heckling from the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman).

Members opposite asked for an emergency debate. They, according to the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), were sincere in their desire to have this debate. I would hope that they would give our side the respect of listening to our comments as well. We did not interrupt the Member for St. Johns. Let us have an opportunity.

I want to begin by saying that I think it is regrettable that Members opposite continue to believe that it is in their interest to abuse the parliamentary process and the rules of this Legislature.— (interjection)— I did, I listened to the comments of the Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko), and he is dead wrong. He believes that he can change the rules anytime he wants to because together, he, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party can gang up —(interjection)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: —because together the two opposition Parties can gang up and, with force of their numbers, abuse, bend and change all the rules of this House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are dead wrong. It is an abuse of the parliamentary process. This is the third time within a month that they have occasioned an emergency debate contrary to the rules of this House, contrary to the Speaker's ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact of the matter is that they are abusing the rules of the House. They are essentially showing their complete disrespect for the Speaker of this House, and they are making it a mockery to operate in this House. They are showing no interest in any of the issues that this Legislature has to deal with, not the legislation that is before it, not the Estimates of Expenditure that are before it. There are people waiting for capital budgets, there are people waiting for operating budgets to be announced in every single department that is represented by the Ministers of this Government, but they care nothing for those people out there. All they care about is trying to make some cheap political points by setting aside the normal business of this House to try and call greater attention to what they are doing in this Legislature, because everybody is ignoring their efforts. You see nobody sitting in the gallery to listen to them, because they are becoming irrelevant to the people of this province. They are simply out here to have their fun, sitting in this House and abusing the rules of this House.

Let us get to the point at hand, the day care issue that is being debated today. Is there a crisis in day care today? Is there a crisis, so as being said by the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis). Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the only crisis that we have in this House is the crisis of conscience on the part of the New Democratic Members of this House, particularly the Member for St. Johns.

I believe that the crisis is a crisis of morality of people over on that side of the House. I believe that they should

examine their morality in terms of how the New Democratic Members are handling this issue. What we have seen is the New Democratic Party attempting to put onto the Government responsibility for six and a half years of their administration. The fact of the matter is they are attempting to blame everything on this Minister, this Premier and this Government that they have occasioned to happen in day care in this province. Who underfunded salaries in this province? Who has left salaries in the position that they are today? The New Democratic Party Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Who left the child care system in a situation in which there is unfairness, imbalance and problems for the workers? The New Democratic Party, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What we have in day care, what they left for us was a system in chaos, a system of ins and outs, a system in which there were funded non-profit day cares and unfunded non-profit day cares, a system in which there were private day cares, home day cares, unfunded, left out of the system as a result of decisions made by the New Democratic Party, capital grants being given to some but not to others, operating grants being given to some day care operations but not to others, day care operations that meet the same standards, day care operations side by side that meet the same quality objectives but some get funding and some do not get funding, salary enhancement grants to some workers in day care and salary enhancement grants not to others—thousands of parents, thousands of children unable to access the quality day care system of this province because of the way in which they have set it up under the New Democratic Government.

What have we done since we have taken office in 17 short months? Given a 45 percent increase to the day care system within this province—\$13 million additional funding, 35 percent increase in salary enhancement grants in just two budgets. This is exactly what we have done for day care. The hypocrisy of the Members opposite is unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable, that the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) could in all conscience say the things that she is saying about day care when she did absolutely nothing in six and a half years as either an employee or a Minister in that Government.

* (2150)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): I do not believe it is in order for the Member opposite to be using the term “hypocrisy,” particularly when in his speech thus far he has spent no time telling about the crisis in the day care centre that is going to be taking place tomorrow.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ashton: The real issue before us today—and for the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), who is acting like

his usual buffoonery self, I would ask that he control himself.

The Conservative peanut gallery is -(interjection)-

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: Concluding my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Conservative benches will control themselves, I just wanted to say that the word “hypocrisy” is clearly on our list of unparliamentary expressions and the First Minister should withdraw that statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson does not have a point of order. The Honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to now just demonstrate the hypocrisy of the New Democrats sitting in Opposition. These are the words of the Honourable Muriel Smith in debate in Estimates on Wednesday, 20 May, 1987, when she was the Minister of Community Services responsible for day care. This is what she said about the debate that was taking place, about salary enhancement grants for workers. In responding to the suggestion that salary enhancement grants were not keeping up, they had given a \$500 salary enhancement grant that particular year, this is what she said, “To date, Government has seen fit, three years running, to provide that enhancement grant in recognition of the relatively low pay of day care workers when we started, and of the fact that over time,” over time, I want to stress that word, “we would like to see the compensation more in line with what other people are getting for comparable skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. But I would expect that would be—an annual decision made by Cabinet.”

She was suggesting that even that \$500 salary enhancement grant might not be continued—might not be continued, that is what she was suggesting. She went further on to say in that particular debate, “While we are arguing for and I think have demonstrated by our actions and our policy, our policy is our recognition of the rights of those workers over time to improve their salaries relative to other workers. After all, no social service system ever started with exact parody with other workers who have been out there.”

So she was arguing that they could not do any more, and they could not expect any more, that day care workers had to be satisfied with starting slowly and over time coming up to the levels of salary of others. That is exactly the argument she made in this particular debate. She said further, “Teachers over time have had to work very hard to get their pay up to what they thought was an equitable level, hospital workers have as well, and the day care workers and other workers

in community service areas, being latecomers to the field of social service delivery, are going through some of those early stages." She found nothing wrong in day care workers waiting and being patient to have their salaries increased. That is exactly what she was talking about. That is what the New Democrats argued when they were in Government, now they are saying, no. It has to be done instantly. We have to change this overnight, and get buckets of money into the system and change the situation. That is hypocrisy, that is pure hypocrisy by the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) and all of her New Democratic colleagues.

Let me just put on one other thing, because I know you will be interested in that, and that is what the comments were of the now Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs), when she was participating in that debate as well on Wednesday, 20 May, 1987. I quote, "First of all, let me make it perfectly clear that the federal Liberal Party is in favour of universally accessible day care and my position has always been that it is the child I would like to see the subsidy go to, not the day care centre. I am not concerned about the centre per se, nor would I provide them with maintenance grants, nor would I provide them with maintenance grants, nor would I provide them with salary enhancement grants."

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Filmon: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have hypocrisy all over the House on the opposite side, and I say to you we are committed to solve this issue, to work co-operatively with the day care workers and to tell them that we support their desires for greater salaries and that we will have to set a plan in order to do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House that it be now ten o'clock? The Honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad that I have the opportunity to speak on this particular emergency debate. I think it is of the utmost importance.

What I personally found somewhat humorous here, and it came from Minister after Minister, is the discussion of abusing the rules. Then the Premier (Mr. Filmon), himself, stated something to the effect that this is abuse of the parliamentary system. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think there has ever been a Government that I am aware of in Canada, in Australia, in anywhere in the Commonwealth that has abused the parliamentary system like this Government has in the spring of this year. We have seen a Government stand up and walk out of a committee, something that they are supposed to be responsible for, not being accountable to the people of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Premier talks about abuse of the parliamentary system, that is abuse of the parliamentary system at its finest, and this is something that you should not be proud of.

So I would not, if I were you, talk about abusing the rules of this Chamber. If you want to talk about burning

the Speaker, how many times did you, in Opposition, burn the Speaker? -(interjection)- Oh, no, no, no. Let us be truthful, you are not being completely truthful.

But anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I would like to talk about is what this Government is all about. This Government is all about confrontation and crisis management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know what this Government is all about. It is all about confrontation and crisis management, and that is what it is all about. The Premier knows it very well. We have seen it with the foster care, now we are seeing it with the child care.

Let us take a look. There are a lot of people who are unhappy with what is going on here: Family Day Care Association, the Manitoba Child Care Association, Independent Quality Day Care Association, thousands of parents, hundreds of workers. What are the results, what is happening with the children of this province, how is this crisis management affecting the children of this province?

Let us look at the results. This is incredible, it really is incredible, the type of crisis management that this Government has brought forward time after time after time. What is the result? what has this resulted in, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Tomorrow, we are going to be witnessing a demonstration at our steps.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to continue on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought an article from the Winnipeg Sun dated September 18 really sums up a problem that this particular Government has and that is its negotiation skills. It reads and I quote: Charlotte Oleson didn't go to a meeting of child care workers and parents last week, but she says she did send someone in her place— anonymously, of course. I quote what the Minister had stated: We wanted to know what the parents are thinking, Oleson said, in defence of the decision to send department employees to the meeting without informing the gathering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would seem to me that the Minister responsible for child care should be taking the opportunity and going out to meet the different organizations. She should have been meeting with these organizations months ago, not waiting for a day of this nature. We have the organizations that are out there. There are a lot of organizations that are out there that would have loved to have heard from her.

As I was going to say, now what is happening is a direct result of this crisis management type style of

Government. We have a one-day strike or walkout from the child care workers. I do not think they are happy to do that. I honestly believe that they would rather be in the day cares taking care of the children.

No doubt the child care workers are very responsible and they will go back and take care of the children and so forth.- (interjection)- The Member for Virden (Mr. Findlay), would be wrong if he thinks otherwise, but anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to see this one-day demonstration in front of the Legislature and hopefully that will have some type of influence in terms of what this Government is actually doing. The demonstration should, if nothing else, send a very strong message to this Minister, to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), to the Government as a group, as a caucus, as a Cabinet.

The workers themselves did not want to go on this strike, as I say, and I think it is rather unfortunate that they have been put in that type of a situation, the situation they have been put in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen, I think very unfortunately, the shuffling of career civil servants, and I am referring to Mary Humphrey. It seems to me that the person who is paying the cost of this crisis management is Mary Humphrey. That is unfortunate. We are talking about a civil servant who has worked for years trying to improve the child care system in the Province of Manitoba. Unfortunately, because of poor negotiating skills and whatever else it might have been, it has led to Mary Humphrey being replaced or being shifted. I think that is really unfortunate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, day care or child care has evolved over the past number of years. At one time it was accepted in society that we would have mother and father or one of the two parents staying at home taking care of the children. Today we have a large number of single parents. We have two-income families. There is a real need to have child care service offered in the province and in fact across Canada. I do not think we can underestimate the importance of day care and why it is needed.

I like to think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have one of the finest day cares in North America. There are some problems. The question of inadequate pay to child care workers is one of those concerns that has been raised time after time after time. The NDP or the third Party of this Chamber did not address the issue when they had an excellent opportunity to, and it is unfortunate in that sense. This Government should be sitting down, negotiating, coming up with the multiyear plan in terms of what they would like to see and so forth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have?

The NDP, the third Party, has referred to the means test, and I guess this is really where I find it awfully hard to believe that they come across saying that the Liberal Party is for the means test and something that the NDP would never ever hear of. We forget so easily that it was the NDP administration that brought in the means test.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

I had a situation over the weekend in which I had a constituent who I believe needs to have his children in day care. He is a single parent who has custody of his two children and is on a very low income, less than 10,000 a year. One of the costs that he has to do is pay a dollar a day for his day care care.

In this type of a situation, I would question it—well, maybe there is some room to have the means test which the NDP had introduced, and there are some merits to it. On that, Mr. Speaker, because I have a committee change, I will sit down. Thank you for the opportunity.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I have a committee change. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations be amended as follows: the Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans) for the Honourable Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose).

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I also have some committee changes. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylcia-Leis) that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan); and the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it ten o'clock?

The Hour being 10 p.m., according to the rules, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).