

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Wednesday, May 3rd, 1972

[The House met at 2:30 pm.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES

MR. KOZIAR:

Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Select Committee appointed by this House on the 21st day of April, 1972, I beg leave to submit a report that the committee has held its first organizational meeting one half hour ago and at that meeting, has decided not to present to the House an interim report on the Gray Report that was tabled and read in the House yesterday afternoon.

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Private Bills Committee, I wish to submit a report with respect to the petition of the City of Calgary for an act to terminate certain agreements between the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and the City of Calgary, and with respect to the petition of Orville V. Berkenshaw for an act respecting Great Way Merchandising Limited and the Securities Act, I find that the rules of the Assembly with respect to the payment of fees and advertising in local newspapers and the Alberta Gazette have been duly complied with and I recommend that leave be granted to introduce the bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 66 The Hospital Visitors Committee Act, 1972

DR. MCCRIMMON

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present Bill No. 66, seconded by the hon. Member for Stettler, The Hospital Visitors Committee Act. Under the provisions of section 39 of The Public Health Act, the Board of Visitors to visit hospitals was established January 1, 1960 by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The Department of Health Act came into being in 1967 and provided for the Minister of Health to establish a Board of Visitors who may, from time to time, visit, inspect, and examine hospitals, sanatoriums or other institutions operated or administered by the department or their records. With the amalgamation of the Health and Social Development under The Department of Health and Social Development Act, the Minister of Health and Social Development was given the power by section 5 of the said act to establish a board, committee, or council who may, from time to time, visit, inspect, and examine hospitals, sanatoriums, or other institutions operated or administered by the department. The proposed legislation would result in the cancellation of the former committee and result in the establishment of a Hospital Visitors Committee appointed by cabinet. The committee established of 12 members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, would have the right,

42-2

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

from time to time, to visit all hospitals for the purpose of reviewing and inspecting them in the manner in which they are operated. The committee would not have the right to inspect financial records, nor records relating to diagnosis, treatment or care provided in respect to the individual patients. The committee would not attempt to act as a medical ombudsman, but would examine hospitals in a general way in order to inquire into the care, treatment, rehabilitation, and general attitudes of the patients in the hospitals, the general attitudes of the hospital employees, and the planning and programs, the co-ordination of programs for the care, treatment, and rehabilitation of patients in the prevention of disease.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 66 was introduced and read a first time.]

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs that Bill No. 66, The Hospital Visitors Committee Act be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[The motion was carried without debate or dissent.]

Bill No. 67: The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 1972

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 1972. Number one, it provides for three amendments. The first deals with the admission to the practice of law of members who have worked in the Department of the Attorney General. The second deals with benchers who have been members of a committee of inquiry, sitting when the applicant appears before the entire benchers, and the third prohibits a municipality from requiring a member of the Law Society to have a licence from the municipality in order to practise his profession.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 67 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. Pr. 10
An Act respecting
Great Way Merchandising Ltd. and The Securities Act

MR. HINMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being An Act respecting Great Way Merchandising Ltd. and The Securities Act. The single clause purports to declare that a certain agreement used by this company shall not, and shall be deemed not to have been, a security under The Securities Act.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. Pr. 10 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. Pr. 7
An Act to Terminate Certain Agreements Between
the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and the City of Calgary

MR. FAFFAN:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Private Bill No. 7, An Act to Terminate Certain Agreements Between the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, and the City of Calgary. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners for this private bill are the City Council of the City of Calgary. The members are all aware that under The Railway Act, passed before the

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-3

turn of the century, railway property was largely exempt from property tax. In recent years this exemption in perpetuity has been altered by federal statute and by some provincial statutes, but in the meantime, in 1911, while the railway properties were still totally exempt, the City of Calgary entered into a bilateral agreement with the CPR, whereby the CPR made a voluntary ad hoc payment of \$37,000 a year, which was considered to be in lieu of taxes. This agreement was confirmed and ratified and entered into again in 1954. The City Council of the City of Calgary maintains that the proper taxes to be paid by the Palliser Hotel should be in the neighbourhood of \$250,000 a year, as opposed to the \$37,000, and therefore they are asking for this act to terminate those bilateral agreements of 1911 and 1954.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. Pr. 7 was introduced and read a first time.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 50 students from Grade VI of the Mill Creek School. Especially, I would like to thank their teachers who brought them down here; Miss Gail Lorenz, Mr. Avery Stewart, and Mr. Marvin Tobert. I hope they enjoyed the lectures they had in the past 60 minutes and hope that they will enjoy the democratic process which is going on down here. I would like them now to stand and be recognized.

DR. HCHOL:

Mr. Speaker, in the public gallery this afternoon we have 86 visitors from my constituency of Edmonton Belmont. Eighty-five are grade X students and one is their supervising teacher, Mr. Bob Berube. I echo the sentiments in the purpose of the visit as expressed by my hon. colleague, the hon. Minister of Youth, Culture and Recreation. Would they please stand with their teacher and be recognized by this Assembly.

DR. McCRIMMON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, a former member of this House who sat in the House for 15 years. He was a Social Credit member from my constituency for 15 years. We are delighted to see him back. He is in your gallery. I would ask that Mr. Glen Johnson now rise and be recognized by the House.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Syncrude Tar Sands Development

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. It is regarding the proposed Syncrude tar sands development. Last week when I asked a question of the hon. minister regarding the Syncrude proposal, he suggested that I hold my questions until he had had a chance to meet again with the company, which I understand he now has. While he is bringing us up to date on the tar sands development, one particular question I would like to direct to the hon. minister -- was the Syncrude company able to appoint a Canadian contractor for the initial phase of the planning and construction of this huge project?

42-4

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. DICKIE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned last week, we had a meeting scheduled this week. I did meet yesterday morning with Mr. Frank Spragins who is the President of Syncrude Canada Limited. I would say we achieved two objectives at that meeting. The first was to deal with Clause No. 4, that we had attached to the conditions of the Syncrude application. Hon. members will recall that condition was that they would employ residents of Alberta; they would use construction firms resident in Alberta; they would purchase equipment and supplies manufactured in Alberta; and they would use engineering services in Alberta, where it was reasonable and practical to do so.

The condition also provided that we would have quarterly meetings with the liaison committee of Cabinet. Yesterday's meeting was to achieve the objective of setting up the first quarterly meeting. We have scheduled that meeting now for some two weeks hence, in which we will review with the managing contractor, as well as Syncrude, the terms and conditions. They have outlined briefly how they propose to carry on those meetings. I might mention that although the condition provides for quarterly meetings, the suggestion was made that in the initial instance it might be desirable from the government's point of view, so they are kept fully abreast of it, to have the meetings more than each quarter. So we have set that up, and that is in progress now.

The second point that we discussed concerned the overall growth of Fort McMurray, and the effect and implications of the Syncrude development in that area. That involves more than just the Department of Mines and Minerals. It involves my hon. colleagues, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, the hon. Minister of Telephones and the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. We have set up another meeting with Cabinet to discuss the development of Fort McMurray, so that all aspects are looked at as the Syncrude project progresses.

That deals briefly with the meeting we had. I think the hon. member had one further question, and that dealt with the managing contractor engaged by Syncrude Canada Limited. That contractor is Canadian Bechtel Limited, which is not a Canadian firm, but has engaged over 1,000 Canadians in their organization.

MR. DIXON:

To the hon. minister, Mr. Speaker. I suppose it is difficult for the company to find a Canadian contractor with the experience to qualify. They made an attempt, did they, to find a Canadian contractor?

MR. DICKIE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. We reviewed that with them at the time and just before they finalized the engagement of Canadian Bechtel Limited. At that time I asked the president of the company if he could detail, by way of a letter, the reasons how this developed, and the criteria they followed for hiring that managing contractor. I would be pleased to table that letter which I think fully sets out the reasons. I don't think I would do it justice if I just highlighted that letter in the question period, so if the hon. member wishes, I would be glad to table that letter.

MR. DIXON:

One final supplementary question then. The Minister of the Environment could answer it. There are some problems regarding environmental control of the oil as far as accidental overflow getting into the river, and I was wondering what precautions are taken. Will this plant be farther away from the river than the present Canadian Oil Sands plant?

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-5

MR. DICKIE:

I am glad you mentioned the Minister of the Environment. In my answer I did omit to mention that the Minister of the Environment will be set in with this committee, and I'm sure he would like to answer the question that you have just asked.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister is not in his place at this particular time. That is a question that I will take up with him so he can give you an answer tomorrow.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals.

MR. SPEAKER:

We are going to have to get supplementaries organized in numerical order. Perhaps the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. FARRAN:

A supplementary for the hon. minister on the same subject of the tar sands. For the Great Canadian Oil Sands contract a similar situation occurred where Bechtel got the prime contract, but there was influence brought to bear, I think, through negotiation for Mannix Ltd., an Alberta company, to have a sub-contract on a large portion of the work. Will the government use its best endeavours to see that as much as possible is sub-contracted to Alberta companies?

MR. DICKIE:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. I can give the hon. member that assurance and that was really one of the main purposes of condition 4 that we attached to the Syncrude permit. I think I could also add that certainly in the discussions that we have had with Syncrude Canada Ltd., they recognized this and are looking forward to meeting with our liaison committee to review these various sub-contracts that are let with a view to make sure that Albertans, as well as Alberta-based companies, have an opportunity to participate in this project.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. minister is as follows. I quite well understand that Bechtel has the capability of doing the work. One of the concerns that I have had over the past two or three years is that there hasn't been an Alberta company capable of doing this and the reasoning that can continue whereby business always goes to such a company as Bechtel. My question then is, to the minister, what steps will be taken by the government to assist an Alberta-based firm to develop the capability to do the work for which Bechtel is presently being used in the form of a crude contract?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I think that is a very good question. I was really expecting that question to come earlier when we received the letter from Syncrude Canada Ltd., dealing with that. In our discussions with them on this point, I think that what we hope to achieve is to develop experience through this type of liaison committee so that Alberta companies are engaged, sub-trades and so forth, and so eventually they will be in the same position as Alberta companies for future projects for which they can apply and say they have the

42-6

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

expertise that is needed to successfully carry out a project of this nature.

Use of Canadian Contractors

MR. CLARK:

I have a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. Can the minister tell the Legislature what company is doing the work at the Imperial Oil expansion here in town, in the City of Edmonton? And is it, in fact, a Canadian company that is doing the prime contract for the new refinery?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I recall some meetings. I can't recall the exact name now, and rather than try to attempt to answer that question I was going to refer to the Minister of Industry and Transportation, but he isn't in his place today. If you will leave that question with us we will have the answer for you on that.

MR. CLARK:

Would you also check and see whether it is a Canadian company?

MR. DICKIE:

Yes, I would be glad to determine for the hon. member the extent of Canadian participation or ownership in that company.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

STEP Program

MR. NORTIEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this question to the hon. Minister Without Portfolio in Charge of the STEP program. By way of explanation I received several complaints from villagers that programs that they submitted were turned down, and in checking with officials of the program, I note that in the Peace River area no money is going to villages, that all the money is either going to towns or to the City of Grande Prairie. I am wondering whether the minister could advise the House whether it is a policy to exclude villages and hamlets and ID's, or if this is just a set of circumstances in that particular locality of Alberta?

MR. DOWNLING:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. The situation is this. We felt that an amount of money less than \$5,000 for any particular town or village or city was just inadequate. It would allow the city or town to hire a minimum of three people for a full three-month period in the summer.

So we had to make a decision. The decision was that we would limit our municipal grants to towns and cities and that the departmental programs would funnel their funds into the various areas of the province to fill in where we couldn't go. They have done a fairly adequate job, in fact a very good job of this, in particular the Department of Lands and Forests and the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. A great number of the smaller towns and villages throughout the province have been covered through the departmental appropriation.

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-7

MR. MCLELLY:

A supplementary question to the hon. minister. Have you considered the situation where villages, together with either ID's or MD's would clearly have projects large enough to qualify for the \$5,000? Has the government considered that sort of a situation, and whether or not they could qualify?

MR. ECKLING:

Yes, we've considered every possible angle. But of course, as you know, if we open it up to one municipality then of course we have to invite the others to present a project of a like kind. We felt that in fairness to all areas of the province that we should make the rules apply in every part of the province in the same way. The Peace River country, for an example, did fairly well from the standpoint of total STEP funds. They received in percentage a good deal more than they would normally qualify for.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Camrose.

Insurance Companies Merger

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Attorney General. Has the provincial government approved the proposed merger between Rocky Mountain Life Insurance Company and another Canadian insurance company?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is not quite accurate in talking about a proposed merger. There have been discussions going on between Rocky Mountain Life Insurance Company and other companies, and the government has been a party to those discussions. Beyond saying that there have been discussions and that the government has been a party to them I think it would be improper -- because there are other companies involved in those discussions -- for me to now discuss the details of it.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has an administrator been appointed and, if so, who is the administrator of the affairs of the company?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, an administrator has not been appointed.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the government satisfied that existing legislation adequately protects the Albertans holding life insurance policies with this company?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, the legislation in that area is something that I have under review. There may need to be changes in it.

42-8

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the government decided whether or not to introduce any further legislation that would protect policy holders?

MR. MINIFF:

He just answered that.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Wainwright.

Canadian Fertilizers for US

MR. STEINBERG:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Are you aware that once again Canadian fertilizer manufacturers are shipping their produce to the United States at prices which enable it to be delivered by truck back from the Dakotas and Montana to the prairie provinces for some \$20 a ton cheaper than we, western farmers, can purchase it at the plant? Can you give any assurance that in the future any Canadian distributor willing to purchase off-season fertilizer produce will be quoted the same price as the buyers from other countries?

DR. HCFNER:

Mr. Speaker, we are looking into the matter of all input costs in agriculture. We'll make a special attempt to get up to date immediately in regard to the fertilizer situation in western Canada and in Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

The Farm Implement Act

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. Can the hon. minister inform the members of the Assembly the progress being made in the appointment of a farm machinery administrator under The Farm Implement Act at this time?

DR. HCFNER:

I can't give the exact progress up to date, but I know that the interviews have been carried out. Whether a man has, in fact, been appointed and run through the personnel office I'm not sure, but I'll check and find out.

MR. FOSTER:

A supplementary question on The Farm Implement Act. Is the hon. minister aware of any further cancellations of farm implement dealerships in the province?

DR. HCFNER:

I'm not aware of any further cancellations of any dealerships in the province, Mr. Speaker. I would point out, of course, that The Farm Implement Act doesn't impose any obligation on the farm machinery companies to maintain dealerships in any particular area.

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-9

What it does do is try and protect the dealer from the distributor or manufacturer in regard to his supply of parts, etc., if the dealership is closed and those aspects of the act are being enforced and will continue to be enforced. But the problem of making sure that the various manufacturers of farm machinery have dealerships in a variety of areas seems to me to be going a little bit further than The Farm Implement Act intends.

MR. NCTLEY:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Several weeks ago I asked the hon. minister whether or not a legal case which changed the meaning of the act considerably as far as the judiciary had decided the case -- whether or not the government was prepared to make any amendments in the act this year. And at that time, if my memory serves me right, the hon. minister said that he would examine it and report back to the Legislature. My supplementary question to you is, have you examined it and are you ready with the report?

DR. HCFNER:

I have examined this, Mr. Speaker, and I am now having the law officers in the department and the Attorney General's department give me an opinion as to whether or not, in fact, what the hon. member says does take place. It is not our intention to bring forth any amendments to The Farm Implement Act in this session of the Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge West.

MR. LUDWIG:

Court House Food Services

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Public Works. Would the minister advise whether the matter of catering services for provision of food in the new Court House has been settled?

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Speaker, I believe the matter has practically been settled. I think there are a few final negotiations that have to be undertaken but the agreement and the letter of agreement has not as yet been sent out, but the matter has been pretty well settled to the satisfaction of those concerned.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, supplementary; were services for providing food in the Court House tendered for?

DR. BACKUS:

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

Will the hon. minister advise whether the contract will be awarded to the lowest tenderer?

42-10

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

DR. BACKUS:

The contract will be awarded based on those tenders. It was based on a score system and the highest scorer is the one who probably will be awarded the contract.

MR. LUDWIG:

Would the hon. minister advise -- in view of the fact he indicated that the choice of the party that will provide services has been made -- the name of the party to whom the contract will be awarded?

DR. BACKUS:

Sorry, I didn't quite get that Mr. Speaker. Does he want to know the name of the party to whom the contract was awarded?

MR. LUDWIG:

Yes.

DR. BACKUS:

The highest bidder on this was a Mrs. Lappa, and I think -- provided certain conditions are fulfilled as a result of it -- that this lady will be getting the award.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, did I understand the hon. minister to say that the highest tender was from Mrs. Lappa and that she will get the award?

DR. BACKUS:

No, Mr. Speaker, he misunderstood. I said the person making the highest score in the tendering, and the scoring is based on the various services that are expected to be provided.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that it is well known that this lady, Mrs. Lappa, has been attempting to obtain this contract, would the hon. minister table all the tenders?

(Interjections)

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order! Point of order!

MR. LUDWIG:

Would the hon. minister table all the tenders and all the correspondence with reference to this matter?

[Interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I have put a question to the minister and there has been a lot of heckling and kibbitsing from the hon. members -- I would prefer your decision on this matter rather than his.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is asking for production of documents and perhaps he would like to make it a Motion for a Return.

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-11

MR. LUDWIG:

Yes, I will, Mr. Speaker, but all I do want -- the question is complete -- I'd like to have him table this but if he wants it in writing I'll oblige him.

MR. HYNDMAN:

You're the lowest scorer.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Financial Assistance for Schools

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Education if I may. Mr. Minister, has any special financial assistance been given, or any promise of assistance, to any school board in the province, either for the operation or for capital grants in that particular district during this year of 1972?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Which district was that, Mr. Speaker?

MR. GRUENWALD:

Has it been given to any school board or school district in the province?

MR. HYNDMAN:

No, Mr. Speaker, so far this year there has been a continuation of the policy announced last year which was essentially a 6% increase in school costs for the year ending December 31st, 1972.

MR. GRUENWALD:

So then there has been no special assistance given to anyone. How many school boards approximately, and what school districts -- other than the Edmonton public -- which were acknowledged earlier in the session, have made an appeal to you and asked for special assistance?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Quite a number, Mr. Speaker. Let's see, the Wainwright people were in, and Leduc -- well there were quite a number. I think there would be 10 or 15, in one way or another, came in to see me, and a number of others have written to me, and even further than that, others have been in touch with my department.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Further on this area of finance, Mr. Minister. There was a plebiscite which was defeated in Wainwright some time ago, and just recently one in Leduc, I believe. Wainwright, I understand, is going to go for another plebiscite, if this is correct. Have you given any thought to limiting the number of times a school district could go for a plebiscite in any one particular year?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Well not this year, Mr. Speaker. Yes the initial Wainwright vote was lost by some 45 votes and they will be voting on their second plebiscite tomorrow. But at the moment no thought has been given -- certainly this year -- to any change in legislation which would reduce the frequency of such procedures. Next year the whole question is wide open, insofar as a completely new plan would be developed.

42-12

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. COCKSCON:

Supplementary to that, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. minister aware of any other plebiscites that might have to be held with regard to requisition?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Well it's a difficult question to answer, Mr. Speaker, as to what plebiscites might have to be held. This is a decision of the local school boards. They don't have to get permission from the government or the minister to hold a plebiscite. So I would leave it to each of the boards to make their decisions as to which way they would wish to go in the event that their priorities are such that would demand more money for this year.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Millican followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

Foreign Ownership Report

MR. LIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. the Premier. It's regarding his report yesterday -- the Premier's report that he gave in the House on foreign ownership as far as the federal government policy was concerned. Is the Premier aware of the comments by the hon. Mr. Stanfield, Leader of the Opposition, where he claims the report does not go nearly far enough? I was wondering, does the Premier agree with this view? And if he does not, does he plan to inform Mr. Stanfield and his members in Ottawa that this could have an adverse effect on our province?

AN HON. MEMBER:

You're out of order!

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I think it was an ingenious effort by the hon. member to try and get me to make a statement about a subject which I'm not disposed to do at this time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

Financial Assistance for Schools (Cont.)

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Education, following up on the question from the hon. Member for Lethbridge West.

Will the hon. minister consider amending the regulations so that a school board can not go to plebiscite more than twice in one year?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Well certainly not this year, Mr. Speaker. The question is getting somewhat hypothetical insofar as May 15th is the last date on which any school board can have a plebiscite. The question regarding next year, of course, is hypothetical, insofar as all the regulations, and indeed much of the law, may well be changed.

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-13

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, supplementary question then. Can I ask the hon. minister if he has any intentions of changing the date of May 15th for school boards to hold plebiscites? To move it back?

MR. HYNDMAN:

No, Mr. Speaker. I do not.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

National Housing Act Discussions

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Will the provincial government be discussing with the hon. Mr. Basford, at his upcoming meeting here in Edmonton, the merits of replacing the urban renewal program with neighborhood planning, with a view to stressing rehabilitation of existing housing?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I think that question would best be handled by our Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, it would be rather difficult to discuss this with Mr. Basford in Edmonton, as he's not going to be here. Officials of his department will be in Edmonton discussing -- on a confidential basis with officials from the province and from the municipalities -- certain proposed amendments to the National Housing Act.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs advise us who all will be coming from Ottawa, and who all will be negotiating on behalf of the provincial government?

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, there are two officials I believe from Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and two officials from the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs.

MR. RUSSELL:

As I understand it, there are no negotiations. It is a fact-finding and discussion period which will be held.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Stony Plain followed by the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill.

Fingerprint Tests For Cheque Cashing

MR. FURLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Attorney General. Are you aware that one of the major food outlets in Edmonton -- a grocery

42-14

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

store -- is asking people to submit to a fingerprint test before cashing personal cheques?

MR. LEITCH:

No, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't. I recall some time ago reading a pamphlet where that type of service was recommended, but I wasn't sure, or I didn't have any knowledge of it being used in Alberta.

MR. TRYNCHY:

Mr. Speaker, maybe I can answer that question --

MR. SPEAKER:

Would the hon. member wish to move into one of the empty chairs in the front row?

AN HON. MEMBER:

It will be one step forward.

MR. MCCRE:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that the hon. Member for Whitecourt had that actually happen to him?

MR. LEITCH:

No, I wasn't, but I expect I will hear about it.

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. member alleging a breach of privilege?

Security Trust Bankruptcy

MR. FARFAN:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Attorney General. This is a follow-up to the question from the hon. Member for Calgary Bow regarding protection for policy holders of Rcmoco. Under the legislation you inherited, is there any hope for recovery for the sorely burned Alberta investors in Security Trust?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, there has been for some time a receiver managing the affairs of Security Trust, and under the existing legislation the assets of that company go first to the payment of depositors. The most recent reports I have received as to the management of the assets of that company indicate there is some possibility -- but I certainly wouldn't consider it a very large possibility -- of the affairs of the company being wound up in such a way that the depositors are all paid in full and there may be some small amount of assets left over for distribution among the shareholders.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FARFAN:

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of investors in Security Trust in my riding. Am I to tell them that there is small hope for the shareholders in this Alberta company?

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-15

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know that I can add anything to my prior remarks that will help the hon. member in what he should say to his constituents. As I have indicated, there is a possibility -- I don't consider it a large one -- of there being some assets available, some time down the road, for distribution among shareholders.

MR. FARRAN:

Another supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Under the legislation which presumably was passed by the last government, did the province not guarantee a provincially-chartered trust company?

MR. LEITCH:

They didn't guarantee the shareholders a return on their investment, nor were they assured that they would get back their investment.

MR. FARRAN:

A supplementary again, Mr. Speaker. What about the depositors? Did they guarantee that the depositors would not be hurt?

MR. LEITCH:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, for the Alberta trust companies there is an arrangement with the Canada Deposit Corporation, whereby depositors' funds are guaranteed. So all those who deposit in Alberta trust companies are assured by that guarantee of recovery in their deposit.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Attorney General. Are all other Alberta licensed life insurance companies and trust companies in good standing with the superintendent of insurance and/or the Attorney General's department at this time?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that is not a supplementary. We have embarked on an entirely new subject. In addition, Mr. Speaker, that is an item that would require considerable detail and I would ask that the hon. member put in on the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Honcraria for Committee Members

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Premier. Firstly, I'd like to refer to an Order in Council of April 24, appointing a Fish and Wildlife Advisory Committee, and it authorizes remuneration as follows: at a rate of \$25 for every day or part thereof. And then a ministerial order, also dated in April, appointing the Alberta Grain Commission, sets out the remuneration for services rendered at the honorarium rate of \$50 per day. My question to the Premier is, why is there a difference in the rates for these two committees?

DR. HCFNER:

I imagine, Mr. Speaker, that the difference in remuneration has to do with the difference in the activity of the two committees. One might take the people away from their ordinary farming duties for a

42-16

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

longer period than the other, and having consideration for this, that would be the difference between the committees. I would agree with the hon. member that a review of the remuneration paid to these various committees should be undertaken so that it is uniform throughout the various departments.

Conservative Handbook

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Premier. Has the Premier made a decision to table the Conservative Handbook?

DR. HCFNER:

Forget it.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What do you want it for?

Use of Canadian Contractors

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, before you conclude the question period, I have the answer for the hon. Member for Clids-Didsbury, if you'll permit me to give that answer at this time. I believe the hon. member was asking about the engineering firm on the Strathcona project. The engineering firm is C.F. Braun, Canada, Ltd. That is a United States company, but the project engineer is Art Worth and he is a Canadian. I might also add, Mr. Speaker, that Imperial Oil have given assurance to the government that all engineering services, except the process design, will utilize Canadian engineering firms. In addition to that, they have stated that it is Imperial's intention to purchase 75% to 80% of the material and equipment for this project from Canadian suppliers.

Conservative Handbook (cont)

MR. F. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. Premier. Could the Premier advise me as to what are the problems in the delay, and if he intends to make a decision prior to the end of the session? If there are some problems, I'm certainly a tolerant person, Mr. Speaker, and I'll understand those problems, I'm sure.

MR. LUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that the hon. Member for Little Bow is a very tolerant person. It's a matter of whether or not it is a government document, as distinguished from a document that is not a government document.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge East.

Public Utility Commissions Board

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address a question to the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities. Does the hon. minister sit as chairman of the Board of Public Utility Commissions?

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-17

MR. WERRY:

In no way, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in the House yesterday, the board is an autonomous quasi-judicial body. The members are appointed for ten-year terms and the current chairman has two years to run on his current term. There is no direction received by the Public Utilities Board from any government minister or a member of the Executive Council.

MR. TAYLOR:

Supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. Would there be any purpose in citizens' committees in improvement districts who are very dissatisfied with gas rates, appealing to you as the minister of that department?

MR. WERRY:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the present time we are trying to establish some method of reviewing the problems of both REA's and gas co-operatives that are experiencing difficulties with pricing, with construction costs, etc, and even though I do not have any staff that has expertise in this field, I can, through the various departments, get the answers that the hon. member would require for his constituents.

MR. TAYLOR:

Supplementary, would the minister then make representation to the Board of Public Utility Commissions on behalf of local citizens and communities?

MR. WERRY:

No, Mr. Speaker, that would have to be made by the individual citizens or the co-ops themselves or the REA's, and they would receive from the Public Utilities Board their written interpretation of the various acts and regulations that they administer.

MR. TAYLOR:

One more supplementary then, Mr. Speaker. What would be the purpose of making the appeal through the minister in the first place? Is it just an exercise?

MR. WERRY:

We're quibbling in semantics, I think, Mr. Speaker. There would be no appeal to the minister. I took it as just being a general question that I would intervene or help to assist these people in raising the question to the chairman of the Public Utilities Board, and in no way did I hope to indicate to the House that I would appeal on their behalf.

MR. WERRY:

I am sorry if I left that impression with the House.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Lethbridge East, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

42-18

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

Funds for St. Mary River ID

MR. ANDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I was going to ask the hon. Minister of the Environment, but he isn't here. Is the government of Alberta still negotiating with the federal government to get some capital expenditure funds for the St. Mary River irrigation district, which is presently operated by the water users?

DR. HCFNER:

Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Metric System

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. What stage has been reached in the plan for the conversion to the metric system of weights and measures in Canada?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, the subject has been discussed once before in the question period, at which time the hon. Minister of the Environment gave some discussion. I am not completely sure what state the federal government is at. If it interests the hon. member, I will certainly get it for him. Since it was discussed in the House before, somebody contacted me to let me know that it would cause a great deal of trouble with the old saying in football, 'first and ten', inasmuch as we would now have 'meters' involved.

MR. COOPER:

Does the hon. minister ever expect -- maybe this is an opinion -- that this conversion will take place?

MR. GETTY:

Would I ever expect? I just couldn't speculate on that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs aware that on Monday, the Federal Trade Department appointed Mr. Duncan R. B. McArthur, the president of Inland Cement Industries Ltd. of Edmonton, to the Metric Commission?

MR. GETTY:

No I wasn't, nor do I appreciate the significance of the appointment.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. minister aware that the federal government has established this commission to prepare a schedule for the conversion of the Canadian economy to the metric system, and that it is of significance to Albertans?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, it was the hon. member who raised the question originally, I believe, when it was discussed in the House. We had

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-19

some considerable detail passed on to him. Frankly, there are certain priorities, Mr. Speaker, that are very important to the people of Alberta, that we are attending to as quickly as possible. Some do not have the same priority, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, they do not get the same attention.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

Speech Pathologists

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might take this opportunity to reply to a question asked a couple of days ago. The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview had asked a question in regard to the number of professional people who were Canadians at the Speech Pathology Department at the Glenrose Hospital. The answer, in substance, is along the lines that I gave him the other day. I indicated at that time that this was a ready and reasonable explanation so far as my knowledge was concerned, but that I would seek an explanation.

The explanation is that there were not sufficient graduates from either the University of Toronto or McGill University to fill the needs of the Canadian programs. These were each graduating 15 speech pathologists a year, and they were absorbed historically in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

As a result, the Glenrose became totally independent on speech pathologists available in England. The University of Alberta will be graduating some speech pathologists this year. Starting next year, my understanding is that there will be 15 graduates a year from Alberta, who will be available to fit in to the programs in Edmonton and the rest of Alberta, and probably, generally in western Canada.

The question was further asked, whether or not one of the reasons for the small number of Canadians might be that the pathologists had to be accredited by the American Speech and Hearing Association. The answer is no.

MR. MCILEY:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Glenrose giving any consideration to preferential treatment for Alberta graduates in the years ahead?

MR. CRAWFORD:

I don't think that I could foresee a blood bath in the competent staff over there as Alberta graduates become available. But I would say assuredly to the hon. member that where the qualifications are equal, and where there are vacancies in the establishment, and applications are made and Albertans apply, it would be my intention that they be given preference.

Foreign Investment Control

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. the Premier. I was wondering if he could inform the House if the federal legislation will have any retroactive feature in it as far as foreign control is concerned -- foreign investment control in the different companies -- and is he aware of any Alberta company at the present time negotiating with an American concern for a takeover?

42-20

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. LUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, on this subject, having regard to the fact that I have just received the report from the chairman, as the other members did, of the Select Committee of the Legislature, it wouldn't be my view that I would be disposed towards answering questions with regard to the matter, particularly the second part of the hon. member's question. As to the first part, my recollection -- in terms of a cursory review of the document -- is that it would not have a retroactive effect. It would come into force at the time at which it was proclaimed, and then take effect from that point on. But that is about all I can say at this time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTERIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that the report of the Commission on Educational Planning, headed by Dr. Walter Worth, will be off the press in mid-June. We will make it available to MLA's at the earliest possible moment and preparations are already underway to ensure the report has the widest possible distribution to all Albertans. Copies will be made to all public libraries and all associations whose members might not otherwise have access to the report if they lack means. Additionally, the report will be distributed by direct orders to, not only the Queen's Printer, but also major book stores and department stores all over the province. A nominal amount of \$5 will be charged for the report, and by that means we hope to recover the major cost of production. The cost has been kept deliberately low at \$5 because we are hoping that the report will prove to be a best-seller in every sense of the word. The government and the Department of Education, indeed both departments, Mr. Speaker, will not be taking any position immediately the report is issued. We will be studying it, and I would urge all MLA's in the House to plan now to seek comments from their constituents, to encourage study groups over the summer to review the report, so that when the Legislature convenes again in the fall we can get back to education and to the report in particular.

I might say that the report, we are told, is going to be at least as colourful and as readable as the Hall-Dennis Report in Ontario of some years ago, and we are indeed already getting requests from many parts of the world for the Worth Report due in mid-June.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (Second Reading)

Bill No. 64: The Surface Rights Act

DR. HCFNER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move second reading of Bill 64, The Surface Rights Act, seconded by the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I was wondering if the hon. minister in the government would hold this bill for a few days. It was just tabled last Friday; it is quite a thick, comprehensive bill, and we haven't completed our study of it. We would certainly appreciate it if it could be held for a couple of days.

May 3rd 1972

ALBPRTA HANSARD

42-21

DP. HCFNER:

Mr. Speaker, if I could just raise a point with the hon. Member from Drumheller. It had been my intention to speak very briefly and if it was agreed to second reading I would then move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee of the Legislature on Law and Law Amendments, so that not only could members go over it in some detail, but representations might then be made to by the various farm organizations, the landmen, and petroleum associations, etc., to that Standing Committee the legislature. I apologize for not indicating that at the initial first reading of the bill, but I had made it public prior to that that the undertaking would be referred to the Committee. So with that undertaking, we would appreciate going ahead today so that we can, in fact, make the motion immediately. If we get second reading, it can then be referred to the committee.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, that puts a different complexion on it entirely, because we will then be able to discuss the principle when it returns to the Committee of the Whole and this procedure is quite satisfactory.

[The Motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 64 was read a second time.]

DP. HCFNER:

Mr. Speaker, if I could then now move that Bill 64 be referred to the Standing Committee of Law and Law Amendments for their consideration and to hear representations from interested parties on it.

[The motion was carried without debate or dissent.]

Bill No. 38 The Treatment Services
Amendment Act, 1972

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Advanced Education that Bill No. 38 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I think that I can justify brevity in the case of this particular amendment quite fully in speaking to it very briefly. The act, as hon. members will know, provides for arrangements made by the province for treatment of various classes of persons who are in need. There is, for example, a section which provides for the treatment of polio sufferers; there is, for example, a section which provides for arrangements being made for the treatment of multiple handicapped people.

That is the section that has in it the provision that the College of Physicians and Surgeons might be an advisory body to the government in regard to programs. The College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Canadian Medical Association and the Alberta Medical Association have undergone a few minor structural changes, with the result that the medical people themselves have asked us to consider that the Alberta Medical Association -- rather than the College of Physicians and Surgeons -- be the medical body treated as the advisory group for the purposed of this legislation; and that is all that this amendment sets out to achieve.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 38 was read for a second time.]

42-22

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

Bill No. 40 The Weed Control Act

MR. MCORE:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Ilcydminister, secnd reading of Bill No. 40.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill, as I indicated during first reading, is to provide a workable vehicle through which to control the spread of noxious weeds in both rural and urban Alberta.

The context of the bill, being a completly new bill, has many clauses which I'm sure the hon. members would perhaps be concerned about, and I shall certainly attempt during Ccmmitttee of the Whcle to elaborate on all sections of the bill and not spend any great deal of time discussing it at this time.

[The motion was passed without dissent; Bill No. 40 was read for a second time]

Bill No. 43 The Cultural Development
Amendment Act, 1972

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Peace River, that Bill No. 43 be now read a second time.

The act of 1967 remains substantially the same. This bill permits smooother and more flexible operations of the branches, particularly in their dealings with the public. It permits us to conduct workshops, seminars, conferences and exhibitions. I give you as an example the music work shops in Lethbridge and Camrose.

Again the act gives us proper authority and simplified operating procedure for a Cultural Heritage Conference to be held in June. A gathering, I might add, that is exciting interest, not only in this province, but in other provinces of Canada as well.

Under this bill we are given authority to hire instructors and lecturers, as well as rent buildings. Vexation, delay, and much of what the public refers to as red tape, is reduced to a minimum. I think it is safe to say that our Cultural Development Branch is beccoming the envy of other branches across Canada. The wonderful work they are doing should certainly be a source of pride to us all. The powers inherent in the Act are simply based from which the minister may authorize their activities in the programs carried out by the Cultural Development Branch, and the changes, I feel sure, will greatly improve the efficiency of administration without in any way, diminishing the cctrcl now exercised by the Legislature and the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 43 was read a second time.]

Bill No. 44 The Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 1972

MR. DCAN:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to move second reading of Bill No. 44, seconded by the hcn. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

This bill will amend Chapter 175 of the revised statutes of Alberta 1970.

Mr. Speaker, a great deal of explanation will not be necessary on this bill as it only changes four small sections in the act, as reference mainly to mobile homes and mobile home parks.

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-23

The first change is in Section 2 under definition and simply defines all types of mobile home units that could be considered under The Alberta Housing Act. Section (e1) defines mobile homes, and means any vacation trailer or house trailer that provides therein living, sleeping, eating, food preparation and sanitary facilities, or any of them, for one or more persons and that is capable of being moved from place to place, under its own power, pulled, or carried.

The next section (e2), in the same manner describes what is included in the definition of a mobile home park and means: any area of land designed to provide services such as roads, streets, sidewalks, water, electrical, sewage, gas, communication or other services or facilities to mobile homes.

Since the Alberta Housing Corporation was established in 1970 it has expanded at a rapid rate. Now, where in the opinion of the corporation, sufficient money is not being made available by lending institutions for the housing purposes which now include mobile homes, the corporation may make loans for the purpose of construction or improving of mobile home parks. Having become involved in a great deal of financing under the Alberta Housing Corporation, it therefore amends Section 5 of the act by striking out the words, "Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs" and substituting the words "Deputy Provincial Treasurer", so the affairs of the corporation shall be conducted by a board of directors which shall consist of the Deputy Provincial Treasurer and the executive director of the corporation as members.

Also, under this amendment, it allows that the corporation may each year pay to any municipality within which any of its premises are situated, a grant not exceeding the amount that would be recoverable by the municipality if the premises were subject to the business tax of the municipality for that year.

Mr. Speaker, in order to make The Alberta Housing Act more acceptable to the general building trade, and particularly to the lower income groups who may be wishing to purchase mobile homes and locate on mobile home parks, I would ask the Assembly to support this amendment to The Alberta Housing Act.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, the idea of mobile home parks is, I think, a very excellent one. I think also that in the consideration of this bill which is an attempt to help mobile homes, we have to consider a few other items. Otherwise the mobile home owner is going to be left in an unfair position. At one time the mobile home owner was receiving a great number of benefits at the expense of society and now it would appear that the pendulum may be swinging too far the other way because when they are now required to pay ground rent for parking, then taxes, they do not have the benefits of streets, of street lights; many pay additional for sewage. The load on the mobile home owner is becoming pretty heavy and it's causing a great deal of concern to many people who have invested in mobile homes, a sum equal to that to which they might have purchased property and a home.

So I think that along with making these mobile home parks possible, we also have to make sure that we're not letting this pendulum swing too far and putting the owners of mobile homes in an unfair position, paying more than their share and paying for benefits that they don't receive but that other people in the same community are receiving.

MR. MCLELLY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to make several comments on this bill following up on the statements already made.

42-24

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

I have a number of motile home owners in my constituency who brought to my attention the real problems that these people, by and large younger people, have. And I think perhaps many of us aren't really aware of the fact that the total that they pay -- when you include the rent for their stalls, and you add to that rent the fee that must be paid to the province -- that in actual fact the total in most cases is somewhat higher than would be paid by an average homeowner in a particular community. So I really do feel that it's necessary for us to examine ways and means of bringing back a better balance in this whole situation, and relieving the rather unfair burden that many of these people have to pay.

As I mentioned of mobile home owners are young people, who are just getting started. As I listened to them in their submissions to me, and heard the rates that are being charged by mobile home parks elsewhere in the province, I really found myself quite surprised at just what some of these monthly charges are, and how few services are really provided for rather extravagant monthly charges.

Obviously, in order to bring some genuine competition into this field, we have to make provision, Mr. Speaker, for public mobile home parks not to take over the business from private parks owners, but in the larger centres, at least to make the market place work a little better. I think this is especially so in our growing centres. I can cite the City of Grande Prairie for example, where as we all know the city is mushrooming in consequence of the Proctor and Gamble Pulp Mill. But largely because of that increase, the mobile home owners in the City of Grande Prairie are forced to pay rather substantial monthly payments for their stalls, and I think provision made so that the municipalities can acquire land and set up their own mobile home park in competition with the private operators is something which would be desirable.

One other point I'd like to make here, Mr. Speaker, on this matter. It deals with the depreciation schedule that is used to calculate the fee that the individual mobile home owner pays to the province. It seems to me that that depreciation schedule is much too long. By the time the period ends the real value of the mobile home is so much reduced that these people are in fact paying fees on a motile home which isn't worth nearly as much, in actual fact, as the depreciation schedule claims that it is. And this is something which I believe the government should consider as well, when looking at the total problems faced today by the mobile home owners.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair.]

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 44 was read a second time.]

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-25

Bill No. 45: The Department of Culture, Youth and
Recreation Amendment Act, 1972

MR. SCHMIDT:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour, that Bill No. 45 entitled The Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation Amendment Act, 1972 be now read a second time.

In speaking briefly on this bill, I would inform the hon. members on both sides of the Assembly that the original act was passed just a year ago. In fact, it came into force on April 1, 1971. At that time, as many members will be aware, several branches and related institutions previously under the Department of the Provincial Secretary were amalgamated. It has included 4-H and Junior Forest Warden Branch, Recreation Branch, the Youth Services Branch, the Provincial Museum and Archives, and the Jubilee Auditoriums. Since the basic objective of my department is to initiate, foster, and encourage the orderly development of all constructive forms of culture, youth and recreation activities, this incorporation was a logical one.

Understandably, in the ensuing year we have run into what might be called operational handicaps, while at the same time we have discovered new ways of enhancing our programs among the public. Essentially the purpose of this bill is to enable us to simplify certain day-to-day operations, while facilitating our working relationship with the public. It will, among other things, encourage and promote maximum interest and participation in all forms of constructive sport and physical fitness programs.

In the area of warm human relations between government and people, may I suggest that if there is any area in which government and its people should come together in mutual warmth, it is in the area of cultural development. We need ways to create a responsive relationship with the public, especially the young people. One of the things we are planning on doing is the preparation of a departmental seal. A seal of this sort has special meaning. For example, when an achievement award is earned by a child who pursues a musical education at a workshop in Camrose, that simple item is a visible, very meaningful proof of her accomplishment. In such situations, of course, we should have the authority to reproduce it mechanically, for achievement certificates are presented to many eager young people who sacrifice their summers to enrich our present and our future.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 45 was read a second time]

42-26

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

Bill No. 47 The Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 1972

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education, second reading of The Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 1972.

Mr. Speaker, when I first introduced this bill into the Legislature, I indicated that the principle of the bill was to bring the provincial income tax legislation into conformity with federal income tax legislation. I also indicated that there were some concerns on the part of our government with respect to some of the provisions in the federal tax revisions.

Mr. Speaker, I will not say again what I said on the introduction of the bill. But for the information of members who are new members in the Legislature, I would just like to review the historical background of the Alberta Income Tax Act in Alberta. This background goes back to the years 1932 and 1940 when Alberta actually levied and collected its own personal and corporate income taxes. They rented these taxes to the federal government during the next 21 years, 1941 to 1961, under the War Time Tax Rental Agreements, and subsequently Dominion-Provincial Tax Rental Agreements. Taxes were levied, but the federal government collected these taxes during that particular decade, 1961 until the present time.

[The motion was carried without debate; Bill No. 47 was read a second time]

Bill No. 48: The Livestock Brand Inspection Amendment Act, 1972

MR. J. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for St. Paul, second reading of Bill No. 48, being The Livestock Brand Inspection Amendment Act, 1972.

The Livestock Brand Inspection Act, 1971 replaced the older Stock Inspection Act. This was necessary to deal with the different methods of transporting cattle. For example, formerly cattle were either trailed to market or else transported by rail. Nowadays, the transportation is mostly done by trucks to many markets. Whereas in former years, the movement of cattle was mainly from farm to packing plant, we now have many livestock markets and cattle being sold from the producer to the feeder and then to the packing plant.

As you can well see, the need for identification of the cattle through these transactions has increased tremendously. This bill has been made necessary to rectify some of the problems which presented themselves from an administrative standpoint in the actual brand reading of cattle, and to overcome legal complications which have arisen by virtue of the wording of the act.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 48 was read a second time]

Bill No. 49: The Meat Inspection Act

MR. FLUKEF:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Lloydminster, second reading of Bill No. 49, being The Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 1972.

The Health of Animals Division of the Canada Department of Agriculture estimate that they inspect approximately 85% of the meat slaughtered in Alberta. A large proportion of this federally inspected meat goes to eastern markets. The remaining 15%, which is

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-27

not federally inspected, all remains within the province, and accounts for 15% to 25% of our domestic consumption. Some cities and municipalities have local by-laws requiring that all meat consumed or sold within that municipality be inspected, and it is under this authority that cities such as Lethbridge and Red Deer provide five o'clock type post-mortem inspection, which is somewhat less adequate.

An anti-mortem inspection is essential to detect some diseases such as milk fever, which is not evident at the animal's death. The post-mortem inspection must be conducted immediately upon slaughter of the animal; in the first instance to prevent animals inspected with contagious disease from entering coolers, and secondly to ensure that proper identification of the carcass is made and recorded by the inspector.

The primary reason for meat inspection must be to safeguard the health of our human population. Our citizens have the right to the assurance that all meat and meat products offered for sale have been subjected to a thorough and proper inspection procedure and have been passed for human consumption. We have had a number of instances in the past where human cases of food poisoning have been traced to improper slaughtering and handling of meat animals and inadequate and unsanitary facilities. There is a strong possibility that more cases of this will occur unless the government of Alberta takes steps to ensure that all meat and meat products offered for sale have been properly handled under sanitary conditions.

A second obvious reason for the provincial meat inspection program is the increased markets that will be opened up to our small operators. At the present time the country plants are unable to market their products in either the chain stores in their own areas or in the larger urban centres because of the lack of inspection. It has been shown in other provinces that once a small rural plant has meat inspection service provided for them, its business will double and triple in a very short time, thus providing much needed industry in rural areas, coupled with the extra employment it provides.

There are approximately 95 abattoirs in the Province of Alberta which could eventually come under this program. Approximately half of them have the necessary standards of construction and facilities in order to begin this program immediately. All they require is the incentive to provide the best possible sanitation and management procedures which will be provided by the presence of an inspector in the plant. Even without any outside influence there are five or six new plants being built in the province every year and these are, without exception, being built to a superior standard.

Our hope is that within two or three years we will be prepared to provide inspection in 50 or 60 of these small plants. It is our hope that the competition provided by the newer and better plants which have inspection, would force the others to either upgrade their slaughtering facilities to our standards, or to close down their operations and use the plants operated by their competitors. This process is happening now in our areas. It is not our intention to legislate anybody out of business, but instead, to have the economic realities force them to come under this program.

Although the act provides that all meat is to be offered for sale for human consumption, it must be subjected to anti-mortem and post-mortem inspection. Exemptions will be provided in the regulations for (a) those operators who wish to do strictly custom-kill business for each animal they slaughter is returned to the farm of origin, and (b) the slaughter of animals by the farmer for his own use and (c) the processing of wild game animals and undrawn, dressed poultry.

It is our intention, wherever possible, to utilize services of rural veterinarians to conduct the inspection service. In those

42-28

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

areas where there is no veterinarian or where the workload is greater than the practising veterinarian would be willing to undertake, it will be necessary to provide full government meat inspectors of the type that are now utilized by the federal government, and who would work under the supervision of the nearest veterinarian licenced as a meat inspector. This procedure would be necessary because the non-veterinarian inspector would have the authority to pass a product for human consumption, but not to condemn it.

We estimate that our ultimate requirement would be for 12 of these non-veterinary inspectors. The cost of this program is estimated at about \$2.50 for each beef animal, and about 75 cents for each hog, at the present volume of business. The total cost would work out to about \$250,000 per year. The increased volume of business would result in a small increase in total cost, but not in proportion to the number of animals processed because of the increased efficiency of the program with the larger volume.

It would not take the inspector any greater time to inspect 20 hogs than ten, once he is on the premises. An increased cost would be a result of the plants operating more days per week, as a result of their greater volume.

Various methods of funding a program of this type have been tried in other provinces, but by far the most successful is that operated in Ontario, where the province has paid the total cost, thus allowing the small operators to compete directly with large packers who receive their service free from the federal government. Those provinces where fees have been charged to the operator, who in turn, passed the cost on to the contributor, there has been a tendency to retard the growth of the program, and the service, because the farmers tend to slaughter on their own farms rather than pay for the cost of inspection.

One must also consider the inefficiency of collecting many small sums of money, and the greater cost of administration with a program of this type.

MR. EUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on this bill. I think this is an excellent bill; it is long overdue. But it has -- as I believe the mover has mentioned -- many problems ahead of it. One of the problems would be the closing out in time -- and this is what he mentioned -- of the smaller packing plants. For example, I have one in my own area which is not large enough for federal inspection, and yet it does a tremendous volume of business. We have a vet within a mile, so there is no problem. In areas where there are no veterinary inspectors, I understand veterinary inspectors will be appointed. I suppose will in turn serve a dual purpose and be the veterinarian for that area. But I think it may be wishful thinking to think it is going to be \$2.50 per head.

You have mentioned that the provincial government is going to pay for it. Couldn't this meat, after it has been inspected -- or is it only federally inspected meat that can be sold outside of the province? These are questions that I would ask.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few brief comments in support of this particular bill. I must say as a layman, when I became involved with the health department a few years ago, it was a considerable surprise to me to learn that all the meat sold across meat counters in the province wasn't inspected before it was sold. It was surprising to find out that there was a fair bit of meat marketed in the Province of Alberta that was not inspected properly before it was placed on the retail market. I realize that the bill

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-29

has been under development within the departments of health and agriculture for at least a year now, and I would only suggest, Mr. Speaker, that certainly I consider the bill to be very definitely in the public interest.

I would also like to support the decision of the government to carry the cost of this service as a provincial cost, since I think this was probably one of the main stumbling blocks in coming to grips with this particular public health measure in the past. There is no doubt in my mind, on the base of my limited experience on the subject, that in the absence of a provincial financial support, I'm sure the program would meet with a lot of resistance at a number of places on the local level.

Therefore, I just wanted to rise and go on record as supporting the bill as being, I think, a desirable public health measure in the best interests of the people of the Province of Alberta. The expenditure of the public funds involved, I believe, would be money well spent.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, I hail this act. I think it is long overdue. The one comment that I would like to make -- maybe the hon. member could answer it -- is he assured now there will be an adequate number of inspectors monitoring this type of program, and will they in fact, be adequately qualified, and if not, what would be the direction? I wasn't quite clear, I think he did mention that. Would he just clarify it again? Secondly, the other question I would like to ask for clarification, despite the fact that the hon. member opposite has just talked about it, is the cost going to be borne by the province, and is this absolutely necessary? Is there any other way of getting around this?

MR. HARLE:

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if I might enter the debate before it is closed off by the mover.

This particular bill is going to be of tremendous importance in our rural areas, and it might be of some interest to know that the veterinarians in my constituency have been inspecting the abattoir that is there over the past 12 years. While they have no record which would offer any statistics, they took one particular week and out of that one particular week, some 35% of the number of animals that were slaughtered had condemned portions in them. So that this matter of meat inspection, I think, is tremendously important to the local abattoirs, and I think will benefit the small towns because, as the market for inspected meat is much greater than non-inspected, it provides that access to market which is not now available.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, there's just one point I'd like to mention. I'd like to thank the hon. member for letting us know what's going to be in the regulations and I am very pleased to say there, that meat for the personal use of the grower is exempted.

There is one other exemption I would like to suggest. And that is where there is a private deal between the farmer or producer and the householder for the purchase of a quarter, or a half, or a whole critter for that matter. It seems that where the buyer and the seller are both satisfied that it probably would not be necessary. I would like to see this considered, also as a possible exemption along with the others that he mentioned.

42-30

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. FRENCH:

Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask a question. If I remember correctly, when this bill was introduced in the Legislature there was some indication that it be held over until the fall, and during the summer representation be received. Is it still the intention to proceed in this way? Before you close debate, would you also advise as to who the representation be made to? Is it to the Cabinet or the Committee of the Legislature -- who will receive representation during the summer?

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Speaker, just briefly I was -- like the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc -- rather shocked a year ago when this matter was brought to my attention. I raised it, immediately following the election, with the hon. Minister of Agriculture and I was pleased to get a prompt response that we are already in the process of drafting the legislation. I think it's important at least for the two reasons mentioned -- the public health aspect, and of course the local industry aspect, and as these have been covered I have no more to say. I very strongly favour this bill.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

May the mover close the debate?

MR. FLUKER:

Mr. Speaker, I may just talk a bit about this bill. I have done quite a bit of work on it and I have quite a bit of information on it and I am well aware of what's going on in meat inspection in Alberta. I really appreciate the comments of the other members on what they think on it.

First of all maybe I should answer some of the questions. We think that in Alberta we will need some 12 to 15 more inspectors and they certainly won't be veterinarians. They will probably work under the veterinarians and be trained and they will have to have a training program. I think that at the present time there is a man in Ontario taking a course so that he can train these inspectors. We will need about 12 to 15 more of them, other than what veterinarians we have now.

When you talk about cost at \$2.50 for the inspection of an animal it really isn't that much, but how are you going to take this off every farmer that comes in and gets his own meat killed? All it would do would be to discourage him to bring it in and have it inspected. I really I don't think that it's going to be that much of a load on the government to pay this inspection and certainly at \$.75 a hog and \$2.50 for a beef carcass. When it is inspected it is brought up to the same inspection that our federal government has now in our big packing plants. I would certainly believe then that it could be shipped out of the province for resale.

Another thing, getting back, I think we should really look at fowl. I look at people killing chickens in the country and I say this about -- I shouldn't maybe say this -- Hutterite colonies who peddle them. Lots of these hens are two and three years old and you don't know what they've had. They have all been drawn and eviscerated, they bring them, and they peddle them.

DR. BUCK:

[Inaudible]

MR. FLUKER:

Pardon ... I would say here that even fowl should be inspected.

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA PANSARD

42-31

I think this bill should be held, we should study it and have a final reading on it in the fall. I think this is our intention for the fall and if you have any submissions that you want to give to me and talk to me about, I would only be too glad to sit down and talk to the other members. But I do think it is very, very important to get this bill passed.

[Motion was passed without further debate, Bill No. 49 was read a second time.]

Bill No. 53: The Federal-Provincial Farm
Assistance Amendment Act, 1972

DR. HCFNER:

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 53, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development.

This bill simply amends the act to incorporate the words 'organization and use of workers for farming in related industries'. At the present time the act deals with such things as land use, farm credit, crop insurance, rural development. We're really adding farm manpower so that we can take advantage of the federal programs in manpower and develop programs related to manpower needs in agriculture. We hope under that the develop apprenticeships programs in specialty lines in agriculture.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 53 was read a second time.]

Bill No. 55: The Universities Amendment Act, 1972

MR. FARLE:

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for St. Paul, second reading of Bill No. 55.

This amendment is to cure a technical defect in the academic pension plan which is presently being administered by the University of Alberta.

The Federal Income Tax Act exempts from tax only those registered pensions funds able to meet the precise terms of Section 62(1a) of The Income Tax Act. This section requires that the pension fund be administered by a trust or corporation solely connected with that particular purpose. At the present time the pension fund is administered by a special committee but ownership of the fund remains vested in the board. The amendment will permit the board to transfer the fund to trustees to meet the requirements of The Income Tax Act.

I want to emphasize that there is no question involved about the liability of individual staff members being subject to income tax on his contributions to the fund.

This amendment has been brought to our attention by the legal advisers of the University of Alberta.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 55 was read a second time.]

42-32

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

Bill No. 56:
The Co-operative Marketing
Associations Guarantee Amendment Act, 1972

MP. TOPOINISKY:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, that Bill No. 56 be read a second time.

These amendments will permit the formation of water co-operatives such as the electrical energy or the natural gas co-operatives and will allow the capital cost borrowing guaranteed by the Provincial Treasurer on behalf of the province.

The second amendment will raise the limitation of the liability under the act, from \$5 million to \$10 million.

In essence, Mr. Speaker, these amendments will permit the guarantee of the indebtedness of water co-operatives and will also double the contingent liability limit.

MP. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a very few brief words on this particular bill to say, certainly, I support the amendment. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say there are constituents in my area who would very much like to take advantage of this legislation to form co-ops in order to distribute water within the district. They are severely hampered now by the lack of funding, or the government guarantee, which would enable the financing of at least a portion of the capital cost.

I would also, however, like to make one or two comments about the basic responsibility of the Co-operative Activities Branch in this area of dealing with these co-ops. I note the smile on the face of the hon. Minister of Agriculture -- and because what I'm about to say is going to be a criticism of the past administration, he can feel free to add to it if he wants.

DR. HCFNER:

See that you do a good job!

MR. HENDERSON:

I will! But it's very timely. I was absent from this House last night, Mr. Speaker, because I felt I had to attend a meeting in my own constituency dealing with a problem with a co-operative. It wasn't water, but it was gas. And if the rules of the House will permit I would say it was such-and-such a mess -- and it's a horrible mess. I think when the governments are underwriting a portion of the borrowings, that possibly the responsibilities of the Co-operative Activities Branch should be expanded and I think this particular co-op is a case in point.

The branch approved the funding of money for a group of farmers in my constituency to enter into an agreement with a private company to build a gas distribution system. And, of course, there was somebody supposed to have money from the Bahamas or something to finance the company portion of it. The farmers have ended up, through the Co-operative Activities guaranteed financing two-thirds of the capital cost of construction -- The thing got so badly messed up that they finally had to go to court and get a court order to decide who owned the company. And on top of that, the company that owns the system is basically in receivership.

In questioning last night at the meeting, I find that there really is no evidence that there is even a supply contract relating

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-33

to the operation of the system. The farmers in question were contemplating a decision whether they should make an offer to exercise an option and buy out the company's ownership in the system, which I agree in principle, is probably a very intelligent move on their part.

It's somewhat shocking, Mr. Speaker, to find out that the funding had been guaranteed the loan, through the Co-operative Activities Branch, without even any consideration as to a contract for the supply of gas. And so the company that promoted the deal has made a sales commitment to the farm people involved to supply gas for ten years. They practically went bankrupt before they got the project one-third completed. The source of gas was not supposed to be the source of gas. It's actually an emergency connection. As far as I can find out from the Co-operative Activities Branch, and indirectly through discussions with the lawyers representing the Co-operatives Association, there is no contract for the supply of gas for the system.

So, I would strongly urge, Mr. Speaker, and I feel quite confident already that the hon. minister has probably taken some action in this regard. But I think, very obviously when we're using the borrowing power of the Government of the Province of Alberta to underwrite these lendings for these operations, that the responsibility of the Co-operative Activities Branch should be expanded to the full area of the project. In this case the selling of the gas really ignored the fact that the company involved was a middle man relating to a purchaser. And while I'm confident the Board of Public Utilities had the authority to deal with any question of supply that may be involved, nonetheless the question was completely overlooked, as far as I can find out, by the gentlemen in the co-op themselves and by the department in the government before the loans were underwritten.

And in that regard it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to expand this legislation and move into the co-op area, and I make this suggestion at this point because of the government's study that is now underway on rural gas distribution. Without trying to anticipate what government policy may be ensuing from that study, I feel very strongly that the government will simply have to develop a better technical capability to deal with all the technical and economic aspects of these programs, not just the piece of them that deals with the marketing end of it -- it has to relate to the entire project.

And in that regard, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we have another deficiency in the technical aspect of it, in the gas system that I find there is nothing in the contract about the quality of gas that has to be supplied. In this particular operation the gas going into the system is too rich, it has too much liquid hydrocarbons in it which condense out at ground temperatures, load it up with liquid and then, of course, they can't get the gas through the system to meet the demand of a particular gentleman at the far end of the line, who I'm sure the hon. minister also knows, and of course, this happens at the time of year when they need the gas for the coldest months of the year. There certainly has got to be something included in the Co-operative Activities program to deal with the quality of the product that is going into this system, regardless of whether it is water or whether it is gas or -- I guess there is not a problem of quality in electricity. There has been enough experience with other co-ops relating with other parts of the province where the experience has been pretty dismal.

I think it is really a mistake to allow a group of well-intentioned individuals who want to have the benefits that the water system or a gas distribution system in a rural area would bring to them and to allow them to get mixed up with what, in my mind in this case, was a pretty marginal proposition and promotion. It is a

42-34

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

different matter entirely in comparing it to the PEA's where at least the groups are dealing with one or two large corporations, than it is to get mixed up in co-operative activities with individuals who are primarily interested in promoting an exercise which, in the final analysis, the consumers are going to have to pay for. They are going to have to pay to rectify mistakes and will probably end up paying more than they should, had a little better guidance been given by the co-operative activities branch in the first place.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I must say I don't single out for criticism the employees, the individuals in the Co-operative Activities Branch. Very clearly, it was a deficiency on the part of direction from the government. My only regret is that I didn't become aware of some of the problems in this area a little bit sooner in my political career. Thank you.

MR. MCORE:

Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to agree with the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin, but in this situation I must. It hurts, but I would like to say this that the problem of gas distribution is not restricted to the Wetaskiwin area. I think there are some three or four co-operative organizations distributing gas that run right through the Lacombe area down to Pine Lake, that are faced with the same problem. I would agree with him that it was a mistake on the part of the former government, that they didn't take the initiative. There was sufficient recommendation from organizations suggesting that had it been set up on the basis of power, that the problem wouldn't have occurred. The problem has occurred, it is regrettable. I hope that this bill will move towards rectifying the bitter, sad situation.

MR. ZANDER:

Mr. Speaker, I would certainly agree with the hon. Member for Lacombe and also the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc. There certainly have been a lot of mistakes made in the supply of gas to the local rural people. In my area we have three gas companies falling all over each other trying to plough in gas lines. Eventually, I think it got into court and I don't know whether it is settled now or not. But I think the problem is not only there, but I think it is in the Co-operative Activities Branch, the personnel in that branch. I spent some three hours in that branch and when I walked out I was no smarter than when I walked in, because they are hopelessly lost.

MR. HENDERSON:

That's not the fault of the branch.

MR. ZANDER:

That is the fault of the people that are in there. They are not acquainted with the situation. I think they should be oriented in the field before they go into that office. Most of those people still think that you run gas on wire, on power lines. I am really perturbed about. . . well, I am not saying that all of them are that way, but I am really perturbed when I walk in there and I start talking gas and it is just so far above their heads. They don't know what the problem is out in the rural areas. I think they should be educated, taken out there and shown what the problems are and then say, go back and rectify them. This is the only thing I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 56 was read a second time.]

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-35

Bill No. 57: The Energy Resources Conservation Amendment Act, 1972

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education that Bill No. 57, being The Energy Resources Conservation Amendment Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the principle involved in this bill deals with a practice that's followed by the Energy Resources Conservation Board. That practice is to have the administration costs of certain acts shared 50-50 between the government and the industry.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 57 was read a second time.]

Bill No. 61: The Social Development Amendment Act, 1972

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Advanced Education that Bill No. 61, The Social Development Amendment Act, 1972, be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the act, in general terms, provides for the granting of social allowance to employable persons and to unemployable persons with children. The proposed amendments are directed to the right of privacy of the individual in regard to record keeping and the disclosure of the records the department has in regard to individuals, and has also in it the empowering sections required to go ahead with the termination of the voucher system. This particular aspect of it has been discussed in the House, and I've indicated in respect to the termination of the voucher system, that it would be phased over a period of years. This first move would be for the purpose of having that done in one regional office.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a remark or two with regard to Bill No. 61. I think there are three basic questions I would like to ask and then make a comment as to our point of view.

The first question is with regard to the section or the principle in this act which talks about secrecy. I want to make it very clear, in making statements with regard to this that in no way do we on this side of the House want personal type of information, such as that about the mental, physical or emotional health of the individual made public. Nor are we thinking in terms of the financial situation or the financial information about a person as to his personal affairs, because that's the business of the individual himself. But one of the concerns that we have, and it is the concern that is related in each of the three question, is basically, how do we account for the public funds that are expended in support of persons that are on public assistance? The questions follow that general statement.

First of all, how can an MLA obtain information on social allowance or social assistance recipients outside of the House in the community, or in the Assembly? I well recognize that we have a certain immunity here in the House and could make certain statements, but at the same time, under what ground rules could the minister make available information on a particular case to us in the Assembly? That's number one.

Secondly, under what ground rules could information be made available to the MLA with regards to a particular welfare recipient? As I read the amendment to the bill and the principle in the bill

42-36

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

here at the present time, there doesn't seem to be allowance made for that.

The second question is, how can a member of a municipal council receive the same type of information? It seems that in discussing the principle of secrecy here, that a municipal councillor who is responsible for expending public funds hasn't access to that information. And if he does gain access, say through the secretary-treasurer or the social development department of that council, what responsibilities are placed on his shoulders if he makes it public in the community?

The third question is a summary question that I would like to ask the hon. minister. How do these two respective areas I have talked about -- the MLA area and the municipal councillor area -- act responsibly in their duties to check on the accountability of funds being expended without being able to receive necessary information, as to the sum dollars or the monthly dollars that have been expended, either in provincial funds or municipal funds, on a particular individual? That is the only information I am talking about at this time.

To support that concern, I think we should relate back to an incident one or two years ago that happened in one of the eastern provinces, where there was a change of government; and upon inspection of the files, it was learned that some of the people who were on welfare payments, belonged to a political party. When the examination was made of their cases, they really were not eligible for the funds that were being expended. Our point is that if this is the case, and there really isn't access to the files, or even access to the gross dollars that are being spent on an individual, how can we maintain accountability? I am sure we all want to do that -- to be accountable -- I believe this has been supported very much by our discussions that have been in the estimates. Mr. Minister, if you could comment on these questions, I would appreciate it very much.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I would be very pleased to do that. I would be closing the debate if I do that, though, at this time. I look to see if anyone else wishes to speak.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. minister close the debate?

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few brief comments in relation to Bill No. 61. I have found many instances -- you have, as an MLA, to justify the position that the social worker has taken in many cases. This does not necessarily imply that you have to take the position of a disclosure of personal files. But certainly, you

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-37

Continued on Page 38

42-38

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

have to have some personal background, insofar as your presentation. I think probably with so much reaction -- in many cases, unjustified reaction -- towards social assistance payments that if an MLA, as such, cannot personally define in his mind the position there is in regard to payments like this, I would think he would then have no position to take. This would mean that, in fact, he was not properly accepting part of the responsibilities as I see them.

Certainly, there are so many areas of lack of knowledge in social assistance. They say, "Look at this fellow over here. He is on social assistance and he is perfectly healthy." You know that this particular man has a heart condition, or he has emphysema, or some other reason. With the total implication of all this being a dark and sinister secret, this to me is wrong.

There is another aspect. I further question the implication of this bill that by some logic it is defined that the subject who is receiving assistance is, in effect, committing some sinister deed. I say this also is wrong. If this person justifiably should have assistance, I do not see any reason why this can be classified as a dark and sinister secret.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I must bring forth a strong objection to the principle of this bill because I think really it is an insult to this Legislature, and to the members here on both sides of the House. I believe that a member of the Legislature duly elected by the people of his constituency, should not be barred by legislation from inquiring into a personal record that he may be asked to pass judgment on. I think there hasn't been an hon. member in this House that hasn't been approached by someone, either the person concerned who is receiving welfare, or by somebody who is concerned that the hon. member should be able to investigate cases in order that an hon. member of this House can come to a fair and just decision. How can we decide, or give information, without all the facts? And I think we are going to allow every lawyer in the country and everyone else the privilege to go in here, yet we are going to deny the people who are duly elected to represent each and every individual in his constituency regardless of how they voted.

I really think that we should give serious consideration to taking a second look at the principle of this bill, because I think that every government is entitled, when public money is being spent, to investigate as to whether that money is being spent properly. That is our major interest in this House, that we are spending taxpayers money and we have to justify why we are spending it. Whether it is on an individual or whether it is on a contract.

I probably can figure out some of the reasons why this legislation was brought in, but I still think that when it comes to barring an elected official, who is responsible for the money that is being spent, barring him from inquiring to get the facts, I think we are on very poor ground. I hope that the hon. minister in the government opposite would reconsider this bill. I have dealt with hundreds and hundreds of welfare cases in my time in this House -- and I have had no objection from anyone yet, where I have asked for a personal file in order that I can come, as a member of the Legislature, to a fair and just decision. I am one of the first people that will tell a person if I think he is receiving all that he is entitled to, I will be able to tell him that. But with this system, there is no way where I can make a fair and just decision as to whether that person who I am concerned with, because he is one of my constituents, did get his fair share. And unless I get the information, I'm not able to come to the decision that I would like to come to. So with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I definitely would like to say that I am opposed to excluding the elected members from obtaining information on money that is being spent by the

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-39

government, without being able to inquire as to whether that money is being properly spent or not.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether the definition of an official would cover an alderman. Is an official of a municipality an alderman? Is an alderman an official of a municipality, I mean.

MR. SPEAKER:

The question with regard to text should perhaps more properly be brought up in committee.

MR. FARRAN:

Well I think it probably affects the principle that the hon. Member for Calgary Millican is talking about. If it was in order for him to object to the alleged retention of confidential documents from elected members except through the minister, there is this provision in the act that they can be provided to an official of a municipality.

DR. BUCK:

Along that same line I would just like to ask or make a comment in the form of a question.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Clover Bar followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Nerwood.

DR. BUCK:

I would just like the minister to indicate to me -- my interpretation is possibly wrong -- of the intent of this bill and say, as an example, if I was to ask the hon. minister a question about one of my constituents, and he in reply to me said, 'Well, yes, Mrs. so and so is receiving x number of dollars or this, this, this and the next thing, and the next item,' the question I would like to know is, would this be constituting violation of secrecy of this lady's document? And this is the only question I have. I'm not exactly sure of the ramifications of the bill.

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, I think that the interpretation as we see it, the way it is printed here, it probably does exclude MLAs from being able to receive information unless it is properly authorized by the minister. I think the intention, and the hon. minister can certainly reply to it, was not to exclude MLAs, and if that is the case, that that was not the intention, then really it is intended that we would be included in being able to obtain such information. And I would suggest that we approve the principle on the understanding that we may make the amendment when this is brought to committee -- at least consider the amendment.

MR. FARRAN:

May I ask if it's the intention to include aldermen?

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Chairman, on the point of order. If the hon. minister wanted to answer a question I don't think that should preclude him from closing debate later, because the answer does have quite a bit of bearing on whether many of us speak or not.

42-40

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. SEFAKER:

If the House agrees, then perhaps the hon. minister would answer the questions. Otherwise if there is no further debate, the hon. minister is closing the debate. He will likely answer them anyway.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think that the answers to some questions, once I get going, could be quite a speech, I suppose. But I want to assure the hon. members that in my closing remarks I will deal with all of these things, I think to the satisfaction of the entire Assembly. I still think, with all deference to the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill, that I should wait.

MP. TAYLOR:

Mr. Chairman, I would then like to make just one or two comments. I have had a great deal to do with welfare cases living in an improvement district. I find that I have to deal with these things -- whether I want to or not -- in public meetings, various clubs and in the homes of welfare recipients. Many times, first of all in the case of public meetings, I have had people in a meeting get up and say that relief was becoming a racket and make some pretty serious charges. In order to follow these up, sometimes I go to the home of the people that are supposed to be the cause of the racket, sometimes I go to the welfare worker, but generally to the welfare worker, and find out what is the situation. In probably nine times out of ten the information indicates that it's a proper, valid case and I take it back to the meeting and the people then are satisfied. If you can't do that, the MLA might just as well not hold a public meeting, because surely you are there to answer the questions of the people regarding public money.

Secondly, if a person has to go into the home to find out how much they are getting on welfare, what the various conditions are, it is simply increasing the work of the MLA without increasing his or her effectiveness. I spend considerable time visiting homes, but I would hope I wouldn't have to, in order to come to a decision on whether or not welfare is being fair, or exorbitant, or too much or too little to go into every home in ID No. 7. I think, as far as I know, I don't know of anyone that wouldn't give me the figure they are getting on welfare. But it's a pretty roundabout way to get the information. In public meetings particularly, I think an MLA and a counsellor have to be in a position to answer, to say whether a thing is right. I have never yet said how much anybody was getting on welfare, at least not to my knowledge. What I generally say is that in my view they are getting enough, or occasionally I've said they are getting too much and tried to do something about it with the department. Sometimes they are not getting enough and that's generally the case -- where they are not getting enough -- where all the information and the home circumstances and the difficulties which the people are going through, the medicine they require, the doctor's care, etc., etc., is generally not available. Sometimes the social worker doesn't know all that, and when they do get the picture then there is a right and proper increase in the welfare.

In connection with service clubs, many times this matter is discussed, too, on the basis of public money. An MLA should be in a position to say whether or not in his opinion the public money is being well spent or improperly spent, or being too exorbitant or not being generous enough. I think this is part of the function of a member.

The only other point I have to mention in connection with the confidentiality is that I don't think the files of those who happen to be on welfare should become a topic of discussion in coffee shops and beer parlours and so on. I don't think any responsible MLA would

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-41

permit that to happen if he had any control over it. Whether we like it or not these figures do get out -- many times from the people who get the money themselves -- and that's from where some of the information is coming. Mostly, I think, we have to realize that welfare is to help those unable to help themselves. Welfare is for those who are having difficult circumstances over which they may or may not have had any control, but they have difficult circumstances. They're not getting enough to eat, or they're not getting enough clothes, or their house is leaking, or many other things that happen. I think we have a responsibility to try to help them.

I think the grafter is the exception, and we've come across those too. There are some professional grafters on welfare. We've had them come to Drumheller from other places, and I remember one chap who was so lazy that he wouldn't even go down to the beer parlour to pick up his own beer. He'd make his wife, who had nine kids to look after and another one on the way, ride the bicycle down. He came to me to ask for more welfare and it wasn't very difficult to deal with him when I checked with the welfare office and found out what was happening. But what happens? He leaves Drumheller and he is found in another city -- on welfare. These grafters should be pinpointed and treated pretty rough. None of us want to hurt the wife or the kids but a fellow like that, I think, should be put in jail, and let's look after the wife and the kids in the proper way.

Well, to bring it to a head, there's information that MLA's have to have in order to do their job, and I would hope that the hon. minister will realize this and make provision for that when he makes his final remarks.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary North Hill followed by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, and the hon. Member for Bonnyville, I think it was.

MR. FARFAN:

Mr. Speaker, I will apologize in advance to the hon. minister because I may be shooting in the dark, as the rules prohibit me from asking questions which would make it clear that my worst fears are not being realized.

I know that it must be wrong to breach the confidential aspect of personal documents from the point of view of broadcasting them to the public at large. This is an affront to the dignity of a person whether he's on welfare or not, and I would not be in favour of that. But at the same time I do believe that an elected official, particularly an alderman at the local level, must be able to obtain documents so that he can be sure that money is being properly spent.

I'm more concerned about corruption by civil servants than I am concerned about freeloading or taking an advantage of a situation by the welfare cases. It is possible, of course, to have corrupt civil servants. By and large we've been very lucky in Canada, in that most of them appear to be incorruptible, but there have been cases of corruption that have occurred in the past. This becomes even more so as this social assistance giant grows. When people get onto permanent welfare a cheque is spewed out by a computer once a month. It's supposed to be checked up on occasionally by a case worker visiting to see that circumstances haven't changed. But it could be that somebody gets onto a permanent stipend, a permanent pension, because of the laziness, perhaps, of a case worker.

Then, unfortunately, under the Alberta system which is, in my opinion, over-generous in most cases, there is no hard and fast scale for welfare. There are many discretionary areas where the case worker or the district supervisor can use his own discretion on

42-42

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

payment. It's not as it is in some provinces where you can go to a local post office and pick up the scale to which you're entitled if you fall within certain conditions. In Alberta they can do anything from paying the price of a motel room to buying you a washing machine, to all sorts of variables which are in addition to the basic scale.

When you have these discretionary items there is a danger of occasional corruption. So a local councillor or an alderman must have the right to ask questions. I don't think he should have the right to wade around in the city council chambers the details of a recipient's personal life any more than a MLA should have the right to do it here. But they should be able to find out the facts of a case. Especially if there's a lot of rumour -- perhaps unfounded rumour -- in a neighbourhood. Often the facts are not nearly as alarming as the rumours, yet rumours as we all know, especially in small towns, tend to grow and to multiply, and it's in the public interest to make sure sometimes that the real facts are known.

All this may be completely redundant because it may well be that the wording of the act, or a minor change in the act, would cover these fears. The Welfare Appeal Board has been set up comprising appointed citizens at large to consider appeals of welfare cases in many districts. These boards so far have been pretty well a flop. There have not been many cases taken before them, but if they perform the proper function in the future, it may well be that they will have to have access to files. Perhaps they are covered by the people helping the department. I believe an alderman also helps the department, and probably a MLA does too. So that is a pretty broad clause there that if they're helping the department, they can have access to files. So perhaps this is what is meant.

Anyway, I believe that unless there is provision for an elected official in special circumstances, without having to go all the way through the minister to look at files, then there will be a lot of discontent at local levels. After all, the local government is paying 20% of the social assistance costs for people on temporary welfare, that's for the first three months of their coming onto the welfare system. The people who administer it are employees of the local city council. They've got to know whether they are functioning properly. The local city council passes a budget every year. They must have complete control over how those dollars are spent.

There has always been a resentment at the local level at the conflicting jurisdictions of fire marshals, for instance. A local fire department is not totally under the control of the city council. They can wear two hats sometimes. They can sometimes say, 'look, we're not going to listen to you elected aldermen, this time we're listening to the provincial fire marshal.' Then if they want to avoid the jurisdiction of the provincial fire marshal, they say, 'well this time we're going to listen to the elected aldermen.' So it is very important that elected people are not hamstrung and hampered in the execution of their duties.

SOME HCN. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. NCTIEY:

Mr. Speaker, following on some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill. I, too, am sorry in a way that the hon. minister really hasn't been able to answer the question as to just what the role of the elected member is, because it might in fact save a good deal of the debate over the principle of this bill.

But I do want to say that I share the concern that I think is implicit in this bill about the confidentiality of files. But on the

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-43

other hand I think that there is a strong case to be made that the elected member must be in a position, from time to time to acquire the information necessary to deal with these cases as they come to his or her attention.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to stress how rare the abuse of welfare really is. From my knowledge the rumors and the old wives' tales about the abuse of welfare, I think, tend to be vastly exaggerated. When you have an opportunity to actually talk to the social worker and perhaps try and apply a reasonable means test to each case, you'd be surprised at just how many of these cases are in fact valid. And the number of people who are abusing the system are, in my view, substantially smaller than is widely held. That also would be the position, I think, that various data gathered from other parts of North America would show as well. That the abuse is certainly the exception, Mr. Speaker, rather than the rule.

But there are cases that arise where members for very obvious reasons are called upon to look into complaints, and I would hate to see a situation arise where a member was barred from obtaining the necessary information. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I realize that once this information is disclosed, there are responsibilities on the part of the people who do obtain this information so that we act in a responsible fashion.

Partisan politics, or using welfare for political purposes is surely something which is clearly reprehensible. Perhaps we should consider some set of guidelines for those people who do have access to confidential information, so that it can clearly be stated what the restrictions are on just how far they use this information.

I wanted to make just a comment on one point raised by the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill. He was talking about the Welfare Appeal Boards and this is something which I certainly think is a step in the right direction. But because we are considering the development of Welfare Appeal Boards throughout the province, obviously these people are going to have to be privy to confidential information, otherwise they are not going to be in a position to act as an Appeal Board.

In general summary, I find myself, number one, saying that the abuse is certainly a rare occasion, that most welfare recipients don't abuse the system. Number two, that certainly we must set out as much as possible, pretty strict standards to maintain the confidentiality of files. But, three, there are occasions where public officials -- elected representatives, either aldermen or members of this Legislature -- may have to be privy to this information and perhaps we should consider a code of conduct for people who are given this information.

MR. FANSEN:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am in full agreement with most of the things that have come out in this debate this afternoon. I feel that it is the wrong thing completely to keep everything quiet as far as welfare cases are concerned. I also think that it is wrong to do away with vouchers and go to a cash system. I will give you one case that happened in Bonnyville a couple of years ago at the annual MD meeting. A lot of money had been spent in welfare cases and the MD was asked at the annual meeting how many were on welfare in the whole MD, to which they never received an answer. I figured they should have, because they were on a cash system at that time. They weren't giving out vouchers. How are the people in the district going to check where this money goes to, if it is just handed out in cash? Whereas on a voucher system, they would have a lot better way of keeping track of the ones who are handling the money.

42-44

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

I am in full agreement with a lot of the things that have been said this afternoon. I think the more secrecy we keep the people under, if you don't know who has welfare and who hasn't, the more people you have on welfare. Because if a person deserves welfare I don't think they are ashamed of it. But I think there are a lot of people that are on a marginal line and over this line, that are receiving welfare, and if they knew that the public was going to know it, they would be off it tomorrow. This is what I figure, because there are a lot of cases that are right on the marginal line as far as I am concerned. I see no harm in the people knowing if they are on welfare.

MR. BATHURST:

Mr. Speaker, I again would like to express my views on this situation, and I can't extremely agree with the hon. Member for Spirit River-Pairview that abuse of welfare assistance is very minimal. With my experience on the county council, every year at the statutory meeting, the council must appoint a welfare officer and particularly in the rural areas where there are the smaller towns and villages, or the rural areas, there is a lot of abuse. A lot of this I would like to blame on the social worker. Just for an example, less than two years ago right within the county of which I was the reeve, a family had applied for social assistance and our welfare officer had gone out, made an examination and a recommendation of slightly over \$100 a month. This man had half a section of land, he had a few animals and so forth.

The social worker came to our county office and told us that we don't know how to run our business, that that man should be getting two and a half times as much as he was. The man had a wife and six children. When we looked on the recommendations of the social worker this man was going to receive \$5,600 in benefits, besides what he was going to get from his farm. His neighbour across the road, a man, wife and six children - anything that he would be earning in excess of \$4,200 he would have to pay income tax on. Yet this person sitting right across the road would be getting benefits of \$5,600 income tax free.

Another area I have cited I am definitely in disagreement with, and that is that this appeal board comprises three persons and one of them is a welfare recipient. This is something that I just can't see.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, just making a couple of comments about this, I think I can best express my concern to the minister by citing an example that happened just recently in my own particular riding, where, in fact, a family came to me and felt they weren't getting the type of assistance that they felt they were entitled to. They had already gone to the regional office and they had been turned down by the social worker there on two or three occasions. We delved into the matter. I went and saw the social worker, and they felt they couldn't do anything more. I felt the case was reasonably legitimate. Through contacts with the department, we arranged for the Appeal Committee in Calgary to hear the particular case. These people ended up getting something like \$35 a month more because of a particular set of circumstances that the Appeal Committee thought was reasonable but in fact the local regional office didn't feel was. The reason I use this example is, if as a result of this legislation, a member of the Legislature isn't going to be in a position to sit down, discuss a problem like this with his constituents who call him and then, in fact, go to the regional office and discuss it on a reasonable and intelligent basis there - that's an assumption, perhaps - but at least discuss it on a basis there and if, in fact, he feels his constituents have a legitimate case, to go to bat for them. If we're to tell them, "I'm sorry, I really can't get involved

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-45

here because this information is not available to me," then I think we're making a serious mistake.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a few comments on this bill. In reviewing my own personal experiences in my constituency with recipients of social assistance, I find that when they feel they have a complaint they contact me and I try to go and visit them in their homes so I get a first-hand impression of the circumstances, and I ask them for the details of their complaint. Then I contact the social worker, and quite often it turns out that the social worker advises that there is additional information that I wasn't given in the interview with the client or the recipient of social assistance. In going back, then, to the recipient, I explain to them that I had presented their case and investigated it, and I find out that there was some additional information that they hadn't made me aware of. In most instances they take the attitude that they are happy that they have had their case investigated by a neutral person or their elected representative, and they are content if you can assure them that they are being treated equally and fairly along with other social assistance recipients.

It seems to me that if this legislation will prevent that kind of a service, that we will be encouraging public hostility with the system, and I don't think that we need to do that. I think it's a difficult enough department for the government to operate without encouraging public hostility. I think that the elected representative, when he is given the opportunity to check with the social worker on specific cases, does quite a bit towards reassuring the public that the system is being operated fairly and is doing the best that can be done.

I think that if this legislation prohibits the MLA from taking this role that it will drastically increase the workload for the civil servants in the department. I think they will find that the increased workload will be from hostile people, rather than from people who, I find, generally fairly calm and level-headed when they contact the MLA. Then, of course, I am concerned about the erosion of the role of the elected person in this regard. I think also, there is the possibility we would be increasing the workload for the Ombudsman if this situation prohibits the elected member from carrying out the role that has been traditional.

There have been, Mr. Speaker, several comments about the Appeal Board. I think it is far too soon to say that the Appeal Board has not done an adequate job. I think the preparation that was given to the private sector representatives on the Appeal Board was very thorough, and that they went through quite an extensive training program, and I think the number of cases heard have not been sufficient to make a decision as to whether or not the Appeal Board principle is adequate or will be doing a good job. And on the subject of the Appeal Board I would like the hon. minister, in his final comments, to advise us as to whether or not -- if this bill is passed as is -- it would rule out the Appeal Board, and if this is his intention.

MR. HINMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I want to add one or two thoughts. It seems to me that we are spending the public's money, and that they have certain rights to know certain things. It disturbs me that we may be making a special case of those who get welfare. I think if somebody works for a city or a municipality and at a public meeting, somebody wants to know what salaries are paid to these individuals, he usually gets the information. We don't go into their private lives, that is true. But it does disturb me that in this particular case, when people are taking the money of the taxpayer, that we are making a special effort

42-46

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

to deny to anybody the same information that we would give about a wage earner, an employee, or an official of a government.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I thought that because of the nature of the debate I would like to rise and make a few comments, and refer hon. members to the Speech from the Throne. With reference to human rights legislation, there is a statement there that these items of legislation will be supplemented by the confidentiality of The Public Documents Act, to assure the protection of individual citizens in the intended disclosure by government representatives of an individual's private documents, without the consent of the individual.

Mr. Speaker, at the early stages of this debate -- particularly with the contribution made by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican -- I thought there certainly is a matter here of merit that I am sure the hon. minister would like to refer to in terms of, perhaps, considering particularly the MLA, although I would suggest he may respond in terms of the intention of the definition in the section, and also the matter with regard to the aldermen. But as the debate has continued, I frankly have become more and more alarmed, because on the other side I have had some pretty significant experience. This is a case where I guess I am at complete odds with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Cardston, where some pretty shattered lives occur when there is disclosure of people who, for no reason, no fault of their own, are in the position -- particularly their children -- where it becomes public knowledge that they are receiving social assistance. There are some very tragic cases that have occurred. I frankly think that for one tragic, shattered family which is involved in those circumstances, I would trade many cases where people may have received assistance improperly.

I think we have to balance our responsibility in terms of the public purse with our recognition in that area as well. I feel very strongly about that. It may be that hon. members wish to know the information, to be able to obtain the information, in the way the hon. Member for Calgary Millican I think was raising it -- in terms of perhaps helping and assisting people who are involved in public assistance. But as the debate continued, and other hon. members participated, it seemed to me that we were getting into an entirely different area -- an area where allegations that a person who was receiving too much welfare would lead to an inquiry by an MLA with regard to that, and then a disclosure of that information generally within the area. And if that is so, Mr. Speaker, I would be very, very opposed to it. On the other hand, there are some responsibilities that individual MLAs have to accept, and that is something that I think should be considered carefully at the committee stage when we deal with this matter on a clause by clause basis and interpretation of the section as to how far it goes. I think it would be only proper that before we deal with this bill in committee, that members have before them, at least the first reading of the Public Document Confidentiality Act. They propose very harsh penalties, indeed, that are being suggested and considered now in the draft stage, for members and ministers, for the intended disclosure of public information. So we can be assessing as members, any possible adjustments in this bill, relative to the provisions in that act.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make two very brief points on this particular bill. Firstly, as I read the bill; I think the government should take this into consideration, as they proceed with the legislation both here and in committee and as I read the bill, I interpret that municipal councillors themselves would not have access to information relating to welfare cases. In my experience on

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-47

municipal council, basically all welfare payments made and authorized at the local level, are approved and authorized by the municipal council. So with the bill as it now stands, municipal councillors would be precluded from having access to the information which they have in the past felt was necessary on which to intelligently make decisions.

Other than that, if that is the case, they are forced to rely on strictly the interpretation of an employee of the municipality and simply accept his word on all matters. And, of course, in the final analysis this becomes impossible because the council is responsible for the accounting of every single dollar that goes through the local treasury. And I have stated in this House on many occasions, and I will state it again. It has been the practice in many municipalities, contrary to the expression of opinion of the Premier, that there are municipalities where the welfare payments have been traditionally recorded even in the minutes. They are there as public information, but there is no rush of people into the municipal office at regular intervals to read the minutes to see who is on welfare.

But the basic factor becomes a question of the accounting of the money that is paid out at the local level. It follows therefore, I suggest Mr. Speaker, that if the government had carried through on its policy, that it will for all practical purposes, remove the question of any responsibility for the administration of public funds, welfare payments, from the local level. Municipal council will not take any responsibility and cannot be expected to take any responsibility on decisions over which they have no jurisdiction, basically because they have no information.

So, as I read the bill, unless this point is clarified, this will mean that the provincial government, with its own welfare staff, will have to take sole and direct responsibility for the administration of all welfare in the province and completely remove the municipal councils from it. I think this is a very significant decision that the government should seriously consider.

And I also must say, Mr. Speaker, so far as the disbursement of public funds in this matter, that the proposal basically enshrines in law that welfare is a matter of right. And I realize that this is the policy on which the federal government have based their legislative program. That it is a matter of fundamental right which is not subject to question by the citizen of the land. I think this is a departure, at least in my mind, from the traditional view of the majority of the citizens of this province. Maybe the majority of people in the province feel, now, that it is a right, the fact that I was brought into this world, walked throughout the Province of Alberta, and am entitled to material sustenance from the taxpayers of the province without question.

I also must say, Mr. Speaker, that so far as the disbursement of public funds is concerned, that I find it entirely incongruous that a man who works in the public service and works for his livelihood, that the information about him is public, and that when the taxpayers money is given away, it is confidential. And I am wondering really, when the government is considering this, if the question of money should not be separated from other aspects of the matter that is under discussion.

I suggest -- I come back to the fact and I think this is pretty significant -- that if the amendments go through, particularly if the question of municipal councillors' responsibilities and prerogatives aren't clarified, that the province will have to assume sole and direct responsibility of the administration of all welfare payments in the province.

42-48

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

I notice also, Mr. Speaker -- I haven't been able to detect it in the act as it is proposed -- that the act doesn't even make any provision for the information to be released when the individual concerned gives his consent. Because there are many cases when it is in the best interests of the individual to have the information released. The act doesn't even allow the individual citizen himself to make this decision relative to having that information released, that only the minister or someone in the department can authorize its release. This is an item that can be examined in committee, but surely this prerogative should be provided.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair.]

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to -- [Interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary North Hill has already spoken on this.

MR. FARRAN:

I would just like to tell the hon. Premier that -- [Interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

I'm sorry.

MR. YOUNG:

I'll try to be extremely brief, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Minister. But I do want to try and identify a couple of points which are of extreme concern to me in listening to the debate.

First of all I am extremely concerned that it appears that in some situations information might be released generally to the public. I personally have to disagree with that. I think that we do need information for a policy-making function and we obtain that information, generally speaking, in this Assembly or in our council, meeting as a council. We need information for audit purposes. Some mention has been made in this Assembly about the use and procedures followed by county councils. I have observed some of those procedures. I have seen the actions taken. I have seen bills approved for payment to individuals after those individuals have worked for the county. Now there is no way the county can avoid paying in those circumstances and I think there is a lot of good old tradition in some of our local government that should be re-examined.

Finally I want to mention that I do believe that as members we have functions somewhat like the Ombudsman with respect to our constituents. If somebody comes to us with a problem, a specific problem, and they want it checked out, I think we must have the means to do that.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

May the hon. minister close the debate?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, firstly the remark that was made latterly by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Ieduc, that this sort of an amendment seems to create a different view of welfare than has been the tradition in the province, in the sense that it appears to introduce

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-49

a right to welfare, is simply not a possible interpretation of the bill that is before the House at the present time. It has nothing whatever to do with it.

I do want to respond, though, to the questions that have been asked in regard to the position of a member of the Legislature and positions of members of municipal councils. And further, in a very brief way, the position of the appeal boards. My reading of the proposed bill, in answering the question as to appeal boards first, is that that is one of the exceptions for which the information can be made available. That resolves that, and I think it's in the interests of the public generally that information be available to the appeal boards. I'm sure they couldn't conduct their business without it, and I, for one, intend that the appeal boards have a full and adequate play, and want to underline the confidence I have in the collective wisdom of groups of citizens who are selected and given the obligation of making these determinations on behalf of the public interest.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Excuse me. I wonder, does the House agree to stop the clock in order that the hon. minister may continue and complete his presentation?

MR. STRON:

A question on the point of order. I understand that we will revert to Orders of the Day. Will we be taking very much time on this?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

How long does the hon. minister have to speak?

MR. CRAWFORD:

I have about two minutes remaining.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Thank you hon. members. The reference to aldermen is a matter I would like to say on which I can fully appreciate the argument made by the hon. Member for Calgary North Hill. I would like to give consideration in the stage between now and the time of the committee, in conjunction with the legislative counsel, as to whether or not the subsection (b) of Section 2 might be taken to apply to aldermen. And at this point would note that in the exceptions in subsection (b) all of the exceptions say that, of course, the disclosure may be made to such a person. Not that that person to whom it's made may thereafter broadcast it. I think that's a very important part of that exclusionary subsection to note.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, coming to the question of the MLA's. I would have to concur with the hon. Member for Little Bow, and I think if it had just been left to the two of us we could have finished this about 40 minutes ago perhaps, that there is some doubt in regard to the position of the MLA which deserves clarification and I'm perfectly willing, when a clause-by-clause study comes in the committee stage, to have a proposal ready for the House in that regard.

[The motion was carried without dissent; Bill No. 61 was read a second time.]

42-50

ALBERTA HANSARD

May 3rd 1972

MR. LUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that we are now past 5:30. I did have a statement that I very briefly wanted to make today because it related to a matter of business that developed today, and I wonder if I could have the leave of the House to briefly revert to Orders of the Day?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. LUGHEED:

The report we received today had to do with the matter of the Select Committee of the Legislature involved with the question of looking at the matter and degree of ownership and control of Alberta industries by Albertans. I made a suggestion yesterday in Orders of the Day that this committee consider an interim report, because it was important for the Legislature and for the government to consider this matter to place some input into the process in terms of the consideration by the federal government as to the response by the Alberta Legislature and the Alberta Government on the matter. I think the matter was raised, too, by the Leader of the Opposition.

In considering the report that we received today from the Standing Committee it's my view that the government now is required, and I think is obligated -- despite the fact that there is a Select Committee dealing with this among a number of other important subjects -- to take some specific action. In the letter I had mentioned that I had received from the Prime Minister yesterday, the Prime Minister asked if we would receive Mr. Gray, the Minister of Revenue, and discuss with him the details and the provisions that are involved in the proposed federal legislation. It is now the government's intention to do that and I hope that we can, at the earliest possible time within a matter of weeks, have a response to the federal government as to our views on the particular statement and the legislation that was announced yesterday.

When we take a position I would like to assure hon. members that the views that we have expressed to the federal government will be made known to all the members of the Legislature shortly thereafter.

MR. STRON:

Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say that I feel it was rather unfair to ask the committee to bring in an interim report on very short notice. I understand they decline to make such an interim statement, and I think rightly so under the circumstances.

I appreciate the hon. Premier has now stated that he feels it will be necessary for the government to have a meeting with Mr. Gray and officials of the federal government. I don't have any objection, of course, to this route being followed. It does place the members of the committee maybe in a very difficult spot. I say 'maybe', because at this point in time I cannot clearly state whether this would be so, but it would be my view that if the government will be now considering making a statement then the members of the Legislature should be free to express themselves in any way that they want to. That for the purposes of the committee we would consider that it is in fact not sitting for the purposes of considering this issue, and that up until the time of making a statement by the government any members of the Legislature, whether they are on the committee or not, will be free in the light of the information that has been tabled, to express their personal views.

I make that statement, Mr. Speaker, because I think there is some doubt as to the position of the members of the committee. And I

May 3rd 1972

ALBERTA HANSARD

42-51

would like to have that clarified so that there will be no question of someone having broken the rules of the House as a result of the committee having been established.

I would also feel, of course, that any information that will be forthcoming now will then be made available to the committee when they meet again, and that they will then proceed as originally intended. But I do feel, Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. Premier, that there needs to be some clarification of the committee's position in this interim period.

MR. LOUGHFEED:

Mr. Speaker, if I could have the leave of the House to respond by way of a point of clarification, I'd like to do that.

SOME HCN. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. LOUGHFEED:

I'd certainly concur with the hon. Leader that members of the committee and all members of the Legislature should not feel restricted or restrained from any comment whatsoever with regard to this matter, having regard to the government's proposed action, whether they are within the committee or not.

Secondly though, I would suggest that there are five other very important responsibilities and a very positive way that the committee has had presented to it by the motion, and I would hope that the committee would consider that they would be proceeding on those five points, and would consider that there is some very important action that they could take. Because only one of the six instructions that were directed by the Assembly to the committee dealt with this specific issue, and I refer in particular to sub-paragraph C. And for that reason I would hope that the committee would proceed. I would also hope that the committee, even in the process of its final conclusions, would not feel that they were in any way restricted from, at that time, coming forth with any further views or any further assessments on this question.

SOME HCN. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 5:39 p.m.]

