

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Friday, May 3, 1974

[The House met at 10:00 o'clock.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Private Bills Committee, I hereby report that Standing Order No. 77 concerning publication of notice of application in the Alberta Gazette and newspapers has been complied with in respect to the following petitions:

An Act to Incorporate Alberta Motor Association Insurance Company
The Alberta Stock Exchange Act
An Act to Incorporate The Calgary Convention Centre Authority
An Act to amend An Act to Incorporate The Canada West Insurance Company
An Act to amend The Edmonton Community Foundation Act
An Act to amend The William Roper Hull Home Act
An Act to Incorporate Stockgrowers Insurance Company of Canada Ltd.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 54 The Natural Gas Rebates Act

MR. FARFAN:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 54, The Natural Gas Rebates Act.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 54 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. Pr. 1
An Act to Incorporate Alberta Motor Association Insurance Company

MR. LEE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. Pr. 1, An Act to Incorporate Alberta Motor Association Insurance Company, on behalf of the Member for Edmonton Highlands.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. Pr. 1 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. Pr. 2
The Alberta Stock Exchange Act
Bill No. Pr. 4
An Act to amend An Act to Incorporate The Canada West Insurance Company
Bill No. Pr. 5
An Act to amend The Edmonton Community Foundation Act

MR. KOZIAK:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce three private bills: Bill No. Pr. 2, The Alberta Stock Exchange Act; Bill No. Pr. 4, An Act to amend An Act to Incorporate The Canada West Insurance Company and Bill No. Pr. 5, An Act to amend The Edmonton Community Foundation Act.

[Leave being granted, Bills No. Pr. 2, Pr. 4 and Pr. 5 were introduced and read a first time.]

Bill No. Pr. 3
An Act to Incorporate The Calgary Convention Centre Authority
Bill No. Pr. 6
An Act to amend The William Roper Hull Home Act
Bill No. Pr. 7
An Act to Incorporate Stockgrowers Insurance Company of Canada Ltd.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce three private member's bills. The first is Bill No. Pr. 3, An Act to Incorporate The Calgary Convention Centre Authority. The second bill, Mr. Speaker, is Bill No. Pr. 6, An Act to amend The William Roper Hull Home Act and the third is Bill No. Pr. 7, An Act to Incorporate Stockgrowers Insurance Company of Canada Ltd.

[Leave being granted, Bills No. Pr. 3, Pr. 6 and Pr. 7 were introduced and read a first time.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the House, some 47 Grade 9 students from the Harry Balfour School, which is the county school in the city of Grande Prairie. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Jim Rigby and his wife, Miss Joan Krause and the bus driver, Mr. Johnson. They are seated in the public gallery and I would ask them to stand and be received by the House.

MR. WYSE:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly, some 28 students from the Alexandra Junior High School in Medicine Hat. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Brooks and also by Miss Shand and Mrs. Lukey.

I understand one of the students, Waldy Batzel, has lived in Canada only two and one-half months, emigrating here from Russia.

They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to stand and be recognized by the Assembly at this time.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, who is away today due to illness, I am very pleased indeed to introduce on his behalf a class from the Spirit River School. They are in the members gallery, 45 strong, accompanied by their teachers, P.S. Maguire and A. McAulay and by chaperones, Mrs. Czaban, Mrs. Gordey and Mr. Van Polen. I am pleased indeed to introduce them to the Assembly today and I would ask that they rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. WYSE:

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLA for Clover Bar, Dr. Buck, who is attending a funeral this morning, I would like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly some 45 Grade 10 students from New Serepta High School. They are accompanied by their teachers, Roberta Hay and Henry Johns, and are seated in the members gallery. I'd ask them to stand and be greeted by the Assembly at this time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Telephones and Utilities

MR. FARPAN:

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud today to have the honour of tabling in the House Position Paper No. 18, a white paper on the Natural Gas Rebate Plan.

Mr. Speaker, this policy announcement is of profound significance to all Albertans and one of the most important policy decisions ever taken in the history of the province. It follows upon a statement of the government entitled "New Natural Gas Policies for Albertans" dated November 16, 1972. At that time the hon. Premier said that Alberta consumers would be protected from the effects of gas price increases beyond those which would normally be expected due to rising costs and inflation.

A study by the Energy Resources Conservation Board concluded that substantial quantities of natural gas were being sold beyond the borders of this province for less than 60 per cent of value. Since 1972 the Government of Alberta has pursued a policy directed at obtaining fair market value and hence higher prices for natural gas exported from Alberta. At the same time, it declared its intention of promoting the maximum processing of such natural gas within Alberta.

The Government of Alberta has denied permits for the export of further quantities of natural gas below market value. An upward trend has now appeared in natural gas prices to the United States and the government has provided for redetermination of various other natural gas contracts by arbitration.

For many years, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been denied a just return for their natural gas. It is, therefore, the intention of the government to correct this inequity by rebating for their benefit a substantial portion of incremental revenues arising from new natural gas royalty schedules. The rebates will be made to vendors of natural gas in such a manner as to ensure that Albertans continue to enjoy the lowest price for natural gas in Canada.

Industry will also be sheltered from the escalating price of natural gas. Small industry in landlocked Alberta has been forced to compete at a disadvantage compared with industry in Central Canada and is entitled to some offsetting benefit arising from its location close to the source of fuel. However, large industry and industry using natural gas as a feedstock may need no greater incentive than a reasonably assured supply of natural gas at reasonable prices. The government therefore proposes that the general natural gas rebate shall apply only to those in establishments and individuals consuming up to one billion cubic feet per year. Any industry requiring consideration regarding a degree of rebate for natural gas consumption above that level may apply to the Minister of Industry and Commerce and each application will be considered on its merits.

The calculation of natural gas rebates will be made quarterly by a Director of Rebates.

The independent Public Utilities Board will be required to check gas purchase contracts and charges made for natural gas to check that these prices are just and reasonable.

Any municipal utility must apply to become subject to the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Board if it wishes natural gas rebates for the benefit of its consumers. This is again necessary to ensure that such benefits are passed through to the consumers and that gas purchases are made at a just and reasonable level. However, it is not envisaged that any municipal utility shall be prohibited from charging a utility tax on consumer bills, provided that such a surcharge is clearly identified.

Rebates will not generally be paid in respect to utility-owned reserves, for which the consumer already pays indirectly by means of the allowable rate-of-return on the investment of regulated utilities. However, there may be some exceptional circumstances

where a producer of natural gas may sell direct to the public a portion of the gas he would normally sell outside the province and such cases will be considered on their merits for rebate.

The Government of Alberta endorses the position taken in July 1973 by the Energy Resources Conservation Board that coal is a preferred fuel to natural gas for the generation of electric power. This view also applies incidentally to the use of Alberta natural gas for power generation in other provinces, regardless of its obvious advantages in cleanliness.

Calculations have been made to determine the economic competitiveness of gas-fired plants with coal-fired plants at various prices of natural gas and coal. At the same time, it is recognized that the commitment of some municipal utilities to certain gas-fired plants is irreversible except at great cost.

Full rebate will therefore only be paid in respect of natural gas used for the generation of electric power above the level of equal competitiveness with coal. Below that level a reduced rebate will be paid.

Each year a provincial support price level for the general rebate will be determined.

The present plan is conceived for a period of three years and will be subject to review at that time in the light of changing economic circumstances.

The provincial level of support, Mr. Speaker, effective January 1, 1974, will be 16.7 cents per MCP, which reflects normal increases expected at wellhead under conditions prevailing before November 1972, the date of the hon. Premier's first statement. This represents an increase to Alberta consumers of only approximately 5 per cent since that date.

The policies contained in this position paper will be implemented, Mr. Speaker, by The Natural Gas Rebate Act, 1974 which you gave me leave to introduce earlier today.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, responding to the announcement made by the Minister of Telephones and Utilities, let me say that we on this side of the House welcome the announcement of the government's intentions as to how they are going to implement the Natural Gas Rebate Plan.

I think it is significant, Mr. Speaker, to say at the outset that we are pleased that since November of, I believe it was, 1972, when the first announcement was made and there was talk of a two-price system that, in fact, the government has chosen to go the route of a rebate plan rather than a two-price system. I think that is a wise choice.

Let me say also, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased to hear in the minister's announcement and read in the position paper that this is going to be retroactive [to] January 1, 1974, for some communities that already have had to face the effects of very sizeable increases in both commercial and domestic rates. That will indeed be welcome. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the concept of a rebate system will indeed be well received by Albertans.

But after having said that, Mr. Speaker, I should say to the members of the Assembly, in commenting on the announcement, that it was in 1969 or 1970, when the Member for Cypress occupied the position of Premier, he announced to the people of Alberta, when the Alberta government approved the Consolidated application for export of gas out of Alberta, that the people of Alberta would be protected against, and I believe the word was "inordinate", increases in the prices of natural gas to Albertans. That really was the first time in this province there was a commitment made to the public of the province that, in fact, there would be protection to Albertans in the case of export of gas outside the province and outside the country.

Might I say, Mr. Speaker, that it was indeed very regrettable that the federal government, through the National Energy Board at that time, failed to see the wisdom of approving Consolidated's application, because we would have had a great deal more competition in Alberta for our natural gas, had that application been approved.

We on this side, Mr. Speaker, welcome the announcement today. We will look forward to the debate on the bill to, in fact, get into the nitty-gritty of how the government plans to make the rebate available to the people of the province of Alberta.

CLERK ASSISTANT:

Orders of the Day.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oral Question Period.

CLERK ASSISTANT:

I'm so sorry. Oral Question Period.

[Laughter]

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I can see that it's Friday.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

The Petroleum Administration Act

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Premier and ask the Premier if he has now sent correspondence to the Prime Minister dealing with the Petroleum Administration Act, and if he is in a position to table the correspondence sent to the Prime Minister?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I have discussed the matter over the telephone with the Prime Minister. The hon. Attorney General will be making his appearance before the federal House of Commons committee on natural resources in Ottawa on Tuesday.

We thought, as a result of that, that it would be better for us to have an evaluation completed as a result of the appearance by the hon. Attorney General, in case the questions which came from the Members of Parliament during the course of that particular appearance by the Attorney General warranted a follow-up explanation in terms of the Alberta government. So, we felt that rather than send the communication on a government-to-government basis in advance of the appearance it would be better, in the better interests of Albertans, to have the appearance first, evaluate the appearance and then confirm the position expressed by the hon. Attorney General, and perhaps add to and elaborate upon it, depending upon the nature of the questions. The letter, of course - as I mentioned to the Prime Minister - that would be sent, even though it is on a government-to-government basis, because of its nature would in fact be tabled in the Legislature as soon as it is sent.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question to the Premier. In the course of the Premier's telephone conversation with the Prime Minister, did you draw to the Prime Minister's attention in the strongest possible language, Alberta's very legitimate concerns dealing with Section 36 of the Act?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I worry about the expression "strongest possible language". I expressed it strongly and I expressed it, as far as PART 3 of the Act is concerned - and we look at it in terms of PART 3 in total, rather than the specific Section 36 - that it's the view of the Alberta government that that particular part is unnecessary in both the Canadian and provincial public interest. It is not necessary as an integral part of the accord, the accord being one that is reflected in PART 2 of the Act.

It is our feeling that we should confirm what I had previously indicated to the Prime Minister, when he indicated to me that such a part might be included in federal legislation, we simply agreed to disagree with regard to PART 3. We confirm our position that PART 2 of that Act reflects the understanding and accord reached in Ottawa on March 27, but that PART 3, in our view, is unnecessary.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question to the Premier. Has the Government of Alberta been in discussion or correspondence with the Government of Saskatchewan in regard to their views on PART 3 of the Act, and also with the Province of Ontario?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, these are very difficult questions to answer because beyond a certain point, I'm sure the hon. Leader of the Opposition is well aware, the nature of these interprovincial discussions are matters that have to be between governments. I certainly would say that on this particular matter there have been discussions with the Government of Saskatchewan and with other provincial governments. They have not included the Government of Ontario, for some pretty obvious reasons.

Fines - Traffic Offences

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a second question, to the Attorney General and ask if the government is giving serious consideration to the concept of a fines system that would be tied to the offender's ability to pay?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, the question of fines and how they are imposed and paid is something that is under continuous review by the government. I expect some areas will be examined by the Kirby board of review and we will be getting recommendations on that. But to say that the government has a study under way aimed at that particular question, the answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

A supplementary to the hon. Attorney General. Will any consideration be given to dealing with the discrepancy between Calgary and Edmonton, in fines in impaired driving cases, in that there is a practice established where Edmonton fines are so much lower than those of Calgary in this particular regard?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, the government, and quite properly so, does not directly interfere with the judicial discretion which is exercised in imposing fines. The government gives its direction to the judiciary through legislation, as opposed to administrative direction. However, the question of uniformity of sentencing or punishment throughout the province is one that is continuously under consideration by the government and by members of the judiciary.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, that there is concern where that discrepancy is not explainable on local economic or social conditions. It is a matter that the provincial judiciary, that is the members of the provincial court, are considering. They have it under consideration at the meeting they are just now completing in Jasper.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, in light of the hon. Attorney General's answer, has he given any consideration to perhaps appealing some of the consistently lighter penalties, by way of fines on impaired driving charges, in the city of Edmonton?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, the practice and policy followed by the department can, I think, be very clearly and very simply stated. Whenever they are of the view that a penalty has been imposed which they feel is wrong, and they feel the chances of it being changed by a court of appeal warrant the taking of an appeal, appeals are taken.

But I think it would be quite inconsistent with the administration of justice to simply take an appeal because a lower fine is imposed, in an effort to correct some general condition. Such appeals can only be taken when the members of the department have reached a conclusion that in law the appeal has such a chance of success that it ought to be taken. Any other approach to it would be most unfair to the accused.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Smoky River followed by the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

Floods - Crop Damage

MR. MOORE:

A question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture. With regard to last Wednesday's announcement of assistance to people who suffered crop damage, does that program apply, Mr. Speaker, to the area north of Highway 16 only, or are other areas of Alberta which suffered damage also eligible?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, there has been no geographic definition or restriction. Certainly some of the areas immediately south of Highway 16 would be covered and will be eligible for assistance.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. I understand there has been tremendous flooding of pasture lands that will remain flooded for a longer period of time. Will they come in for any consideration under the program?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I find it very difficult to devise mechanically, any scheme by which we could cover pasture land. I might say to the hon. members though that I'm sure in some areas the pasture land will welcome the additional moisture very much.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, for the information of the hon. minister, I wasn't referring to my area.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills.

Canada Pension Plan

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, this question is to the Provincial Treasurer. It arises out of the reported excellent performance of the Quebec Pension Plan in relation to the Canada Pension Plan. The question, Mr. Speaker, is this. Is the government giving any serious consideration to opting out of the present Canada Pension Plan in the interest of the people of Alberta?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, not at the present time.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Foothills followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

National Petroleum Corporation

MR. MCCRAE:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. In view of the introduction of legislation in Ottawa for the establishment of a national petroleum corporation, I wonder if the Premier would care to comment on what participation such a corporation might have in the oil and gas sector in Alberta, particularly the oil sands? What impact might it have here in Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is clearly asking a question of opinion in about three different places. If it can be related to government policy, it certainly is in order.

MR. McCRAE:

Could I try to rephrase it then, Mr. Speaker? In light of the introduction of legislation in Ottawa, could the Premier comment on how that fits into the policy of the Alberta government on oil and gas matters?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the National Petroleum Corporation which was introduced in the federal House of Commons yesterday is being considered by the Alberta government. We noted the reports were that a significant proportion of the expenditure was intended to be directed towards involvement in the Alberta oil sands.

The Government of Alberta, in anticipation of this situation, [in] discussion by the energy committee of cabinet and by the cabinet, considering participation by the Canadian petroleum corporation of the federal government, which is a full Crown corporation of the federal government, in the Alberta oil sands - our response is that such involvement should only occur if the Alberta government is satisfied that such involvement is strictly in accordance with the policies, priorities and guidelines of the Alberta government which owns the resource, and that such involvement by the federal Crown corporation in no way affects, jeopardizes or limits, in any respect whatsoever, Alberta's jurisdiction over its own resources.

MR. HENDERSON:

A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the Premier, by way of backing up that statement, is prepared to entertain limitations on existing leases whereby farm-out deals for existing tar sand leases would have to be subject to Crown approval?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe at the moment I'm in a position to elaborate upon the important question the hon. member raises, because it ties in with the review which we're doing during the course of this summer regarding a statement of guidelines for oil sands development.

But that particular item fits within the ambit of our review in relationship to the National Petroleum Corporation and our longer term guidelines, and my answer dealt in part with the term guidelines.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood.

Bow River Valley

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Premier. Has the Premier given any consideration to calling a meeting of the Calgary MLAs to deal with the issue of the beautification of the Bow River Valley flowing through the city of Calgary?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, we're having a cabinet tour to Calgary on June 10 and 11, in which the members of the Alberta cabinet will be meeting with the city council. As a result of those discussions which, I believe, will be free-flowing and informal and a broad dialogue, hopefully, about the aspirations of the city of Calgary, and as a follow-up to that particular luncheon meeting which I believe is scheduled for June 11, the hon. member's suggestion is certainly one that we'll take under advisement.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood followed by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation.

River Bank Stabilization

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. I wonder if the hon. minister could advise the government's policy on river bank stabilization relative to cost responsibilities? I have particularly in mind the whole of the river valley running through the city of Edmonton.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might be able to answer that question in two parts. First, specifically, where the government has declared a water conservation area, then stabilization of the banks is totally under the jurisdiction and direct responsibility of the province with respect to costs and stability.

Normally the matter is covered under Policy Position Paper No. 5, which was issued some time ago by the government with respect to the item called River Training Projects. Where these projects are minor in nature, or fairly minor in nature, they are shared with the municipality on a 50-50 basis if there is a provincial responsibility.

Where, in fact, they are major and directly in the interest of the province, all the costs are undertaken by the province. By way of example, through the City of Calgary, Crematorium Hill was stabilized on the basis of a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement with the City of Calgary.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation followed by the hon. Member for Calgary McCall.

CP Trucking Service

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my first question is to the hon. Minister of Highways. Has the minister received a brief, protesting the proposed cancellation of Canadian Pacific trucking service in areas of east-central Alberta?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I am going to refer that question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, the reason he refers it - as acting Minister of Industry and Commerce I have had conversations with officials of the department and they indicate that they have in turn discussed this rumour with Canadian Pacific Railway.

The guarantee of service provided by Canadian Pacific has been reconfirmed, and in the event that CP decides to move out, a firm by the name of C & M Trucking of Stettler will pick up that service and it will still be provided.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary to the minister responsible for rural development. Has the minister monitored the level of truck service now available in those areas where this service has terminated?

MR. TOPOLNISKY:

Mr. Speaker, the problem voiced by the hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation is a serious one in certain parts of the province. I'm aware of the situation, of the discontinuance of the passenger and freight service in certain parts, and now the truck service.

To be more specific on the question, I have not monitored this, but certainly these policies of CPR are working against the smaller communities and not in line with the policies and programs of the government to revitalize the smaller communities. But in the absence of the Minister of Industry and Commerce, if the acting minister, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, wishes to comment, I'd turn it over to him.

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, just one brief comment. I should have mentioned that any adjustment in the service presently provided in this area is being adjusted to offer better service and at reduced rates. That is the purpose of the adjustment situation presently going on.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary McCall followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Millican.

Consolidated Cash Investment Fund

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Could the hon. minister advise what brokerage firm or firms act on behalf of the Consolidated Cash Investment Fund?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, the Consolidated Cash Investment Fund, which was a measure to maximize yield on the province's surplus cash and various funds, has resulted in a considerable amount of expertise within the department. The department handles the investment on a bid basis from a wide variety of investment firms throughout the province.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister given consideration to retaining Alberta firms to handle these investments?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, the firms which have been bidding on the cash investments by the Treasury Department are represented by offices in the province of Alberta. The overriding consideration, to this point, has been the yield on public funds, which I think that all members would agree, in terms of managing public funds to ensure that our citizens receive the best possible return on the funds we do have for investment, is handled, as I say again, on a bid basis to ensure that we do obtain the maximum yield.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister given consideration to establishing its own agency to reduce the cost and ensure that investments are in the best public interest?

MR. LOUGHEED:

You want a bigger civil service?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know. I have to question whether the hon. member understands the principles of investing surplus funds because, as I indicate, there is no commission or brokerage involved. When the province has X millions of dollars to invest, either on a short-term or a long-term basis, all the investment firms and financial houses bid on a certain yield, a certain return for those funds, on a 30, 60 or 90 [day], or 1 or 2 year basis. So clearly what happens is the Treasury Department makes the judgment on the basis that the yield bid by the investment house is the best yield obtainable. It has nothing to do with the question raised by the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Millican followed by the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Gas Liquids Pipeline

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question today to the hon. the Premier. It has to do with the statements recently by the Hon. Minister of Energy in the federal House, Mr. Macdonald, where he claims the federal government is holding up the application of Dome Petroleum Limited of Calgary to export and build a gas liquids pipeline from Edmonton to

Sarnia, Ontario, and at the request of the provincial government, they are holding up any approval until the government has had a chance to submit its reactions to the plan. So my question is, have the reactions of the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, been forwarded to the federal government?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, that communication should go - and it probably would have to remain as a government-to-government communication - but it should go on Monday or Tuesday of next week.

MR. DIXON:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the government going to recommend the application, or object to it?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, in the area of petrochemicals, I don't think it's as simple as the yes or no question which was directed. It's an extremely complicated matter. It involves a number of changes which have been made in federal government regulatory control. It involves an assessment, by the ministers of this government, that's going to take some considerable time over the course of the next six months. But the specific communication on that matter will go. We will have to assess whether or not it is in the public interest to move it beyond a government-to-government communication at this time.

MR. DIXON:

A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. the Premier. In view of the federal government's indication that they wish to make a recommendation within the next three or four weeks, I was wondering, will the communication that the government is sending next week, Mr. Speaker, allow the federal government to come to an early decision?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that it will, that the communication will be sent Monday or Tuesday of next week, by the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs to the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in advance of a federal cabinet discussion, perhaps next Thursday, if there aren't other events intervening.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Debtor's Assistance Board

MR. D. MILLER:

Thank you Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Attorney General. Could the minister advise if a decision has been made to respond to the Supreme Court decision that the Debtor's Assistance Board could not legally issue consolidation orders?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, within the department we are currently carrying out an assessment of the implications of that decision and as soon as that assessment is completed I'll have a more definitive answer for the honourable gentleman.

MR. D. MILLER:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Have all consolidation orders been stopped?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, during the period that judgment is in force - and I use those words because I assume there is always the possibility of an appeal - we will carry out the departmental functions in accordance with the terms of the court's decision.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Highwood followed by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

Bill No. 41 The Expropriation Act

MR. BENOIT:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is also to the Attorney General with regard to Bill No. 41, The Expropriation Act. Is it the government's intention to carry the bill through to Royal Assent during the spring portion of the session?

MR. LEITCH:

Yes it is, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller.

Suffield Facilities - Future Use

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It's regarding the phasing out of the DRES program. My question is, has the minister contacted or had any correspondence with the federal minister?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, we have had both contacts and correspondence with several federal ministers on this issue, the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Richardson, and the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mr. Gillespie.

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. What did the provincial minister indicate to the federal Minister of Defence?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, we passed on to them the feelings expressed in a brief from people in the area, and we particularly wanted to know why the phasing out of that facility was occurring now without any prior advice, and what we might consider in the way of an alternative use for the facility which might allow the people who live in the area to continue to enjoy employment at the facility.

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Is the provincial government planning to oppose vigorously the phasing out of DRES?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we were doing with the federal government, although I should caution the hon. member that responses to date are that the Minister of National Defence will not be reversing his decision on that move. Nevertheless consideration is being given to some alternate method of having the facility used which might satisfy the people in the area. Consideration is also even being given by the provincial governments also, to find a use for that facility which might allow the people in the area to be employed at the facility.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister prepared to table the correspondence he has had with the federal ministers regarding the phasing out of DRES?

MR. LOUGHEED:

No, that's not proper ...

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, the House might consider that, should it be put on the Order Paper. However, many of these matters are of intergovernmental communication which, in many cases, cannot be made public.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills.

Alberta Coal - Ontario Market

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals. What progress is being made towards getting more Alberta coal into the Ontario market?

MR. DICKIE:

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to say that we have made strides over the last year, or year and a half, particularly in respect to the quality of the coal. That is now acceptable. The Minister of Industry and Commerce and I are working together on transportation. These are subject to continuing discussions with the Province of Ontario. We hope in the near future to have further meetings where we will continue to advance the thought of getting more coal into Ontario.

Calgary School Construction

MR. McCRAE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education. In view of the wide public interest, I wonder if the minister would advise the House as to the disposition by the School Buildings Board of all recommendations for new school construction by the Calgary Board of Education?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I agree there has been considerable public interest in that. I think it would be a difficult question to answer in the question period. But I would be prepared to file in the Assembly next week a statement as to the disposition of the school building situation, vis-a-vis the Calgary Public School Board, and including, in addition, the fact of static population, predictions in Calgary.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff.

AEC - Shares

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is again to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. It is regarding the shares sold by the Alberta Energy Corporation. My question is, is the provincial government planning to back the shares sold by the Alberta Energy Corporation?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Guarantee them?

MR. GETTY:

I'm not sure what the hon. member means by "back the shares", Mr. Speaker.

MR. WYSE:

Guarantee.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What an inane proposal!

MR. GETTY:

No, Mr. Speaker, that is not the intention of the provincial government; rather that these shares be sold on their merits with the risks inherent and the potential for profit inherent in that type of company.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to add that we don't propose to have a 100 per cent Crown corporation like the federal government. We want the people of Alberta to support the free enterprise system.

MR. LUDWIG:

Supplementary to the hon. Premier ...

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff has already asked for the floor with a supplementary.

MR. WYSE:

... [Inaudible] ... Minister, is the Alberta government in danger of violating the Alberta Securities Act?

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we are. I understand there was a speculative story in the paper that seemed to reflect on that. Someone in my office discussed the matter with the Securities Commission. I don't think there is any problem involved and I certainly don't think the members of this Legislature should be restricted in debating an important bill before the Legislature.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's reply dealing with the comparison of Alberta's action with reference to the ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Question.

MR. LUDWIG:

I'm coming to my question, Mr. Speaker. Smile. Yes, Mr. Speaker, with reference to the remark made by the Premier comparing Alberta's advent into business, as compared to Ottawa's, ...

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. LUDWIG:

... is the Premier suggesting that half an offence is not as bad as a full offence?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, what I was pointing out, because I think it is very timely now, is that we have before this House the Alberta Energy Company where we have 50 per cent of the shares available to the citizens in a free enterprise way. This gives the citizens, as individuals, an opportunity to have a piece of the action, to participate.

The federal government has done it the other way. As far as I'm concerned, I was only concerned that the Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff really believed in free enterprise.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Talking about belief in the free enterprise system, does the hon. Premier really feel that we ought to believe that this is a free enterprise move?

[Interjections]

MR. SPFAKER:

The hon. member is asking a question, eliciting an opinion. Perhaps this might be a good juncture at which to revert to Rule 181 of Beauchesne and cut off the debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (Second Reading)

Bill No. 55 The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act (Cont.)

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me this morning to lead off the debate today on this particular bill. I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by reminding the hon. members, and particularly the hon. Member for Highwood who seemed last night to have lost his way with respect to this debate, about the objective of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the objective is quite clear. The purpose of the bill is to provide a means to coordinate and expedite the activities of the provincial government, of local governments and of agencies in the geographic area covered, in order to provide public services and facilities for the accommodation of the people who will be moving into that area, and to provide those facilities in an orderly and efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, the principle involved in the bill is that in order to meet these objectives it is necessary to provide special and unique authority for that purpose. The method chosen by the government and included in this bill, and which I therefore submit is the purpose of the bill, is to provide for the authority and establishment of a commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, the debate to date has covered a number of the alternatives and it's quite clear, in presenting this bill, that in the government's opinion this is the most desirable alternative for achieving an orderly and efficient development of what I shall refer to as the infrastructure service in that area.

Mr. Speaker, there will be, as I proceed in my discussion, frequent references to dollars and amounts of different kinds. I would like to make it quite clear now that in my view the purpose of this bill is to provide for the concerns of people: the hospitals, the roads, the schools, the housing - all of the infrastructure services - plus those services which we might not normally consider to be an activity of government in the local sense and the everyday sense, but which may, in fact, become a responsibility by default in an area which will likely develop, in terms of population, as rapidly as that of the Fort McMurray area.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that a single tar sands processing plant will require for construction somewhat in the order of 3,500 people working approximately four years. That is to construct one plant, Mr. Speaker. To operate a plant, I understand, will require in the neighbourhood of 1,500 people. Each plant will involve a total of approximately 9,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Mr. Speaker, just so that we grasp the significance of that in terms of the present population of the area in question, it might be well to note that the present population of Fort McMurray is, I believe, not more than 9,000, maybe somewhat less than 9,000; of Fort Chipewyan in the order of 1,200; Fort MacKay, 200; Anzac, a little over 100, and there is estimated to be approximately 2,000 people elsewhere in the general geographic area of which we are speaking.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about an area presently having a population of around 12,000 people. We are talking of putting into that area a project which in its

smallest form - one single plant will have implications and provision for something in the order of 9,000 jobs. Those are jobs. They're not families, not population - they're jobs. Mr. Speaker, relatively speaking, we can expect then to have a tremendous increase in the population of that area.

I might say in passing, Mr. Speaker, that with respect to a comment made by the hon. Member for Cardston last night, when he suggested that we leave this matter for consideration for another year and think about the possibility of an urban county and official trustees, this bill is precisely a reflection of the reason we must proceed. We have an urgency there in view of that development, which cannot wait another year, if we're to proceed. To follow the hon. member's suggestion of waiting for another year, in my view, just fails to grasp the significance and the magnitude of that development.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, among others, made some comment about the rate of development, and I distinguish the rate of development, Mr. Speaker, from the urgency of development. The urgency for this bill, I think, begins with the first plant. The rate of development, Mr. Speaker, seems to me to bring us into the debate about whether we should have one plant this year, one plant next year and another plant the following year; the kind of debate that the Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer attempted to get into with his off-the-cuff and probably ill-considered comments in various parts of Canada, the kind of debate suggested by certain scientific or pseudo scientific research institutes in the United States. Mr. Speaker, that's the one view. We need development as fast as we can go - and I would submit that some of the ideas expressed in that respect are faster than we can go, we simply wouldn't have the population if we moved all of Alberta up there to do some of those things - versus the concept that we should really drag this thing out, that we don't need to move that quickly.

I think that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview who makes this argument, clearly reflects a philosophy and a concern of some people. Fair enough. But I think that is a different concern from what we need to be considering in this bill. In this bill we're considering the urgency of putting in place provisions for people in that area, and we must have those provisions even if we have one plant. It is inconceivable, it would be horrendously expensive to drag out the construction of a plant over a longer period of time than is already projected. Once the investment for such a proposition starts to be put in place it must be continued with dispatch.

Mr. Speaker, in general I think, we can say from the debate of last evening that most hon. members would agree there is need for extraordinary and unique measures. The Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray said the motive is excellent. We need coordination in the area. It's a thought that was echoed by many members.

Mr. Speaker, where the divergence of views occurs is in the method of accomplishing that motive. I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker, that beauty is said to lie in the eye of the beholder and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in the matter currently under debate the appropriateness or otherwise of a particular scheme also lies in the eye of the beholder to a large extent.

I should like to comment now upon some of the key characteristics of different schemes that have been advanced to achieve the objectives of this bill. Basically, they are alternatives or arguments why the particular method of a single commissioner should not be chosen. I will try to comment then, Mr. Speaker, on a number of the reasons advanced.

Mr. Speaker, the first matter hinges on a difference of opinion as to the degree and nature of local decision-making, which is feasible or appropriate and which is required. The hon. minister, in introducing the bill last evening, advanced five unique characteristics of the region. I will remind you of two of those which strike me as being particularly significant.

One is the remoteness of the area, remoteness in the sense of the populated parts of the province, remoteness in the sense of currently at least some of our transportation facilities. He commented upon the population; he commented upon the existing form of government. Mr. Speaker, it's worth while for us to consider that the area in terms of its current size does not have a long history of local government. It has a history of developing local government over a period of time.

I'd like to point out a couple of other characteristics which, it seems to me, are key elements in a consideration of the appropriate nature of government in that region. One, Mr. Speaker, is what I anticipate will be a highly mobile population. Mr. Speaker, I hope that it won't be as mobile as I fear it will, but I anticipate that to move that many persons into an area such as the Fort McMurray and surrounding area, will necessarily mean that a good proportion of the population will be highly mobile. The nature of the skills required means that some of those skills will be moving in, doing their work, and moving out of the area. So I think we can expect - I take it, at least, as a concomitant of a mobile population that the population will be somewhat less interested in local government than we would expect of a stable population.

The geographic area, Mr. Speaker, is another consideration. The hon. Member for Cardston spoke of a rural-urban county. Now I don't want to get into a discussion of rural-urban counties because I have some pretty strong views on rural-urban counties and whether or not they would work in Alberta. The point, Mr. Speaker, that should be noted is that the area in question is, in my estimation - and I haven't measured it in acres or square miles - but simply from looking at a map it would seem to be somewhat in excess of eight times the size of the municipal district of Cardston - eight times the size.

So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of a geographic area, we're looking at a very large land mass, a very large geographic area and an area in which, Mr. Speaker, the means of communication are - if I may use the word - rudimentary, which I think would be the most appropriate in the circumstances. The means of communication are not well established from one part of it to another.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that to have a high degree of local decision-making requires, among other things, sound stability of population. Now there is some stability. We hope there will be a highly stable population. But let's face facts. To move that many people into a town or an area such as that in a matter of four years does not give these people much of an opportunity to establish roots, to study their area, to establish relationships one with another, to understand the workings of government as it will be in Alberta, because I think it can be accepted that a number of these persons will come from without the province.

So then, I think, we have to consider that the population there, with all respect to them, are not going to be as well able to govern themselves, in terms of the decisions we make locally in most parts of Alberta, as citizens in a good many of our towns, villages, cities and municipal areas.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there must be opportunity and time to make decisions if they are going to be made by a large number of people. Again, the urgency rules this out. Decisions must be made and they must be made quickly. The very rapidity with which decisions, in my estimation, will have to be made in that area would require of elected members that they be virtually full-time. I don't see how we could consider persons in that area, making those kinds of decisions, being much less than full-time if we look at the nature of expansion there. We see the problems in cities like Edmonton and Calgary whose rate of expansion or whose volume of expansion, in many respects, will not be too unlike that of that geographic area for the next few years, and the amount of time that is required by those local citizens to make decisions - and we have to consider that they have a precedent in history, a well established administrative structure from which to get information. These things currently do not exist in the quality and quantity which would be required in the Fort McMurray area.

Mr. Speaker, on the same point, the requirements for sound local decisions, there must, I believe, be a fiscal responsibility. Mr. Speaker, the minister indicated in his opening comments the nature of the provincial investment that will be required in that area. It will be some multiple of Grande Cache. Regardless of whether we're out \$20 million or \$40 million, it's going to be some multiple of the investment required in Grande Cache. Mr. Speaker, for those who care to read the report, that investment on the part of the province was very great. It's an investment, Mr. Speaker, which is, as we all know, giving us some problems in terms of meeting the amortization.

My quick estimates, Mr. Speaker, will be that in the next few years there will be something in excess of \$10,000 of infrastructure required for every man, woman and child now in the geographic area under discussion. For the members who haven't stopped to consider the significance of that, think about the amount of capital investment currently or annually undertaken in your city, town, village or rural area - something in the order of \$10,000, probably more, of infrastructure alone, per man, woman and child now living in the Fort McMurray area. Clearly, that money is not going to come from local taxation. It has to be a provincial investment. And it should be, because it is a provincial decision in part which is forcing this extraordinary growth.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some criticism of the advisory committee. There have been some suggestions for improvement or changes to the advisory committee. I think the concept of the advisory committee is necessary. Despite my comments which I've just made about what I consider to be the inappropriateness of forcing all these decisions on a local body, I still believe that an advisory committee to provide local input is necessary. It's the only way I know of bridging the needs from all the areas and making sure they are brought to the attention of the administrator and of the provincial government. I believe this concept ought to be kept.

Mr. Speaker, one of the points which has been brought out in debate has been the dependence or independence of this commissioner or whoever would exercise this authority in terms of the provincial government. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray and also the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview made a plea that there be freedom from politics. I believe they were speaking of freedom from provincial politics, a disassociation - I

think, is the concept they were trying to suggest - from provincial government. The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc made a plea in exactly the opposite direction. He wanted a cabinet minister on site, on stream, 24 hours a day ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Preferably, on the ball.

MR. YOUNG:

... preferably making decisions. The issue, Mr. Speaker, is one on which I think we could rightfully expect a difference of opinion. Having noted that there is a difference of opinion, I simply would give my reasons for the approach taken. I do not see how, when the province has by and large the major fiscal responsibility, we could have a disassociation of the activities of this individual from provincial policy and provincial responsibility. It just cannot be.

On the other hand, I suggest that the nature of what I regard as a minister's function could not really fit with an on-site operation. I think the responsibility of ministers is a different responsibility; more a policy-making and less the everyday administrative type of decision which would be involved in the commissioner's activities.

Mr. Speaker, lastly I want to deal with some of the checks and balances because really that is a major concern and has been expressed over and over again. How can we assure that the authority vested in this commissioner will not be abused? What are the checks on this authority?

Mr. Speaker, in the first instance the individual is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under Section 3. So in that instance there is a responsibility directly.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, certain of his functions may be specified completely or explicitly under Section 4 of the act, and they may be set out by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Clearly again we are relying on checks at the Executive Council level.

In 7(b), Mr. Speaker, there is yet another reference to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. In fact, Mr. Speaker, in connection with the assistance and function of the commissioner, it is quite clear that the only way this individual can override the jurisdiction of local authorities is for specified periods of time for particular purposes assigned to the commissioner by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. That is the only way, Mr. Speaker. So there is quite a close check at the Executive Council level again.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the argument is made in Section 8 that extensive authority is granted. That is correct. There is also a check written into Section 8, a check which will be exercised by this Assembly, if that authority is exercised. So, Mr. Speaker, I think, given the nature of the urgency and magnitude of the project, that there are sufficient safeguards here.

Mr. Speaker, two other comments were made and the Premier dealt with both of these when he gave assurance that there would be no right to taxation and, secondly, that the responsibility or answerability of the minister responsible to the House would be quite clear. He indicated that there would be a specific appropriation, that it would have to come up in the Estimates. It would be dealt with here. It could be dealt with in our subcommittees which provide - if not at the House level - lots of opportunity for questioning.

Mr. Speaker, just before I close, I would like to make one last observation to the hon. members. For those who are concerned about the need for provincial government to become involved and the need to centralize authority as is done in this bill, I would refer hon. members to the so-called Crump Commission Report and particularly pages 110 through to about 120. I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker, a very brief portion of that report, where the commission said:

It is also clear that a resource exploitation of such magnitude necessarily involves the government as a participant in the venture: whether recognized or not. The province not only has an interest in the efficient mining of the resource, and its conservation, but it has a major capital investment in providing the means for exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, I say again that the magnitude of this project means that the province must be involved. It is a scope beyond that of local decision-makers, however much we are concerned about local decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I view this project as a major challenge to the Legislature, to the province and to the citizens of the province. Mr. Speaker, it's a challenge which will

require some vision, regrettably more vision than the vision which I understand was expressed by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff today in his concern about government backing of shares in the energy company. It requires vision. It requires daring. It requires a positive approach.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear.

MR. YOUNG:

It requires careful assessment by all members of the Assembly, positive input from all members of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this project is tied to the fiscal policy and future of this province, to the economic policies, to the economic future of this province and to the social fabric of this province. It is of that magnitude.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that if all members of the Legislature set their minds to making this project work, undertake their responsibilities in terms of exercising checks through their ability to question and require reporting from the minister, this project can be to the betterment of all Albertans as well as all Canadians.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Attaboy!

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to participate in the debate on the principle of Bill No. 55. To date, we have had some very interesting speeches. I must state that the highlight of the debate has to go to the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray, Dr. Dan Fovier, and to the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc, the hon. member, Mr. Henderson.

I believe the government felt very strongly at the time that it may not have chosen the right road, and listened to these hon. members. But the Premier's rear guard action was, in my opinion, an exercise in saving face rather than yielding to logic and doing what perhaps will be in the best interests of this province.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. LUDWIG:

I thought the hon. minister, Dr. Backus, made rather a stirring call-to-arms type of speech. He got up and said, man the barricades everybody. But he kept looking. He was apprehensive. I didn't know whether he was afraid of a frontal attack or whether he was afraid of a flank attack, or perhaps an attack from the rear, because he kept looking over his shoulder, and more so to the right. The more he spoke, the redder the Premier's face got. And that wasn't the only red face in the House when the hon. minister spoke, Mr. Speaker. But I kept watching the Premier, who wasn't too happy.

But with all due respect to the whole performance, after that inspiring call-to-arms and the emergency which was declared - although the facts did not exactly substantiate the panic indicated by the hon. minister - the best that I can grant the Premier in his performance was that it was an anticlimax to the hon. minister's performance.

This whole bill and the performance in this House reminds me of a poem. I believe it's by Frost, "The Road Not Taken". I believe there is a crossroads here and an important one. The first couple of lines of the poem go as follows: "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And [I am] sorry I could not travel both / And be one traveler"

We are at an important position here and some are taking one road and some are taking another road. I must admit, at the present time, that some had indicated they would like to travel both and rather made an effort to do so. But you can't be both things in this debate. There is a separation of views here, Mr. Speaker, and an important one.

The hon. members opposite are now in a position where they are going to stick to the position taken to the bitter end. I am watching the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and he sits there confident of victory in the bill. But he appears to lack confidence as to whether the decision is right or not. He sits there with that sort of faraway, lost look, wondering whether this is the right decision, whether maybe we ought to listen to some of the remarks on this side and do the right thing.

The bill is misleading in that it states that it is enabling legislation - at least from the explanation in Clause (1), Explanatory Notes, it appears this is just a scheme; and that's a good word, scheme - to coordinate. If that's all it is, why do they have absolute power in the bill for the cabinet to run the whole show through an appointed commissioner?

We know that a commissioner appointed by the cabinet is beholden to the cabinet because they can hire or fire him. So he is a paid, high-ranking employee of the cabinet only. Knowing how this government has operated, that political preference is not exactly something beyond their attitude or beyond their practice, it would be nice if they appointed a good, loyal Conservative, well paid, who will know exactly where he stands because of the directives and the attitude of the council.

We are now being asked to hand this thing over to the government. I suppose if we say we have a responsibility here, they will say, well, we are acting in accordance with legislative practice, with the supremacy of the Legislature, because they legislated this power to us. That is where I believe a lot of the confusion exists with the hon. members opposite - and I will be very surprised if some of the ministers have not thought this would be a point on which the government could be challenged. I am of the opinion that not a single minister on that side would expect this kind of effort, this kind of attempt I should say, to be unchallenged. I would just love nothing better than to be able to read some debates from Ottawa as to what Conservatives would say if Ottawa tried a thing like this.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. LUDWIG:

There have been instances like this, and some very capable men - men who will go down in history as having been parliamentarians even though they have not had much time in office - who fought any obvious move for centralization of power. The backbenchers on the other side, Mr. Speaker, appear not to be too concerned about the thing. Their responsibility will be discharged if they say, well we have such implicit faith in the hon. Premier and cabinet that nothing can go wrong.

But that is a very poor premise from which to operate, because all hon. members have a responsibility to see that the Legislature has a high level of control over what is happening. The responsibility of the members to the electorate is recognized. But here we're going to be responsible for something and we will have no say in its operation. We will have delegated this whole important portion of power to the cabinet and I would say not only to the whole cabinet, but perhaps to the inner sanctum of the cabinet which will call the shots. Therefore anything can happen for which the hon. members in this House will be responsible, but not in [such] a manner that they can do anything about it. So I believe there is another point that ought to be considered when we vote on this bill.

There is no way I'm going to state that I will support the principle because the end result may be of some benefit if they do this or this or this. That is not the proper approach to this kind of bill which gives such unprecedented powers, and perhaps will set a precedent that may well end up in half a dozen protectorates in this province. After all, if the cabinet can run the show successfully in this area, there will be no shortage of reasons why the whole thing should not be extended. There is a clear and obvious diversion from that method of government, that method of dealing with problems, that has been built up through hundreds and hundreds of years, and perhaps principles that have been fought for, not only on the floor of Parliament in Britain, the House of Commons and legislatures, but perhaps on the battlefield. Dictatorship was and still is a bad word in these parts.

I'm not at all convinced that this is not a trend towards control of the situation by a few people. So to that extent, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to be associated with having supported legislation which would entitle the cabinet to ignore or by-pass numerous very important statutes.

This attitude of mine is certainly strengthened by the fact that the hon. minister who is proposing this bill at one time stood up in this House and violated one of the most sacred principles of democracy, of the supremacy of the Legislature, by having suspended legislation. This was an affront to all the hon. members here and an affront to everything that is recognized as being important under our system. So now this minister says, well, you have to have faith in us because we are going to do the right thing. Don't question us. We can do no wrong. It will all be all right because the hon. Premier said so, although he also said, Mr. Speaker, that this is done with reluctance. This is on record, that the hon. Premier said we're going this way with reluctance. I don't know who was stopping him from changing it and doing what is right so that he would not be reluctant for ever after that he had to go this way.

I believe that the hon. members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have the message. They have the message that they are trying this whole Legislature on for size. Can we get away with it? After all, if you can push them over once, the next time will be easy. This is a forerunner of something that no Opposition and no respectable member of the Legislature would permit with some kind of stand. At least let them stand up and support it.

I am looking at the hon. Deputy Premier. I have great regard for him, and I have great regard for his brother in Ottawa. I don't think that he would put up - there would be fur flying on the floor of the House if Trudeau tried a stunt like this ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Right!

MR. LUDWIG:

... and more power to the hon. member of Parliament, Jack Horner. He's outspoken and I'm sure that once in a while his own colleagues don't appreciate him, but I think that if he feels he's doing a job, then hats off to him.

I also want to make one more point. I'm convinced beyond any doubt, Mr. Speaker, that if we were proposing legislation like that and those hon. members were on this side, you'd see quite a performance. There would be no way ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

You'd do more than see a performance.

MR. LUDWIG:

The only thing - I'm not saying, Mr. Speaker, that we didn't even try - but there were times on the other side when we were in government, when some of our hon. members would get up and take issue with the government. The government-side backbenchers would stand up and perhaps fight - not perhaps, but in fact did fight - against proposals of this nature. We always had the united support of the Opposition when there was any indication we were perhaps going to regulate something, when we were perhaps going to step in and centralize power. I guess we've heard that word before, centralization of power. This is a clear-cut, obvious and deliberate move to centralize power in the hands of a few people in this province. When the hon. Premier said that he's doing this with reluctance, that was the most important and the only significant part of his whole speech. He's doing it with reluctance, as though he hasn't got the majority to do the right thing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that anybody who has any regard or respect for the democratic process, for the supremacy of the Legislature, can entrust this government with this kind of power. I want to emphasize that I was perturbed to no end when the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs had the gall to stand up here and say, well, that bill is in abeyance. He knows. That was a terrible move, one that ought not to be forgotten and one that will remain on the records in Hansard as a foul move on the part of a minister who should have known better.

Now they are asking that we won't want to suspend legislation on the whim or fancy of a minister, we want legislative authority to override or ignore legislation.

I'm almost of the opinion, Mr. Speaker, that with this kind of issue we perhaps ought to consult all the authorities involved.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that someone wants to interrupt to introduce some visitors.

MR. SPEAKER:

Will the House permit the hon. Member for Drayton Valley to revert to Introduction of Visitors?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. ZANDER:

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to introduce to you and to the Legislature, a group of Grade 6 students [from St. Anthony School, Drayton Valley]. They are seated in the members gallery and they are under the leadership and direction of Mr. Dixon. I wonder if they'd rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER:

I apologize to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View and thank him for his forbearance.

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (CONT.)
(Second Reading)Bill No. 55
The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act (Cont.)

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the situation and I did not mind stepping down for an introduction.

DR. HORNER:

A welcome change.

MR. FOSTER:

Ha, ha, ha, ha.

MR. LUDWIG:

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm very disturbed about the hon. minister, Mr. Foster, because when somebody says something funny in this House, he's quiet. When somebody says nothing, he gives a belly laugh. I know he's been golfing, Mr. Speaker, but I didn't think the heat was so great that it might have touched him slightly. Let's have the last laugh so I can carry on.

MR. FOSTER:

I apologize.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Accepted.

MR. LUDWIG:

I didn't think you needed to at all. I thought perhaps I might have to.

Mr. Speaker, I have made several points with regard to this bill and I don't think that we can treat this lightly at all. This is a crossroads as far as I'm concerned. I'll be disappointed, not because some hon. members on this side felt that we'll give them the benefit of the doubt and trust them to bring in amendments - because although it may appear that some hon. members on this side supported the bill, nothing is further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

What they did say, in fact, was that they'd like to give the government the benefit of the doubt, but there are some completely unacceptable sections in this bill. I think this bill will get the kind of attention it deserves in committee. I still don't believe that we should deal with specific sections because we'll be debating this thing over and over and over again for that matter. But I say that all hon. members on this side, those who said they'll vote for the principle, expressed grave concern about some of the things that ought not to be in the bill, and those who have expressed the fact that we should not be

expected to take a chance in supporting the principle of this bill when we, in fact, do not believe in it, Mr. Speaker.

I would be curious to know just how many members on the other side feel that it is the right move to set up what could be termed a protectorate of a sort, an Executive Council protectorate. As I said, if this is a good way to govern and if they could show that this experiment works, we could end up with six or seven. And that's how trouble begins, Mr. Speaker, not with the Executive Council - I don't question their sincerity. But being eager and enthusiastic, the Executive Council gets something done all under their control and the hon. members in the House sit by and let them do it.

This would be a bad move, this would be a turning point on the quotation I made from "The Road Not Taken". I believe that if some hon. members don't want to commit themselves, at least stand up and say that for now we are going to stay at the crossroads if we don't know any better.

But the principle in this bill is the kind that could not pass without serious challenge in any parliament or legislative body in this whole country. I would just love to have the opportunity of quoting some of the remarks of men like the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker, Baldwin, Knowles and other outstanding people who have fought this kind of action by the government. It wasn't too long ago that they did this. I think that the government has the message. Let them act accordingly.

I am still getting messages from the hon. member who already had one break. Mr. Speaker, I believe I have said all I need to say.

From looking at the hon. ministers, I think some of them have some grave doubts about the wisdom of this decision they are making. I would like to urge them not to take the position, but we have made our choice, we can't back off now, after all we are the government and it is a question of saving face. I think that they have enough intelligence and enough integrity to do the right thing under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Athabasca.

MR. APPLEBY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that I can participate in the debate on this bill. I think that it is an excellent bill in its present form and I don't think that there are any changes necessary in it.

I have to appreciate the comments that were made by many of the members of the Assembly, and in particular members of the Opposition, because I think many of them raised concerns that were valid. However, when we come to the speech that was just delivered by the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View, we can appreciate that it was the same one we have heard before, the usual disorganized type of performance. I can only conclude that he is ...

MR. LUDWIG:

I rise on a point of order. The hon. member saying that he has heard this speech before - he should be a little careful with the truth ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh.

MR. LUDWIG:

... I have never given this speech before, Mr. Speaker. I might give it again and he would do well to quote some of it.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member scarcely has a point of order. The reference to a speech being "the same" wouldn't necessarily mean that each syllable corresponded in each speech.

MR. APPLEBY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, I can only conclude that he is very much preoccupied with the destruction of the courthouse in Calgary, and his lost marbles.

MR. LUDWIG:

I haven't lost any marbles, Mr. Speaker. I hope that he will find a few because he sure needs some.

MR. APPLEBY:

Mr. Speaker, in entering this debate, there is one thing that I wonder about as it regards all of us in this Assembly. We have heard the words "remoteness" and "vastness" and "great distances" used to refer to the area that is under consideration. I wonder how many members of this Assembly appreciate the fact that the geographic centre of the province of Alberta is about 75 miles north of Edmonton ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Athabasca.

MR. APPLEBY:

... on the east-west line. No, it is south of Athabasca by about 10 miles. And you have a tremendously vast area beyond that in Alberta. I think we have to be concerned with that when we think about this bill.

We are talking about an area, Mr. Speaker, that I am quite familiar with. I have been in and out of the Fort McMurray area for many, many years. The first times that I ever went in there were by train. In those days when you tried to register for a hotel, just before the boom started, you were asked if you had brought your sleeping bag along so they could find a place somewhere for you to put it on the floor. There were dog teams on the streets at that time.

The town has become quite sophisticated since then. Now you have modern hotels, apartment buildings, shopping centres, recreation complexes, cocktail lounges and so on. And there has been a tremendous change in the population.

However, that is an area of Alberta which has great potential in other resources beyond what we have been discussing as far as the tar sands are concerned. There is a tremendous timber potential. Recreation in that area is something that will develop throughout the years. But when we come right down to discussing the bill we have in hand, we are all, I'm sure, thinking about the development within the tar sands, the complications arising there and the manner in which they can best be dealt with. That is the key and the core of all our concerns and that is the reason for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, because of the special circumstances that are involved, not only because of the remote location, but also because they have a population mixture there which is probably one of the most cosmopolitan you could expect anywhere in Alberta, it is very transient. The average age of the adults in the community is around 30 years. You have all kinds of problems not only with health services, but also with school services. This is one of the things mentioned and outlined very well by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in his original presentation.

There have been difficulties in the community. I have been in that community and have discussed some of them with people involved in administration, education and health there. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands has also been there and is very familiar with these types of things too. Because of the difficulties and the frustration on the part of the local officials, I think that a bold new approach has been needed. This is the approach we have in Bill 55 and this is the approach that, I think, is the one that is going to resolve, to a great extent, many of the difficulties that now exist.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that members of the House, and particularly this morning the hon. Member for Edmonton Jasper Place, have outlined the needs and the way these needs have developed. The minister outlined it. The hon. Premier told of the difficulties that are there.

I think the act not only provides the vehicle that we need for the orderly development of this region, but also, under Section 8, it does recognize the supremacy of this Assembly and this Legislature and it makes provision for the administration in that area, and the commissioner, to be responsible to this Assembly. I think that is important. That is one of the keystones of the constitutional arch of the whole British constitutional system. I subscribe to that and believe in it most sincerely.

I appreciate the concerns, Mr. Speaker, that have been presented to this House, because these are the type of concerns that, I think, any hon. member, and especially a member in Opposition, would naturally bring forth when the government proposes something very new and very innovative in this type of area. However, while these suggestions are well-meaning, I really can't see, at the moment, that they are the type which would make

the office of this commissioner any more effective and any more useful as a vehicle for solving some of the difficulties that arise in that area.

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview last night expressed a concern that one person should be responsible for the administration of an area that involves one-eighth of this province. In comparing that, Mr. Speaker, I would have to think about the Northwest Territories where we have one commissioner responsible for administering one-third the area of Canada. I believe the commissioner in that area is doing a pretty good job. Certainly one of his functions seems to be to cut through red tape quite capably, and I believe that is going to be one of the necessary functions of the northeast regional commissioner and something he is going to have to deal with.

The hon. Premier outlined the method that the commissioner will have of reporting to the Executive Council on a periodic basis. At that time he will have the opportunity for expressing his views regarding cross-communication between departments. I think this is going to be one of the keys to the success of the operation of this commission.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I note the concerns last night that the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray expressed when he said this scheme might work if we could find the proper type of person to carry out the duties in an effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, I think that was a valid comment. But when I look back over the last period of time and I think of the calibre of appointments that have been made, the chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board, the new Ombudsman in Alberta and other appointments ...

MR. CLARK:

Who made that one?

MR. APPLEBY:

... I don't think there is going to be that much difficulty in finding the proper type of person and making the proper type of decision as to whom that person should be.

I think this person, going into this position, will, as has been said by many members, have a very challenging position, a very exciting position. But I think this type of person can and will be found, and he or she will be very successful in achieving the desired objectives of Bill No. 55.

Thank you.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to get into the debate on Bill No. 55. First of all I would like to join with the others who have commended the minister for his presentation. I think he gave us a very good resume of what is intended in Bill No. 55. I would also have to say that in my view he covered reasonably well the problems that will be faced because of the rapid development that is going to take place within the remote area of the North. I appreciate very much the speech he made in introducing Bill No. 55.

I have enjoyed the debate we have had on Bill No. 55. I think a number of very worthwhile comments have been made. There have been a number of points raised that are certainly very interesting to consider. But I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, that in my view we are facing a very important decision with respect to Bill No. 55.

The hon. minister, in introducing it, suggested that the area it was to deal with was a unique region and required a unique approach. Certainly he has brought in a unique bill. The location is remote, sparsely settled. It is suggested that it is behind in levels of service. The population is chiefly Native. The existing government is an ID, consisting chiefly of unorganized territory. He also pointed out that essential support services will require large sums of money to bring them up to the level they should be and also to meet the requirements of the tremendous increase in population and development that will take place within the area.

I think one of the significant statements that has been made repeatedly is that we must keep in mind a concern for people. I accept that, Mr. Speaker. I think that may be the crux of the discussion we are having on Bill No. 55: how do you provide for the concern of people?

I can say, too, that I have had some experience in attempting to get horizontal coordination between departments of government. I think it goes without saying that it is much more difficult than maybe some people realize. Civil servants understand very, very clearly responsibility on a vertical basis, from the minister to the deputy minister and right down through the ranks, but it is very hard for them to understand the need of this horizontal relationship. I can appreciate the reasons for it.

I think what we are looking at in Bill No. 55 is an attempt to get this horizontal relationship established in a meaningful way. I would say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that as far as I am concerned, I really do not care whether it is through a three-man commission, five-man commission, an individual or whatever method is used. What I am concerned about are the rules under which this particular body will operate.

When it is suggested that it will require large sums of money, I become even more concerned. I think that when we are spending large sums of money we want to be very sure that we know the rules under which it will be spent. I think, too, when we are talking about the need for quick decisions in remote areas, we want to remember that if it requires someone who can do it very readily because of its remoteness, the possibility of abuse is maybe going to be just as great as the possibility for doing the right thing.

When we are looking at this whole matter of coordination and taking power away from some and giving it to others, I think we want to be doubly sure that we know the rules under which that particular individual is going to operate.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it very clear at this point that I am 100 per cent in support of doing everything we can to establish greater coordination. I rather like the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc. He suggested the Premier might very well give consideration to cancelling out a couple of the ministers without portfolio and providing an individual minister with very definite responsibility - a resource minister, if you wish to call him that, who would be directly responsible to cabinet. He would be operating under an act that would set up the terms of reference, and would in turn be responsible to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of Bill No. 55, I'm sure there will be a number of members in this House who will share my recollection of the group which sat here when we were in power, and will recall that on numerous occasions we were bombarded for doing too much by regulation.

One of the other statements made, I believe, by the then Leader of the Opposition, our Premier, was that if he had his way he was going to re-establish the supremacy of the Legislature ...

[Interjections]

... Now, Mr. Speaker, in this particular bill he is not following his recommendation to us. He is in fact moving away from it. I am wondering why he deems it so absolutely necessary at this time to move away from the supremacy of the Legislature into a position of granting, to an individual, powers that have never been granted before. Mr. Speaker, I believe that today we are facing, more than ever, an erosion of the powers of the Legislature. It is important that we review it in that context.

I was rather interested to hear the hon. Member for Athabasca suggest that this wasn't any different from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories - a man who has tremendous power and can cut through red tape. Well let me suggest to the hon. member that the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories operates under an act, an act passed by the House of Commons, under which the rules of operation are clearly established and known by everyone. There is also a Territorial Council which meets on a regular basis and establishes policy for development within that area. So I cannot accept that this position is comparable at all.

It has been suggested that there is an urgency. I'm always a little frightened, Mr. Speaker, of making the kind of decisions that we would class as crash decisions, particularly if there are no rules that would apply. Again I have to point out, as has been pointed out by the hon. Member for Drumheller, this particular individual will not be subject to a number of acts. I think it is even more important if this individual is going to be given the powers suggested, that he be guided by the acts of the Legislature. At least we would then know in which direction he would be moving.

Mr. Speaker, I feel it is very important that we maintain control of any area of development within our province under the legislative acts that have been established by this House. Therefore, I would have to support 100 per cent the proposition made by the hon. Member for Drumheller that when we come to committee we strike out the section that suggests he will not be subject to those acts.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is an existing act under which the development could be handled. It was the act passed in 1961, The Northern Development Act. If it is not adequate I suggest that it could be amended. If there are other changes that need to be made I suggest that acts could be brought in that would spell out clearly what the government intends this individual ought to do. At the moment I do not know what the qualifications of this individual are supposed to be. There are too many uncertain factors. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, even though I am for the principle of coordination, I am opposed to Bill No. 55 in its present state.

MR. ADAIR:

Mr. Speaker may I just add a few words in support of Bill No. 55, and possibly explain for the members opposite the role of my office, the office of Northern Development, and Indian and Metis liaison. I would point out to the group that my office has the primary responsibility for planning, research and monitoring all things that relate to northern Alberta.

Within that there is a specific region, the northeast region, which has a situation, an exciting situation, created by the Alberta oil sands. As a result of the speed of development and the need for a much closer look at the area, this bill comes forth. I support it and I think I should point out to the members that we, in our office, will be plugged into that particular commissioner's office and with any advisory group that he would have. Also the members of the Northern Alberta Development Council, which is an advisory council - and a very effective advisory council, I might add - would also have a part, as per the diagram. It would be at the services of the northeast regional commissioner, if he so wishes.

I might suggest one thing that could be considered, as I speak for the council, and that is that one of the members of the advisory committee he may choose could possibly be one of the members of our council from that particular region. We have two people on that council from that region who are extremely interested in the problems of the area and extremely knowledgeable in the problems of the entire area.

I might point out that the minister yesterday, in his introductory talk, pointed to a problem about the school. The length of time it took to resolve that particular situation might well not have happened had the commissioner been in place - not because the commissioner might have had to act but because, knowing that the commissioner was there might well have expedited the decision for the betterment of the people of the area.

I really think if we address ourselves to the situation, the compounded problems that may arise on the horizon, that we in fact should be voting for Bill No. 55, and I support it in toto.

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise and make a few points ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Before the hon. member continues, would the House permit the hon. Member for Drumheller to introduce visitors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. members.

It is my pleasure to introduce some 85 students from the Samuel Crowther High School in Strathmore, who are seated in the public gallery. They are accompanied by Mr. William Ternan, the social studies person in the school system there; Mrs. Phyllis Gray, Mr. Barry Paulsen and two parents, Mrs. Hermanson and Mrs. Bartelen. I'm sure we are very happy to have this splendid group of young people here in the Legislature today.

GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (CONT.)
(Second Reading)

Bill No. 55
The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act (Cont.)

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few remarks on second reading of this bill. I feel, as has been expressed on both sides of the House, that this is a very important bill dealing with the future of the energy centre of Alberta. I believe we are unanimous in the House that it is quite obvious we need coordination in this area.

To me, this is something that is going to be like a great army operation. It could have been D-day or it could have been the charge at Dunkirk or any other thing where a general has taken over. They provide an objective and he has to be ready.

We know these things have to be done. We are looking forward, say for the next 20 years, and the mistakes we make today or the things we do right today may well save us many needless dollars in the future. There's the obvious answer that we need orderly provision of services and planning, not only on the short-term but on the long-term basis. But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is coming through on this bill that we object to, on this side in particular - and the Premier in his remarks last night and even the hon. minister who introduced the bill are a little concerned probably about the action you are taking. You probably have no other course, but I'm looking at the person of the commissioner - and this seems to be the bone of contention - the powers that this man is going to have.

I would like a few moments just to see what type of man you are going to try to get to fill this position. What type of qualifications would this man have to have?

Listening to both sides of the House, he would almost have to be a Solomon and a saint as well. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to call you a saint, but he's going to have to have some of the qualifications you have, to be able to solve these problems. And when he's out of order or not, I don't know. But what type of individual can you get to carry this heavy burden? Because this man is going to have extraordinary powers. He's going to have the economic means of one man who's going to spend a tremendous amount of public funds. He also has to provide services for private industry and the spin-off, and the number of people in that area - he has to be ready for them.

Now the Premier remarked, and I think it was quite well taken, that he expects the man to be in the field to make a decision on the spot, and I quite agree, if this is where he has to be. He also suggested that he wants him in here on a monthly basis to report to the cabinet. Now, Mr. Speaker, if you are going to appoint a commissioner, I would hope sincerely that the cabinet would lay down reasonable guidelines, hard and fast, as far as the Executive Council is concerned, as to the objective that you are trying to reach, the policy of the government and the time frame allotted to this man to provide the services that are going to be needed. And I would hope, on his part, that he would give a factual account of his monthly progress. But I also wonder, Mr. Speaker, in giving this man tremendous power, what direction then, on a monthly basis, is the cabinet going to give this man? Because he is going to have to have direction. You just can't leave a man with that amount of power out there in the field and not tell him, almost from the fact, from the Executive Council, this is what you will do.

This brings me to the second point I would like to ask, as to what type of man you are going to have. Because there is going to be conflict between the policies and the regulations of the departments of Environment, Lands and Forests, Mines and Minerals and Municipal Affairs, and you get into Education and Health and Social Development. Even the Mayor of Edmonton, the Mayor of Macleod or of any other small community have conflicts with the Minister of the Environment, they have conflicts with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. These are daily occurrences, you can't help them. These are the carrying out of the policies and the regulations as laid down by the various departments. This man is going to be in a tremendous position, because out in the field, I would imagine, there are going to be representatives from these various departments. What responsibility is this man going to have on his own and what decisions is he going to make on his own hook? Will he be able to justify his actions, say, to cabinet? Or are you going to fire him because he didn't carry out what you thought was right? Because he could well be right.

I am thinking, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about a commissioner - this is on a much broader scale - General MacArthur was right in his assumption that when the government of the day, which was President Truman, didn't agree with him and General MacArthur went to the press, which is a 'no-no' for a general, and said these are the mistakes we are making, he was let go because it was a political decision and he was told to keep his

mouth shut. And what happened to Commissioner Nicholson of the RCMP when he disagreed with the federal cabinet? He resigned his post but he spoke his mind.

But it doesn't make much difference if a man speaks his mind and he's fired even though he was right. If this man feels he is right, has he the right to, say, issue to the press, this is where we're going, I don't agree with the government? Again, he could well be right. And what advice will this man take from the local residents?

These are things I think we have to look at. We're placing a burden on a man unless it is laid down, hard and fast, by cabinet. And I have no objection to that, because cabinet is responsible to the Legislature. But if the cabinet decides, as the government of today has decided - the government decided today what energy policy we should have - we have no objection to that. This is your right. I feel that if cabinet can make decisions that affect the lives of Albertans - and this is what you are elected for, to make decisions that are going to affect the lives of all Albertans and even Canadians - then surely cabinet has a right to expect that this commissioner is going to do exactly as it tells him. Even though he makes these decisions in the field, he is following the direction and the policy laid down by the cabinet in the name of all the people.

I have no doubt this man is going to have an expert staff. The recommendations they make to him are going to have to be weighed. Is he going to make a decision? If their recommendations are wrong or his staff is in conflict with other government departments, who is going to resolve this? Is it going to be resolved at the monthly meeting? Or is this commissioner going to be able to override his own staff and say, this is where I will go? Because you can get some awfully bullheaded people. A man can be almost right and yet you say, I'm still not satisfied with what you are doing, I'll have to let you go. But it could be, in the long run, that this man maybe has a far greater vision than even the cabinet at the moment.

I suggest that in looking at this commissioner - what kind of a strait jacket are we going to put him in? Or are we going to put him in a strait jacket at all? Are you going to allow him to go out and say, well, this is what we want you to do, you go ahead and do it, we've provided you with the power, we've provided you with the money, now you go out and do the job?

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in a job this big, a job of this magnitude, the cabinet must set down hard and fast guidelines; this is what we want, this is the objective, you get to it, but we want to know on a monthly basis - even a shorter time period than that - some of these decisions. We want to know your decisions.

It may come [about] that his decisions must come to cabinet on a weekly basis on some of the major decisions he is making. But I suggest, unless we do this, you are turning loose something and you don't know just where it's going to end. We realize the need for planning. We realize the need for coordination. We also realize that you are going to have to have a man you're going to have some control over.

I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, when he closes, to answer some of these questions I have posed and give us an idea of what type of gentleman, or it could be a lady - I doubt it - what type of gentleman ...

MISS HUNLEY:

I object!

MR. BUCKWELL:

... what type of talent you are looking for in this commissioner.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, in taking part in second reading of Bill No. 55, The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act, it's been rather interesting to listen to the debate. I certainly appreciate the outline the minister gave in his introduction to second reading about the unique region, about the sparse population, about the fantastic investment and the various other aspects he has outlined to us. But it's most interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, to be a member on this side of the House and recall the session of 1971. When the minister was one of the members on this side of the House, when the Leader of the Opposition at that time was promoting open government, the supremacy of the Legislature and that decisions not be made behind closed doors, now we come, Mr. Speaker, to this bill before us, which will, in effect, negate some of the powers of the Legislature.

With reference to the region being a remote one, I think this is 1974 and possibly with the 'air force', shall we say, of the Department of Lands and Forests, it's not that far from Edmonton any more. Certainly with the building of the highway into the area it's not that far, and certainly with communications, transportation and many other facilities, I think that is less important than it has been made out to be. Certainly I recognize

there are some difficulties. But because of some of these difficulties, are we going to give the powers that are extended in this bill?

Now reference was made earlier to the appointment of the Ombudsman and the powers he has. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman is appointed by the members of this Legislature and not by decisions made behind closed doors. Certainly there is a vast difference in this field.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the matter of coordination is one that I think everyone who has been involved in government over the years is pretty well aware of. But to try to get coordination by giving one individual what amounts to dictatorial powers isn't feasible certainly to me, nor right in this Legislature.

When we look at Section 8, I think it's rather interesting and worth while just to repeat what it says. Section 8(1) says as follows:

In order to enable the Commissioner to carry out his functions with the diligence and dispatch that the circumstances may require the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, with respect to the Region, varying, substituting, adding to or making inapplicable any of the provisions of the following Acts and the regulations thereunder:

Then follow, Mr. Speaker, no less than 12 acts.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that there is a clause in here that says, "Any regulations made under this section cease to have any effect after the last day of the next ensuing session of the Legislature." Now, Mr. Speaker, I submit that an individual with the powers given here can do a lot of irreparable damage in that time span. It would run into a period of a year or possibly a little more.

So I submit, Mr. Speaker, that I for one cannot accept Bill No. 55 with Section 8 in it. The powers given to this man and the influence he may have, or the influence that may be given to him or his connections or his friends certainly give me a lot of consideration.

I recall one of the hon. ministers, during the debate, referred to Britain during the war. Now I submit the problems faced here are nothing in comparison to wartime. Another hon. member referred to three in the driver's seat of a car. I submit that comparison has nothing to do with what is here.

So my concern, Mr. Speaker, is principally with Section No. 8 and the powers it gives over and above what the Legislature has given. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, [I think] the people in the area are the ones who should be respected, no matter how sparsely populated that area is and no matter how much money, per individual, the government is spending there. I think the rights of those individual citizens are just as important as if the government's spending was almost nil. The rights and the responsibilities of the individual - and I think it boils down to the matter of the magnitude of the problem versus the rights of the individual and the rights of ourselves as legislators.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's not my intention to support second reading of Bill No. 55 at this time.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 55, The Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act has certainly brought out some strange responses from the various parts of this Legislature. As I've listened to the speeches, Mr. Speaker, I've come to the conclusion that some of the best speeches in favour and in support of this bill have come from this side of the House.

MR. GETTY:

Get smart, Roy ...

MR. WILSON:

Then on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, some of the most damning indictments have come from the other side of the House.

AN HON. MEMBER:

You weren't listening.

MR. WILSON:

Some of them may not have been made fully intentionally either, Mr. Speaker, but the Minister of Public Works certainly brought out some of the negative aspects of this bill in a very clear and concise manner which I particularly appreciated.

Now another thing which seemed rather interesting was the lack of enthusiasm, Mr. Speaker, with which the minister, who is charged with piloting this piece of legislation through the House, approached his job. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has been known to muster some enthusiasm on occasion for jobs he looks forward to and enjoys. We find that was notably lacking in this instance, Mr. Speaker, and that seemed a rather strange situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we would particularly like to hear from some more of the ministers who will be seriously affected by this bill. Because, Mr. Speaker, as we have heard earlier, the commissioner or the 'super-czar' of the North as he may be nicknamed as time goes on, will be appointed by the cabinet, and I think this chart does not accurately reflect what the situation will really be.

Mr. Speaker, it seems there will be 14 cabinet ministers subservient to this czar or commissioner, plus the Office of Program Co-ordination of the Government of Alberta. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's kind of ironical, and perhaps we can understand after all the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Minister of Municipal Affairs in introducing this bill, because he, too, will be one of the ministers who will be subservient to the commissioner. So, Mr. Speaker, we can kind of understand how that would affect the enthusiasm of some of the ministers.

So we have the situation where this bill is a vote of non-confidence in those 14 ministers listed on the chart that was supplied, Mr. Speaker. We can see that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is the man who is moving the vote of non-confidence in 13 of his cabinet colleagues as well as [in] himself. So I can see the lack of enthusiasm, the lack of real zeal in promoting this bill and speaking in favour of it, among the 14 government cabinet ministers so affected.

You know, Mr. Speaker, once again we find that this is one of the few acts of this government that has not been staged, managed and promoted to the nth degree. Perhaps it's justifiably so and we can sure see why they wouldn't want to carry on the traditional routine in this instance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, are there any government backbenchers left who believe in the preservation of our democratic system, and are they free to speak as they think about this issue? Are they sworn to uphold the party line on this particular bill, Mr. Speaker? Is there a free soul left amongst the government backbenchers who supports the principles of democracy, who would like to get up and speak his mind freely? And is he allowed to do so?

AN HON. MEMBER:

No comment.

MR. WILSON:

You know, Mr. Speaker, I can't help but think about an expression that would apply to these 14 ministers who are going to be subservient to this commissioner. Perhaps the expressions, ciphers or puppets of the commissioner, would best describe the role the ministers are going to have to play under the commissioner as outlined in Bill No. 55 ...

MR. FOSTER:

When are you going to say something?

MR. WILSON:

... because of the new challenge that the development of this northeast regional area presents to the government, is no reason for the government to abandon the principles of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the situation would better be served, and Albertans would better be served, if the opportunity that has presented itself in this exceptional growth situation - we'd all be better represented if the principles of democracy were applied to the problem and the solution arrived at in that manner, and democracy strengthened rather than abandoned completely at the first challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I feel democracy has stood the test of time through the ages, both fair weather and foul, and has certainly not come up wanting. It has proven that solutions can

be found to similar situations through the democratic route rather than one which I would certainly call a dictatorial route.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, the minister, in introducing the bill, I think summed up the main principle, that what he hoped to achieve was to provide for effective and orderly supply of support services for people. Most certainly we all agree that that must be done and that there is a need for the coordination of the services for people in this area. But we must, I feel, Mr. Speaker, couple that with supremacy of the Legislature and not by hiring a commissioner or a dictator.

The amount of power this bill would give the non-elected commissioner is alarming. There is certainly no meaningful vestige of democracy suggested in this bill. It effectively kills any remaining election machinery or self-expression at the local level.

Another aspect of it, Mr. Speaker, which concerns me is that it undermines the member of the Legislature for that area. Because under our present situation, when a member of the Legislature has a problem affecting a constituent, he can go to the minister. He can present the problem, and the minister either can act on the problem to solve it or he has to defend himself in the Legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we see the situation where we have the commissioner on the top of the chart and the minister under him, and the MLA has to go to the commissioner with a constituent's problem, the commissioner doesn't have to defend himself in the Legislature, he doesn't have anywhere near the same regard for the problems of the elected member. So we are not only undermining and killing the incentive, Mr. Speaker, of elected people at the municipal level; we are, in my opinion, also undermining the role of the provincial member of the Legislature with this bill. That alone should be enough to discourage anybody from voting for it.

In reading the bill, I wonder who drafted it? Whose idea was this? Because I get the feeling it must be somebody who wants the job as the commissioner, because the commissioner's position is certainly well protected in the way this bill is prepared, Mr. Speaker. All the way through, the commissioner's position is well looked after.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Horner?

[Laughter]

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would hope many of the affected ministers who have suggested they have an input in this would stand up and tell us how they developed it. Maybe some of them feel they are going to resign and apply for the job of commissioner. And if they are power-hungry, boy, that's the job to have, no doubt about that!

AN HON. MEMBER:

Are you interested, Roy?

MR. WILSON:

When the hon. Premier spoke on the bill, Mr. Speaker, he talked about the argument for a need to solve the problem, but he didn't say he had applied any of the tested principles of democracy to find a solution. No, he said we took an expedient route. This seems to be expedient, at least that's the way I felt when I listened very carefully to the hon. Premier's dissertation on this bill. Nowhere did he suggest that a solution to the problem via a democratic principle was considered. It was a matter of an expedient method of solving the problem. Applying dictatorship in this region of Alberta, I don't think is an acceptable manner of solving the problem.

It seems like, the principle of democracy be damned. Expediency says we solve the problem with a dictator. We will hire some guy to stand between us and the people. If he is any good he may solve the problem, but if he fails at least we've got a fall guy. This seems to be the attitude which prevails in this thing. You get somebody else to lay the blame on for the problems. If it works, they can take the credit. It seems very interesting, Mr. Speaker, the attitude which went through this bill.

Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs closes the debate on this bill, I wish - in second reading anyway - he would reassure us that he is serious about tabling the results for Motion No. 131, for example, which has been on the Order Paper since the beginning of April. All we are asking for is an index of contracts in the Fort McMurray area, which falls within the territory included in this bill. Because it would, I think, be most helpful to give us an overview of the magnitude of the situation which has to be considered.

All we are asking for is an index of contracts which exist in the Fort McMurray area in this Motion for a Return No. 131. On Tuesday of this week the minister indicated he would table it in a couple of days, which most people would have thought meant yesterday, but we didn't receive it yesterday. So hopefully we will get it on Tuesday. There are other reasons why we would like that information as well, but it would certainly be helpful in understanding the magnitude of the situation this bill purports to resolve.

I am still confused though, Mr. Speaker, about some of the strange reactions this bill has brought on some of the members on both sides of the House. When a member stands up, expresses concerns about the bill and the dangers and the fears and so on that he has in regard to the implementing of it, and then ends up by saying, but I am going to vote for it on second reading and see what happens, that's a strange rationale to me, Mr. Speaker. I'd rather vote against it and see what happens. I think it's a much safer approach.

So, Mr. Speaker, it appears we have, in the minds of some members of the Legislature anyway, a most objectionable piece of incompetent handiwork in this bill. It indicates a bumbling, stumbling and fumbling attempt, Mr. Speaker, to solve a problem not at all based on the principles of democracy which we have enjoyed in Alberta historically and have come to expect from the governments in Alberta and all of Canada for that matter.

No, Mr. Speaker, northeast Alberta becomes the dictatorial territory in the province of Alberta governed by a puppet commissioner you would expect to come from a banana republic rather than a part of Alberta. The very basis of democracy, representation by population, is being thrown out the window with this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I for one want no part of it.

Who in heaven's name is calling for a dictatorship anyway in northeast Alberta? Who wants this? Who is asking for it? I certainly don't think there is any indication of public pressure from the grass roots for such a situation. This is something which is being imposed from on high and with a certain degree of reluctance, obviously and rightly so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that if the government aren't prepared to govern as they were elected to do, and instead want to abrogate the responsibilities by hiring a dictator to take on the problem, that isn't the thing they should do. If they are not prepared to govern the way our democratic system set them up to do, then they should resign, not hire a dictator to take over their job for them.

Mr. Speaker, if this bill is passed, I can see a certain amount of jealousy creeping into the situation. For example, we are going to have to have a new bill giving new powers to the Premier of the Province of Alberta just so he can stay abreast of the 'super-czar-commissioner of the north'. My goodness, there are some very, very strange consequences envisioned in this thing.

When we are talking about this commissioner, Mr. Speaker, what government salary level will he be classified under? I am just wondering, does the government classification system for employees cover this sort of thing, a commissioner, a super czar, a dictator? I am just wondering - maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs, when he closes debate, would be good enough to tell us what salary classification this man would fall under.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned that the local initiative by citizens will be killed in the area not only for such things as running for the municipal council but local initiative for everything. All volunteer organizations, service clubs and things like that, I'm afraid, will suffer because of the influence of this dictatorial approach to solving problems. The incentives will be removed for anyone to help himself, it seems to me, and we are stepping out onto very, very dangerous ground with this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want this to be taken as a personal thing, but I think this bill is a dirty slam at the Minister Without Portfolio in charge of northern development. I don't think that any minister should be slapped as hard as this bill does the Minister Without Portfolio in charge of northern development. It's just a dirty slam and it's a shame. That, I don't think, is right at all, and this bill is certainly very, very much out of order in that regard.

MR. DIACIUK:

Tell him, Al.

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, in committee we can get into details, but electing this advisory board, I suppose, would be better than appointing the advisory board. We have "the minister shall establish a committee" and then "he may appoint the members" of it, which is a kind of contradiction. There is nothing to say that the commissioner will listen to this group even if the minister does appoint it. That's interesting. If the commissioner is a really aggressive, hard-nosed character who is an expediter, he's going to run roughshod over any committee appointed by the minister and probably the minister, too. The authority is certainly here for the commissioner to take that approach to the thing.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we see that there is provision to provide employees and so on and the minister can engage the services of experts. Technical people, consultants and others can be engaged by the minister to give advice to the commissioner. Well, Mr. Speaker, how does the minister know that this is going to be money well spent? You know, if this is a hard-nosed commissioner, he is going to want to hire his own technical people. He's not going to want to be taking advice from somebody the minister may have hired, for any one of a number of reasons, including patronage. The commissioner, if he's the guy who is going to get the job done, is not going to appreciate having work done by some party hack foisted on him, for example. So, Mr. Speaker, I can see problems cropping up there.

You know, as I read through this bill the thing that came to my mind - the label that this thing suggests - is that this is a pork-barreler's dream. This bill is a pork-barreler's dream the way it is prepared. If anyone were so inclined - and I'm not at all suggesting anybody presently elected, Mr. Speaker, would resort to patronage or anything like that in regard to this bill - but if they were so inclined, man alive, here is the place they could really have at it, and just accomplish all kinds of things that would make those who appreciate the principles of patronage rub their hands with glee.

So, Mr. Speaker, there have been references by many to the 'super powers' being delegated to this commissioner and perhaps I shouldn't dwell on the details there. There have been suggestions, as the Minister of Public Works said, comparing the powers to those of some well-known dictators around the world. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that is a sure sign that trouble will happen if this proposal is implemented. This bill spells trouble. It's a dangerous precedent. As sure as we're sitting here and debating this bill, trouble will follow if it's implemented. I feel it should be eliminated, because I don't think there is a need to take that risk, Mr. Speaker. When a dictator appointed by cabinet order can overrule elected bodies and the laws that have been passed by those elected bodies, that certainly spells trouble, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to close, though, on an optimistic note, Mr. Speaker. There is one principle in this bill that I do wholeheartedly agree with. Mr. Speaker, that's the principle of repealing The Proposed Village of Waterways Act. I'm very happy to see that the Minister of Municipal Affairs did act on a lead that he got from yours truly. He has incorporated The Proposed Village of Waterways Act, which is redundant legislation on the statute books of Alberta, in his bill. I think he's to be commended for that. I think that takes some foresight and I'm glad he acted on our suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see the minister piloting this bill through the House bring in an amendment to delete everything down to and including Section 8.

MR. TRYNCHY:

Mr. Speaker, it's indeed amusing and a pleasure to get into this debate. By speaking last or near the end of a debate you don't have to say too much, because it has already been said, whether it's right or wrong. But I'm amused at the Member for Calgary Bow in the way he didn't drum up the enthusiasm and the zeal for this bill he usually does, in the booming voice that he has used in the past. As he spoke and I listened it seemed to me that he wasn't quite sure he understood himself what the bill was about and what he was talking about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. TRYNCHY:

He challenged us and asked us if we were free to speak in this House on the rights of this bill. I can say right now, Mr. Speaker, that I do support Bill No. 55 and I do it for two reasons. I do it because when I look back over what has happened - I'll get to this in a minute or two - I look ahead to think about what should happen and what will happen if we don't have some regulations and a commission to take care of the north.

We talk about one-man commissions and dictatorships. In a town council you have seven councillors. Pretty soon you get down to where four votes make the regulations. When you

have a three-man council two men make the vote, or two persons, be it man or lady. So you don't have a true representation of the voters. You have majority rule, whether it's a twelve-man council, seven-man, three-man and so on. The local improvement districts are represented by one man, the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In some cases if the MLA does his work, he's represented by the MLA.

MR. GPUENWALD:

But they're elected!

MR. TRYNCHY:

So you have a one-man commission that is a liaison between the people and the government. If he's a responsible person and a person whom I think we can get, then of course the duty he has is one that should be appreciated by the people.

You talk about commissions and I'd like to ask the hon. members on that side, what kind of commission did they have when they had the Alberta Resources Railroad going? Was it a twenty-man commission? Was it a one-man commission, was it a two-man commission, or did they have anybody? Because if they had a one-man commission, let's say it was me, we wouldn't have had any railroad.

[Interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER:

Way to go, Peter.

MR. TRYNCHY:

At least the people of Alberta wouldn't have been paying \$8 million a year in interest.

The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View - I was amused at his little speech. He says we're at the crossroads of the northeast development area. I say we are and we have to take a step, but the hon. member didn't know which road to take. He went round and round and round in circles and that's where he ended up.

[Interjections]

He says, do it right, do it our way. I'd like to mention some of the things that they have done in the past. Let's go back to Grande Cache with a population of 3,417 people. The per capita debt is \$1,175. We just wrote off close to \$1 million because of their wonderful commission.

MR. CLAPK:

What were the assets?

MR. TRYNCHY:

Let's go on to Fox Creek. It's in my constituency, with a population of 1,514 people. Their per capita debt is \$681, much above the rest of the towns in Alberta. Of course, we had to write off \$200,000 on that town.

You know, they talk about past planning. The one that really is amusing is Painbow Lake. Some of the members are new here like myself and don't know too much about Rainbow Lake ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. TRYNCHY:

... I checked into some of the figures and I have come up with something that is really amusing, and I hope they clap when they hear this. The per capita debt is \$3,420. Now how in the world can they ever pay that off? They have got water lines and sewer lines running so far out in the bush that the hunters are tripping over them. We've written off over \$1 million. When I speak of these hydrants out there, they are so far out that the dogs can't even use them.

[Laughter]

AN HON. MEMBER:

Attaboy, Peter! Give 'em heck!

MR. TRYNCHY:

Mr. Speaker, I don't have any concern or hangup about a one-man commission. I think if you want positive action you get this by being able to do it on the job, being on the spot and doing it. We talk about dictatorship. This is not dictatorship. This is a man who will report - a man or a lady - a person who will report back to the cabinet. Now I can't understand their thinking at all. They say, let's get together and do it our way, yet a half dozen of them spoke on behalf of what we are doing and have praised the government for bringing it in, except one or two who shouldn't even be mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, let's put it this way. If one of us were appointed the commissioner in this House ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Heaven forbid.

MR. TRYNCHY:

... I'm sure there isn't one of us who wouldn't do the job that is expected of us. We would do the job that was best for Alberta and the people. Now if there isn't anybody here who wouldn't do it that way, then he doesn't belong in this House. So surely, Mr. Speaker, we can find somebody in this great province of ours, and if we have to go to another province to find a commissioner who can do this job, I'm sure we will.

We talk about town councils and their problems and why we don't have some facilities. This happens all the time and that's what we are trying to get away from.

Mr. Speaker, the word "dictatorship", or "Hitler", which has been mentioned is just unreasonable. It shouldn't even be brought up in this House, because a one-man commission, if he operates with the people - and this is the way this commissioner will operate with the people of Fort McMurray or other townsites with a feedback to the cabinet and to the Premier - then we will move ahead so we don't have this hodge-podge that we have there now, or of course what happened in other centres.

Let's go back just a little further to 1959 in Lodgepole. They installed water and sewer for a big city. There again, the hydrants are so far out nobody can use them, and there is no town.

Let's go to Cynthia in 1961 where the same thing was done. Now is this the kind of planning they are looking at? Is this the kind of planning they want? Or do they want something that is consistent by moving ahead? Sure, I talk about the things that have been done in the past, because that is the only thing we can see. We don't know what's going to happen ...

MR. BENOIT:

I'll tell you what is going to happen ...

MR. TRYNCHY:

... but with this type of bill, we can adjust to it. If it doesn't work right the first year, we can move along and amend it, but not throw it out completely and say we can't stand up. The hon. Member for Highwood says, well I will support second reading, but if they don't do this I might not support third reading, and then I might not support something else. You have got to have some consistency with this bill. Either you are for it or against it. And if you are against it, bring in some amendments. Give us some suggestions. I haven't heard one concrete suggestion from that side that would say ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Where have you been - asleep?

MR. TRYNCHY:

... do it this way and it will be better, except delete Section 8, delete Section 7, delete Section 6 and so on.

MR. STROM:

You're on the wrong section.

MR. TRYNCHY:

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a member who is going to support this bill, because if we do something wrong now, at least we are doing it ...

[Laughter]

... and next year we can change it, but at least we can admit that there are some wrongdoings and we will change them. In the past, Mr. Speaker - the hon. members can clap all they want - but look at their performance ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Right the first time.

MR. TRYNCHY:

... If that is the kind of performance we want, I don't want to be any part of it.

MR. D. MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on Monday afternoon we will continue with seconding reading of Bill No. 55. When we complete this bill we will then move to Committee of Supply for consideration first of the estimates of the Department of Agriculture, followed, when we get to them, by the Departments of Public Works and Advanced Education.

Tentatively, for next Tuesday night, May 7, we would contemplate having the Estimates, under Legislation, which, I gather, will be taken through the House by the Members' Services Committee. That's next Tuesday night, May 7, at 8:00 o'clock.

I move we call it 1:00 o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

[The House rose at 12:57 o'clock.]

