



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

41 Elizabeth II

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



VOL. XLII No. 18 - 1:30 p.m., WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1993

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
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, Clif	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
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALLOWAY, 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	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	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
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 3, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Sport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report 1991-92 for the Manitoba Horse Racing Commission.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave of the House to introduce a bill for the Minister of Justice?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave to introduce a bill?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

Bill 16—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), that Bill 16, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's bill is on the notice paper, not on the order paper. The honourable Madam Minister would need leave to introduce Bill 16.

Does the honourable minister have leave to introduce Bill 16?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Special Needs Programs Service Availability

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): House business is being managed like the finances of this province.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. We were raising questions all this week about the impact of government decisions on kids and students in this province.

Yesterday we learned, and we have had confirmation from parents and others, that specialists working with special needs kids in rural Manitoba have been told that they will be laid off at the end of June, some 66 staff working in hearing impairment issues, speech impairment, behavioural problems, working in rural Manitoba, have been told they will be laid off in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the Premier what impact these layoffs will have on children with hearing impairments, with learning impairments, with behavioural impairments and impairments that are, unfortunately, germane to some kids in rural Manitoba that need special needs programs.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, yes, it is true, a service that we have provided through our department for the past 20 years is now a very well-established service. It is well established within the divisions. So what we have done is we now, through our funding formula, provide both the operating costs and also the administrative costs for school divisions to hire these clinicians within their own divisions. It is simply a change in who employs these clinicians.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would quote the minister from May 7 of 1992: Due to the large number of students with speech and language problems, the service is stretched and follow-up activities are not always as extensive as we would like them to be.

These kids are the most vulnerable kids in rural Manitoba. I was talking to parents today and they fear if the diagnostic services are not available, if the

services on hearing impairments, on speech impairments, on behavioural impairments are not there at the earliest possible age, we will have these kids going through our social and economic systems for life and not have the head start or the opportunities that all of us may enjoy.

I would like to ask the Premier how he can justify cutting back these services to special needs kids in the province of Manitoba? Is that the priority of this government for the children of rural Manitoba?

* (1335)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to give the member all of the information. Nineteen school divisions presently provide this service. Ten of those school divisions operate outside of the city of Winnipeg, including Mystery Lake School Division, including Frontier School Division. So we do know that school divisions have accepted this model, have been operating in this model.

Now we have that same concern for young people and their parents. I would like to assure this House that there will still be the funds flowing through our funding formula to employ those specialists. However, they will be employed at the local level at the school board level, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the Tories across the way could clap for a decision like that on the children of rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there is a declining enrollment in school divisions of rural Manitoba. Your funding formula, which of course has been cut back 2 percent since you made your announcement last year, school divisions will not be able to have the expertise for special needs kids. They cannot hire one hearing impairment person, one behavioural person, one speech person in each school division across Manitoba. That is why the smallest school divisions need this provincial program.

I would like to ask the Premier to overrule his Minister of Education, to overrule the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and his cutting back on special needs children in this province and maintain those services for all kids across Manitoba through their grants.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, let me say again that we have a strong belief that this service continue and because of that we have, through our funding formula, increased the grants for a clinician, increased the grants to \$45,000. We did that last year because we believed that the service was so

important. This year through this action, we are now saying to school divisions that they would become the employers, they would then have the control.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of special needs let me also make it clear to the member that we increased our special needs funding last year, and this year through our announcement we have also increased the amount of money flowing into Level II and Level III grants to pay attention to those particular concerns and issues.

Distance Education Employee Layoffs

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows very well that the services and the funding that she is providing is totally inadequate to meet the needs in rural Manitoba. She knows that and she should not be attempting to mislead this House.

Because of the cuts that this government has made over the last number of years and this year as well, which has resulted in the fact that there are no options available in many schools, classes are combined. There are teachers teaching three and four classes in one classroom, different courses in one classroom. Because distance education is one of the only hopes for equality of opportunities in education in the small rural divisions, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Education how she can justify the cutting of six positions from distance education, which is providing this only hope, this bridge, for rural small school divisions in Manitoba.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Yes, we have made some rearrangements in our distance education for the purposes of a better delivery, because we have understood, Mr. Speaker, as a result of listening to Manitobans, that distance education should no longer just be a separate part of education but in fact should be an integral part of education, should be an integral part of our curriculum development and our service development. That is what we have done.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, this minister did not answer the question, how she is justifying the cuts of six positions when she says in the Estimates, in her own words last year, that this was a priority and an expanding area. How can she justify the cutting of six positions?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member obviously did not hear me. What I have said to him and to Manitobans is that this is a very important part of education in Manitoba. In fact, we have had a task force working on this area. We also have listened to Manitobans. One message that we have received is that distance education is important and integral, and should be considered along with all of our education, both in K-12 and in our post-secondary area. So we will be considering it in a holistic way with the other issues on our K-12 side.

Mr. Plozman: Mr. Speaker, since school divisions are telling this minister and telling us daily in communications and phone calls and letters that in fact the services to children are being affected by her draconian cuts, by her deep cuts in education, I want to ask this minister: Will she now admit to this House and to the people of Manitoba that in fact the services to children are in fact being impacted in a negative way, and will she now admit that this has been acceptable for her right from the beginning in her decision making?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, again let me say, services to children are of utmost importance for this department, and because services to children are so important, within our funding formula this year we did what we said. We modified that funding formula, we adapted the funding formula. We did so particularly out of interest to children who need support for extreme behavioural and emotional disorders and hearing impaired children. We increased the funding to make sure that was available for the children of this province. We have also said, as school boards consider their budgeting process this year, to please look at areas of budgeting that do not affect children and programs.

* (1340)

Education System Reform Program Development Support Services

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education.

The minister has told us in this House that she is interested in education. She has told us that she is engaged in a reform process, yet every day we see actions which belie any leadership and any real reform initiatives. Today we hear that program development support services will be decimated. Over 50 staff years will be gone, and services will be cut.

Will the minister explain to this House how this decision fits into her education reform, a reform which to date is illusionary?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all that the Child Care and Development branch will not be decimated, that it will continue to support school divisions. It will provide for school divisions supervision for those clinicians whom they hire, that supervision that is very important for clinicians to get their certification. We will also continue to monitor the ADAP or the special education plans. We will also continue to act as consultants. We will also assist those school divisions in their hiring process. If they would like some assistance in the hiring process, then we are more than prepared to do that.

In answer to the reform part of the question, Mr. Speaker, I have answered that this afternoon. We have understood that in some areas, and I will use distance education as a very specific example, that distance education is no longer seen as a separate part of education. In the process of reform, we are moving to integrate it into education in Manitoba.

Report Tabling Request

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): We have no difficulty with this government embarking on reform in education. Will the minister take a page out of her colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and take some time and actually write a document that talks about education reform?

Mr. Speaker, education officials, people concerned about education in Manitoba, want to know what the reform process is. Is the minister prepared—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood, your question, please.

Ms. Gray: This is a serious issue because education officials want to know what the education reform plan is. It is not enough for the minister to stand in this House and spout out sentences. We want to see a reform plan, a blueprint. Will she table that document?

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

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I think it is important to remind my honourable friend again that the education officials

have been involved in the process as we move into educational reform, that we have made sure that their views of what reform should look like, how that reform should be accomplished, have been integrated and that we have taken a great deal of time to work with those groups.

We have worked with parents in Manitoba to make sure that the views of parents are considered, the views of labour and business and industry, so that the goals of education and the accomplishments of education are also views that they would like us to consider, too.

Ms. Gray: The Minister of Education asks that we listen to her. We ask that she listen to what education officials are saying in Manitoba. They know nothing about this reform process that is going on. She is pitting rural school division against urban school divisions.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Ms. Gray: Is she prepared to table a document to let us know what type of education reform she has planned rather than just slashing and cutting—

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

Mrs. Vodrey: I certainly reject any suggestion of rural and urban school divisions having to compete for attention to listen. I have made an attempt to visit personally as many school divisions as possible. I have made sure that I have met with their executive groups and have taken into consideration how they would like reform to look.

Mr. Speaker, what my honourable friend seems to say is that she would in her own mind develop a document, then put it out and then say to people this is what it should be, but we have in fact taken a much different tactic. We have taken the time to listen to what the goals of that reform might be to then put together the goals of reform, and as we announced in the throne speech, we are moving towards the education innovation forum, where the process of reform can be discussed.

* (1345)

Health Care System Reform Pediatric Surgery Restrictions

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): My question is for the Minister of Health.

The minister's own action plan talks about moving treatment from more expensive facilities to less

expensive facilities. The minister's own plan on page 15 says that teaching hospitals cost \$775 per day while treatment at a community facility could be for \$410 per day.

Why is this minister dictating that all children's surgery in the city of Winnipeg, almost up to 3,000 procedures a year, must be carried out at the four or five operating rooms at the Children's Hospital?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): My honourable friend also might acknowledge that within the process of health care reform, we have indicated that the direction for the urban hospitals and the teaching hospitals is establishment of centres of excellence.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to claim the original credit for establishing Children's Hospital conceptually and developing it as a centre for excellence for inpatient care for children, but unfortunately that has been a policy of successive governments since 1975. Sir, that is what is being accomplished with this consolidation.

That consolidation of inpatient services, including surgery, including medical needs for inpatient care of children in Manitoba, is being consolidated at the Children's Hospital for two reasons: first of all, Sir, they have the ability and the finest expertise in Manitoba to provide for the most complex needs of children in Manitoba—surgical and medical; secondly, by maintaining pediatric departments in a number of other hospitals, inpatient is a duplication of resource at a time of constrained resources, and it makes not only program sense but very good economic sense to consolidate the Children's Hospital.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister can clarify since there is so much confusion out there, will the minister advise this House, contrary to what is being said by the head of his health reform, that outpatient surgery for children will also be consolidated at the Health Sciences Centre? What is it? Will outpatient surgery also be consolidated or not?

Mr. Orchard: I am quickly thumbing through my book, Mr. Speaker, because if I can just find—well, I cannot find the direct quote.

My honourable friend the new critic for Health, and the New Democrats, would do himself well to make more corrections of false impressions that he has left on the airwaves, as he did yesterday, to his credit, Sir, where he stepped out of this House and

said, yes, emergency services for children will continue at St. Boniface Hospital and other services.

He did not say that when he alarmed the people of Manitoba by saying the St. Boniface Hospital would be closed to all children's services.

Sir, that would leave families who wish to access emergency and postoperative care the wrong impression. It might compromise their ability to receive emergency care at St. Boniface and other community hospitals if they believed the words that my honourable friend misinformed the public with some three weeks ago.

Sir, inpatient services are consolidated to the Children's Hospital. That means admissions of children to hospital beds, but outpatient services will continue in most, if not all, of the locations currently, including St. Boniface, Victoria—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: I have one more supplementary. Mr. Speaker, I am thankful the minister finally clarified the distinction that one side of his department was saying one thing and he is saying the other. He has clarified now what the question is. I hope he will tell the head of his health care reform.

My final supplementary to the same minister, Mr. Speaker, is: Will the minister also clarify, since we are at this and since his own health reform head will not be able to clarify this for members of the public, will 15- and 16-year-olds now be considered adults or children for purposes of admission for surgery, because we are told that 15- and 16-year-olds will now be admitted as adults because they cannot accommodate all the children at the Health Sciences Centre?

* (1350)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I guess I have problems with my honourable friend because coincidentally the other day, when he was having yet another press conference on this issue of service consolidation—and I note with interest that the Premier—no, well, a member of the cabinet that made the decision to conceptualize the Children's Hospital as a centre of excellence is in the gallery today—1975, yes.

I fully acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that when New Democrats are in government they sometimes get things right, but when they are in opposition they seldom do. I recognize that. I fully recognize that.

Let me tell my honourable friend that he should seek advice from Dr. Aggie Bishop, head of the Children's Hospital, who, after the press conference he held saying it was going to be a disaster, spoke to reporters and others outside in the hall saying, look, we can accommodate inpatient services for children in Manitoba very, very reasonably, effectively, with quality, with patient care, with love and with the needed care being met, Sir.

Post-Secondary Education Grant and Bursary Assistance

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, in the last full academic year that has been reported on, fully 30 percent of the students at the University of Manitoba received some sort of financial support, 50 percent of the students at the University of Winnipeg and 70 percent of the students at Brandon University.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education one simple question. Why is she moving to a loans-only program and increasing the debt load of the 2,700 students who received some grant and bursary assistance in this province last year?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, presently, as the member knows, the system is Canada student loan first and then Manitoba supplements the Canada student loan. That has been the process within this province. There are changes that are expected on the Canada student loan side, and we are looking forward to seeing what the federal government will do on that side.

In terms of any changes which we might then move to within our provincial government, the member will have to wait until the budget to see what that will be.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, what I want this minister to do is to give the students of this province an assurance that they will have the same level of grant and bursary assistance in the coming year that they have in the current year.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, I speak to the students of this province. I had them into my office yesterday as well. May I say, at that time they were very pleased that this government has capped tuition fees at 5 percent.

In terms of any further assurances, Mr. Speaker, they will have to wait until the budget is brought down in this House.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, this government has increased student fees at the universities by over 80 percent since they came into office, and another 5 percent increase is inconsistent with the cuts that they are making at the other facilities.

Universities Capital Assistance

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I would like to know, from the minister, why she has chosen not to provide any capital assistance to the universities in the coming year.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, in the announcement that I made last Thursday to the universities, I announced their operating funds. I told them, at that time, that the announcement regarding capital would occur at the time that the budget comes down in this House.

I would like to remind the member that, by and large, university funding is not usually announced as early as this time and before the budget, but the universities did ask this year to please note, where possible, their operating grants. That was an important request from them. This government listened to their request. We were able to oblige in the operating. The capital will come with the budget announcement in this House.

Social Assistance Health Benefits

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Family Services announced yet another attack on the poor when he cut health benefits by \$3 million. At the same time the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), in the same government, was negotiating a contract with a consultant in the range of \$4 million to \$6 million.

Can the Minister of Family Services explain why this cut was made at all, a cut which affects low-income people, those who have the least ability to pay for their own optical, their own dental, their own medical expenses? Why has he eliminated coverage, especially for procedures like root canals?

* (1355)

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I indicated last week, when we discussed this, that we have had a 65 percent increase in the funding for social allowances

over the last three budgets. As a result of that call on public money, we have had to make some adjustments to benefits to social allowance recipients, which still leaves them more than adequate coverage, certainly much better than citizens of this province receive who are regarded as being the working poor and others.

The delay that we have put into place is the same delay that civil servants respect when they come onto the job and that private plans have as well. So in order to preserve a system, we have had to make some adjustments to it and those adjustments were announced last week.

Retraining Programs

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Family Services or his staff studied the issue of improving or making changes to the work incentive for people on social assistance, and if so, what did those studies show? Is the government prepared to make any changes there, especially progressive changes to encourage people to get off social assistance and get into the workforce?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the member raises I think a critical issue that is facing governments across North America, and I know in discussions with the member he is aware that the Premier of Ontario was talking about going to a form of workfare in that province.

We spend something like \$12 million on programs for social allowance recipients and moving them into the workforce. Part of the difficulty, of course, is the difficulty of finding jobs for people without the appropriate skills. This is a challenge that I think we as government will be looking at in the coming months and years, and one that all governments are looking at, is how to use those funds to get people back to work. I can tell you in discussing this with my colleagues across the country who are responsible for social allowance programs, this is an area that needs reform and we are looking very carefully at what other provinces are doing.

Work Incentives

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Will the Minister of Family Services give serious consideration to improving the work incentives since there are many people who are willing to work? For example, working as enumerators in the referendum last fall,

one individual earned \$500, was only allowed to keep \$50. People need a positive incentive. It could be built into the system so that people are able to keep a much greater percentage of their earnings instead of having them taxed back, effectively at the rate of 100 percent. No one in this country pays taxes at the rate of 100 percent except people on social—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, certainly the member is aware of the tremendous number of reforms that we have brought in in the last two years, very supportive. I think of the change in the liquid assets test and the head of household changes. There are other reforms that we are looking at.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corp. No-Fault Auto Insurance

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a question for the minister responsible for MPIC. Manitobans continue to be very angry and concerned about the excessively high Autopac premium increases that they see under this government. They see a government that is doing absolutely nothing to keep the cost down. In answer to my question of March 1, Mr. Speaker, on the outrageous 75 percent increase given to the new chairman of the board of MPIC, the minister replied that they are looking at, and I am quoting from Hansard, "some very serious changes in the MPIC program," and he went on to infer that Autopac 2000 is coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister advise, does this mean that this government is now finally prepared to establish the pure no-fault system as recommend very strongly by Judge Kopstein?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I was not making any announcements, but I think the member should not rise from his place and try to ignore the fact that he was part of the administration that was looking at a 30 percent increase.

Cost Efficiencies

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, if the minister will not implement a no-fault system, can he explain to the people of Manitoba how he and his government expect to keep costs

from escalating in the future as they have done in the past? In fact, rates have risen year after year under this government. People are very annoyed, very concerned. What is this government going to do to keep costs from rising in the future?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated, and I have indicated very publicly on a number of occasions, that we are looking at all aspects of the Autopac coverage that is required by law in this province. We are also assuring ourselves, through the corporation, that the operations are efficient. We will be doing a number of things within the responsibility of the corporation. The corporation is actively pursuing some options today which will, in due course, be presented.

Mr. Leonard Evans: It is still regrettable that Judge Kopstein, who recommended a system that would have reduced Autopac premiums by 21 percent, is being ignored, Mr. Speaker.

* (1400)

No-Fault Auto Insurance

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): My final supplementary to the minister is: Has this minister received any representation in the past few months from the Manitoba Bar Association, or any group representing the legal profession, in opposition to a no-fault system, since such a system will reduce litigation costs substantially by tens of millions of dollars?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I have received any communication from the Bar Association recently. I certainly received some a number of years ago. I have also received representation from the Manitoba Society of Seniors. I saw representations that they have made regarding their concerns.

Labour Force Adjustment Strategy Tabling Request

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour.

The labour force in the province of Manitoba has been going through a major shift in the manufacturing industry. We have seen the loss of over 10,000 jobs since this government has taken

office. We see, in terms of retraining and training programs, that this government has been taking a reactive approach in addressing the needs of the workers for today and tomorrow.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the minister. I would ask: When will he table a detailed plan on the labour force adjustment that will put Manitobans back to work now and prepare them not only for now but also for the future?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) has indicated several times in this House, the work that is now going on with the Canada-Manitoba agreement, which includes the Apprenticeship and Training branch of this department, and the co-ordination of a host of training programs across this province is now underway, and we are working towards concluding that agreement.

I would point out to the member opposite that over the years, through various administrations in this province, both federal and provincial governments have built a host of programs often duplicating each other. Now, over the last while, myself, the Minister of Education and the cabinet of this province have been working with our federal colleagues to sort that out and give direction to it. So that should be moving along shortly.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting he points to the Minister of Education. I am aware of a student at Red River College who made application for the industrial electronics course and was told that in fact there is up to a two-year waiting list and then in January was told that he could come up on March. Now he has been told that in fact he might have to wait till September because of the budget and potentially the course being cancelled completely, and he quit his job for it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Question, please.

Labour Force Adjustment Strategy Department Co-ordination

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is: When will the minister take steps to ensure that there is a collaboration between departments so that training and retraining programs are co-ordinated in their efforts to put Manitobans back to work?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would just like to address the innuendo that the honourable

member has raised in this House regarding courses. There has been no announcement yet.

For the student and the individual case, I am happy to look at that particular student's case, but one of the difficulties that Red River College will be correcting in the upcoming academic year is to look at those waiting lists, because waiting lists in the past have included the same person's name several times. We are now looking at making those waiting lists much more accurate so that then we know exactly what the intended enrollment will be at the colleges.

In terms of working with my colleagues for a labour market strategy in this province, I would like to say that there are two working groups. In fact, there is a working group that is working within departments. There is also a working group that is working among departments and those departments include the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik). They also include my colleague the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), I T and T. So we have been very inclusive in developing a labour market strategy in this province.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, then can the minister explain to me why the registration fee would be accepted and then the course be cancelled? That is not innuendo. That is, in fact, what has happened.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, as my honourable colleague first stated the case, he stated a proposed change. So he would have to present to me the specifics of the individual involved and, of course, I will be more than happy to look at those specifics should he present them to me.

Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co. Older Worker Adjustment Strategy

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, while all of northern Manitoba is suffering under the lack of economic leadership by this government, the community of Snow Lake and—[interjection] The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) knows full well that the Minister of Energy and Mines bungled the Hydro contract. In the communities of Snow Lake and Flin Flon, as a result of five mine closures and two mill closures over a 30-month period, some 490 workers are going to be laid off.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. Can the Minister of Labour explain to the

House why, after receiving a copy of a letter dated October 6 from the employment and personnel administrator in Flin Flon at Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, asking the government to begin to establish a program for older worker adjustment, the Province of Manitoba as of a week ago had provided no response and no leadership on an issue that affected as many as 120 older workers in Flin Flon and Snow Lake?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would remind the honourable member for Flin Flon that the Department of Labour through our Labour Adjustment unit has been working very closely with the community committee in the town of Snow Lake on a host of adjustment issues of which POWA is one. We have a staff person who has been assigned to that community working with them. He has been in Snow Lake, travelled there on many occasions to work with the committee and the conclusion of potentially a POWA application is part of that whole process.

I would remind the member for Flin Flon, the terms of the POWA agreement are fairly restrictive. Before even a candidate would be eligible for consideration, they would have to be out of work for at least a year. So it is not as if there is an issue today that has not been acted on. That process is part of the adjustment process in which we have a staff dedicated and assigned to the Snow Lake community, as the member well knows.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. The question was why has the government not responded.

Can the minister tell the people of Flin Flon and Snow Lake, who obviously are anxious about their jobs and their future, whether in fact the provincial government will be supporting a program for older worker adjustment for the Flin Flon and Snow Lake layoffs that are underway?

Mr. Praznik: If I understand the member correctly, I believe he is referring to the POWA program, the program for older worker adjustment, where in essence the federal and provincial governments buy an annuity for an individual, I believe over 55 years of age, who is not able to be retrained, but the criteria for that particular agreement is extremely restricted.

I would say to the member, before you can ask whether or not a government would support that application, we are not even sure whether or not

there (a) will be any applicants who will qualify, or whether the community will qualify, but I can tell him that we have staff assigned who have been working through the Labour Adjustment Committee in the process, which is the route to go, and that has been ongoing since the initial announcements from Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, the minister has not even read the letter. The chairperson of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Worker Adjustment Committee identified in his letter that there were 122 people who would be eligible, or he believed would be eligible.

My question is a simple one: Will the government of Manitoba at least be supporting the establishment of a program for older worker adjustment for the Flin Flon, Snow Lake layoffs which are going to decimate the communities?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, because the president of Hudson Bay—in fact, this must be the first time that the New Democrats have accepted the word of a president of a mining company holus-bolus without judging it against criteria.

Mr. Speaker, there are criteria by which that program operates. One of them is that those individuals are not eligible or have not been able to be retrained within a year of being laid off. If they are eligible, we will consider that application.

I have to say this to him, that the process is underway. This department has assigned staff to that process, but if he is asking me for a commitment here today, whether we do not even know if this layoff will be eligible, that would just be silly.

* (1410)

Crow Benefit Government Position

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, cuts by this department are having a devastating effect on rural Manitoba, and other decisions that they are taking are causing much uncertainty. Last year they participated in the transportation talks dealing with the method of payment, the subsidy paid for the transportation of grain. Even though farmers voted overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the system the way it is, this government continues to participate with the federal government to push on this matter.

I want to ask the Premier to state very clearly his government's position. Does he feel the payment

should stay as it is, or are they supporting the idea that the payment should be changed to the farmers?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we in the economy of Manitoba, the economy of Canada, the economy of the world are under tremendous pressure. There are forces out there of change that are rather large, that are causing all of us to take a look at every opportunity to increase investment, to increase job creation and to ensure that we can strengthen our economic base. That is true of every area of the economy, including agriculture.

Of course, we are going to want to be open-minded, to look at all opportunities to increase the value of our production, to increase the revenues to our individual producers and to ensure that we do not ignore any opportunity for economic growth in our farm community.

We will always evaluate the options available to us with that in mind. We will not have a narrow, blinkered view, as is being expressed by the member for Swan River who says, do not consider any change; do everything the way it used to be done 50 years ago and condemn our farmers to poverty. That is what she is asking us.

I will not do that, Mr. Speaker. Our farmers deserve the opportunity for economic growth, for economic prosperity like everyone else in society does, and we will ensure that as we evaluate our policies, we keep that first and foremost in our mind.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my left, where we have with us this afternoon the honourable Howard Pawley, the former Premier for the Province of Manitoba, former MLA for Selkirk.

I would like to welcome you here this afternoon, sir.

Nonpolitical Statements

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): May I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Johns have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I would like to bring to the attention of this House the amazing achievement of

a Winnipeg artist and performer, Ma-Anne Dionisio who was recently chosen from among hundreds of talented individuals to play the lead female role in the \$20 million production of *Miss Saigon* set to open in Toronto in May at the Princess of Wales Theatre.

This is a remarkable accomplishment and a matter of great pride for Ma-Anne's family, the entire Filipino community and Manitoba as a whole. It means a big boost for Winnipeg and it puts the city once again on the map for our young talent and our rich, artistic community.

I, along with several other members in this Chamber, had the privilege of witnessing Ma-Anne's extraordinary voice and amazing talent when she performed at the Walker Theatre on February 21, along with young Angela Jill Guingcangco, another well-known, extremely talented member of our community.

I would like to offer, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of members in this Assembly, our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Ma-Anne Dionisio and on behalf of everyone here express our thanks by saying *Salamat po*.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Lamoureux: I want to join in with the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Lels) in the words that she has put forward with respect to Ma-Anne. You know, I have had the opportunity to go to a number of different events and functions and am somewhat familiar with Ma-Anne's performances, not only on the radio and so forth but also in different organizations where I have seen her performing.

In particular, just over Valentine's Day at the Radio 27 Club, which is another organization where we see a lot of talent, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of this talent is allowed to come to the surface because the communities, all of the different ethnic communities, get behind the individuals and promote and ensure that there is a platform for them in order to get more and more people involved in listening to the different arts and the different heritage groups and so forth.

I did want to congratulate Ma-Anne on the wonderful job that she has done, and I am sure that she will do Manitoba proud in her performance coming up in Toronto. Thank you.

Committee Changes

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be amended as follows: Osborne (Mr. Alcock) for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you call Debate on Second Readings, the bills in the order that is presented on the Order Paper?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Endangered Species Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), Bill 2, The Endangered Species Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les espèces en voie de disparition, standing in the name of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing?
[agreed]

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time that we have seen this issue before the House since the election of 1990. This government did not get it right the first time. This is very common in many of the bills that the government brings forward. They do not have a very good screening process in place to ensure that the bills have gone through all of the requirements and that they will not have to come back before the House and demonstrate their confusion and mismanagement when it comes to managing bills in this House. We have seen this many times. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) knows that and is rather embarrassed about it.

I would be, too, if I was him, because in fact they have been in government five years now and should have been able, by this time, to put in place a process that ensures that bills brought before the House are not rushed and brought in in a haphazard way, an ad hoc way, therefore requiring all kinds of changes later on, because it does take a lot of the time of this House, as the minister will probably realize by the time the debate in this House is over

on this bill. It does take a lot of time and expense for the taxpayers.

Any government that wants to proclaim itself as efficient and as custodians of the taxpayers' dollars should, in fact, ensure that their legislation is brought in in a way that is complete, accurately reflects the intent and has passed all possible scrutiny so that we will not end up with the problems that we have with many pieces of legislation by the government.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I realize there are some new circumstances that have developed since 1990 and that is why the bill, Bill 2 dealing with endangered species, is before this House as well. So it is partly the fact that the government did not do it right the first time. They had the opportunity, this government, only two years ago—three years ago, in 1990. Also not only did they not do it right, but there were some other circumstances that developed since that time, regulations put in place at the national level that require some changes to the provincial act to conform.

Having said that, I can see there is some validity then to bringing the act in. My understanding is that there is a committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada, Mr. Speaker, that has nationally recognized definitions of terms. Since that has established a norm and a standard across the country, it makes sense to make sure that Manitoba's act conforms. I believe that information was available to the government in 1990 when they brought in the previous act, and they should have been able to enact it at that time, rather than just going ahead and ignoring the national standards and facts that were in place. [interjection]

* (1420)

The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) seems to be particularly interested in this bill, paying close attention, but he is interrupting me at this time. I wanted to bring to his attention, Mr. Speaker, that he will have an opportunity to speak on this bill—I am sure he will want to—at great length at some point in the near future, because the government does not have any real agenda for this House at this present time.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, is they are hoping that the opposition will be able to fill the time for them because they do not have their act together. They are afraid to bring in a budget. They are afraid to bring a budget before the people of Manitoba until other provinces have brought in their

budgets. So they are kind of dilly-dallying, waiting, whiling away the time in this Legislature, wasting the time of this Legislature on bills.

I think it is time that this government brought forward its agenda for this legislative session that they said they were going to bring forward, if they want to be straight with the people, in the throne speech. I think their agenda is shifting. In fact, we are not even seeing the list of legislation that was promised in the throne speech coming forward.

So we are having to deal with these bills at this time. The government is hopeful that it is this side of the House that is going to bail them out because they do not have an agenda for the people of Manitoba, and I would say by delaying the budget, Mr. Speaker, they are in fact managing inefficiently and wasting taxpayers' money in the province of Manitoba. This should be noted and is noted on the record.

I think the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) should be relevant when he discusses issues in this House. I have found it very difficult, Mr. Speaker, now that he brings forward the topic to find out exactly what he is referring to when he is answering questions or speaking in this House, because he has a great deal of difficulty being relevant to the subject.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to provide a brief bit of history to the Minister of Northern Affairs and other MLAs listening closely on this important issue. This matter of endangered species was one that has been pioneered at least in Legislatures in this country, a great deal by the previous New Democratic government.

As a matter of fact, we had initiated a process to establish such an act, an Endangered Species Act, way back in the mid-1980s. Now we are talking about eight years ago when this process started. It was recognized even before that. We had done a lot of the groundwork. We had all the bills ready to go and, as a matter of fact, would have been introduced in the House in 1988 prior to the unforeseen election that took place in the spring of 1988. The government then took another two years following that to bring forward an Endangered Species Act so they had a couple of years.

What I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, is that they did not have an adequate process for screening legislation to ensure that it was accurate and reflected the intent. So what we saw is that the bill

that was brought in in 1990 was severely flawed and needed some updates. Now they are telling us that new circumstances have resulted in a need to in fact change things in this bill. So if we take them at their word, there are some changes that are a result of a change in the situation regarding endangered wildlife, endangered species in this country as a whole, and they have brought in some changes.

We have some concerns, I would not say, Mr. Speaker, about the definitions, because the definitions on endangered species, extinct species and threatened species are more clear and consistent with the national standards and so that is okay. However, there are some aspects of this bill dealing with the minister's powers. Now that is always a frightening thing when we talk about the minister's powers, because when we have powers placed in the hands of the irresponsible as we have in many cases here in this Legislature, in this government, it is pretty scary for people because they have, in many cases, across the board carte blanche authority to make decisions that affect in this case not only human beings in this province with regard to social services and health care and education, but also endangered species of wildlife.

Now, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) talks about endangered species. I think that he better start looking in the mirror, because it is going to be a fact that they are going to see a vanishing species across the road as we approach the next election, and it is becoming more evident. The real extinct species is going to be on the other side, so they should try to preserve themselves—I admit that they are—and take all the steps necessary, perhaps using this act to preserve themselves. In the final analysis, they will be a vanishing breed, Mr. Speaker, and they are at the present time.

Let me say that with regard to the powers of the minister, there is going to be a section within the bill that will allow the minister to issue a permit that would permit the killing of an endangered species member. That is of serious concern because they use the term "scientific purposes" and they say that would be the reason, but it has been pointed out by my colleagues, and I think very importantly so, that "scientific purposes" has not been adequately defined.

If you do not have a definition and a guideline under which the minister must act, then we are giving the minister, as I indicated earlier, a

dangerous expansion of power. In fact, there could be interest groups that would want to take these animals for their own purposes, that could lobby the minister and end up with a permit that would not be truly for scientific purposes or necessary scientific purposes.

We have not even talked about the necessity of this and whether there are alternatives. What about the possibility that there are all kinds of other species that could serve the same purpose for scientific study? They would not have to actually go after one of those that are rare and endangered. We would think that the government would consider that, but there is no definition in this bill that deals with this issue. That, of course, is very frightening, as I said earlier.

In fact, we have seen the misuse of power by this government, by these ministers on many occasions in the last number of years, and perhaps no more aptly demonstrating, Mr. Speaker, than in the deep and difficult, the extremely painful cuts inflicted by the government on children in this province, on the poor, on the vulnerable, on the people who are ill, on the elderly. Groups that are vulnerable in society tend to be picked on by this government. In that way, with that example, you have to wonder whether, if we were to compare those species that are endangered in animal life, we could look at that comparison and that parallel between what they do with the most vulnerable in society when it involves human beings and what do they do in a situation like this.

Do they really care? Is there any chance that we could point to examples that would show that this government really cares about the most vulnerable in society? We have seen their track record. Why would they care about animals? Why would they really care about finding out whether a scientific project of research was really necessary on that endangered species? Why would they really care?

They do not demonstrate they care. They seem to be more concerned with pursuing their ideological bent and philosophy with regard to privatization and cuts on essential services than they do with compassion for those who are most impacted in society, Mr. Speaker.

We saw that with the kind of flippant responses from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) yesterday when he raised a very serious issue about one of his constituents

with regard to mental health services in this province. We saw the kind of political attack by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who said he was just grandstanding. That is the kind of response that would demonstrate to us that this government is not a caring government, does not concern itself with the plight of those who are the most vulnerable and are being hurt the most in society and in fact hurts them even worse and smiles, Mr. Speaker, oblivious to the blood that is being shed around them.

* (1430)

I say, Mr. Speaker, any time a government of this political stripe, with this callous attitude towards life, towards people, to those vulnerable in society, we should be concerned when they bring in an act that gives expansive powers to the minister, in this case the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), to make decisions with regard to animal life.

Many times many people consider animal life as sacred as human life. In fact there are many people who risk their life, who spend much of their life defending various species of animal life in our world, not only in our country but across the world. The Greenpeace organization might be one example. They give their own lives in some cases. They give their own lives to preserve and save endangered wildlife.

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

So we consider that human beings value wildlife and species, and of course we see that it is endangered in so many areas of the world. We are losing species, plant species, wildlife species at an alarming rate at the present time with the burning of the rain forests and the destruction of other habitat for wildlife. We are losing hundreds of species perhaps a day in some of the information that I have seen. It is extremely scary and a tremendous loss to our world that these species have indeed been wiped off the face of the earth forever.

So there are those who draw this to public attention, who spend much of their life defending those that cannot defend themselves, those that cannot speak for themselves. Just like we have the vulnerable in society who cannot speak for themselves in many cases, they ask the voice of the opposition to bring forward their concerns. We have wildlife, indeed, who cannot speak for themselves as well. When this government is

callous in their treatment of our environment and our wildlife, as many like governments across this world are, like-minded governments to this government I might say, then there must be someone who will stand up and speak for them. That is what we intend to do with this bill, to speak for those who are at risk, be it wildlife, be it human beings, because both are very valuable to our people, to our fragile planet, as my colleague the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) says in adding her piece to this bill from her seat.

I am certain that my colleagues will want to add their contributions on this bill time and again over the next while to bring forward their deep concerns on the issue of endangered wildlife and plant species in this world, certainly. I want to just alert the government that we not only are vigilant when we are dealing with human life and those who are vulnerable in society and endangered by the actions of this government, endangered. The parallel is very clear. In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, we will be vigilant not only when it endangers the human species, but also when it endangers the various species of wildlife and plant life in this country, in this world and in this province in particular.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I will close my remarks at this time with the one final statement that I can make to the minister, that he, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), when reading these remarks, undoubtedly in great detail, at some time in the future, will carefully consider whether in fact he should define scientific purposes in this act, so that there will be some legislative guidelines for decision making by the minister, not wide open.

Although the minister and his colleagues may feel comfortable for another year or a year and a half, they are—and they have to realize—temporary custodians of the decision making of government in the province of Manitoba, temporary custodians. So, within the passage of time, within a year, a year and a half, perhaps as long as two years, they will no longer be in their positions. They can see those days being numbered. They may think, just as we do not believe that they can be trusted to do the right thing all of the time, even some of the times, they may think that we cannot be trusted when we are in government to do the right thing all of the time.

They should ensure that they like this legislation not only when they are in government, but they find it acceptable when they are in opposition too. If they used that as a guideline for any of the legislation

they bring forward, to consider whether it is acceptable to them if they were sitting in opposition as it is when they are sitting in government, if they use that measuring stick, then in fact they will definitely be more representative of people's wishes than they are at the present time, because they certainly are not using that.

They are not using that, Mr. Acting Speaker. They have to remember, it could be in the hands of the opposition in government only a year and a half or two years hence. Would they like those powers in the hands of the opposition when in government? That is the yardstick I said they should use. I hope that they will endeavour to consider those things when they make decisions of this nature. Because they are not going to be there, as I said, for a very long time, and they will have to consider the implications of that to their future as well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am going to just indicate that we will want to hear what the government has to say in support of what they are proposing here. We will want to hear whether they have some way of dealing with the concerns that we have raised that are satisfactory to us. My colleagues will undoubtedly want to raise a number of other issues related to this bill at the very earliest opportunity. As a matter of fact, I understand that they will need some of those papers very soon. Thank you.

Committee Change

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some changes to the Public Accounts Committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Would the honourable member for Gimli have leave to make changes to one of the committees? Leave. [agreed]

Mr. Helwer: I move, seconded by the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be amended as follows: The member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) for the vacant position that we have on the committee.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading—[interjection] Oh, it is standing in the name of the honourable member—that is correct. I am sorry.

As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

Ms. Jean Frlesen (Wolseley): Mr. Acting Speaker, I assume that there is still permission to remain standing in the name of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). Okay.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am glad to rise on The Endangered Species Amendment Act, which is an act of three or four pages which intends primarily to offer some wording changes, some definition changes to The Endangered Species Act.

Its purpose in altering some of these definitions is to bring them in line with both national and international wordings and definitions, and I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is generally a good move, one where in fact we perhaps ought to be looking at other acts in much the same way. In the New Democratic Party and on this side of the House, of course, we have always fought for national standards in so many areas of government.

* (1440)

Definitions, scientific regulations and connections across provincial boundaries I think have always been important, and one of the things in fact that I thought was one of the better aspects of the constitutional proposals of Manitoba was that it argued for a stronger voice at the national level for the environment as well as for post-secondary education, and that was an all-party report, Mr. Acting Speaker. It did not in the end, I believe, form part of this government's proposals at the constitutional table, but I do believe that it was something which was approved of by most Manitobans in the hearings that we heard from last year and the year before. So the move towards national standards even in such a small area as this is one that in principle I approve of and would offer some support for.

I would hope that the government would at some point go back to that all-party committee on the Constitution to look at the submissions which were made by people who were looking for national standards and national approaches to the difficulties that Canada is facing in the environment and in post-secondary education, and perhaps take to heart and try and make some changes on and in the national forum in both of those areas, both of which cry out for a national approach to the problems that

all provinces are facing, and problems which do not stop at provincial boundaries.

The second thing I think that is interesting about this act, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that it is an act, perhaps, much like The Heritage Resources Act where government is acting to regulate and to protect a national or a provincial inheritance, a public, a common inheritance for the people of Manitoba.

I am often surprised when this particular government does make that approach, because this is a government which is adverse to regulation and to protection. It is a government which I believe has a real agenda in fact to retreat from governance, to retreat from the protection of the rights and the community supports and of the programs that we held in common, a party and a government which is aiming in almost everything that it brings to this House to reduce the role of government, to reduce regulation, to reduce any kind of constraint upon international markets, multinational corporations.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when government is weak, it is the people and the poorest people who suffer, and that, I believe, is the real agenda of this government in almost every area which they touch. So it is with some surprise that I do see that they are, in fact, dealing with, or making as part of their agenda, an act which does attempt to regulate in a very, very small way some elements of the provincial or common inheritance. The protection of endangered species is something that cannot be done by individuals. It is something that cannot be done by individual communities or by sections of the province or indeed classes or volunteers so much beloved of this government, but it is something which must be done by all the people together.

So it is with some surprise that I welcome the interest of this government in some forms of regulation and in some forms of common inheritance. There are times when I look at the actions of this government in dealing with education, in dealing with the health care system, in dealing with family services, when one wonders if there will be anything left for the next generation of Manitobans. Will there be any common inheritance left? There may, in fact, if we look at this, be perhaps some endangered species left in Manitoba, and so I congratulate the government at least on dealing with something which I would think ran counter to their basic assumptions and their basic agenda for this province.

This particular act, as I said, reminds me very much of The Heritage Resources Act, which the NDP government put in place, but there are, of course, some differences. The Heritage Resources Act aims to protect and regulate special places and buildings of historical significance. It is an act which provides for surveys, for evaluation, for designation, for public hearings and for appeals. It is quite a complex act, Mr. Acting Speaker. At the time when it was instituted under Eugene Kostyra, it was the most progressive piece of legislation in heritage conservation in the country. Since then, there have been others which have improved upon it, as is the case in our federal system and, to some extent, in Ontario, which surpassed it in the latter part of the 1980s. But it was a good piece of legislation. It is still in place. It is one that I think has resulted in a much greater awareness of the value of endangered places and endangered buildings.

The provision for the designation of municipal buildings and municipal special places, I think, has resulted in wide recognition and a great deal of community activity, particularly in parts of southern Manitoba. So I would think that this government, which represents much of southern Manitoba, might have seen the value of the surveys, the public input, the right of appeal and the monitoring of heritage resources and heritage-designated places in Manitoba. It does surprise me perhaps that some of those principles were not used when the amendments to this act were developed, and it is some elements of that I wanted to turn to, Mr. Acting Speaker.

One of the difficulties in this bill is, in fact, that it provides for a listing of endangered species and for really a process of watching decline. It does not provide for enforcement; it does not provide for fines; it does not provide, perhaps more importantly, for the very first basis of any kind of wildlife management program or heritage management program or management program of any kind of conservation resources, and that is, first of all, an inventory of the existing species, their habitat, their condition, their numbers, and develops longitudinal studies of those particular species and animals.

That, I think we will find when we get to the public hearings, will be one of the difficulties that environmental groups and people concerned with heritage and conservation generally will address. I guess we all are grateful for the advantages we have in Manitoba having all bills go to public hearing so

that we do have the opportunity to address issues such as this on which we might all be able to agree, in which there might be a consensus and where it might be possible for the minister at that stage to address the issue in conjunction with the community and with the opposition and to find some way of addressing the public concerns that are out there. Those public hearings are always well attended and, I think in some cases, not in all but, in some cases, there has been very productive use and there has been the opportunity to develop a consensus in a number of areas and to provide amendments that do address the issues that the public brings before us.

In this case, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that there might well be presentations which do point out to the minister the difficulties that Manitobans have in looking at endangered species when we have so little information upon their recent history and we have so little information that would give us essentially an inventory of which animals and which species are in greater or lesser need of protection and which ones in fact are present and in what numbers and how their numbers have been changing perhaps over the last five to 10 years, the very basic kind of inventory that any small businessman, as the government I am sure will well recognize, any management of any resource, whether it is a human resource or whether it is, in this case, a species of wild animals. You have to know how many there are; you have to know what rate they have been changing at and where they are and how those habitats have been changing.

One of the difficulties in Manitoba is that we do not have those monitoring provisions and we do not have those inventory provisions. Many other jurisdictions do. I think particularly you will find that environmentalists will point to American jurisdictions and to new legislation in the United States which is particularly strong on this issue. So that is one area I think that the government might want to address.

I think a second issue that is important to all of us on this side of the House is the capacity of this particular department to indeed take on very basic management processes such as an inventory of these species. This is a government which a number of years ago fired over 200 people. This is a department which, I am sure, will suffer greater losses again. It is a department which is going to a four-day week. How can you have a department of

Natural Resources which is charged with, which is mandated to protect endangered species and to give a wide variety of services to the people of Manitoba who are being consistently undercut, undermined, underfunded by this particular government? It is not simply a response to the issue of financial resources in the government, because I do fundamentally believe that this government, without a financial crisis, would have taken steps and moves to reduce government, to retreat from governance, to retreat from the role of a community in defending and preserving its resources and its inheritance.

* (1450)

It is a clear ideological divide, one I think which we are seeing now put in place very consistently when the government believes that it will have public support for its particular ideological bent under the guise of a financial crisis, but we should not be misled or fooled by this. There are a good proportion of the cabinet, a good proportion of the members of that side of the House who clearly see that limits to government powers are ones which will act in the interest of those who are powerful and wealthy and who have influence in our community.

It is a clear ideological divide, which I believe the people of Manitoba are becoming more clearly aware of, particularly in the city of Winnipeg, where the economic cleavages are becoming much more dramatic and much more evident. I think it will become increasingly clear as the effects of these government cuts are felt throughout the province in school boards and universities and institutions of health and family services as they begin to trickle down.

I think the real trickle-down legacy of this government in fact will be that recognition that there is a clear ideological divide between the peoples of Manitoba and in fact the government, which is choosing to reduce and to retreat from its rightful role as the voice of the community and as the protector and conservator of our resources and our programs.

There are concerns about a number of endangered species in Manitoba. Some of the ones that have been mentioned most recently are on both sides of Lake Winnipeg, for example the woodland caribou. I think there have been some changes that have been made in the area to the east side of Lake Winnipeg in some logging practices in order to protect parts of the woodland caribou herd.

As far as I understand it, these changes and these limitations placed on logging in order to protect the woodland caribou have come at the request, at the pressure of conservation groups and of the environmental movement. They have not, as I understand it, although I stand to be corrected on this, come at the insistence of this no-regulation government.

Public interest groups out there are indeed concerned about this and, certainly in the case of the woodland caribou, have acted to force the government to act, but it is a government department which has fewer and fewer employees and, of course, does find it more and more difficult to be ahead of the process, to be there monitoring the state of the woodland caribou or of the brown trout, for example, in the Nelson River system, another species which people have suggested is also in danger.

So I would suggest, first of all, a reconsideration of the role of the Department of Natural Resources of the staffing levels to look at whether in fact they are able to manage the consequences of acts such as this. I would suggest to the government that they consider an inventory, that they have the basic management tools at their fingers so they can indeed reasonably enforce this act.

I would suggest also that they do consider having some provisions in this particular bill for enforcement. There is very little in here that gives one any hope that there will be serious enforcement, partly because of the staffing levels of the department, but also partly because of the nature of the bill itself. That would be something I think we might want to consider in committee as well.

One area that has also been brought to our attention is the issue of permits in this bill. The permits by the minister, which are mentioned in one particular section towards the end of the bill, where the minister is now permitted to authorize a person to kill, take, collect or capture an endangered species. That, I think, will bear some further investigation at committee.

An Honourable Member: Trust us.

Ms. Frlesen: The minister says, trust us. Well, the minister will forgive me if a slight smile appears on my lips.

An Honourable Member: You like that, eh?

Ms. Frlesen: Yes, just a little.

There are comparable provisions in The Heritage Resources Act, and I wanted to draw those to the attention of the minister because The Heritage Resources Act, I think, has elements which could be useful here. The minister here is allowed to give permits for the killing of animals, and I assume that the origin of this is animals perhaps who might be badly wounded and who, under the actual specific wording of the previous legislation, could not be killed. So it may be for the provision of—the point that I wanted to make about the permits is that it may indeed be seen to be correcting some of the limitations of the earlier wording, but there are some problems with it, and I hope that we will be addressing these in committee.

In The Heritage Resources Act, for example, the minister is allowed to provide permits for archaeological investigations; some, in fact, are given regularly. But there is the provision for an advisory committee to the minister, the Heritage board which does look at, over a period of time, not every permit, but once a year at the nature of the permits which have been given. It may be possible that within the Department of Natural Resources or within one of the existing boards of government that some review could be provided for in that area. That might be something that we could look at—that sense of public reassurance that this is not being done in an unnecessary or a cruel manner and one where it is being done, in fact, in sympathy with the spirit of the legislation.

So there are some concerns there, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I hope that we will be looking at them in more detail later on.

Manitoba has lost many species over the course of its history, and I suppose the most famous of these is the buffalo, but it is not the only one by any means. In earlier times, there were in fact great millions of carrier pigeons in the Red River region, so much so that in fact they became one of the major sources of food at certain times of the year. It was by the hand of man and by the introduction of guns that many of these pigeons were decimated and eventually became an exterminated species in the Red River Valley.

There have been others. Fish, for example, perhaps is one of the most notable ones which has suffered serious declines throughout Manitoba history. We tend to think that it is the buffalo which was the staff of life for people in this area and for people to the west of us on the plains, but indeed I

think most of the recent archeological and historical interpretation is suggesting that the buffalo was one of the more recent additions to the basic staple of life for the people of this area. Recent archeological investigations both in Manitoba, Pembina Post, for example, and in the Qu'Appelle Valley have shown enormous productions of fish material—the preparation of fish pemmican, for example, amounts which were feeding very large numbers of people over long periods of time and which enabled them to assemble in quite large tribal groupings. So the provision of fish and its loss over the years I think is one of the things that we should remember as we are addressing endangered species in this particular bill.

*(1500)

For the most part fish was lost, not just by the hand of man alone, but in a sense by the unregulated market economy. Much of the fish of Lake of the Woods, much of the very large fish, the sturgeon of Lake of the Woods, was lost in a very short period of time, between about 1880 and about 1890, a 10-year period, when American fishing companies moved into this area, established themselves largely with Metis labour along the shores of Lake Manitoba and in the Lake of the Woods area and, in a sense, mined that resource. Out of Selkirk, for example, they took the railway and they transshipped the fish down to Chicago and to Detroit, and those provided a ready market and an initial and quick cash market for the fish resources of the area.

To a large extent the fish resources of Lake Winnipeg have not recovered from that onslaught of the open market. Of course, the people who suffer from that are those for whom the fish had become an important part of their diet. So the Metis of that area in the 1890s and beyond not only lost some of their labour opportunities that they had in the earlier period, but they also did not have the same opportunities for the management of that resource that they had in the past. So the loss of species has had tremendous impact upon different communities in Manitoba, 2,000 years ago, 200 years ago and even perhaps almost within recent memory, at the turn of the 19th Century.

The loss of the buffalo is a more complex issue. It is an interesting one perhaps. We tend to think that it was only at the hands of the European hunter that the buffalo declined, but the more recent research suggests that it was a great variety of

complex mechanisms, one of which was the opening in the 1830s of an immediately available market in St. Louis and at the smaller towns along the Missouri. The people of Manitoba: Metis, Assiniboin, Dakotas and Cree, through the Mandan trade reacted very quickly to this new market economy.

The expansion of the buffalo hunt amongst all groups in Manitoba, I think, was very rapid in that period and was one of the factors that pushed the buffalo further west and led to the migration of people out of Manitoba essentially into Blackfoot territory where the buffalo continued to arrive. A number of complex factors there did result in the loss of a very significant resource for large numbers of the people of this province. The final culmination of the loss of the buffalo was of course due to the railway and to the expansion of white settlement and to the introduction in the United States of non-native hunters who did make very rapid inroads into a declining resource.

It was not without the appeals of the people at the time. The Council of Assiniboia in the 1850s did consider in fact regulating this particular resource and did look upon it as an endangered species. Certainly there were other times the Northwest Council of the 1870s also examined the case of the buffalo and its loss as an endangered species. When the Cree of western Manitoba and of eastern Saskatchewan approached the government to make treaties in the 1870s, one of the elements that they asked for was in fact exclusive control of the buffalo resource, because they knew it was a declining resource and, as they said at the time, we must find ways to feed our children. They asked—in fact, in the late 1870s, the Indians made repeated requests to the Northwest Council for game regulations on the buffalo that would enable them to find a living for what appeared to be the last generation of buffalo.

So this is not the first time that Manitoba by any means has looked at endangered species. Manitobans have not always acted I think in the best interests of the species, and we have lost a number of species and we still have species which are in imminent danger.

We have a government which prefers not to regulate, which prefers not to monitor or to inventory, which prefers not to have a bill which provides for penalties in this area but which offers a small movement towards national standards at least

in vocabulary and which is trying to perhaps offer some public relations effort to people who are concerned about the environment. I do look forward to the committee hearings, where we will have an opportunity for questions and perhaps to find some consensus where we can ameliorate some of the elements of this bill and to perhaps find some openings of opportunity in the area that it offers to us.

Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on this bill, because I think endangered species are very important and it also gives me the opportunity to start off with some theological reflections, which is something that I like to do with every bill, but it is not always easy to do that. In this case I believe it is. I think that a good place to start is with our theology of life on this Earth and how we view it and how we as human beings are responsible for preserving life and protecting life. The best word for that is stewardship. We are stewards of our environment. We have the opportunity to be good stewards or bad stewards of our environment, and much of this thought and language comes from the book of Genesis, where God gave humankind dominion over the earth and all living things, and this passage has been interpreted in different ways. For example, there have been two primary interpretations of this passage.

One is that humans can do anything, because humans are superior and have a God-given mandate to do anything they want. Historically that interpretation held sway for many, many centuries, and some people still hold to that interpretation. There is another and I believe more enlightened interpretation, one that has much better scientific support, and that is that to have dominion implies being responsible and being good stewards of our environment. I believe that biblical interpretation and ethics support this second interpretation.

So, in our society, we have not only competing theological concepts, if you want to look at it from the biblical point of view, but you could say—[interjection] The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) wants to know if I use the same script on weekends, and the answer is yes. I would say exactly the same thing in the pulpit that I am saying now in my speech. If the member would like to come and listen to me in the pulpit I would invite him to do that too.

So another way of looking at this is that these are two competing philosophies, or these are two competing world views. One view is that as human beings we can use up the world's resources, that we do not have any responsibility for how fast we use up the world's resources or in what manner we use them because, as human beings, that is our right, that is our privilege. It is up to us to make all those decisions.

The other world view is that we should be good stewards, we should be very concerned, we should be very careful of how we use the world's resources and to what extent we protect them. We have an Endangered Species Act in Manitoba. As far as the act goes it is good as far as it exists. However, there are many shortcomings in this act which I will describe.

The act in the Preamble recognizes that plant and animal species are of ecological, educational, aesthetic, historical, medical, recreational and scientific value to Manitobans and the residents of Manitoba and, due to the activities of persons untempered by adequate concern for the preservation of native plant and animal species or other factors, plant and animal species in Manitoba from time to time become extinct or so depleted that they are threatened with extinction.

* (1510)

Well, that is good enough as far as it goes. I can agree with that. I can even agree with the purpose of the act, which is to ensure the protection and to enhance the survival of endangered and threatened species in the province; second, to enable the reintroduction of extinct species into the province; and third, to designate species that are endangered or threatened with extinction in the province.

So the purpose of the act is a good one. However, we have serious problems with the fact that the act does not go nearly far enough. For example, if one looks at fines in Manitoba, which is an important part of enforcing the act, it is my understanding that in Manitoba the fines are a maximum of \$5,000 or six months in jail. If you contrast this with the equivalent American legislation, you will see that in the fish or wildlife endangered species protection act of the United States Senate, which was originally passed in 1969, that the fines are twice what they are in Manitoba. For example, the fine is \$10,000 or imprisonment of not more than one year. [interjection]

Well, I seem to hear the member opposite asking me if I like the American way. This may surprise her, but I am going to talk a lot about the American endangered species protection act, because it is much better legislation than exists in the province of Manitoba. Yes, there are things that we can learn from the American example. I am not adverse to borrowing good ideas, nor should we, nor should her government be adverse to borrowing good ideas from the United States when that is appropriate. I see the minister agrees with me. I am glad to see that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) agrees with me.

Now I would like to direct my attention to Bill 2, The Endangered Species Amendment Act. The main problem we have with this is that it does not go far enough. It only lists the endangered species and the requirements to catalogue various stages of extinction. In fact, I came across a wonderful quote. I am sorry I do not have the person who said this, but someone said: We will be the only species to minutely monitor our own extinction.

I think what that means is that after we monitor the extinction of all other species, humankind will be the only ones who are left.

In our society, we have actually gained quite a bit of expertise and knowledge in monitoring certain things. For example, we are wonderful at monitoring air and water pollution, or air quality and water quality. However, in Bill 2, we are going to increase monitoring the extinction of species, but we are not going to do anything more about protection of species, and that is a shame.

In the American legislation all agencies, fish and wildlife service and other agencies are required to enforce the endangered species act. In Manitoba, I believe The Endangered Species Act is merely a public relations gesture. There is no compulsion for a recovery plan or to do anything other than to catalogue the extinction of species. In fact, the opposite is happening.

As a result of budget cuts by this government, they are eliminating and dismantling the infrastructure in the Department of Natural Resources. They are slashing the budget in Natural Resources. They are slashing the staff in Natural Resources. The staff person who was responsible for ecological reserves is gone. So not only are we not protecting the habitat and protecting species, but we are going in the opposite direction. We are

providing fewer and fewer resources so that this might happen in the present or the future.

I learned today that there was an endangered species scratch-and-win ticket, which suggested that the government was concerned for endangered species. It suggested that the money that was raised this way might be used to protect endangered species. However, when the staff of the Wildlife Branch wanted to get some of this money to protect endangered species, they were not allowed to access it, which suggests to me that the endangered species scratch-and-win was another public relations exercise.

The Department of Natural Resources used to have a library. They used to have an excellent librarian. What happened? It is gone. What did they do with the information? They dumped it on the Parks Branch, but gave them no resources for the public to make use of it.

What we have on the one hand is the government's professed allegiance to preserving and protecting the environment and on the other hand budgetary decisions which are going in the opposite direction and providing fewer and fewer resources toward protecting the environment and endangered species.

What does Bill 2 do? Well, it lists various stages that species go through. The list in this bill is endangered species, threatened species, extinct species and extirpated species. Well, I think that they have the last two out of order, probably should have been extirpated species and then extinct species, because what extirpated means is that the geographical limit of a species is limited. They are only found in a particular area, and the next step after that is they are gone, that they are extinct. So it would actually be more logical to say extirpated and then extinct.

But what does this bill do? What is the intent of it? Bill 2 only catalogues the decline of species, nothing more. There is no compulsion for action. There is nothing to prevent the situation from getting worse other than keeping a list.

I actually have a friend who works for the Department of Natural Resources or Ministry of Environment in the Province of Ontario, and before he was hired on by government, he had many interesting jobs working at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and at other places, and one of the things that he does is that he catalogues

species, particularly plants. He is considered an expert in some varieties of plants, particularly in the province of Ontario.

He has also travelled across western Canada cataloguing species. In fact, he once got a phone call from NASA in Houston, Texas, because they had pictures of northern Ontario and northern Manitoba and something showed up that was a particular colour and they did not understand what it was. So they phoned my friend John Riley in Toronto, and they said, what are we seeing in these photographs from outer space? He said, what you are seeing is a particular plant at a particular stage and it gives it a particular colour, and that is what you are seeing. He knew this from studying these plants in the Hudson Bay lowlands.

So I have had some interesting discussions with my friend John about how we protect endangered species, plants and other things. This kind of challenged my thinking, because one of the things that he said was it is not always the right thing to do to have government set aside a parcel of land in order to protect a species, because what that does is it lets everyone know that a particular species of plant or animal or whatever is in a particular geographical area.

The example that he gave me was an endangered species of plant somewhere in the Niagara Peninsula, and someone had the idea that they should buy a plot of land to protect this endangered species. He said, well, there is another way of doing this, and the other way of doing it is to have the property owner protect it and then the public can only come on the property with the permission of that property owner. In his view, it provided better protection than having it as public property because once something is public property then the public have certain rights and certain privileges. So I have an open mind on what is the best way to protect endangered species.

One example of how this government is, I believe, not protecting the environment and not protecting endangered species is to look at the level of fines. If the minister responsible for Hydro would like to look at the level of fines collected in Manitoba and in other provinces, you would see huge differences in the level of fines collected. For example, I understand that in B.C. and Alberta over a million dollars a year are collected in fines levied under environmental legislation. In Manitoba, it is one-tenth of the revenue that is collected by Alberta.

I think this is a measure of the seriousness with which government enforces their legislation.

* (1520)

In Manitoba, what do we need? We need an inventory of species, an inventory of all species. In Manitoba, we do not know how many species we have. We do not know what their distribution is. We do not know where they are located, and no government department has a mandate to do this. Now, of course, the members opposite will say, how much will this cost? How are we going to pay for it?

Well, it does not mean that it has to be done overnight. It does not mean that you have to spend millions of dollars to do it in the next year. It could be done in stages. You could work your way through the province in stages, either going from one rural municipality to another or going through biological areas, through one ecosystem after another, or you could require that Crown corporations and companies conduct an inventory of species when they apply for an environmental licence. For example, Manitoba Hydro could be required to do an inventory of species when they apply for a licence.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Unfortunately, this government has found a creative but unfair way of doing this now, and that is, with Ducks Unlimited, they did their own inventory of species. They did their own assessment, and then it was used by the government to justify the project, hardly an objective way of doing anything, to have the group that is applying for the permit do their own assessment. Even if they are experts in particular areas, it does not appear to be a just or fair way to do it.

In Manitoba, we have species that we need to be concerned about; for example, the woodland caribou that my colleague for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) mentioned. The woodland caribou apparently is in danger in certain parts of the province, endangered because of logging activity north of the Whiteshell and the Nopiming Park area, and they exist all the way up to Churchill. In fact, my colleague for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) could probably fill me in on the woodland caribou.

Presently, there is no monitoring. There is no money in the department's budget to monitor the woodland caribou and the effects of logging on this species. I suggest it is because the government does not want to know what the effect of logging is

on woodland caribou because then there might be some threat to the logging industry.

The other example for Manitoba that my colleague mentioned was the trout in the Nelson River. At one time, the trout in Manitoba were the subject of articles in Fish and Wildlife and sports magazines because they were a trophy fish. Now what has happened because of the construction of dams by governments of all three political parties in Manitoba is that these fish are almost gone. One of the ironies is that there is going to be eventually, I assume, a full environmental impact study on a potential Conawapa dam. What will it show? Well, it will show that the dam will not harm the trout because there are so few trout left that there is nothing to harm. So it is a case of being too late and shutting the barn door after the horse is out.

By contrast, the American legislation is much better and much stronger than Canadian, at least provincial Manitoba legislation. So I would like to talk a little bit about the American legislation. For example, it compels recovery plans. It compels an inventory of habitat. It looks at the impact of developments. It requires correcting conditions which endanger a species.

One of the famous examples that has come to media attention is the spotted owl in Washington state and elsewhere in the American northwest. The American legislation which was, I believe, originally passed in 1969 is called the fish or wildlife endangered species protection act. Their act requires that it be reviewed, I believe, every three years or every five years.

There is very interesting discussion in the environmental community, also in Congressional Quarterly, and I have a periodical called Energy Environment—no, I have the Congressional Quarterly Almanac for 1991, and I have the Congressional Quarterly Almanac for 1978, excellent publications which my colleague should be using in preparation for speeches, if you want to compare American legislation with Canadian legislation.

For example, in the 1978 Congressional Quarterly, the Endangered Species Act was amended, and some of these amendments strengthened the act and made it a better act. It required public hearings by the interior department for designation of endangered species' critical habitats. The hearing had to occur in the same area

where the proposed site designation was located. The amendments restricted the authority to apply for an exemption to governors, the federal agency concerned and the holder of a federal permit or licence to build and operate a project. The amendment allowed any person to appeal the review board's decision in court.

These all sound like reasonable and positive improvements to the act, kind of the opposite of the way this Conservative government went in Manitoba with the Ducks Unlimited bill, by which they made it easier for nonenvironmentally sound practices to be carried out on certain kinds of public lands.

Some of you may remember some of the controversy about this legislation in the United States, because the Supreme Court there said that a dam could not be built because of an endangered species, the snail darter. So there was lots of media coverage about this and great debate in the House and Congress about the usefulness of this legislation. To quote from the Congressional Quarterly: In the view of many, it was bizarre that a federal law that protected such storied creatures as the grizzly bear and the bald eagle should be extended by the Interior Department—whose Endangered Species Office designated which species were to be protected—to cover obscure, seemingly insignificant little things like mollusks, beetles and snapdragon plants. Brushed aside was the environmentalists' argument that even the smallest elements in the Earth's ecological system are vital.

You can see that the developers found themselves to be in conflict with the environmentalists, or the developers were in conflict with environmental legislation, in this case the endangered species legislation.

In addition to placing a species under the federal mantle, maximum penalties for harming or capturing a protected creature was a year in jail and a \$20,000 fine, double the fines in the province of Manitoba. In the United States, there were 177 animals and 15 plants listed as endangered as of September 1978. Of the almost 6,000 consultations between the office and builders to see if a project met the law, only four had reached court up through September 1978. So in the first nine years that the legislation was in place in the United States, only four times did developers, in this case, builders, come in conflict with the act and take the government to court, which

suggests that in by far the vast majority of cases—6,000 consultations are referred to—the act seemed to be working and doing what it was supposed to do.

The debate in the House was quite interesting. For example, a Democrat from Iowa, John Culver said—John Culver led what was often an emotional floor debate—quote: "It does on the surface seem stupid to save something like a snail darter, some crazy bat, some crayfish, something called a Furbish lousewort," he told the Senate, referring to other species that threatened the future of certain projects.

But he continued, and I quote again: "It is also true, in my judgment, that we have the ethical and moral responsibility to pass on to future generations, in as pristine a state as possible, what we in turn have inherited."

Then he goes on to point out how we are losing species and how this is going on at an accelerated pace over the history of human evolution on this earth. He says that during prehistoric times only one species was extinguished every 10,000 years. Around the year 1600, the rate increased to one every 1,000 years, until "today, from one to 20 species are extinguished from our global environment every single year."

"The cause of our accelerated pace of natural extinction is man," Culver said.

So we see what happens. We start off with a very slow extinction of species. It picks up speed as development increases and becomes faster and faster until one to 20 species are extinguished from our global environment every single year.

This was a speech made in 1979, so I would suggest that it has probably increased since then.

* (1530)

There have been positive changes since then in our society's thinking about the environment. We now have the concept of sustainable development, a concept which has been greatly abused and is interpreted in various ways. Hopefully, if we interpret sustainable development in a positive way, it means that we do not endanger species and that we only go forward with development where it does not harm the environment.

Unfortunately, Manitoba legislation, I believe, is not strong enough to protect species. In fact, Bill 2 has only minor technical amendments, and The

Endangered Species Act in Manitoba only requires that endangered species be monitored, and that they be listed, and does nothing to protect them from further extinction.

One amendment proposed by Nelson, which was also adopted, required preparation of an environmental impact statement on the threatened species, or its critical habitat, before the board could grant an exception. An environmental impact statement is something that I think would be helpful in Manitoba.

If we look at the Congressional Quarterly from 1991, we see what happened in the most recent review. The lawmakers introduced and held hearings on bills to stem the decline of the northern spotted owl in the Pacific Northwest, restore several endangered species of salmon and steelhead trout that ran the Columbia River watershed, and continue helping the Atlantic striped bass.

Now the result of this discussion is that it brought to the fore the conflict between the logging industry and environmentalists; that is, it brought to the foreground the conflict between those who wanted to continue in the logging industry and those who wanted to protect the environment. So that was a very interesting debate.

"A particularly bruising battle was waged over the spotted owl. The controversy produced a hodgepodge of bills that attempted to deal with it.

"They ranged from timber-industry-supported proposals to make end runs around the Endangered Species Act and judicial review of timber policy, to environmentalist-supported measures that would give ironclad protection to whole swaths of the owl's ancient forest habitat." It is interesting to follow that debate and to see what happened.

One of the things that was introduced, which is a good idea, which I think should be adopted elsewhere, is: "Bills were introduced in both chambers to require the government to consider entire ecosystems in managing public lands." In fact, that is something that we should probably include in Manitoba and something that we should probably talk about when we talk about parks boundaries, because right now when we designate an area as a park we tend to have straight lines for boundaries, but the ecosystem does not follow straight boundaries. Ecosystems tend to follow drainage basins and things like that. So these are irregular shapes. It makes more sense to protect a

species by its ecosystem rather than by drawing straight lines on a map.

To continue from the Congressional Quarterly: "Biodiversity was much talked about during battles to save the habitats of the northern spotted owl and red squirrel. Supporters of habitat preservation argued that subspecies, such as the two in question, were a distinctive and important part of their ecosystems

"Most scientists estimated that there were between 10 million and 1 billion species of plants and animals on the Earth and only a fraction of them had been identified.

"Many in the scientific community worried that the loss of biodiversity would deprive mankind of potential medical and agricultural breakthroughs."

Is this relevant in Manitoba? Is it important here? Yes, it is. We could have species in Manitoba that need to be protected for the same reasons, because of their potential medical and agricultural breakthroughs. So it is not enough in Manitoba to just monitor species as they become extinct and to list them as they become extinct, but we need to preserve their habitats so that they do not become extinct.

An amendment was introduced similar to the biodiversity bill: "to amend the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 to require that the impact on biological diversity be considered in the preparation of environmental impact statements." Another good idea.

"During the House consideration of the Bureau of Land Management reauthorization bill, fierce debate centered on an addition to the bill to compel the bureau to manage its lands with 'biological diversity' in mind.

"Opponents did not try to strike the provision. In fact, an amendment offered by Jontz strengthened the biodiversity provisions of the bill by ordering that the BLM restore its land to its 'natural productive capability.'"

This is something that is not happening in Manitoba. If you drive through the Birds Hill area, for example, there are gravel pits which are an eyesore and a blight on the environment. Many of them have been emptied of their gravel, but they have not been restored to their natural state. There are laws in Ontario, for example, that are much more progressive than in Manitoba which require that berms be built so that you cannot see them from the

road, that require landscaping and trees, but in Manitoba you can see the empty gravel pits from the road. This American legislation says that they have to be restored to their original state. Certainly that would be a great improvement if gravel pits and other developments in Manitoba were restored to their natural productive capability.

In the Senate, hearings were held on biodiversity legislation.

"Scientist and author Stephen Jay Gould testified at the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Protection hearing on July 26. He offered an aesthetic justification for efforts aimed at preserving biologically diverse habitats." This is an interesting quote: "What a bleak world it shall be if none but the hardy city dwellers remain, and we come to share our planet only with pigeons, rats, cockroaches and flies." Certainly it would be a bleak environment if we shared it only with pigeons, rats, cockroaches and flies. If we do not do something about protecting not only endangered species, but protecting the environment or the habitat in which they live, that is whom we will be sharing the environment with.

So, Mr. Speaker, in summary, I believe that this bill is very inadequate. All it does is it requires that endangered species be listed. What it does, in effect, is it monitors various species as they go through the categories from endangered to threatened to extirpated to extinct and then they are gone. Then it is too late to bring them back. So what we need is much stronger legislation that protects their habitat and keeps these species and does not just monitor them as they go out of existence.

I believe that we could look to the American legislation that I have quoted from extensively, the fish or wildlife endangered species protection act of the American Congress, and we can learn from their experience since their legislation has been in place since 1969. I do not think that we should copy what they have done holus-bolus. I think we could learn from their experience and adapt and adopt what is appropriate for our context in Manitoba.

Certainly, other jurisdictions are doing things that are much more progressive than this government in Manitoba. This government professes to be concerned about the environment, and so we see the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in a canoe in an election ad professing to wanting to protect the environment,

but in government we see that especially through their budgetary decisions they are hacking and slashing, especially the Department of Natural Resources, so that they do not have the staff and they do not have the resources and they do not have the physical resources to do what they need to do to protect the environment and to protect endangered species.

We believe that they should. We believe there are many things that they can be doing and many things that they should be doing. They could do some of that by putting some teeth in the enforcement, by requiring certain things, and they could do it through The Endangered Species Act and through their environmental legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

* (1540)

Bill 3—The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Downey), Bill 3, The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi concernant le pétrole et le gaz naturel et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois, standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and put a few thoughts on the record on Bill 3, The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act.

According to the press release that was issued by the minister in late December of last year when he announced this act, this bill is going to result in a consolidation of petroleum exploration, development, storage and transportation legislation under a single statute. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have always been supportive of the concept of consolidation, of making legislation clearer, easier to understand and putting a number of acts into one consolidated statute so that it is more readily accessible to the public. Of course, given that we will not know all the ramifications of

this piece of legislation until we hear the government's discussion on second reading on this matter and also the public hearings—given those caveats, we do, as I have stated, agree with clarification of legislation wherever possible.

Also, Mr. Speaker, according to the government, another one of the bases of this legislation is to modernize or to bring up to date some of the outdated elements of some of those five pieces of legislation. Again, we are in favour of updating and making legislation more relevant to the times in which we live. So in that regard we have no concerns with the concept of consolidation and updating and modernizing.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not put some concerns on the record as to this piece of legislation as we read it now. Again, I would certainly hope that the government members will clarify for us in the House, during second reading, the elements of this legislation and will do their best to respond before we get to public hearings on our concerns that we have raised in the House. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) in particular have put some concerns on record. I would like to reiterate some of those concerns and perhaps expand on one or two of them from my perspective.

One of the major concerns that I have with this piece of legislation is the composition of the proposed board. Boards and commissions of provincial governments in our parliamentary system play an incredibly important role. There are literally hundreds of boards in our system in our province that advise, work with and reflect, in many cases, the issues of the community, that advise the government of the day on issues of concern in their area and, in many cases, reflect the thinking of the government of the day.

We have examples of boards in this province that are made up solely of professional people whose role is to, in a very technical manner, advise the government on issues that relate to their jurisdiction. We also have boards that are made up of a mix of individuals who have a certain expertise, as well as representatives of the general public who advise the government, who deal with various elements of the running of the government.

I think, Mr. Speaker, generally speaking, this is an excellent way of functioning as a government. It is important for a government which can potentially run

the risk of isolating itself from the wishes and desires and concerns of the general public that there are boards and commissions in place that are allowed and do reflect those issues and concerns that reflect the makeup of the community and that can provide good, solid advice to the government of the day.

There appears, Mr. Speaker—and again this is something that we would like to have clarified by the government and also will look for advice and help and assistance when we get to the public hearing process—to be a shift away from power and influence from the appointed board to the minister which is an interesting shift in the light of this government's general way of doing business which is to try and make government less intrusive or less active in the workings of the government.

The government has tried to, and in many cases has succeeded, in offloading their responsibilities, as we would see it, onto lower levels of government, onto communities, onto individuals and families. We, on this side of the House, have spoken at great length about the impacts that this implementation of the Conservative ideology of less government is automatically better government on the people of Manitoba.

I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, in this context, that the proposed makeup of the Oil and Natural Gas Conservation Board would appear on the surface to fly in the face of that tendency or a move that the provincial government has been undertaking in the last four years because this board, the way it will be comprised, will have, it appears to us, less influence, less authority than the current board does and far more power will reside with the minister.

I would like to spend some time discussing this issue because I think that it is a very important concept and a very important part of this piece of legislation because, frankly, if this board is not going to have much power or if the composition of this board is not going to fully reflect the community's best interests—and I will discuss that concern as well—then we have some major concerns with this part of the legislation.

Currently the Oil and Natural Gas Conservation Board is limited to five members. There is no specific qualification for appointment to this board which means that the minister is free to make appointments that reflect a very broad base of community involvement and allows the minister to,

if the minister is, in our context, using this board to its best benefit, will appoint members who reflect not only the geographical elements that need to be represented when you are discussing oil and natural gas in this province, but also allows the minister a great deal of flexibility in those appointments.

Currently this five-member board has the power to make inquiries. Now, this is a very important power that this board has, whether it chooses to use it or not and with regularity is an entirely different issue, but because this board has the power to make inquiries, it has some independence from the government of the day. It has some ability to bring to the government of the day concerns that the community at large may have with the many issues surrounding oil and natural gas and its conservation and use in this province which is not an unimportant and small issue.

So the current board does have a great deal of authority. Again, another component of this current board is that the decisions of this board are final, so, again, there is an enormous amount of potential power and authority and influence on the members of the current board as it is under the current piece of legislation.

Under the proposed board membership, there must be at least three members, so there is a minimum number, but there is no maximum number. I will share some concerns that we have on that element.

Two members of this board must have specialized knowledge in the field of oil and natural gas. Now, frankly, I personally feel that this is not a bad addition to the composition of the board, because it does allow for a certain amount of expertise that comes from outside the government to be reflected in this board.

* (1550)

Only one member of this board may be a government employee. Again, that is an important specification to the board composition because the board will advise the minister and needs to have some linkage with the government of the day, so we have no concerns about the fact that there needs to be a representative of the government. However, we do have, and finally, generally speaking, in the proposed board, the minister refers matters to the board for consideration, so a great deal of the independence of the current board will be eliminated in this new board.

The concerns that we have on the composition of the board deal both with the minimum number and the lack of a maximum number of members on this board. The problem with the minimum number, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) pointed out in his remarks yesterday, is that if you have only three members of the board and one is a member of the government to provide that linkage and continuity with the government and two members must have expertise, you could potentially have a situation where this board, legally represented, legally constituted with three members, has a government employee who by definition does not have a great deal of autonomy or independence and two members of technical expertise who very likely would be members of the oil and gas industry.

I would certainly be remiss if I left it on the record the suggestion that any individual member of the community would not be an honourable member of a board, but I think it is fairly safe to assume that if you only have three members of a board and the only two members are representing special interest groups, are representing one part of the entire complex of issues that are found in the oil and gas industry in the province of Manitoba, you could potentially run into some major problems.

I think that it is highly unlikely that this government would appoint two representatives of environmental groups to sit on the Oil and Natural Gas Board. It is highly unlikely that they would appoint two members who had interests concerning either the oil industry or the natural gas industry, but it is not beyond the realm of possibility, as we have seen by other appointments by this government and other actions of this government, that those two positions might definitely not be industry representatives.

The concern we have with that is that it allows for only a very narrow focus to be dealt with and discussed by this board. It does not allow for a range of issues to be discussed. It does not allow for a range of concerns to be addressed by the board and recommendations to be given to the minister.

The maximum number of members of this board is not listed in the proposed changes to the oil and natural gas act. This potentially has a problem as well. If you do not have a maximum number of individuals, there is the possibility, and I am not for a moment suggesting that it would actually come to pass, that a government could appoint 15, 20, 25, 30 people to this board. That could potentially lead

to a perception, if not a reality, of using the government's ability to appoint people as being seen as pork barrelling or paying back or paying off or giving a perk to supporters of the government in one form or another.

A federal comparison springs to mind with the ability of the federal government to appoint senators and the potential for misuse of that power that we have seen, in particular with the current Conservative government's unconscionable stacking of the Senate in order to pass the goods and services tax.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that this government would in fact use their power to appoint cronies or people with a particular interest at all, but legislation must take into account the extremes of potential activity that could be undertaken. I am responding to the potential errors that a government could fall into in appointing a very small board as well as the errors that could happen if you appoint a very large board. We would like to see there being perhaps a larger minimum number and very definitely a maximum number.

A question I would have of the government, and I do not know what the current situation is, but I would wonder as well of the cost of this board, if there currently is a remuneration for the members of this board and, if so, what it is. Will the regulations, which are, I understand, being worked on as we speak, have remuneration attached to them as well? If it is the case that there is remuneration attached to the membership in this board, then there is a cost factor involved in having an unlimited number of potential members to this board. I would suspect that the government, with its overweening concern for cost reduction, would take a very close look at this potential and suggest that in order to be responsible, they look at instituting a maximum number and they look at increasing the minimum number of the members of the board.

The whole concept that the minister now has more power as a result of these recommended changes is disturbing, because we believe that it is important that if there is a committee, if there is an advisory body, if there is a board attached to legislation, that board should have a reasonable amount of authority. The government has not explained to us the rationale behind the proposed changes in the makeup and composition of this oil and natural gas conservation board. It is unclear why the minimum number has been changed from

five to three; it is unclear why there is no maximum put in place, and so we of course are concerned with the rationale behind that.

We are also concerned, Mr. Speaker, with the change in the terms of reference or the mandate of this board, which had the power to make inquiries, and the decisions of that board were final. We now find that basically the board has been reduced in size, it has been narrowed in scope, and it is only advisory. It does not have the degree of independence that it had previously.

As I stated in my earlier comments, the last thing that I want to leave on record or leave the impression with members opposite is that I am attacking in any way any individual, actual or hypothetical, who might be appointed to this board. I am raising issues and questions that we have about the changes that are being proposed in this piece of legislation, which is our responsibility as opposition members to do.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is the role and obligation of the government to clarify, not only for the opposition, but for the members of the public at large the reasoning and rationale behind these amendments. These are not just housekeeping amendments; these are not just consolidative amendments; these, if we are looking at no other part of this legislation, then the composition and makeup and responsibilities of the board are much more than that. They have the potential for major consequences, and they have the potential for major consequences no matter which government is in power, no matter which minister is leading this department.

* (1600)

The board, as I have stated, is now advisory; it has no actual powers. The board receives its powers of inquiry from the minister. So, in effect, the minister now tells the board what it can do. Why has that changed? I have some suggested reasons why that has changed, and I would be very glad to hear the minister's explanation for that, and I do hope that the government responds to these issues and concerns prior to our going to public hearings.

The board, if it is allowed to make an inquiry by the minister, then submits its findings to the minister for his or her consideration. Again, instead of having decision-making powers which the current board has, this proposed board has only advisory powers, and it could only advise the minister on

issues that the minister wants to be advised on. Well, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, this sounds to me like it is a board that has had its teeth pulled, a board that has very little, if any, authority and it is open to speculation therefore that it is a board that is being put into place so that individuals who think like the government does, who are willing to respond to government initiatives and who are willing to, in effect, rubber-stamp the ideas and proposals that the government has, will now be allowed to do so. I would hope that is not the case, and I would again reiterate our concerns on this issue and would hope that the minister clarifies these positions before we go to public hearings.

Another area that we have a major concern on in this proposed legislation is within the area of sustainable development, and again, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have serious concerns about this government's definition of sustainable development. They have not proven themselves in the past to be exemplary leaders in this regard. I need go no further than Oak Hammock Marsh as an excellent, or a dreadful, example of this government's definition of sustainable development which is whatever the large corporate business interests want is fine by us. We will do anything in our power to make sure that those interests supersede any other concerns and considerations.

I would like to quote from one of the sections that says, "decisions respecting the development of oil and gas resources be integrated," and this is where we are talking about the concept of sustainable development, "with decisions respecting protection and management of the environment so that oil and gas industry activity is conducted" not in a vacuum but "with due regard for its impact on the environment," and conversely that "environmental concerns are instituted with due regard for the economic impact."

We have, again, concerns regarding this section or this area of this bill. We have no problem with the concept of the fact that you need to have a marriage, if you will, between environmental issues and economic issues. However, as I have stated before, this government has a dismal track record in that regard. Their idea of sustainable development eliminates almost entirely the environmental concerns; it emasculates the environmental concerns. The environmental protection act that was passed by this House last year is another example of where the minister now has all the power

and authority to do virtually anything he wants to in the environmental area without any recourse to the public good and the public benefit.

You can understand, Mr. Speaker, our concerns about the impacts of some of these elements of the new proposed act. We are concerned that what will happen, particularly if you have a board that is composed of one government representative and two representatives of the oil and gas industry, is that that board with virtually no independent powers of its own, will take inquiries as they have been framed by the minister and respond to those inquiries with recommendations to the minister.

I mean, it is a real shell game here. The government can then say, well, yes, but the board said we should do this, and the public at large probably will not understand the changes that have been made to this, because they will assume that an advisory board will have a certain degree of independence. Again, it is pulling the wool over the eyes of the people of Manitoba or an attempt to do so.

I would suggest that unless the government can assure us on this side of the House that those are not the intentions or the potential outcome of these changes to the legislation, we are going to have some major concerns that will need to be addressed, I would hope, in debate and discussion on second reading, but failing that, certainly at the public hearing process.

As I said, we are very open to the minister and the government telling us that our concerns are not accurate, that there are safeguards in place, that this will truly be an independent board, that the changes here do not mean taking away power and influence and authority and independence from this very important board, but by our reading of these amendments we do not see that.

We are very concerned that the environment be protected and be part of any discussion that takes place surrounding oil and gas development in this province. We do not see that in the composition of the board. We do not see that concern raised in the authority taken away from the board, and we do not see that in anything this government has implemented. Again, we will ask that the government be particularly careful in its responses to us on these issues.

I would also like to just briefly touch on the potential for disaster with the dreadful lack of

environmental controls that we will be operating under if the North American Free Trade Agreement goes through. If it does go through, we are convinced that we are in for some major pressures being put on our already limited environmental protections. Our concern is that this board, as it will be constituted, will not allow for any kind of check and balance on virtually unlimited exploration with no due consideration being given to the environmental impacts. There is nothing in this legislation that requires that the environmental impacts of exploration of oil and gas activity be undertaken.

We would like very much to see that perhaps the composition of the board be expanded to include a definition of what "experienced" means, that "experienced" means people with technical understanding be broadened to include potentially representatives from the oil and gas industry; and if that is the case, also on the other side to balance it, representatives of the environmental concerns. As is stated in Section 2(2) of the bill, both of these concerns must be addressed, but there is nothing specifically in the bill that activates that concern, so we have very serious problems with the potential for disaster.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close my remarks at this point and again strongly urge the government to respond to our concerns, which I believe are legitimate, and to stand in the House in debate on second reading and to attempt to assuage our concerns so that we can go forward into the public hearing process and hear what the community at large has to say.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

* (1610)

Bill 5—The Northern Affairs Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey), Bill 5, The Northern Affairs Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les affaires du Nord, standing in the name of the honourable member of the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 8—The Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 8, The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances, standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 10—The Farm Lands Ownership Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), Bill 10, The Farm Lands Ownership Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la propriété agricole et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois, standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickee).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 12—The International Trusts Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 12, The International Trusts Act; Loi sur les fiducies internationales, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 13—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), Bill 13, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: Bill 9, The Winter Roads (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act; Lois sur les routes d'hiver – modifications de diverses dispositions législatives.

Not proceeding with it today? Okay, that is fine.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable acting government House leader, what are your intentions, sir?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, as I detect that there are no further speakers from the opposition benches on any of the matters before this House, I would ask if there is leave to call it 5 p.m.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Individual Line Service

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer), that

WHEREAS Individual Line Service is a luxury that people in some parts of the province have not yet been able to enjoy; and

WHEREAS the Service for the Future program, the Manitoba Telephone System \$800 million network modernization program, all 47,000 party lines in the province will be converted to Individual Line Service by the mid-1990s; and

WHEREAS Individual Line Service allows people in rural Manitoba increased privacy and convenience as well as a wider range of telecommunications products and services, such as the use of personal computers, facsimile machines and options such as Call Waiting and Call Forwarding.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the Service for the Future program helping people in

rural communities with the modernization of their telecommunications.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to introduce this resolution because it is of great benefit to rural communities, rural communities such as I represent in the constituency of Gimli.

First of all, I want to tell you a little bit about the Manitoba Telephone System and a little bit about where it came from and where it started. I started in business myself back in 1963, 30 years ago as a matter of fact. At that time, we had a phone with the local exchange. Our phone number was 118, and my house phone number was 118, ring two. You had to ring the bell, the operator would come on, and you would tell her what number you wanted. Then she would connect you up. That was just an example of what it was like in 1963.

An Honourable Member: My mother used to be a telephone operator.

Mr. Helwer: That is right. We had a lot of local telephone operators actually in a small community such as Teulon. It was a good employer, actually. That is right, but the time has come for improvements in the telecommunications. Then we went to the dial phone with party lines in rural areas. From there, we went to the newer version of the dial phones, and now we have a phone system in Manitoba that is second to none, probably, with the individual line service, modern digital equipment and individual line service for all the rural customers, plus we have a number of other benefits that the Telephones provide.

As an example, we have the urban unlimited, which is of great benefit to my community because of the Stony Mountain-Stonewall areas, whereby people can phone from Winnipeg directly out to these areas such as Lockport also. They could call directly out to those areas now. Those businesses have the option also of being able to hook up to where they can call toll free to Winnipeg.

All these improvements over the years have certainly been a great benefit to the communities. Today businesses that are much more sophisticated with computers and fax machines—

An Honourable Member: Modems.

Mr. Helwer: Modems, that is right. They can order their products by fax or by computers. It really brings the businesses of rural Manitoba into the

'90s, much more advanced than anywhere else really, all these things that the Manitoba Telephone System has been doing to help the rural areas.

Today, businesses also do not have to be in large communities. Farmers today are becoming very sophisticated, and they have equipment in their farm homes, computers and fax machines. They can be connected up to the grain exchanges in Winnipeg, Minneapolis, Chicago and wherever to be able to keep up with the daily trends taking place in the marketing of their products.

So this also gives services for rural areas, services for many useful purposes, but besides helping them in their business, it also provides an opportunity for housewives, whether it be farm wives or people living outside of a community, the opportunity, with fax machines or computers, to find outside employment or to provide employment in the home. They can do a lot of things such as surveys or data processing right in their home. Plus they can do this while they are at home helping their husbands or their families with the farm operation and also keep raising their families and creating a much better home life for the whole family as it is.

Some improvements have been made with the telephone system in the Gimli-Fraserwood-Winnipeg Beach area. At one time, it was long distance between Gimli and Winnipeg Beach, which is a matter of eight miles apart. Today, with the Community Calling they can call from Gimli, they can call Winnipeg Beach, Teulon, Fraserwood. Next year, they will be able to call Riverton and Arborg. Here again it opens new doors to new opportunities for the people of those areas.

Even, as an example, the Evergreen School Division will be using the telecommunications to provide television in the schools between Gimli, Arborg and Riverton. These will be hooked up by telephone. So it will certainly improve the quality of education for many areas and also probably do it at a cost that will save the school division some money. So these are great benefits.

* (1620)

There are many other advantages to the Community Calling areas, individual line service, such as a number of reasons in the line of safety. They can call the RCMP. Today, the people from Winnipeg Beach, as an example, can call the RCMP office in Gimli without there being any charge. It is toll free. They can call the hospital, ambulance. So

it really has improved the quality of life for people in rural Manitoba in many different ways, not only economically but also in the services that can be provided. It improves the quality.

When we look at some of our other communities in the south end of the Interlake or the south end of my constituency, such as Stonewall, Stony Mountain, where they are hooked up now, we can dial directly out to those places from Winnipeg.

Stonewall, as an example, is the fastest growing community in Manitoba. The amount of building permits for the South Interlake Planning District—again, Stonewall last year led the way in the amount of building permits. So did the Rural Municipality of Rockwood. Mainly the development in that municipality is a lot in the south end, Stonewall south, in the Stony Mountain area there, close to Winnipeg. One of the reasons is because of communications. These people can get on the Stonewall exchange and they can dial directly into Winnipeg to their jobs or whatever. So it is certainly a great benefit to them.

That has helped companies such as Ducks Unlimited, who have located at Oak Hammock; Bristol Aerospace, who are in the Stony Mountain area. This opens the door to many developments, and I am sure that in the years to come, we will see more businesses and small manufacturing plants locate in these communities just adjacent to Winnipeg, because now they have the communications so that they can service them.

Also, in the cottage areas along Lake Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Beach-Gimli area, the rural municipality of Gimli had 35 new cottages built there last summer. This was, again, a record actually almost for that municipality.

An Honourable Member: Building for Manitoba.

Mr. Helwer: Well, that is right, because of the fact that it is close to Winnipeg and we have a communication system that can look after these people. When they go to cottages nowadays, they want to build a cottage that will serve them all year round in some cases, where they can have proper phones, proper hydro facilities and things like that. All these things help make my constituency and all of rural Manitoba a much better place to live and to work and to raise a family. We need these types of—

An Honourable Member: Making Manitoba strong.

Mr. Helwer: That is right. It helps to make Manitoba strong, all these communications types of things.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to certainly say that the new lines that the Manitoba Telephone System is installing, where they are making the individual line service available, such as in the Teulon area, where 600 new customers were hooked up last year under the individual line service, this is money well spent. I just want to say that the Manitoba Telephone System is doing an excellent job. The money that they are spending on the individual line service and the Community Calling areas is money well spent. We certainly want to say it has been a great thing for rural Manitoba.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, in closing I want to congratulate the Manitoba Telephone System for the improvements they have made to the communities not only in my constituency, but in all of rural Manitoba to help the quality of life in all of rural Manitoba.

Thank you.

Committee Change

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be amended as follows: Inkster (Lamoureux) for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rose): Agreed.

* * *

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure today to rise and speak on the resolution brought forward by the member for Gimli on individual line service. Once again, it is a pat on the back of this government. They have so few positive things to relate to Manitobans and to this Chamber, so they often do this in this particular forum during private members' hour.

We on this side of the House naturally enough support the concept of the resolution. It is one of those you often have from the government, like motherhood or apple pie. Of course, you support service to rural Manitobans, and those of us who are from rural Manitoba, of course, will benefit the most from service for the future.

In fact, my family last year—and they lived about 20 miles north of here, near Selkirk—received their individual line service for the first time. For the very first time they now have their own line. The phone rings one ring; that is theirs. Before, when I was younger there was up to maybe 20, 25 individuals who shared that one line, so you can imagine the problems that it caused for both individuals phoning us and for us trying to phone out.

So again we support individualized service. We support Service for the Future program. As a matter of fact, it is very appropriate that this resolution was brought up today considering the fact earlier on this afternoon we had the former Premier of the province here in the Chamber with us, and it was the former Premier's government, and under the direction of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Gary Doer) when he was the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System, that initiated such a program.

It is very appropriate today that we discuss this type of resolution, again based on the fact that it was originally initiated by the member for Concordia (Mr. Gary Doer) and the government of the Pawley administration that introduced expanding service to rural Manitobans in respect to the telephone system.

* (1630)

The concerns we have, of course, are the concerns that I know that all Manitobans have. I had the opportunity about two weeks ago to meet with some employees of the Manitoba Telephone System, and they were stating that MTS could not have undertaken such a huge capital project like the Service for the Future—and in the resolution it mentioned that it was a \$800 million program—they would not have been able to do it under the current competitive situation here that telecommunications in this country is facing.

So if they had deregulated the telephone industry in '87 and '88, we would not be debating this resolution right now because MTS would not be able to afford it, because you know, Mr. Acting Speaker, that deregulation does not work.

We know for a fact that deregulation has failed in the transportation industry, and the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has raised this issue time and time again. Somebody has to raise it. It is very appropriate and he has done it in a very good manner. He has raised the issue about how

deregulation has failed in the transportation industry in this country.

We have the railways again announcing, just this past week, 10,000 jobs; the airline industry, the trucking industry—all because of deregulation, this government's federal cousins' support of competition, deregulation, all neoconservative concepts, but they do not work. It is proven.

I believe even the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) is reconsidering his position on deregulation of the railways, of the airline industry in this country, because he knows that it does not work. It is supposed to improve service, it is supposed to lower costs, but instead deregulation cuts services, and it is going to raise costs. It is one of the great beliefs of the members opposite that competition is the answer.

You know, like I said, the theory goes that it will bring greater efficiencies, but the reality is something different. There are lower costs for a very few, and the rest of us will see higher costs. We will see this under deregulation of the telephone industry. It has been estimated by the co-chair of the CRTC, a Mr. Bud Sherman, who at one time was a member of the government across the way, he himself concluded in a study that nine out of 10 consumers or subscribers to the telephone industry in this country will see their rates increase. Nine out of 10 will see their rates go up, concluded in the study by Bud Sherman. Only one out of 10 consumers will see their rates go down. So there it is. There is competition for you. It benefits very few and harms many in this country.

You will see the rates—we are seeing this now at MTS. In fact, the Manitoba Crown Corporations Council recently issued a warning to MTS. In that particular report, I would like to quote where it says: Council is concerned that government is facing major exposures with this company due to the risks facing both MTS and telecommunication industry in this country. It notes increased competitive pressures from deregulation and has serious reservations about the Manitoba Telephone System's current operating plans and longer-term strategies. In fact, an internal report leaked by MTS reveals that MTS is planning to deal with \$100 million a year revenue losses to provide large businesses with a 59 percent cut in their long distance rates.

The report also stated that ordinary subscribers and small business in this province will only see a 2 percent cut, and it also went on to explain that medium-sized businesses will receive a 38 percent cut. So the big winners in telephone deregulation are large businesses.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Here are some of the ones that have been campaigning actively for it. We have Great-West Life, Investors Group, Federal Industries, Richardson Greenshields, and I had a chance to go and check where these large firms make some of their political donations. It comes as no great surprise that all of these firms are very, very large donors both to the Conservatives and to the Liberals. The Liberals have been very quiet on this issue. We do not know what their position is on deregulation, but I had a letter back—you know, Axworthy on one side and the critic on the other. You will see, like I said, the corporate giants in this country will see their rates go down while the rest of Manitoba will see their rates go up.

What has MTS done so far to deal with this competition? Well, they brought in the rightsizing initiative. Rightsizing—well, that is just a euphuism for downsizing as they laid off a thousand employees. I mean, MTS will be laying off a thousand employees over the next four years. Of course, the government recently was at the opening of Unitel. The company Unitel will be creating 400 jobs here. Unfortunately, Manitobans, though, will be the net losers as we lose 600 jobs. MTS has cut now 15 percent from its capital budget. How will they be able to continue with this Service for the Future program when they will be dealing with potential losses of \$100 million a year?

We know that MTS will be unfortunately having to raise their rates. In a recent Public Utilities Board judgment, they raised the rate three times the rate of inflation, and the chairman or the president of the Telephone System produced a plan calling for the lowering of its debts by raising basic monthly phone bills by 33 percent. In fact, Bell Canada, which is also having to deal with competition, has announced that they are seeking a 65 percent rate increase this year.

Oz Pedde wants 33 percent over four years, so we will be paying well over double our rates. Subscribers will have to pay; 10 percent of telephone subscribers will see their rates decrease.

This is all going to lead us, of course, into something we have been always concerned about, the Americanization of our telephone system. In the United States, they have had competition there for nine years, and it provides us with a guide as to what is going to happen.

An Honourable Member: What kind of beautiful things have happened there?

Mr. Dewar: Right. Exactly.

What they were promised—the phone companies there promised huge savings to the consumers, but the real reductions are considerably less. As they were saying, oh, you are going to save 20 percent, you are going to save 30 percent, but actual savings now are only around 8 percent. They have had to charge more for their local service, and they have added new charges as well. So the situation there is exactly what we are going to predict is going to happen here, and we are seeing it has already happened here now in Manitoba.

There was a recently released study on the American experience. It stated that 90 percent of telephone users were worse off before deregulation in the United States, while only 10 percent, again mainly the large businesses, benefited from the competitive experience, the deregulation experience, the same experience that we are having here in this province.

One of the saddest things, of course, is it has been estimated in the States that now 25 percent of low-income Americans no longer have access to a telephone, which is very regrettable in today's economic conditions.

What we are really concerned about is that while we support the Service for the Future program—it is why all of us, of course, support better access for rural Manitobans—we know there are some situations where the rural and northerners do not have basic service yet, and so we applaud the government for that particular program. The only problem is that the program will not continue. It will not continue, for how can they possibly deal with these huge losses and continue with this program, Mr. Speaker?

So while we do support the program, we do have serious reservations about it continuing, and as such, I would like to make an amendment, if I may.

I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that the resolution be amended by adding the following:

WHEREAS the Service for the Future Program would be jeopardized by the present government's support of telecommunications deregulation policy which limits the resources available to the Manitoba Telephone System.

And by adding, at the end of the resolution, the following:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call upon the provincial cabinet to cancel their support of telecommunications deregulation.

* (1640)

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) has moved an amendment to private members' Resolution 3 which presents an alternative and relevant proposition which, under Beauchesne's Citation 567, is acceptable. However, the "BE IT RESOLVED" portion of the amendment is virtually identical to the same portion of private members' Resolution 56, which has been given notice of and is listed on the Order Paper for consideration.

The amendment contravenes our Rule 31: "No member shall revive a debate already concluded during the session or anticipate a matter appointed for consideration of which notice has been given." I must, therefore, rule the honourable member's amendment out of order.

* * *

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, it does not really matter, I suppose. I will address some of the comments made by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), despite the fact that his amendment was poorly drafted.

I do want to start off saying that I intend to support this, and I do support this. I do not think it is a bad thing that rural Manitoba is receiving individual line service. I do not think it is a bad thing that we are attempting to bring rural Manitoba into actually, I suppose, the '50s. So I am not going to stand up here and condemn the government for doing it. I think that they are addressing a problem that has existed in those communities for a very long time.

I do want to talk a bit about what is sort of behind the debate that is taking place right now. I think maybe the best way I can do that is to take note of the fact that Motorola and Brazil signed an agreement just recently. A lot of people do not pay

a lot of attention to those kind of things, although I have some interest in it. They signed an agreement to put in place around the world 68 satellites that will allow every individual in the world to access every other individual in the world simply by dialing in an individualized contact number into their cellular system.

That is such a tremendous advance that it is hard for us to conceptualize it, but that is an advance that is taking place as people begin to take advantage of the technological changes. So in a sense what the government is doing may in fact be overtaken by a successful conclusion of that program. There is a need still to wire communities. There is a need to wire communities, because increasingly we are moving more and more information digitally and a lot of the things that now go over the airwaves it is predicted in another decade or so will begin to move over wires. We will begin to see on our TVs a lot more use of digitized contact systems, information exchange systems, banking and purchase and all sorts of other kinds of services that can be brought into the home. In fact, there are some that suggest we will be able to vote from our homes in the not too distant future.

The point I think that it brings up is that it is very difficult. You know, we sit and we watch Star Trek and we see the people slap their shoulders here and speak to anybody anywhere on the ship at any time and they know exactly where everybody is and they can have that kind of conversation. That is presented as something that is taking place four centuries into the future, but in fact a version of that is happening now. It is happening right now in our time and could be in place in this world within a decade.

What that does to our ability to contact each other and relate to each other and communicate with each other is really hard for us to predict or even comprehend I think at times. So when I hear the members on my immediate right here talk about regulation and the need to capture and control and manage all this somehow as though they can predict all of this and they can somehow control all of this, I just think it is fatuous nonsense. I really take great exception to this sense that somehow somebody or some group of people sitting in a room somewhere can understand what is happening. I think that the markets do have a good ability to establish prices, to distribute goods. I think there is a real ability here to take advantage very quickly and respond very

quickly to important changes in communication technology.

I work with a group right now. I am on line on a daily basis with people in Boston and people in Los Angeles and one fellow in Australia. I can communicate with them like that, because those kinds of—[interjection] Well, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says, I wish I could afford that. The fact is, he can afford it, because all he has to do is call into the University of Manitoba, and he is on the worldwide internet at no cost, and you can communicate to anybody who can tap into that. Unfortunately, you have not taken the time to think. You have not taken the time to recognize that there are very major changes occurring in the world that produce great benefit for people, that link people together, that cause great co-operation, that cause a tremendous ability for people to be closer to each other rather than further apart. So I am saddened, frankly, by the position taken by the New Democratic Party. I think it is perhaps more antiquated than most of their policy positions that we have seen of late.

I do want to raise something with the government that does cause me concern about this, and it is one of the problems we get into politically when we deal with issues in this Chamber all the time. I want to raise the spectre of MTX, not to criticize it, but to ask the government to rethink it.

I had an exchange this summer with a woman who is the assistant to the new prime minister of Bulgaria. What are they trying to do? They are trying to build a telephone system, and they are desperately trying to put into their country the kind of basic services that we take for granted. They are looking for the kind of expertise that we have in this province.

As we build this individual line service we are training a large number of people who can do that kind of work, so let us not, simply because MTX was a failure, write off the ability to look around the world and to help those people whom we employ here continue to be employed providing very important, very valuable services around the world.

An Honourable Member: That is right. Don Orchard started it.

Mr. Alcock: That is right, and I think there is a danger because every time—[interjection] Wait a second. I am not going to take just that side of this debate, because any time you launch an ambitious

adventure you run the risk of failure, you run the risk of problems. It is risky to do it so you have got to be careful on how you calculate the risk, and you have got to be careful how you evaluate the risk, but do not close your eyes to it simply because every time we raise the three letters MTX in this Chamber everybody goes oh.

* (1650)

Let us look at it on behalf of the people whom we employ through MTS to see if we can give them some opportunities to use their skills and to have Manitoba represented in the Philippines that are trying to build a telephone system, in Bulgaria, in Romania, in Poland, in the Soviet Union. Let us give our people a chance to compete over there and to bring some wealth back into this country and get the skills that exist in this province recognized around the world.

I think what the government is doing with the ILS system is a good thing, and I certainly, for one, support it. I think they deserve to be congratulated, and if this comes to a vote I will vote for it, but I would ask them just to think a little more broadly about it to see if there is a way in which they can open that door and to give some opportunities to the people we employ.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this very important resolution this afternoon, and I would first of all like to respond to the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) who first of all admitted, of course, that this government undertaking is an excellent undertaking and then attempted to take credit for it for his party sometime in the distant past.

It rather seems to me that he illustrated the problem of why his area just north of Selkirk had to wait till last year to get individual party lines when he brought in an amendment that was unacceptable. I guess that is an indication that the planning that they had, however many years ago, was not adequate either. They must still have the same people providing advice, because even 20 years later they cannot even bring in a proper amendment. It indicates to me that if we had been a little more forward and had a little better planning a number of years ago we might now all be profiting from individual line service. As an individual, I can certainly relate to the importance of this particular

undertaking, having lived on a rural party line almost all of my life.

As the mover the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) pointed out, one of the great advantages of bringing in individual line service is not only the convenience of having an individual line and having an opportunity to have a line to yourself and not have to share it with someone else, but it is also the opportunity to use some of the advanced equipment that has become available in the last few years, such as fax machines, which will not operate on a party line, and computers or mobile or wireless phones.

As always, I suppose, progress does have its cost. Those of us who did have a great deal of experience with party lines will miss some of the things, some of the neighbourliness, I guess, that we enjoyed with the party line service, because there was always a friend and neighbour who shared the line with you. Somehow you did not feel quite so isolated, I guess, living out in the country when you knew there were others on the same phone line.

As the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) pointed out, years ago, quite a number of people shared the same phone line, so it became sort of a little community. I know at home we had our automatic line ring whenever we wanted to call a community meeting. I have forgotten what it was. I think it was seven rings—three long and three short or whatever. Anybody in the community could turn the little crank whatever the number was. Everybody on the party line would come on, and we would have a community meeting on the long cold winter nights.

Of course, another thing that we miss as the technology progresses in rural Manitoba is the old telephone operators before we had dial telephones and had to rely on the party lines with the operators on the other end. You developed a real sense of rapport with the telephone operator. You could always rely on him or her—and it was almost always she—to be a very friendly and helpful person, and even quite often to anticipate whom you were going to call and have the number dialed for you while you were chatting about some other thing of interest between the two of you. So when we lost the telephone operators, we certainly miss that, and I guess again another sacrifice made in the name of progress.

I think the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) did make some excellent points in his presentation. I was pleased to hear that he is firmly supportive of this resolution. I am assuming that when I complete my remarks in just a moment we will have good solid support from all members of the House to pass this resolution. I think the member for Osborne is to be congratulated for his broad approach to this and his recognition of the kind of service that this government is providing to rural Manitoba.

He makes the point that technology is moving very, very quickly, almost mind-bogglingly quickly, and I concur with that. The suggestion that we may very well, within a relatively short period of time, be communicating by voice almost totally through satellite is not without a good foundation. In some of our discussions about advancing cellular service across Manitoba, which we have been moving very quickly to do, there is always that concern that some of the equipment we are installing may very well become obsolete within a very short period of time.

Technology in the communications field, as well as most other fields, but particularly in the communications field, has absolutely exploded in the last quarter of a century or so. Things that we accept as commonplace, like fax machines for example, were things that were unheard of 10 years or so ago. So who can guess what kind of equipment, what kind of communication systems may very well be in place within the next 10 years.

Coming back to this particular resolution, from the point of view of those of us who live in rural Manitoba, we are particularly supportive and gratified with the thrust of the government towards bringing in individual line service to 47,000 Manitoba telephones that did not have it. Unfortunately, this cannot all be done in one year. It takes a period of time to introduce the service across the entire province. Unfortunately, the particular exchange that I am on is one of the ones that is a little further down the line, but as always in rural Manitoba we understand the problems and that these things cannot all be done at once. We appreciate that the undertaking is underway and that we will, in fact, all enjoy individual line service within a couple of years when the program is completed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to add those few words to the record, and I certainly urge all honourable members to support this resolution.

Thank you.

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the government congratulating themselves on a program that was initiated through an extensive groundwork that was done by the previous government in Manitoba. Certainly, there were extensive public hearings that were undertaken, and the government of the day in 1987 travelled throughout the province. My leader was the minister responsible for MTS at that time. He was actually responsible for Crown corporations at that time. We had set up the new Crown corporation, super Crown corporation, and we also had Bill Uruski who was the member for Interlake and was the minister actually responsible for MTS at the time who travelled throughout the province with the Leader of the Opposition at that time who was responsible for Crown corporations and they began this process.

Now there are some things that really are relevant to this whole discussion. The member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) raised a couple of things. I am not surprised to see him coming down the side of deregulation, supporting the government in its moves to deregulate. We have to remember that in order for the Manitoba Telephone System to have the revenues to undertake these kinds of massive capital programs to modernize service—and I would not call it a luxury that the member who moved this resolution from Gimli referred to in his resolution, a luxury that people in some parts of the province have not yet been able to enjoy. I would call that, nowadays, basic service which they have a right to, and it is long overdue. I agree that it must be done.

The Manitoba Telephone System would not be able to undertake this kind of thing if we did not have the kinds of revenue over the years that we have been able to receive from long distance service as well as basic service. Long distance service across this country of course, as the minister knows, provided about 60 percent of the revenue traditionally for the Manitoba Telephone System and, therefore, made it possible to undertake major capital programs. This, as my colleague the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) said, would not be possible under the deregulation scenario supported by the minister and by the Liberals here. Let us make that very clear.

* (1700)

The Conservatives and Lloyd Axworthy, the Liberals, who initiated deregulation in this country under the Trudeau government, followed lock step by the Conservatives when they came back in government here in Manitoba, have been demonstrated to be a failure in this regard in so many areas. It has hurt not only the consumer that they said would benefit, it has hurt the average consumer in the airline industry, and it is going to hurt worse. It has hurt in terms of safety; it has hurt in terms of railway workers and the railways. [interjection]

Well, the member talks about Saskatchewan. Grant Devine's government agreed, caved in on deregulation in the telephone system, caved in on deregulation, along with this government here. That is why that happened. If there would have been an NDP government in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba, and the two would have stood strongly against the initiatives by the federal government, that never would have happened in this province and in Saskatchewan—guaranteed. Guaranteed, it never would have happened. But the New Democrats lost government in Manitoba. The Saskatchewan PCs continued to support the federal government on this, under Devine, even though it was contrary to the best interests of the consumers and the people of Saskatchewan. They are the ones who caved in on this. History will show that, along with this Conservative government here.

Now, they say, oh, the NDP increased the rates. Let them not blame the government that inherited this terrible legacy from Devine. That is why they have to increase the rates. It was their policy; it was the Devine policy. We know it. We know why. We cannot rewrite Saskatchewan history. We know very well what happened there. It is a mess, and we are going to be left with the same kind of mess here in Manitoba unfortunately. We are going to have to clean up a mess in Manitoba like they had to do in Saskatchewan.

Now the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) talked about MTX, and it is interesting in historical perspective. When the member for Pembina, as minister responsible for the Telephone System in 1980, created MTX, he did so illegally. He passed it by Order-in-Council. He did not have a subsidiary in place, so that had to take place later on. Our government did in fact follow through on the initiatives started by the now Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) at that time. The reason the Minister of

Health started MTX in the first place is that he recognized, as the member for Osborne said, that there was opportunity for the expertise that had been developed in personnel in Manitoba over the years at the Manitoba Telephone System to be in fact exported to other countries that did not have that expertise and could benefit.

I want to just say that in the context of today, with the changing world, with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the modernization that is going to have to take place in many of those countries, we probably have a more marketable commodity now than ever in terms of the expertise. [interjection] Well, the minister asked, can they pay for it? Yes, if they can pay for our wheat, and we sometimes wonder—but there is credit being extended throughout the world, and the International Monetary Fund is looking at this to help bring them out of the 18th Century and into a modern situation. Yes, they will need our expertise, and, yes, they will find ways to pay for it, and so we have to be ready.

I have to agree with the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) on that, that we should not be shying away because of the experience in an Arab country where certainly a lot of extenuating circumstances and individuals resulted in an experience that was certainly less than favourable, that this government now should never look at that kind of thing in the future.

As it was said, it was started under the Sterling Lyon government with MTX; it was continued under the Pawley government; now this government should remember. I know in the early years when I was minister responsible for the Telephone System—and the briefings from the Telephone System at that time certainly showed a very good opportunity, the possibilities of opportunities there of using our expertise abroad. So we followed cautiously, very cautiously, very small in the first few years. I can only speak about when I was involved, in 1982 and '83. I can tell the minister at this time that we were only putting in terms of liability in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, nothing even in the millions at that time. It was very cautious and very small.

It was something that I am not sure that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) when he was minister responsible for the Telephone System would have been as cautious as we were in the initial stages. He was really going on this thing. I mean, all of the documents show that this member for

Pembina (Mr. Orchard) was going hell bent for leather on this thing. He was moving straight ahead on MTX, and he was not looking back. The only thing that caught him was November 17, the election. That stopped him. That was the only thing that stopped him in 1981. He breathed a sigh of relief after he saw that some things were not going as smoothly as he had hoped, and then he started attacking there because he knew that he was in trouble.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that the rural upgrading—[interjection] Well, the Minister of Health has been pretty quiet on this because he knows that he is guilty right up to the top of his head on this one. We want to see rural development, rural upgrading of the system. We certainly do not want to see the competition that is going to take away all of the revenues from the MTS of the future.

It is possible, if this government wanted to follow the policies that have been in place by Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments over the years, regardless of the changing technology, to ensure that there was a monopoly for the telephone system on these services, that could still have been provided if there had been a united stand by Saskatchewan and Manitoba with publicly owned telephone systems. We know that.

The CRTC could not have imposed that on Manitoba and Saskatchewan. We do not believe it would have happened unless the governments caved in, did not show the will to stand up against the federal government on this. They knew the philosophy was such, and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) knows that when the Conservative governments came into government in this province and in Saskatchewan, they had an excellent chance of carrying out their strategy on this, and that is what happened—

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): You cannot live in the past.

Mr. Plohman: Now, the minister for Telephones says, you cannot live in the past. The thing is they want to rewrite history here. They want to leave the impression that they are not responsible. Let me tell you, we will ensure that we give the people of Manitoba the minister responsible for the Telephone System's telephone number. We will give them his telephone number to receive all the calls when they start getting their local or their basic rates jacked up

as a result of his policies. We will ensure that they send their cards and letters to this minister here who is responsible for it.

An Honourable Member: We will compare rates in Saskatchewan any day for the next 10 years.

Mr. Plohman: We know what happened in Saskatchewan with Grant Devine. Okay, go over it, we know. Grant Devine was even worse than you. Yes, you are right. He was worse in the early years, but you guys are getting as bad too, and you will be doing the same thing in the next little while. You are going to run this province into the ground.

We will probably see a billion dollars in deficits. You have increased \$700 million from the surplus we left you in 1988. Do not forget that. We talk about mismanagement, look at yourselves in the mirror just as Grant Devine had to do, because they were the greatest mismanagers that Saskatchewan ever had, and you are cut of the same political mold. There is no difference, so we will see that.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): It will not sell anymore, John.

Mr. Plohman: It is selling right now. The Minister of Health says it will not sell. I will tell you that people in Manitoba are perking up and listening, because they know what kind of a mess these people are making. All we have to do is look at their education system.

Now, I am going to close by saying that the individual line service is a positive move. We want these kinds of services to be maintained in the future. They will only be maintained if the revenues for the Telephone System are secure, and we will support policies that ensure secure revenues for the MTS without jacking it up on the backs of the local ratepayers who are going to pay the burden of this government's policies if they are not changed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (1710)

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, could you tell me how much time is left?

Mr. Speaker: Two minutes.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that have come from all sides today. Certainly the initiatives of the Manitoba Telephone System in terms of service in the future are very good for all of rural Manitoba, but I am a little disappointed in the members of the official opposition party talking about deregulation because

there is no deregulation of the Telephone System in Manitoba or in Canada.

We have competition because consumers want it, because it promotes economic activity. [interjection] Mr. Speaker, these members do not want to face the facts of life. CRTC went across this country, had hearings right across the country, broadly supported by the consumers and all the business community of this country.

When the ruling came down to establish a level of competition, the consumers said they could not have written a better ruling if they had written it themselves. That is how much the consumers support it.

The member conveniently ignores the fact that the competitor pays the same level of contribution that the Manitoba Telephone System pays from long distance to support local rates. He conveniently ignores the fact that the Saskatchewan government last year raised basic telephone rates by 30 percent, and in Manitoba I would ask him to look at the record at the very small increase of inflation that happened in Manitoba.

The ability of Manitobans to access services that are globally available is because we have a competitive environment that allows that to develop, and the fact that 400 jobs were announced for the city of Winnipeg just last week, he ignores that also, to give Manitobans a choice of all the services available globally, give us a chance to access the globe with the high level of technology that the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) talks about. In terms of Manitoba Telephone System staff exporting their technology, we do not oppose that

provided it is an economic opportunity and that it does not require the investment of capital.

It was the MTX, the investment of capital from here, that was the problem. It was not the export of technology. If there is an opportunity to do that in some country that is able to pay the bills, we can and will be able to do it. But, yes, we all know the sensitivities of the MTX. It was an unfortunate affair, but the member talks about all the money he put into the system. Back when he was in government, they lost \$20 million one year, \$28 million the next year. How is that called funding the future? It is not funding the future. We came into government, we make \$15 million, we make \$19 million, we make \$39 million. That is money used to reduce the debt service charges of the future. It is money used to fund the pension plan which they did not fund for his employees.

If we can expand the opportunity of Manitobans to do business in the world, we will attract more jobs to Manitoba from these high-tech industries. You can communicate with anybody in the world from the sand dunes of Carberry—anybody in the world—with modern technology, and we are making that available to all Manitobans.

So I thank the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) for this resolution, and I thank—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 12 minutes remaining.

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Wednesday, March 3, 1993

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