



Third Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Cliff	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold	Rosmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 11, 1992

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 99—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I move, seconded by the honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), that Bill 99, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la loi sur l'évaluation municipale), be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I have been asked to introduce this bill by residents of the Swan River Valley. This bill will provide that the Swan River airport lands, including paved runways, taxi way, lighting and hangar buildings, terminal buildings and other improvements thus associated with the airport operation, be exempt from school and municipal taxes.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of the honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon His Excellency Nicholas Bayne, the High Commissioner of Great Britain to Canada, and Mrs. Bayne. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

Also with us this afternoon, seated in the public gallery, we have 25 visitors from the Voyageur '92 Program. They are under the direction of Mr. Dick Critchley. They are guests of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay).

Also, from the Riverview School, we have twenty-eight Grade 5 students under the direction of Linda Kerr. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

Also, from the Souris Elementary School, we have forty-eight Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Glenn Wallmam and Mr. Herb Horner. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose).

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Northern Telecom - Layoffs Government Action

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

The Premier, on April 10, 1992, stated that the government's intention was to create jobs in new growth areas of technology, high technology areas, telecommunications. This is consistent with the throne speech of March 7, 1991, where again the government talked about their new development strategies for emerging opportunities in telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, today we learned that 45 people have lost their jobs at Northern Telecom, a company located in Winnipeg, 45 positions, 40 of which are production and manufacturing, and five of which are administration. This company has a great deal of activity with the local community and the provincial government.

I would like to know, from the Premier (Mr. Filmon): What action is this government taking to prevent these layoffs and stop the layoff of employees in these high-tech areas working in Manitoba?

* (1335)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I met first thing this morning with two senior officials from Northern Telecom to discuss their reasons for the decision that was made today. I guess the good news, in terms of the Manitoba plant, is it exports about 95 to 98 percent of its product. So it is an export company delivering products worldwide. What has happened with this particular plant is that there has

been a decrease in demand for the product, resulting in the decision that they had to make today.

We discussed the future plans, the commitment to the province of Manitoba. They are certainly committed to the province of Manitoba, and we will work co-operatively with them in terms of other initiatives here in our province. It was because, not of product delivery here in our province, but because of impact globally in terms of the product delivery that they came to the decision they made and announced today.

Mr. Doer: I am quite surprised at the minister's answer. The minister knows that the Northern Telecom plant in Manitoba, the one in Toronto, the one in Calgary, the one in Quebec all produce products across Canada. This plant does export a lot of products, but other plants in Canada produce a lot of products that are purchased by the Manitoba government through its Crown corporations. That has not changed.

Mr. Speaker, the employees informed us, the line employees who are being laid off, that their jobs dealing with the production of the DMS urban telephone equipment, the 2,000 cord work, have been transferred. The work has been transferred to Northern Telecom's plant in Atlanta. The employees also tell us that they have been offered other employment in Calgary, but they stand behind 300 other employees who have been laid off from NovaTel after the \$560-million loss in Alberta. With the Alberta government losing \$560 million, they are behind 300 other people in Alberta.

I would like to know: What action is this government taking? We purchased tens of millions of dollars worth of equipment from Northern Telecom. Yes, some of that equipment is produced in other provinces, but there has always been a relationship between the purchases we have and the jobs in this province. What action—[interjection]

Well, if the Premier would like to answer the question, he is quite welcome to get up. What action is the government taking to stop these layoffs?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify once again some of the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition in terms of the function of this plant. He refers to jobs being transferred elsewhere. This plant is the back-up facility for the preparation of urban transmission. That is not the primary function of this plant. It has a different primary function than channel distribution. That market share has

decreased, and it is a business decision that they are making because they have no market for their product.

But the plant in Atlanta that is the primary producer of their urban transmission products had a decrease of 57 people in February of this year, again because of declining international markets. So jobs are not being transferred from Manitoba to a plant in the United States or in Atlanta. They have had a reduction of 57 employees. This decision was made because of market share.

We are working with Northern Telecom in terms of their presence here. They still have a presence of 213 people, and we want to expand and grow with that. But it is not our decision in terms of forcing a company to be uneconomical in terms of the product they distribute.

In terms of the economic reality of Canada, companies have to be competitive. They have to be able to compete, and it is time that the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition party learned that, because that is the economic reality facing Canada and facing the world today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: It is time this government learned that their step-aside approach, as established by the chair of the Economic Council of Cabinet, is not working if Manitobans are not working.

Mr. Speaker, in 1989, the Telephone System had a \$166-million contract with Northern Telecom. Now, I had met formally with the president of Northern Telecom, and we always had a relationship that they would keep the jobs here in Manitoba in return for the contracts they received for the provincial Crown corporation.

So instead of the government just throwing up its hands and saying, oh, we are just going to let the jobs go wherever they may, what action are they taking to keep the 45 jobs here? We lost 60 jobs last year, another 45 today. Where does that fit in terms of the economic strategy of high-tech jobs in telecommunications for Manitobans in the future?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I have already explained to the Leader of the Opposition that we are going to be meeting with Northern Telecom in terms of other commitments here in our province.

We are meeting with them and a company called TR Labs in terms of some additional research and development of the information technology aspect of business here in Manitoba, but I have already explained to him the decision that was made today

and the impact here in Manitoba and the impact that has been made in facilities elsewhere by Northern Telecom, most notably in Atlanta which is producing a similar product.

* (1340)

Mr. Speaker, we will be meeting with them. We will be encouraging economic development in our province. We will continue to point out the good things about Manitoba which they recognize, I should remind the honourable Leader of the Opposition. When meeting with them this morning, they recognized the positive things that this government has done in the area of taxation, in the area of workers compensation rates, in the area of creating a more competitive and positive climate here in Manitoba for long-term prosperity of Manitobans.

They recognize that, and they are interested in doing business here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Minister of Rural Development School Division Interference

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we raised the very serious matter of the Minister of Rural Development meddling in the jurisdiction of the Pelly Trail School Division. We have had board members say that it was reported to them that the minister did say that if staffing was changed, he would be on their doorstep. Quote, he said: I will get facts on staffing and pupil ratio and go public with it.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) whether he has reviewed this matter with the Minister of Rural Development.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the questions that were posed yesterday by the member for Swan River, and I could not believe what I was hearing from the member for Swan River. As a result, I checked with the chair of the board yesterday after Question Period, along with some members of my staff, to ensure that indeed the conversation was legitimate. Indeed, the chair of the board said, I do not know where this is coming from. Indeed, she said, I thought our conversation was fairly positive.

Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate to you today, is there anybody in this Chamber who cannot represent his constituency? Constituents had raised the matter with me. I phoned and asked

about the matter. That matter was clarified to me by the chair of the board, who said there was no decision made, and said that she would indeed be dealing with it at the meeting and that there would be a report from the superintendent that would give them the details of some alternatives they were looking at.

Mr. Speaker, the conversation went on to say, and I said, I understand that when you have difficult decisions like this to make, that indeed there will be people who will make insinuations, and they will be at our doorstep indeed when these matters come to our attention.

I offered the member the information that I would get on behalf of the constituents, if I could get it, and that I would share it with the school board before I took it to the individuals who had contacted me, and I understood the difficulty they were facing. The conversation ended amicably.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I also spoke to the chairman of the board today, and I have a different story.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) said yesterday he would investigate this matter. I want to ask the Premier what steps he has taken to begin this investigation?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that was addressed to me and affected me and the way that I deal with my constituents.

An Honourable Member: You are not the Premier, Len. He is.

Mr. Derkach: Well, the members of the opposition do not want me to answer the question.

I have to tell you that every member of this House represents his constituents, whether they are school board members, municipal officials. As a matter of fact, the member for Swan River, herself, has appealed to me, a decision which was made at her council and asked me to intervene when that was done by vote, Mr. Speaker. That was done by the member for Swan River.

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I did not ask the minister to intervene. I asked him for his advice on the matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order. That is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Minister of Rural Development School Division Interference

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I want to ask the Premier, again: What effect will this latest incident have on the Minister of Rural Development with the status of the probation that was placed on him on January 14? Is he still on probation?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the hypocrisy of the member for Swan River in all of its glory. Here she asks ministers to intervene with decisions of other levels of government, and then she says that it is improper for a person who is a taxpayer to talk to his representative on the school board and to ask questions about what might be done.

* (1345)

I reject totally the kind of cheap politics and innuendo that are being practised in this Chamber every day by New Democrats, and particularly by the member for Swan River, who reports hearsay, innuendo and does not have any evidence to demonstrate—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier had cared to listen to the question put by the member for Swan River, she asked very clearly about whether the minister was still on probation. She reported facts to this House from members of the school board. It is totally out of order for the Premier to suggest that there is innuendo. It is time the Premier accepted responsibility—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, that is the point that the member for Thompson makes that absolutely hits the nail on the head. The member for Swan River did not report facts. She reported hearsay and innuendo and no fact whatsoever, and that is the kind of thing for which there is no place in this Legislature, and New Democrats had better learn that lesson.

Point of Order

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I would like a ruling. It is my

understanding, according to the rules of our House, that the member for Rural Development should not be answering questions relative to education. If that is not the situation here, then I am quite prepared to ask some questions to the Minister of Rural Development.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point raised by the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, I would like to remind the honourable member that a question is put to the government. Questions are actually put to the government, and the government decides who will answer.

Mrs. Carstairs: Fine, Mr. Speaker, and all I asked for was a simple ruling. I did not mean to ruffle everybody's feathers in the House.

Minister of Rural Development School Division Interference

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, well, I can understand why the government is a little thin-skinned, because I would like to ask a question to the Premier, but I would in fact be delighted if the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) decided that he was going to answer it.

I would like to quote from the now-Minister of Rural Development, the then-Minister of Education, on April 11, 1991. At that particular time, the minister said: "That is a decision that is really in the realm of responsibility of that school division, and it is not very appropriate for any minister to interfere in those kinds of decisions which are the jurisdiction of a local school division."

Can the Premier tell the House if it is now a change in policy for government ministers to interfere in the jurisdiction of local school boards, since it was obviously contrary to that policy on April 11, 1991?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, from the dates that the Leader of the Liberal Party has quoted, I believe that she is referring to responses to questions that she was asking at the time of the Cartwright School closure and the conflict with Turtle Mountain School Division.

* (1350)

I might say that the Minister of Education, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose), myself and others engaged in many discussions with the members of the school board during that issue. I was phoned directly by those people, and I know

that the Leader of the Liberal Party was phoned directly by those people. I know that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) was phoned by those people. So there were discussions, and that indicates that we have responsibility to listen to, to respond to and to discuss with people all of these issues.

The question is whether or not a person—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, I could never bring myself down to the level of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), so he ought to be aware of that when he talks about bringing down the level—[interjection] I was not referring to his stature in terms of his height—[interjection] Civility is not the long suit of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) either.

The point that she makes illustrates exactly what happens. When there are issues that affect joint constituents, when there are issues on which we are asked to appeal on behalf of other decisions of other levels of government, we do not ignore them. The point is whether or not threats or intimidation were involved, and I am satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that none were involved. They are only in the mind of the member for Swan River.

In fact, the chairperson of the Pelly Trail School Division has written today to indicate that she is not complaining about any threats or intimidation. In fact, she says, to demonstrate the credibility of the member for Swan River, and I quote: The contents of our discussion and what is being reported in the press, et cetera, to me is totally blown out of proportion.

So that is the kind of issue that we have brought here by the New Democrats, and I just suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Liberal Party ought to check her facts before she becomes associated—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, you will find in the rules—because the Premier has quoted from a letter, we will ask him to table the letter.

Mr. Filmon: Because I know that the member for Inkster and his Leader would not want to be embarrassed by further questioning on this matter, I will table the letter.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable First Minister.

* * *

Mrs. Carstairs: I can assure him that the Leader of the Liberal Party and none of her caucus are going to be embarrassed by asking further questions about inappropriate actions by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

Minister of Rural Development School Division Interference

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last year we had an incident in this House—and we spent many hours talking about the Cartwright school situation, because the school trustees of Turtle Mountain were violating the spirit of the Minister of Education's regulations—very clear. The minister said, no, no, no, I cannot touch that; I cannot interfere in any way, shape or form.

I mean, in addition to what he said earlier, he said, I am not going to exert my authority as Minister of Education and Training to try and impose something that is completely out of my jurisdiction, so will the minister explain or the Premier explain why he felt compelled to pick up the phone and phone the chair of the trustees of Pelly Trail School Division instead of going to his Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) to find out relevant information, when he has clearly stated that he does not believe ministers should do that kind of thing?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I totally reject the member's insinuation that there was any kind of pressure put on the chair of the board. Throughout the week, just to clarify the matter for the Leader of the third party, there have been several calls from my constituents, as is normal, and I engage in conversations with constituents and board members frequently about matters which I have no information on.

To clarify that, the chair of the board and I communicate on many occasions. As a matter of fact, since I moved into Rural Development, I have been in touch with the board on several occasions, who have asked me questions about matters which I have simply relayed to the Minister of Education and Training for her response.

* (1355)

Mr. Speaker, the conversation was about clarification on a position that was taken by the board. At that point in time, the chair of the board

clarified the matter for me, indicating to me that no decisions were made, that indeed these were simply rumours that were out in the constituency, and as a matter of fact, the superintendent of the board would be looking at alternatives and making recommendations to the board and at that time, the decisions would be made by the board.

Additionally, I might say, Mr. Speaker, when I received those calls from constituents, I indicated to them that they in fact should be directing their comments and their questions at the board where they should rightfully be.

Minister of Rural Development School Division Interference

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, now that I have a copy of the letter from the chairperson of the Pelly Trail School Division, it clearly does not deny that such a conversation went on, nor does it contain any ingredients of what was in that conversation.

So I would like to specifically ask the Premier, since we have a minister who rushes out of this House and instead of acting with even a modicum degree of propriety, picks up the phone so that he can put whatever pressure he can on the person at the other end—having done it earlier in the week—will the Premier tell this House if he has himself spoken with the trustees of the Pelly Trail School Division to ascertain for himself exactly what the conversation was and what the reactions of the school trustees were to such a conversation?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that sort of preamble does nothing for the credibility or the integrity of the Leader of the Liberal Party. To suggest—

Point of Order

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with the Premier casting aspersions on ideas that I may raise in this House. I have a great deal of difficulty with his casting—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order. That is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, talk about the pot calling the kettle black. I invite the Leader of the Liberal Party to read her preamble to see whether or not anybody was casting aspersions or questioning

integrity in this House, and that is exactly what she was doing. She just reflects on herself when she does that.

The fact of the matter is, there is no suggestion in this letter that there was any threat or intimidation that was brought forward as an allegation by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that was repeated as an allegation by the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), and in no case is that supported by any evidence that has been presented.

Innuendo, hearsay, Mr. Speaker, nothing more than that is the basis upon which that kind of allegation is made. It has no place whatsoever in this House.

Workers Compensation Board Rating System

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the widow of the deceased Workers Compensation claimant stated that the trigger point for her husband's suicide was the rating made by the Workers Compensation Board.

We have tried to point out on many occasions the incompetence of the Workers Compensation Board in this regard. Nothing better illustrates this than a letter which I will table here today, and my question for the minister is on this letter.

Why, on June 2, 1992, a full six weeks after the death of the individual, did the Workers Compensation Board revise the deceased's rating?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Mr. Speaker, the member is probably well aware, the specifics of individual claimants' files are not within my purview to examine. That would be most inappropriate unless I had the information provided to me.

This is the first that the member has raised this matter. I have made the offer to him on a variety of occasions in this House to provide me with information relating to this matter which he has refused to do, provide me other than in the forum of this Chamber.

I should inform him today that I understand that the Chief Medical Officer of the province has ordered an inquest which will be before a provincial judge in which all the material that the member has that relates to this matter will be able to be brought forward under oath, that officials of the board and all

related parties who have some interest or knowledge in this matter will be able to come forward and bring their evidence under oath and be cross-examined.

* (1400)

As minister, I welcome this inquest. This is the appropriate forum in which to do it. If there was in fact wrongdoing on the part of the board, that will come out in this inquest, and it will then allow us to take the appropriate action.

Family Entitlements

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Yesterday, when I asked the minister questions about the benefits for the family, the minister stated that the family had not filed a benefit claim with the Workers Compensation Board.

My question is for the same minister. Can the minister explain why in the last week of April of this year the widow offered, in a meeting with Workers Compensation officials, to file the necessary form with them at that time but was told by officials of the Workers Compensation Board, as indicated in this letter, Mr. Speaker, that it was not necessary for her to file that form?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Mr. Speaker, again the information which I have in my briefings on this matter indicate—and I should tell the member that the widow in question had a meeting with me this morning. She did not raise this matter with me, if my recollection is correct. The member provides me with information; I will find out.

I tell you again, I tell members of this House again, that the appropriate benefits would come under the area of fatality in which the widow would have to file a fatality claim. That information has been provided to her. There has to be a proper investigation by board staff as to the cause of the individual's death, the reasons behind it, and if it is adjudicated, goes through the normal adjudication process, and if it found that it is related in fact to the compensable injury, then she will be entitled to the appropriate benefits.

I do not intend to interfere in that process. That would be most inappropriate. It has to work its course. The member brings forward information. This information, I appreciate him providing it to me. If he had provided it somewhat earlier, perhaps if

there was any difficulty with the claim, it would be solved.

Public Inquiry

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister.

This letter, coupled with the minutes that were destroyed from the February 28 meeting could never be dealt with in an inquest—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member, kindly put your question now, please.

Mr. Reid: In light of this new information, indicating an agency—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reid: Will this minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board now do the right thing and call an independent, impartial public inquiry?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Mr. Speaker, the member for Transcona uses the word independent, impartial and public. That is what an inquest is. My colleague the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) utters that from his seat.

It is before a provincial judge. If the member for Transcona is implying that the judges of the provincial court of this province are not impartial and do not have the ability to do that work, I say that he does not understand the justice system, and he should come forward with some evidence to the contrary.

I understand as well in this particular letter that he provides that the impairment award was changed from 2.9 to 3.1 percent based on an error, but I tell the honourable member that those are decisions made by medical practitioners. I am not a medical practitioner, nor is the member for Transcona, and they are appealable. We have a number of appeals every year, and I say to the member for Transcona that the individual involved was still receiving full benefits, and the impairment rating did not affect those benefits.

Waste Oil Disposal Recycling Programs

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, under the WRAP process, the committee on used oil, which both reports to the minister and has representation from the oil industry, cited that the

use of lubricating oils is something that must be addressed in the province since it is considered hazardous waste.

My question for the Minister of Environment is: Given that the government has said that recycling waste oil is a priority, why is it that 22 million litres of oil is being improperly disposed of in the province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I suppose it is somewhat unfortunate that last week when we announced the declaration of Sections 8 and 10 of The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act, which does bring this material under regulation and brings it under the manifest system, is effective as of the end of June. I think the member can be assured that the process, as envisioned under the WRAP Act, is well in process.

As a matter of fact, the market for used oil is now starting to gain some considerable ground in this province, and we are now a resident to one of the leading technologies in treating used oil. Combine that with the regulatory regime that we have just put in place effective the end of the month, I am confident that this material will be removed in large quantities from the environment.

Report Tabling Request

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radlsson): Could the minister tell the House: The report on collecting and recycling waste oil from his department that was commissioned last May through the Environmental Innovations Fund is now complete, will it address this problem? Will the minister table that report?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, there is a considerable amount of work that has been in progress regarding whether the markets for the material can be developed, and that is part of the information that is being researched in that work. That research is providing information, some of which in the preliminary stage. The final application of that report will be made public. I have no qualms about that. But I have to indicate that the market for this material is changing very rapidly from one of simply re-refining, but to look at a broader method of environmentally sound removal of this material.

Soil Contamination

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radlsson): Mr. Speaker, the problem is before the markets and with

collecting the waste oil. There is a report today from a spokesman from Enviro-Oil that claims that waste oil is disappearing and is being dumped on roads and municipalities, 97 percent of which seeps into the soil.

Can the minister tell us whether he is aware of such a practice? What action is being taken to correct this?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I suppose one can always make assumptions as to what the quantities of oil are that may be available. We know, for example, that there are some considerable quantities of this material being exported out of this province. With that we are also losing economic activity, I might point out. We also know that Enviro-Oil, in fact, is now capable of processing 2 million litres of this material annually. We know that Consolidated Environmental exports about 3 million. We know that some of this oil presently is licensable to be spread for dust control. That is an activity that will be phased out under our new regulatory regime.

So, Mr. Speaker, combine that with a number of in-house, or homemade in some cases, burners that use used oil for heat recovery; we think that there is a much higher percentage that is in fact being used.

Health Care System Reform Professional Training Co-ordination

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The health care reform will change staffing patterns within the health care system. The job description will change, and new education and training requirements are required. The early closing of the Health Sciences Centre School of Nursing has displaced at least 60 students who are willing to have a new career in the nursing education and training. Mr. Speaker, the plight of the students must reflect a larger problem, because we do not have co-ordination within the system.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House and also make a commitment that he will work with the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) to develop a long-term health care plan to make sure that the needs under the new health care reform will be met, not only for the patient, but also for the health care providers?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, some of those discussions with the

respect of training institutions have been ongoing for some time, as well as with the various nursing professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I think what my honourable friend is reflecting is one of the unfortunate realities across Canada. We had seen a number of our employment opportunities in nursing being fulfilled not only in the province of Manitoba but across the country. The Health Sciences Centre in terms of their press release of yesterday indicate that although they were going to not continue with the diploma nursing program past this fall, because, of course, as my honourable friend knows, we have established last year the four-year collaborative program for Baccalaureate Nursing there, they believe it would be—if I can paraphrase their words—a disservice to the students to have admissions to a training program for which there appears to be quite limited job opportunities.

* (1410)

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, when the health care package was released, we had no clue that these things would happen. There was supposed to be a nursing advisory by the Minister of Health, which will co-ordinate all the decisions.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House if this kind of arrangement, when people are told a week before they cannot get a place for proper training for a proper job in the health care facility—can the minister tell this House and assure the people of Manitoba that this kind of approach will not benefit the health care in the long run?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I just want to caution my honourable friend not to make the quantum leap in logic that this decision by the Health Sciences Centre is attached to the health reform package that was released some three to four weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Health Sciences Centre has been operating a diploma course in registered nursing for quite a number of years. As I indicated to my honourable friend in my earlier response, that was converted over to a Baccalaureate program; first graduates were accepted last year. The concept was to phase out the two-year program at the end of this upcoming training year given, and I will quote from the Health Sciences Centre release: Poor employment prospects for new nursing graduates are attributed to unprecedented permanent bed closures in hospitals across Canada and an increasing tendency for nurses to stay active in their careers later in life. The Health Sciences

Centre has only been able to hire six of the 92 students who will graduate in 1992.

I think what the Health Sciences Centre is signalling is that we would be inappropriate to accept the class for which there appears to be limited employment opportunities, particularly when there is Baccalaureate program in course right now.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, it is very strange that the minister is saying the health care professionals are not a part of the health care plan.

Can the minister tell this House why such decisions are being made in isolation and not a part of the health care package which was released only two weeks ago? This kind of decision—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Mr. Orchard: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, my honourable friend is saying health care deliverers should not be involved in the reform process as if that was the substance of my last answer. That is not accurate, Sir. I know my honourable friend erred in his preamble.

Is my honourable friend saying that this decision by the Health Sciences Centre in not accepting students one year in advance of their closure of their two-year diploma program is inappropriate, and that they should continue the program, raising expectations for some 60 students that there will be jobs, when in their own press release they indicate that they have only been able to hire six of the 92 students who will graduate in 1992?

Health Sciences Centre School of Nursing Closure

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health just said that the decision by the Health Sciences Centre to cancel all classes for the first-year registered nursing program is not attached to the health care reform plan. Well, of course not. It totally contradicts the minister's plan of action released less than a month ago where he describes the nursing issue in terms of an issue for open discussion.

My question to the minister is: He makes decisions about education and about nursing classes. Will the minister rescind his decision, put on hold his decision, until the recommendations of his own health care plan to develop a five-year nursing resource plan, until that study and that review has been accomplished? Will he put this

decision on hold and not put in jeopardy the lives of at least 60 individuals?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am not able to accede to my honourable friend's request to rescind this decision. But what we do intend to do is to consult with MARN which has a rather important role in the overview of education of diploma-nursing in the province of Manitoba and to seek from them their views as to whether this decision by the Health Sciences Centre School of Nursing will compromise, in the fashion my honourable friend alleges, the availability of nursing and the plan for nursing education in the province of Manitoba.

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

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that under Rule 27, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the interference of the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) in the internal matters of the Pelly Trail School Board and his attempt to bring unwarranted pressure on the board.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before determining whether the motion meets the requirements of our Rule 27, the honourable Leader of the second opposition party will have five minutes to state her case for urgency of debate on this matter.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, as you know, in order to introduce a motion of this type, there must be no other ordinary opportunity to debate this particular matter. It is clear that we have finished all of the major general debates presently before this Manitoba Legislature. The budget speech is completed. The throne speech is completed. The Estimates of the Department of Education are completed. The Estimates of Executive Council are completed. The Estimates of Rural Development are completed.

So there is no other opportunity to get to the bottom of this particular situation, and we certainly did not and were not able to use Question Period effectively in trying to find out exactly what happened with regard to the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) and the Pelly Trail School Division.

There are obviously serious discrepancies in information that have been provided by the reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press, who spoke with a number of trustees who indicated that the information that they had received at their board meeting was such that it gave all the appearance of undue pressure. We also have statements by the former Minister of Education, the now-Minister of Rural Development, in which he clearly indicates that he understands that no minister of the Crown has any authority to interfere in any way, shape or form with the actions of a school board.

If that is the situation, Mr. Speaker, then we are entitled to an answer to our questions which are why the minister picked up the phone in the first place and why he picked it up a second time and did not leave it to his Premier (Mr. Filmon) to investigate whether the action of his minister was an appropriate action for a minister of the Crown, particularly in light of the stated position of the former Minister of Education as to what he believed to be appropriate, which was that no minister of the Crown should interfere in this matter or any similar matter in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to indicate that in terms of our rules—and one of the key considerations in terms of a matter of urgent public importance has to be both the urgency and also, of course, the question of whether there are other ways in which this matter can be appropriately dealt with.

I can say on behalf of our caucus that we feel the Leader of the second opposition party (Mrs. Carstairs) has pointed accurately to the fact that Estimates are completed in terms of the Department of Education. That would be the most appropriate other way in which we could deal with this, Mr. Speaker. The only current opportunity for members to deal with such matters would be in the form of a grievance which we believe would not be appropriate to the matter before us.

The question before us, Mr. Speaker, is in terms of the propriety of conduct of a minister in terms of the contact that was made in this particular case with this particular school board. It is important to note that even today in Question Period, we received confirmation by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) that there is no dispute as to what was said. The letter from the chair of the school board makes it very clear, there is no dispute over what was said. The real

question is the propriety of what was said, and this is where we feel this matter is urgent.

The Premier has to understand that he has responsibility as Premier for the conduct of his ministers. He makes the selection as to who sits on Executive Council, and I remember yesterday some of his comments across the floor in terms of who sits on Executive Council. The bottom line is the concerns that have been expressed by both opposition parties about the propriety of the comments and on the kind of interference it opens up for members of elected school boards.

* (1420)

Let us remember the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) is a former Minister of Education. The Minister of Rural Development sits on Executive Council. There is real concern about opening up the school board, any school board, for that kind of direct interference. We are not talking about discussions. We are not talking about lobbying. The concern is in terms of interference. I would hope that members of the government side would listen.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, earlier in Question Period, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon)—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is a very serious matter.

Mr. Ashton: The First Minister, when asked questions about this matter, immediately tried to impugn the integrity of the Leader of the Second Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). On question after question, when the government is cornered, they attack the integrity of those asking the questions. When are they going to realize the questions are being asked for a very good reason? It is because this government is losing track, Mr. Speaker, in terms of its role in this society of ours, in terms of propriety. This government is becoming increasingly arrogant. Day after day, the minister is allowing this arrogance to continue. We—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that it is an urgency, not the issue that is before us at this time, the urgency of debating this matter today. The honourable member has a minute and a half remaining.

Mr. Ashton: Indeed, when you get a government that has sunk to the level of arrogance that it has, Mr. Speaker, when it cannot realize the question of

misconduct, that is indeed urgent. If the government cannot understand the urgency of getting some integrity back in government, they have a serious problem in terms of the level of arrogance. That is why I say—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will remind the honourable member for Thompson that again it is the urgency of debating this matter today. I would ask the honourable member to keep his remarks relevant to that.

Mr. Ashton: I am saying it is urgent to get back the kind of trust in the integrity of this government. The only way we can do this, Mr. Speaker, is by having the debate now. We cannot allow this to continue. I have followed when you have risen, and I would appreciate if other members, instead of trying to howl opposition members down when they raise matters of concern, would allow us to complete our remarks on this.

The urgency is in terms of the fact there is no other opportunity to deal with this matter. It is a very serious matter. There is no opportunity in terms of Estimates. We are not into concurrence in terms of the question. We cannot raise the concerns there. There is no other forum to raise the concern. The decision, Mr. Speaker, you have to make is very simple. Is there another opportunity to raise this? Is it urgent? I suggest to you, there is no other opportunity. I suggest the maintenance of the integrity of the government is always—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I had trouble at the beginning determining whether the opposition House leader was for or against the call for the emergency debate at the beginning of his remarks, but he is fully square in support of the Liberal request for an emergency debate. The issue is urgency, and the issue is a matter of public importance.

Let me say, I could address both areas. Certainly, there are many more opportunities in this session, regardless of how long it lasts, for members opposite to put their remarks on the record. Indeed, if members want to go beyond putting their remarks on the record, and they feel that their personal privileges in some respect have been offended, then, of course, they should bring forward a motion of privilege and prescribe a remedy, Mr. Speaker. I would say that this would be the better course of

action, indeed, if members opposite wanted to prolong this issue.

There are concurrence motions. There are certainly many money bills to come that will be referred to committee of the whole. There are grievance opportunities still remaining. So the members opposite have not made the point in my view that this is the last opportunity that they will have to discuss this particular point of view.

But let me say, Mr. Speaker, within Citation 390 of Beauduchesne, again, which says, the urgency of the debate and which also says that the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately—what we have here is, and I will break your rule a little bit, I apologize for that, is pure unadulterated character assassination by the members opposite. That is what they are attempting to do.

They are taking out of context the former statement made by the present Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), and I guess, Mr. Speaker, we all have to ask the question, do we as representatives have a right to speak to trustees who happen to be our constituents within our ridings. I would have to say that this is a very significant issue. If the members opposite want to tie that in with respect to the allegations made to the member, then indeed this should be presented by way of a matter of privilege. This should be a referral to the Rules Committee. This should be discussed at Privileges and Elections, but that is not a matter of public urgency.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have not established how the public will suffer if we do not debate this issue. What they are wanting, of course, is readily apparent to anybody who can add five and five; simply that they wish, of course, because they have not made marks with respect to the economy of this province, they have not made marks or strides with respect to other elements of our responsibility of government, they are trying, of course, to muckrake, and what they are trying to do is impugn the integrity of a member of Executive Council.

So, Mr. Speaker, in my view, the members have failed to establish the urgency, and certainly, there are sufficient opportunities elsewhere to make their points as they so wish.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have heard a member from each of the parties.

Order, please. I wish to thank the honourable members for their advice as to whether or not the motion proposed by the honourable Leader of the second opposition party (Mrs. Carstairs) should be debated today. A notice regarding this matter was received in my office, in compliance with sub-rule 27.(1).

The conditions necessary for a matter of urgent public importance to proceed are set out in our Rule 27 and Beauduchesne Citations 389 and 390. First, the subject matter must be so pressing that the ordinary opportunities for debate would not allow it to be brought forward early enough. Secondly, it must be demonstrated that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention.

According to Beauduchesne Citation 395, and I quote: "The conduct of a Member ought not to be the subject of debate under this Standing Order."—and that is a motion for a matter of urgent public importance. "If a Member's conduct is to be examined, it should be done on the basis of a substantive motion, of which notice is required, drawn in terms which clearly state a charge of wrongdoing."

Further, I do not believe that the matter is so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the proposed motion is not debated today. Additionally, I note that the honourable Leader of the second opposition party has not risen on a grievance and therefore has another opportunity to raise this matter. Accordingly, I am ruling the motion out of order.

* (1430)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, with respect, I challenge the ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair having been challenged, all those in favour of sustaining the Chair, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A requested vote having been requested, call in the members.

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the results being as follows:

Yeas

Connery, Cummings, Dacquay, Derkach, Driedger, Ducharme, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Manness, McAlpine, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Orchard, Penner, Praznik, Reimer, Render, Rose, Stefanson, Sveinson, Vodrey.

* (1530)

Nays

Alcock, Ashton, Barrett, Carstairs, Cerilli, Cheema, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Edwards, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Hickey, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Maloway, Martindale, Reid, Santos, Wasylycia-Leis, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 26, Nays 21.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask whether there is a will to dispose of private members' hour, to waive private members' hour.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

Mr. Manness: Before we move into Committee of Supply, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will meet on Tuesday, June 16, at 10 a.m. to consider the report and recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee, 1991.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable government House leader for that information.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if we could revert, with leave of the House, if I could table a document, mainly the Supplementary Information for the Department of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave to revert to Ministerial Statements and Tabling of Reports? [Agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): I would just like to table the 1992-1993 Departmental Expenditure Estimates, Supplementary Information, Department of Finance.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion presented.

MATTERS OF GRIEVANCE

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Under the rules of the House, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take advantage of my right to grieve.

I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that this government does not recognize the very serious nature and breach of the concept of ministerial responsibility that we have seen exercised by the Minister of Education over the last two days—excuse me, not the Minister of Education, the former Minister of Education, the present Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

Mr. Speaker, last year in the debates of the Estimates of the Department of Education, I worked very hard at trying to make the Minister of Education understand his responsibilities when it came to areas of his jurisdiction at that particular point in time.

There are rules that have been developed by the Department of Education with regard to the closure of schools. Those guidelines which have been distributed to all school divisions in the province of Manitoba very clearly state that schools that are to be closed must go through a reporting procedure. It is supposed to take some two years to close a school. That was so that parents and children could adjust to that change.

The vast majority of the school divisions in the province of Manitoba abide by those clear guidelines. Every now and then, however, a school division will try to subvert the process by trying measures which, while they may obey the absolute rule, certainly do not obey and abide by the spirit of those particular guidelines.

In the case of the Turtle Mountain School Division, they had a structure which for many years had been two schools, a secondary school and an elementary school. Because there came a time when they needed to save costs, they built a gymnasium which brought those two formerly physically separate

schools into one roof. However, it is fair to say that the two schools continued to operate quite independently. As school enrollments became smaller, they did move to a single administrative chairperson.

It was the decision of the Turtle Mountain School Division to transfer all of those students from the Cartwright school to the high school in Killarney, thereby denying the opportunity for those young people to go to school in their local community. When I asked the minister over and over and over again why they were being allowed to subvert the guidelines of his department, guidelines which had been put into place by the former Minister of Education, Maureen Hemphill, why he would not ensure that the school division obeyed the spirit of those guidelines, over and over and over again, he talked about the autonomy of school divisions.

I think it is important to put some of those remarks on the record. He said: Mr. Speaker, once again those kinds of decisions, whether a high school should remain open or whether it should close, are in the purview of that school board. I did meet with some parents who had some concerns about the situation from Cartwright, and I clearly indicated to them it was their school board's responsibility to make these decisions.

Now, here was a minister who was saying that despite the fact that I have guidelines in my department, guidelines in my department that are being subverted, I feel so strongly about the autonomy of a school division that I am not going to interfere in this particular situation.

He then went on to say: "That is a decision that is really in the realm of responsibility of that school division, and it is not very appropriate"—I would ask the members to listen to this very clearly—"for any minister to interfere in those kinds of decisions which are the jurisdiction of a local school division. I do not intend to interfere in the matter since it is a matter of local jurisdiction."

He then went on to say and I quote again, "Mr. Speaker, once again"—in another question—"there are matters within the jurisdiction of school boards that have to be left to those jurisdictions." Again, he said: "I am not going to exert my authority as Minister of Education and Training, to try and impose something that is completely out of my jurisdiction." Again, he said: ". . . there is no way that I can impose my will on the questions that

school board trustees may want to ask of their superintendent and of their administration."

Again, there are school boards that have been elected with certain responsibilities and, indeed, it is their responsibility to determine which schools will be opened, which will be closed and where students will be transferred. The member knows that very clearly, that it is not a matter for the Minister of Education to intervene in those kinds of situations.

So between April of 1991 and the final quote which comes from May 29, 1991, the Minister of Education, now the Minister of Rural Development, clearly understood that it was not the responsibility of a minister to interfere. In his opinion, not only should he not interfere in matters that were totally within the purview of local school divisions, he should not even interfere when they were within the purview of a Minister of Education, which is what his own guidelines were. These were not trustees' guidelines. These were his guidelines. He was so cautious, so careful that he could not be accused of interfering with the autonomy of local school boards that he said that under no circumstances would he ever do such a thing.

Well, that of course, Mr. Speaker, led me to some shock when I first heard the question raised by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), because I had been assured so often of the total autonomy process that would be obeyed by any stretch of the imagination into all extremes of circumstance by the Minister of Rural Development, that when I first heard the member for Swan River ask her question, I was duly shocked.

I thought, no, no, no. I mean, we could not possibly have a circumstance in which a member of this Crown had done a complete flip-flop in a year. That could not possibly be the nature of the activity of the now Minister of Rural Development, now could it?

* (1540)

But I listened carefully to the questions asked by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), and she was asking questions of a very serious nature. Not only was she suggesting that he had made calls to the chair of the trustees—and I will quote the member—in the article from the paper, yesterday, she said: "He called the school board chairman Monday and tried to interfere with the board's budget decisions, and I don't think that is fair, . . ." Demanding Derkach be removed from cabinet: "The chairman told me he said that if there were cuts

at that school, he would be sitting on their doorstep." She also said that the minister, a former Education minister, had threatened to embarrass the board by obtaining Education department information about student-teacher ratios to prove the staff cut was unnecessary.

The chairman of the Pelly Trail School Division could not be reached by the reporter Donald Campbell with the Free Press, who I understand worked very hard to make sure that he did speak specifically to members of this board, because he wanted to be very clear that his accusations and that his story was absolutely accurate.

He goes on to say: "But trustees on the board—based in Derkach's hometown of Russell—confirmed she raised the issue of the minister's call with them at a meeting Monday night." Quote: "She didn't receive it positively, said one trustee."

Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Education, the now Minister of Rural Development, is not just a simple member of the Legislative Assembly. He carries with him always the aura of being a member of the Crown. He cannot say, sometimes I am an MLA and sometimes I am a minister. That is not the way the process works. He is a minister of the Crown, and as a minister of the Crown, when he speaks, he speaks as a minister of the Crown. So to use as his excuse that he was acting only as an ordinary MLA on an ordinary constituency issue, quite frankly, is not accurate. He is not an ordinary MLA. He is a very special MLA in the sense that he has the confidence of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of the province, that he is a member of the government cabinet. When he speaks, that is how he speaks.

He also has another responsibility when he must watch and guard his actions, and that is, for some years he served as the Minister of Education. He has knowledge about that department and its functions that very few other individuals have. Only those who have also served as Ministers of Education would have that same kind of aura that this particular individual has. So when he makes a phone call, he makes a phone call not just as the MLA, not only as the Minister of Rural Development, but also as the former Minister of Education.

As the former Minister of Education, he did not have a particularly good track record. He was known, unfortunately, as a very heavy-handed minister. He was known as a minister who interfered with the hiring practices within his own

department. He interfered to such a degree that the Civil Service stepped in and took his hiring authority away from him. Now they would argue that they took the hiring authority away from the department, but in reality, they took the hiring authority away from the Minister of Education, because the Minister of Education had abused it.

Even when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) removed him, thank God for the kids of this province, from the ministry of Education and put him in the Department of Rural Development, they issued a little press release showing their absolute confidence in this man's ability to use the Civil Service in an appropriate way. They said, well, he has been moved, but we are going to watch his hiring practices. We are going to watch him closely. The Civil Service Commission is going to monitor carefully the hiring authority of the Department of Rural Development.

Now there had never been any controversy about the Department of Rural Development. There had never been any question about the hiring authority in the Department of Rural Development under the previous minister. There had never been a Civil Service audit of the Department of Rural Development, but all of a sudden they get a new minister and along with that new minister comes a little press release from the Premier, a little press release that says that the new minister's hiring authority is going to be monitored. It is going to be watched. It is going to be watched carefully because they were concerned about the fact that he had not used his hiring authority as Minister of Education in an appropriate way.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from an editorial in the Free Press which talks about the manner in which this occurred. They said, and I quote: The Civil Service Commission has dealt with the case appropriately by suspending the Education department's delegated authority to hire for Civil Service positions. The department has shown it is not capable of adhering to rules aimed at hiring and promoting by merit.

It goes on to say: All ministers are besieged by job seekers who are not willing or not able to seek paid employment outside of government service. To gratify those demands, ministers are able to hand out Order-in-Council appointments to which the Civil Service standards of competition and competence do not apply.

(Mr. Edward Connery, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

So there was no question that the Minister of Education did not have some positions that he could use in ways that certainly did not abide by the rules of the Civil Service Commission, and we accept that. We know that happens. We recognize that there are Order-in-Council positions. That is one of the rules of the game, and we can all abide by that, but to this minister, that was not enough. This minister was not content to satisfy himself with the Order-in-Council positions. This minister chose to go below that level and to interfere in many more positions of government.

That is why the government chose, when they moved this minister from the Department of Education to the Department of Rural Development, to continue to place some limits on his hiring authority by maintaining a watchdog attitude with regard to the issues and the hiring issues that he would have at his disposal.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we had a process yesterday in which the minister was accused of having used intimidating language, and I am shocked at the way in which this thing was handled. I would have thought that after the information that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) had brought to this House, information which she directed to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), that the Premier would have immediately launched an investigation, but what did he do? Well, it seems he did nothing.

He allowed the Minister of Rural Development to leave the House, escape the media and to place another phone call to the chairman of the Pelly Trail School Division. I cannot understand why the Minister of Rural Development would think that it was appropriate for him to place that call at that particular point in time. Here was a minister whose previous action was being questioned, and he, quite frankly, multiplies that by doing the same thing again. He phones the chairman again.

We do not know about that conversation, but I quite frankly think it is unethical that this conversation even took place, but it did, and the result of that was a letter which was received just in time for Question Period today. That letter comes from the chairperson of the Pelly Trail School Division. Well, we were listening with interest to that letter as it was selectively quoted by the Premier, because it appeared the Premier thought it was a complete denial of the allegations, that somehow or

other, the minister had been totally freed of any allegations or any charges.

* (1550)

But is that what the letter says? No, that is not what the letter says. The letter says: Dear Len, I feel I must comment on the latest radio and press reports regarding our conversation on Monday. Let me firstly say our division has always tried to maintain a good rapport and working relationship between the government of the day and our division. Our discussion on Monday was reported by me at our board meeting on Monday evening during an in-camera session.

But the letter does not say what the conversation was about. It does not say what the minister said or what the minister did not say. It goes on to say: The contents of our discussion and what is being reported in the press, et cetera, to me is totally blown out of proportion. Hopefully, this will put the so-called issue to rest.

But nowhere does he deny anything that has been in the public media about what the minister said to him on Monday night. He certainly does not say anything about what the minister said to him after Question Period on Wednesday afternoon. All we know is that the chairperson wanting, one can hope, to maintain a relatively good relationship between the school division says the contents of our discussion and what is being reported in the press to me is totally blown out of proportion.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Well, I would suggest to the chairperson that perhaps the chairperson does not understand the concept of ministerial responsibility, because the whole concept of ministerial responsibility means that a minister of the Crown is responsible for his actions, and one of those actions which is totally unacceptable and totally without precedence is the right of a minister of the Crown to interfere in the operations of a school division and what is totally without his authority is to, in any way, attempt to intimidate.

I would remind members of this House of a number of occasions when ministers of the Crown across this land and indeed at the federal level have picked up a phone to phone a judge. In every single case when they have done that, when they are dealing with people who are free from political pressure, who do not get their money tied to a funding formula, every single case of this nature, the minister—whether it is in Ontario, whether it is at the

federal government level, no matter what political party—they have stood in the House of Commons and they have resigned. They have resigned for the good and simple reason that they knew that they had used their ministerial office in a totally unacceptable and unethical way. That is what has happened in the past when they have done that. They have accepted that their actions were unethical.

That is really what we want to bring to the minister's attention, because the matter that was raised at the Pelly Trail School Division was that in the sense of the person who received the phone call, that this was not a phone call by the member to seek information. This was a phone call of an intimidating nature. This was a phone call which indicated that the minister would try, in some way, to bring some pressure to bear upon the decision-making process of the school division. Mr. Speaker, that is totally unacceptable.

What is more unacceptable is the fact that the minister recognized it. He recognized it over and over and over again in his own words in this Chamber. He recognized the autonomous nature of school divisions. He recognized that he did not have an authority to interfere in their day-to-day decision making. He recognized that as a minister of the Crown that he did not have that authority, and he even went further.

I remember him raising this one day in the House. We were talking about the sensitivity that school divisions have with regard to members of the Legislature and members of the Crown, and particularly to the Minister of Education. He spoke, as he did in the article in the newspaper today, about the fact that he did not feel as a parent that he could even go to parent-teacher meetings because he did not want the teachers to feel any sense of intimidation because he was the Minister of Education. I congratulated him on that, because I thought that this clearly showed that he knew the power of the office he had.

I recognized his conflict because my husband had been chair of a board, and he too had felt that he could not go to parent-teacher meetings to talk about his daughter's accomplishments, because he did not want the teachers to feel there was any intimidation in the fact that he was the chair of the board and, therefore, directly responsible in a way for hiring them. He did not feel that he could bring any intimidation to bear of that nature.

So I empathized with the Minister of Education at that time, now the Minister of Rural Development. That is why I was so deeply shocked at the actions of the Minister of Education when he did what he did in phoning a school division, through the chair, and providing that chair with the feeling that he was being intimidated, because it does not matter if the actual phrases used were said lightly, in jest. That does not matter.

The sense of it is, does the individual on the receiving end of the phone call feel that undue pressure is being brought to bear by a minister of the Crown? If the sense of the chairperson was such that he felt that sense of intimidation, then that chairperson did what that chairperson should do and brought that matter to the school board meeting and extended to other members of that board, who then reported those feelings to the Free Press reporter, that it was not a positive conversation, that it was not an information-seeking conversation, that it was a conversation that was not positive, that it was a conversation in which they felt that some sense of intimidation existed.

That is what we must be very careful to govern against, that there is never any sense of intimidation. I thought that the Minister of Rural Development understood that process very well, but, unfortunately, it appears that he did not. I hope that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will recognize that what we experienced yesterday was wrong, that this kind of action should not take place, and that he appropriately discipline his Minister of Rural Development and ask for the Minister of Rural Development's resignation.

* (1600)

* * *

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use my privilege of the House to grieve at this time.

It is regrettable that I have to rise in this House on an occasion like it is to be able to put some comments on the record to show that what the opposition are doing in this House is nothing more than the gutter politics that they are so used to.

The situation that we are speaking about here today, that the Leader of the second opposition party just addressed, was the inappropriate, if you like, approach that may be used by a minister of the Crown, indeed, talking to a school board member

and phoning a school board member or an official at a municipal level.

I can tell you that I thought democracy was still the order of the day in Manitoba. But according to what we have heard here from the opposition, they would like to change that somewhat.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in the conversations that I have had on numerous occasions with many of my constituents who are elected to office, we have always had a very congenial relationship in terms of the issues that we have addressed. From time to time issues come up that we do not always agree on. But as the MLA for the area, it is my responsibility, like it is for any other MLA in this House, to represent the constituents in the best way possible.

When I called the chair of the board, I did so in the way that I had approached it on many other occasions where she has called me and I have called her and we have discussed issues as they relate to school board matters in my constituency. On each of those occasions, when we were addressing the issues, we talked in general terms about what was happening and perhaps about some calls that I had been receiving from constituents. This was not a different matter, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the opposition have chosen to make it an issue purely for political reasons.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the question, perhaps: What is the role of the MLA in a constituency? Regardless of whether I am the minister or not, I was not the Minister of Education and Training. During my tenure as Minister of Education and Training, I ensured that I did not interfere in any way in any kind of decisions that a board might make.

As a matter of fact, the deputy chair of the board, or the former chair of the board telephoned our home, and in a conversation with me she indicated that she had been asked a question whether or not in the past I had interfered or put pressure in any way on the board. She said, very clearly, no, that indeed, if anything, there was probably more contact with former Ministers of Education than there had been when I was Minister of Education in that constituency. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was never a time when I tried to exert my will on the board and neither would I.

I have to indicate also that, yes, my children go to the school system in Pelly Trail School Division. I am proud of the school system in my division. My children have attended there since Kindergarten. It is not easy, and maybe members can relate to that as MLAs, when your own children are in a school system and you are the minister of that particular portfolio, and even as an MLA sometimes, it is not easy. So for those reasons, I did not involve myself in any matters as they related to the education of my children.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to tell you in sincerity that I have not attended any parent-teacher interviews except for one very early when I was elected. Since that time, I have left those matters to my wife. I do not care who in this House it is, but you have to have some consideration. I know if your children are involved, you want to know what your children are doing in a school system.

When I called the chair of the board on this particular occasion, we talked about whether or not some of the phone calls that I was getting were in fact true and whether there was an intention by that board to be changing some staff allocations. She told me that indeed what was happening was they were awaiting a report from the superintendent and that the superintendent would be coming in with a report to the board probably that evening, which was Monday night, when they were having their meeting.

I did not ask what the report might be. She indicated clearly that there were other considerations they were taking into account. I said, well, that explains it and I understand it, but I also understand that when you are making changes like this, and I said, we have just gone through it in government, that there is a lot of speculation out there about what is really going on. When that happens, you do have parents coming to you and asking for information, asking about matters.

I also explained to her that some of the constituents had requested information which I said that if they put on paper to me, I would forward that to the minister, and then the response would be forthcoming. I also indicated to the chair of the board that when I got that information, I would certainly pass it along to her so that she would know exactly what kind of information was going out to parents.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, is there any member in this House who would not do the same? Is there any member in this House who would not

take that course of action if you were called by constituents and then as an MLA, not as a minister—I am a parent in that division, but indeed as an MLA for the area, I was only trying to ensure that I was representing my constituents in a proper way.

Now, I do not know what happened. I do not know the conversations that went on after that, and I do not know the heated debate and the emotions that may have arisen as a result of some decision making that the board was going through. Those things I do not know anything about.

I was shocked when I heard the question from the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) yesterday. For that reason, in the presence of some other people, I called the chair of the board and asked her about our conversation and whether there was some misunderstanding. She went through it with me, and it was basically as we had talked.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is nothing for me to hide in this matter. As a matter of fact, I would have discussed it openly with the board. I expected that matter would come to the board and the chair of the board would report to the board that I had spoken with her, that there were parents who had some concerns about this, and that duly it would have been reported to the board in the proper way.

* (1610)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also have to tell you that I have had a good working relationship with the chair of the board. She is an honourable person, and I have had a good working relationship with the entire board. From time to time, they have asked me to come in and meet. They have also requested from me an opportunity to address issues with the present Minister of Education in an informal way. That is only in the course of doing your duty as an MLA.

Now, if there were matters that relate to Rural Development that I have responsibility for, then indeed you have to look at those matters in a different way, because you cannot be lobbying on behalf of your constituents against yourself when you are the minister. Madam Deputy Speaker, there are those issues that arise from time to time in our constituencies which affect the portfolios that we have. I can tell you the allegations that have been made here and the statements that have been made by the Leader of the second opposition party appall me.

They appall me because I go back to the situation she talks about, the situation of Cartwright, when I

was Minister of Education and Training, and the Leader of the second party was the critic for Education. I stated very clearly at that time that it was not appropriate for a minister to interfere into matters that were being dealt with by a school board. I believe that strongly and I still believe that today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not go out to the Cartwright community and show my support for one side or the other side of the argument by walking into a classroom, as the Leader of the second opposition party did and spend the time teaching the children. For what purpose? For what purpose did she go into that classroom? Nothing but sheer gutter politics. That is why she went to that school. Not to try and help those students—because if she really wanted to help the students' cause in that community, she probably would have asked to volunteer as a teacher for an extended period of time—but it was a media kind of thrust: In and out. I have had my media shot, and now I can get back to the Legislature.

There was another issue in all of this that the member did not speak about. That was the pressure that she was trying to put on me as minister and on my department at that time, when I was Minister of Education and Training, to try and make a decision that she wanted to have done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, she was prepared to have me ignore the legislation, ignore The Public Schools Act and make a decision on the Cartwright situation contrary to the school board act.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in my view is the kind of interference that we should take objection to, but as MLAs, opposition or government side of the House, we try, I am sure every one of us, to represent our constituents in the best way possible. Yes, when we get into this Chamber, there are some politics that are played out. We do that every day in here. Indeed, we try to attract media attention through various ways, but in this case, I think we have gone beyond the limits. I feel offended because the member who is the Leader of the second opposition party has attacked me.

I produced a letter today that was signed by the secretary-treasurer on behalf of the chairperson of the board that indicated that the whole matter has been blown out of proportion, and that she is writing the letter to me to explain that it has been blown out of proportion in the media and she would like to put an end to it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what went on in the in camera session of the board, and I will never know because that is an in camera session, a session which is private, a session which is only for the board members and not for the public. I also know that perhaps through the emotions of what debate was going on, some individual trustee became agitated and perhaps made a phone call. I do not know what the circumstances are. I have only heard it via some secondhand information.

I was able to produce a document today, and this was received this morning. It was produced in the House today. It is from the chair of the board. I do not care what members may think about my sending a document, but if you have any trust in what the chair of the board is saying, I think she explains the situation. Now, some members will say, oh, yes, but she does not deny it; how come she does not deny? I say, well, I did not write the letter; the chair of the board did. She used her own language and her own way of putting it down. I did not do that, so I cannot explain that.

Members of the media ask me: Well, what do you think went on in the board meeting? I do not know what went on in the board meeting. I do not know what went on in the in camera session, so whatever went on at that board meeting is something that is entirely up to the board. Whatever decision they make is one that they are going to be responsible for.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to also tell you that today I have been called by trustees of different school divisions who tell me that this is a lark. They tell me that I am getting a bum rap, and they are talking about the credibility of the people who bring this forward. They go so far as to say, you have a responsibility as an MLA to advocate on behalf of your constituents. Those are the comments that are being made to me.

Mr. Speaker, do members opposite deny that? Do they deny that as an MLA, you have a responsibility to advocate on behalf of your constituents to your school board, to your municipality, to your ministers? Yes, I acknowledge, too, that if I were to come to that school board and say to them, you make this decision or else we will come in as big government and show you how to do it, or I will organize a demonstration against you, or some other silly kind of allegation—that does not happen, and I did not do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted the opportunity this afternoon, when I heard that the Leader of the second opposition party rose to talk about this, to indicate that it is easy to point the finger, but if you do not have the facts, that finger points back at you, or you have three other fingers pointing back at you.

I ask the members of this House, for the integrity of the House here, to reconsider what our responsibilities are as members of this Legislative Assembly and who we have responsibility for in terms of our constituents. I have a constituency that is a long way away. Not everybody in my constituency voted for me, of course not. I won the election by whatever margin. That is irrelevant right now.

* (1620)

But, Mr. Speaker, I represent all of the people in my constituency, regardless of their political affiliation, and I will advocate for those constituents, regardless of how they vote in an election. If it means that I have to go to another minister and lobby on behalf of the constituents who have come to me, or if I have to make the school board aware that in fact I am getting some calls about a particular matter, I think that is my responsibility as a duly elected representative in the area. I hope that we do not lose sight of that.

I have been lobbied by members of the opposition, lobbied hard. Sometimes the language even gets a little bit out of hand. I have even received a letter that was questionable, Mr. Speaker, and you ignore some of those things because you know that the MLA is only trying to do his or her duty and to impress upon you the importance of the situation. I have never been threatened by any MLA. I have never been threatened by any school board member, and I do not threaten anyone either.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know what the members here feel in terms of an issue. They feel that, sure, it is wrong to be putting undue pressure and to influence a board in a decision-making process, and I agree with that. But you do not go about it through innuendo.

I guess I conclude my remarks by telling you how appalled I am at the approach that has been taken on this matter. The questions in the House, I can handle, Mr. Speaker. The questions in the House are something that we all expect to come from the opposition, and sometimes the facts are not all there. Many times, the facts are not there. Our side

of the House is responsible for responding as government.

Mr. Speaker, I only hope that we learn and that we all continue to be honourable members in this House who do diligence to their duties as members of the Legislature and indeed represent their people, lobby on behalf of their constituents and indeed advocate on behalf of their constituents in an appropriate manner, in a good manner, but in a forceful manner. I thank you for having given me the opportunity to put these few words on the record. Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I would like to exercise my right as a member under the rules to grieve.

Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the words of the Minister of Rural Development. It strikes me with respect to this issue that the question, judging from his words, is not so much one of principle in the sense that he agrees with the principles espoused with respect to attempting to unduly influence trustees—and that is a principle that he espoused on many occasions himself as the minister—the issue is one of fact, and that is what in fact was said, the tenor of the conversation, and whether or not it was an inquiry of fact that he suggests it was, or was it rather an attempt to infringe upon the school board's right to make decisions as to staffing.

The suggestion is very clearly made and is buttressed by other statements of fact that the tenor of the conversation, the substance of the conversation, was something other than the minister suggests. It is a question of fact, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the agreement of the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) that it would be improper to unduly attempt to influence a school board in their rightful jurisdiction; that is, staffing within the school division. That is a position with which I agree. That is a position that is, I think, obvious to members of the House.

The minister talks about advocating, and he defends strongly the right to advocate on behalf of one's constituents. I wholeheartedly agree and have done the same myself, and I would expect all members to do that as part of their obligation. That is not what is alleged here. What is alleged here is that the minister did not advocate on behalf of the

school board—that is one thing—in trying to help them, assist them achieve their desires.

What is suggested is that he attempted to tell them and use the power he had as a member of cabinet to influence their decisions with respect to staffing, and that is an entirely different matter. Mr. Speaker, I want to review the evidence that there is to suggest that the conversation was other than the minister said. It may well have been—[interjection]

Well, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) adds her comments that I do not know what was in the conversation. Neither does she, Mr. Speaker. Neither does she.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order, and I understand that a dispute over facts is not a point of order. However, the member for St. James just admitted that he does not know the facts that led to this incident and is now on a grievance talking about something that he really knows nothing about.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, the member for St. James was courteous in allowing the minister to stand up and put his comments on the record when we questioned a number of things that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I am going to lead to a suggestion which I think would be in the interests of all members of the House and indeed the public at large on this issue. The fact is that there are recorded statements from individuals suggesting, who are better informed than I or the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), to know what occurred in that conversation, who say, and I quote: that the chairperson of the school board did not receive the information communicated in that telephone conversation positively.

If it had been an inquiry and an inquiry only, there is no possible way that comment would have been made. It would be absolutely unnecessary for a school trustee to say that they did not receive the

information positively if all the minister was trying to do was be advised, find out what was going on and advocate on behalf of the board. That is an entirely illogical thing to have said if that is in fact what was communicated and that alone.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we have. We have the minister standing here today saying that all that was communicated was an inquiry—what is going on, I just want to know?—and then he suggests that advocating on behalf of the board was his only intention. If that is the case, why was it communicated by someone at the meeting, hearing the chairperson of the board discuss the conversation with the minister, that that chairperson did not receive the call from the Minister of Rural Development positively. It was taken negatively. Why would that be if all the minister was doing was inquiring as to the status of events? It just does not make sense.

Mr. Speaker, there is only one way—[interjection] Again, they say look at the facts. The point is they do not know the facts. The fact is, if the member will let me continue to my suggestion, that there is only one way to unequivocally deal with this discrepancy in what occurred and what did not occur, and that is to have the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) conduct an investigation.

There should be an investigation into what occurred, because it is a very serious matter if there was a threat made on the admission of the minister himself. That would be a very, very serious situation.

There should be, Mr. Speaker, in order to clear the air—and I assume that the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) will be the first to make that recommendation to the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), given his accounting of what occurred in that conversation. There is nothing to hide, and he has nothing to fear, I would assume, if in fact that is what was communicated and that is all that was communicated.

I look forward to that recommendation, and I think it would be in fairness, out of fairness to the Minister of Rural Development that the Minister of Education step into the breach and do that investigation. That is the proper course.

Mr. Speaker, the indication from the minister was that somehow the Leader of the second opposition party was being inconsistent in saying that her

discussions with the minister with respect to the school division in Cartwright was somehow analogous to the situation. It was nothing of the sort.

* (1630)

If you look at what the Leader of the second opposition party was asking for, it was for the minister to enforce his guidelines. She was asking the Minister of Education of the day, the Minister of Rural Development today, to enforce his guidelines. There was a dispute, a legitimate dispute, between her and the Minister of Education as to what the guidelines said.

That has absolutely nothing to do with the allegations which are here today, which are that the Minister of Rural Development stepped into the breach and took an initiative, by the very fact that the call was made at all, as a member of cabinet, and communicated a threat that he would embarrass the school board, and communicated a threat, according to the reports, that he would be on the doorstep of the school board, and I do not suggest that this is the most heinous offence that a member could commit.

What I do suggest is that if allowed to go uninvestigated and without a full review of those at the meeting—

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you do a quorum count?

Mr. Speaker: A quorum count has been requested. All members will please rise in their places so the Clerk can count.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The Honourable Mr. Manness, Honourable Mr. Cummings, Mr. Neufeld, Mr. Lamoureux, Ms. Friesen, Mr. Santos, Mr. Martindale, Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Speaker: You have eight, plus the Speaker, nine. There is no quorum present. Due to a lack of quorum—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have already ruled that there is no quorum. Due to a lack of quorum, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning (Friday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Thursday, June 11, 1992

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