

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Thursday, May 9, 1974

[The House met at 2:30 o'clock.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 42 The Wage Assignments Act

MR. LEE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 42, The Wage Assignments Act. Mr. Speaker, this bill is one that was introduced in the last session in response to a report of the Institute of Law Research and Reform on the subject of wage assignments. As a result of the response to that bill last year, Bill No. 42 has been prepared.

The main provision, Mr. Speaker, of this bill is to abolish the use of wage assignments by lending institutions as utilized to secure the payment of an existing or future indebtedness.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 42 was introduced and read a first time.]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 42, The Wage Assignments Act, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[The motion was carried.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, as you know this week is anti-litter week or beautification week in the province. There are a number of projects going on in the province from one end to the other in terms of cleaning up the province. At the same time ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. minister introducing a project?

MR. YURKO:

No, some guests in the House, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

Carry on.

MR. YURKO:

Schools all over the province have had various types of contests and the Edmonton Separate School system has had an anti-litter poster and slogan contest. They have declared five winners and I would like to introduce those winners to the House.

They are Gregory Lakeman who is a Grade 3 student from the St. Vincent School. He is in the public gallery with his teacher Mrs. O. Ellis. The second winner is Leonard Kaldenhoven who is here with his teacher. The third winner is Janet Kushner. She is a Grade 6 student from the Father Leo Green School. The fourth is Jocelyn Ayotte, a Grade 8 student from the St. Cecilia School with her teacher Miss Stambaugh. The fifth is Tommy Heykants, a Grade 3 student from the Father Leo Green School. Some of the children are here with their parents and also their outdoor education supervisor from the Separate School Board, Mr. Julian Thomas.

I would ask all these people to stand and be recognized by the House.

MR. McCPAE:

Mr. Speaker, that's a tough introduction to follow.

It's my pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a group of Grade 9 students from the Senator Patrick Burns School in Calgary. They are accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Szulczyk. They have enjoyed a tour of the museum this morning and are looking forward to observing the Legislature in action this afternoon. They are seated in the public gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that they stand and be acknowledged by this Assembly.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce two classes of students from McQueen School in my constituency, in fact in my home community, who are here today with their principal, Mr. McLeod and teachers, Mrs. Moffet and Mrs. O'Neill.

Mr. Speaker, of particular interest to the members is the young lady in the front row wearing the blue dress with the red trim, Miss Susan Chambers, who is the daughter of the hon. Member for Edmonton Calder who has to attend a school in his constituency today, which is the reason for his absence.

Mr. Speaker, I would request the students to rise and be recognized.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm today that I introduce to you and to the members some 34 lively and alert Grade 9 students from St. Paul School in my constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Ron Semkow. They are in the members gallery and I would ask that they stand and be recognized by the Assembly at this time.

MR. ASHTON:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce some 50 Grade 5 students from Jean Vanier School in Sherwood Park. They are accompanied by a couple of teachers and by several parents who drove them in to visit us this afternoon. I will ask them to please stand in the public gallery and be recognized.

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House a prominent citizen of Granum in my constituency, Mr. Ed Cesar, who is in your gallery.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, with your kind permission and in the absence of the hon. Member for Hanna-Oyen, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of the Legislature, an outstanding school teacher, Mr. John Charyk, MA, who is in your gallery.

Mr. Charyk was principal of schools in Hanna for over 20 years and retired from teaching last June. He is a writer of note and has already published two books on education. One is entitled The Little White School House. The second is called Pulse of the Community. He is now working on a third book on education.

Mr. Charyk has received many honours, including an honour as a mathematics teacher from the American Astronauts Association, which among other things sent to him an American flag that had gone to the moon and back. In 1971 he was named principal of the year. In

1972 the Government of Alberta honoured him with a merit award in education. He was just recently made an honorary member of the Alberta Teachers' Association. He has also been made a Fellow of the Canadian College of Teachers.

It is a real pleasure to have Mr. Charyk with us in the Legislature today.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, members of the House will probably remember that the Alberta government appointed a new agent general to Alberta House in London late last year. That agent general has returned to the province as part of a program of keeping up to date with the many changes which are occurring in our province. I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the House, Herb Pickering, Alberta's agent general at Alberta House in London, England and would ask Mr. Pickering to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table replies to two questions; one being No. 152, requested by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the other being No. 147, requested by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc.

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to table the Public Service Commissioner's Annual Report for 1973.

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table an order in council under The Government Emergency Guarantee Act, as required by statute.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Highways and Transport

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Safety Council is today introducing a public education campaign on safety belt usage which will continue on through the vacation months. The objective of the campaign is to significantly increase the voluntary use of lap and shoulder belts by motor vehicle occupants. The theme of the campaign will be "Persuade the ones you love to wear their safety belts".

Mr. Speaker, I know that every member of the Legislature will join with the Department of Highways and Transport in supporting the Alberta Safety Council in this very worthwhile campaign.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mount Royal College - Collective Bargaining

MR. CLAPK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Advanced Education, to ask if he is aware of the efforts of a number of members of the non-faculty or non-academic staff at Mount Royal College in Calgary who are in the process of applying for certification to form a collective bargaining unit?

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that there is a growing interest and concern in the academic staff, principally, to organize themselves in a collective bargaining unit. I've had several discussions with academic staff groups of various institutions around the province this past year on that subject. My response has been, as I indicated in the House last night, that we are in the process of a total legislative review of university and college legislation in particular. We would be happy to consider whatever amendments may be appropriate to that legislation arising out of this desire for collective bargaining in the course of our review.

MR. CLAPK:

Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I didn't make the point clear to the minister. I'm sorry. I referred to the non-academic staff at Mount Royal College in Calgary.

MR. FOSTER:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that the non-academic staff in some colleges already is organized. For example, CUPE represents the people in the college in Red Deer. Whether or not I'm aware that the non-academic staff in a public college may be seeking certification is certainly a point of interest. I fail to appreciate the hon. leader's point, however. If his desire is to demonstrate that I may not be aware of a certain activity somewhere in a public college, fair ball. But what's the point?

MR. CLAPK:

I'm coming to that.

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Is the minister aware that a 12.7 per cent increase has been authorized by Mount Royal College to the non-academic staff at that college who are not part of the group trying to get collective bargaining rights?

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will not be too unkind in saying that you can't have it both ways. If you create, by legislation, relatively autonomous educational institutions, i.e., universities and public colleges, and if you give to those organizations the right to make their own wage and salary decisions, the right to carry on most internal management functions, including determining how much they will pay their staff, then you live with the results. I'm not trying to suggest that the minister is uninterested or disinterested in the consequences. Since we fund a major portion of their budgets, we certainly are. But the fact that one college may award ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. minister able to conclude briefly? We seem to be getting very clearly and vigorously into debate.

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, I'm not able to conclude briefly, in which case I'll look forward to discussing this matter further in the course of my estimates.

MR. CLARK:

A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that the same college board has offered to the same members of the non-academic staff who have not become involved in the collective bargaining attempt ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order. Order.

MR. CLARK:

... is the minister prepared to have the officials of his department check into the actions of the Mount Royal board from the standpoint of unfair labour practices?

MR. FOSTER:

Mr. Speaker, certainly I would not want to see any university or public college practising unfair labour practices. However, to suggest that the awarding of a contract to academic staff at a certain percentage and the awarding of a contract to non-academic

staff at a different percentage, higher or lower, is of itself an unfair labour practice is a conclusion I'm not prepared to draw.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Agreed.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister of the same opinion that this offer should be made at the very same time when a group of these non-academic staff people are applying for ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is perhaps overlooking the strictures against asking for ministerial opinions which is one of those rules that applies to all 75 members of the Assembly, including the Chair.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, may I pose a supplementary question on this matter to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour, flowing from the exchange between the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister of Advanced Education?

Can the Minister of Manpower and Labour advise the Assembly whether he's had an opportunity to review the B.C. Labour Code which freezes wage increases during a time of certification request?

DR. HOHOL:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed that particular legislation.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the government at this time giving any consideration to changing The Alberta Labour Act to bring in a measure such as that?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, it would not be the intention of this government to perform in that way.

Meat Industry -- Labour Relations

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, if I could direct a second question to the Minister of Manpower and Labour and ask him, has he been advised of the breakdown of negotiations between the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen and their employers?

DR. HOHOL:

No, Mr. Speaker, negotiations have not broken down. This is a dispute that is centred in most of the major cities of Canada. In the ones we're concerned with, in Calgary in particular and here in Edmonton, negotiations are proceeding. There are some difficulties but they have not broken down. Some are in the process of examining the next step they may want to take and our particular services are at their request. We're performing that way.

MR. CLARK:

Supplementary question, did the minister say that negotiations have not broken down?

DR. HOHOL:

That's correct. To the best of my knowledge they have not broken down in the sense that they have utterly ceased and that no further contact is being maintained by the two parties.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Consumer Affairs. As negotiation is still going on and this situation is under serious consideration, what steps is the

provincial government prepared to take, to ensure a continued supply of meat products to consumers?

MR. DOWLING:

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a really easy question to answer. The Department of Agriculture has, as you know, a great number of programs to secure adequate supplies of all agricultural products, beef included. I would suggest that we ask the hon. Minister of Agriculture to supplement my answer.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Even if they call a strike?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we're taking steps to have emergency plans available, if necessary, particularly in relation to the marketing of livestock and its subsequent slaughter.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs. Approximately how many days' supply of processed meat is there in Alberta at any given time?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a further supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour. My question is in relation to representations which have been made to me by people in my constituency who are working in the packing houses. Apparently there is great concern, with the threat of ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Would the hon. member please come to the point of the question.

There is no wish on the part of the Chair at all to be unduly restrictive but I would again respectfully seek the cooperation of all hon. members with regard to 171 of Beauchesne. Perhaps it might be in order to refer to the very beginning where it says that "The purpose of a question is to obtain information and not to supply it to the House."

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I think when a person has representation from his constituents I can see no harm in announcing that to the House, because lots of times we're questioned as to why we are asking the question. If we can't ask a question on behalf of our own constituents then I think we're in trouble.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I think that it's quite in order for the honourable gentleman to ask questions but not to offer alleged facts to the Assembly - but to ask for questions.

MR. DIXON:

Well, Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. Minister of Education, I haven't given any facts yet. I haven't had the opportunity.

[Interjections]

Mr. Speaker, my question is this: there is great concern in the industry, with the fact ...

[Interjections]

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order. Order.

MR. DIXON:

How many speakers have we got in the House, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, my question is, in answer to the concern that all plants are going to be closed if Swift Canadian plant ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is clearly giving information. Admittedly, there have been a number of questions of this kind which have gotten by the Chair but from time to time it seems that we should revert to the rules, otherwise the matter will escalate beyond all reasonable bounds.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, then is the hon. minister aware of the fact that threats have been made that all plants will close in Alberta if one is put on strike by the workers?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, the question would apply in nearly any industry as labour relations are constituted in Canada on a national basis. As recently as yesterday afternoon I spoke to a senior official of the union involved. A national representative is on his way to assist in this matter here locally in Alberta. Certainly when one plant shuts down there is a question as to whether the others will or will not. That's always a possibility. But at this point it's completely and utterly hypothetical.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER:

Might this be the last supplementary on this point?

MR. HO LEM:

Thank you. Can the hon. minister advise this House what steps will be taken to ensure that prices are stabilized in meat products during this time of negotiation?

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty obvious that the thing that has the greatest influence in stabilizing prices is adequate production. As the hon. member is aware, there have been a great number of steps taken in this regard by the Department of Agriculture, in fact, to stabilize production so that there is an adequate supply for every Albertan and, in fact, [for] a great percentage of the population of Canada. That, in my view, is the way that prices are stabilized - by production.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Possibly the hon. member might revert to this topic later if there is time.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Macleod.

Child Protection - Ad Campaign

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Health and Social Development. Will there be a continuation of the advertising campaign which has made the public aware of the Child Protection Registry?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, no decision has been taken about continuing advertising of that particular program. The important time for the advertising was when the program was being introduced. I think, if necessary, from time to time to acquaint people with where they

can be in touch with the necessary agencies for purposes of child protection, then some lesser amount of advertising might still be done.

MR. COOPER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does the department plan to introduce any legislation which would alter the laws concerning child abuse?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may recall that the government, in bringing in the legislation regarding child abuse and in particular the legislation covering the child battery register and reporting system last year, indicated that the punishment section of that would not be utilized at the present time because the government was far more interested in an educational program than the other.

I think that is still the case. At the present time no change to implement the punishment provisions is planned, nor any other substantial change.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Macleod followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Livestock Loss - Power Failure

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture, if I could have a brief point of explanation.

On Monday I asked the minister about the aid for livestock which have been lost because of electric power failure. Mr. N. D. Jensen, the appraisal coordinator of the government, has announced that farmers and ranchers who lost livestock as a result of the snow storm at the end of April will be eligible for provincial assistance.

Could the minister give us the criteria or the guidelines over and above, say, that electric power loss?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, just to clarify that matter. Any losses are related to the power losses. The other types of losses will be handled under our livestock disaster or indemnity fund in the normal manner.

MR. BUCKWELL:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask the hon. minister, will aid be given to those for, say, poor management?

DR. HORNER:

No, Mr. Speaker. That's why I appreciate the opportunity to clarify.

MR. BUCKWELL:

A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister put an ad in the daily papers of the province listing the criteria on which they would be paid?

DR. HORNER:

We'll certainly distribute the information in the affected area.

MR. HINMAN:

Mr. Speaker, my question is, will the same deadline date May 15, apply, in making applications under the livestock disasters act?

DR. HORNER:

That's an ongoing program, Mr. Speaker, using money from the Horned Cattle Trust Fund with regard really to "acts of God" types of disasters. There is no deadline on it.

MR. DRAIN:

A supplementary on the same subject, Mr. Speaker. Does this include all areas of the province for such things as unexpected snow storms, cold weather, et cetera?

DR. HORNER:

Let us be clear, Mr. Speaker. The one program is an ongoing program that has to do primarily with predator losses. The other was a severe storm that damaged electrical facilities in the Calgary area. In that storm there was \$1 million worth of damage to electrical lines about half of them belonging to Calgary Power and half to the rural electrification associations in the area. In addition to that there were a number of losses because of the lack of electricity in some of these areas. It points up, Mr. Speaker, the requirement that major livestock producers, particularly in controlled confinements, have auxiliary units on hand.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Highwood followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Legislature Sitting - Victoria Day

MR. BENOIT:

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. Government House Leader what the government's intention is with regard to sittings of the Legislature during the May Day weekend of May 19 and 20?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, we would see the House not sitting on Monday, May 20, which I believe is a holiday throughout Alberta. So the House would adjourn on the previous Friday and come back on Tuesday, May 21 at 2:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Wetaskiwin Land Purchase

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Was the minister made aware at an early date of the purchase of the 2,000 acres in the Wetaskiwin area by a German syndicate?

MR. RUSSELL:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Was Dr. Platt or any member of his committee made aware of this particular purchase?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could respond to the hon. member in that I've been aware of the ownership by the so-called German syndicate. My information is, Mr. Speaker, that it's primarily land that was bought in fact, by an Edmonton company whose principals happen to be of German descent.

Foreign Investment Committee

MR. NOTLEY:

A question, if I may, to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. In light of the recent sale of others in the province, can the minister advise the Assembly whether the government is giving any consideration to introducing the interim report of the Foreign

Investment Committee as it applies to an ongoing monitoring agency, prior to the land committee report?

DR. HOPNER:

No, Mr. Speaker. It is not our intention.

Land Use Forum

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary to the hon. Premier. Has the hon. Premier issued any guidelines to foreign land buyers with regard to disclosing publicly the intention to purchase in order to prevent secret purchases?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe those are matters that are within the terms of reference of the Land Use Forum. We'll await their report and their recommendation.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

A supplementary to the Premier. In light of the concern of the citizens of Alberta because of purchases such as this, is there any consideration to implementing or bringing in any kind of land freeze legislation prior to the Land Use Forum report?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, we are rather surprised to receive a question from the other side restricting the freedom of sale by the farmers of the province. Certainly we don't subscribe to that view and we think the farmers of this province would have the same reaction that they did in the province of British Columbia.

MR. HO LEM:

A supplementary to the hon. Premier. What steps does the Premier plan to take to deal with unemployment resulting from consolidation of several smaller farms into one ...

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is making an allegation in the nature of debate.

MR. NOTLEY:

A final supplementary question, if I may, to the hon. Premier. Can the hon. Premier advise the Assembly whether he has any information as to when we might have the report of the land use commission?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be in the approximate area of a year and a half from now, having regard to the schedule and the three phases, if the hon. member is referring to the final report of the forum.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Gasoline - Wholesale Price Increase

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier. Can the Premier advise the Assembly whether he has had any discussions with federal officials and with officials of major oil companies concerning the date when we might expect the wholesale price increase in gasoline as a result of the recent oil agreement?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we have anything current on that particular subject today. It may be in the next few days we will have. My recollection is that there was a tentative target of an increase for May 15, but whether or not that will be maintained, I don't have any current information. Perhaps in a few days I might have more.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Can the Premier advise the Assembly whether he has had any discussion again with federal officials and major oil companies concerning the extent of the wholesale price increase as a result of the crude oil agreement?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, no recent discussions.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Day Care - - - Calgary

MR. LEF:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Development. In light of recent reports regarding reduction in the Calgary preventative social services' budget for 1974, are there any provisions by which those two day care programs which were cut by the city, especially the Thornhill project in my constituency, might be allocated funding to proceed with their already scheduled project?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think the question that probably should be asked by people of Calgary, in regard to support for the day care program, is to the municipal government. The question might well be, now that they have the money, what have they done with it, if there is any shortage. Calgary receives a sum of \$155,000 more this year than they received last year for the purpose of day care, an increase of 29.5 per cent over the previous year.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is this the total amount requested by this municipality of Calgary?

MR. CRAWFORD:

No, Mr. Speaker. The amount requested was more but my understanding of the budgeting of a responsible provincial government is that sometimes amounts asked for are not given precisely as requested.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister advise how much he responsibly reduced the application by the City of Calgary?

MR. SPEAKER:

The question is probably correct in substance even though it may not be proper in form.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I don't take the position that the Department of Health and Social Development "reduced" the application at all. I take the position that the application was more than was allotted to the City of Calgary. They would know that with an increase of 29.5 per cent that they can implement a strong and good program with that and need not go beyond such a large increase.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Nursing Homes Subsidy

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development. My question, Mr. Speaker, is this. Has an order in council been signed authorizing an increase in the nursing home subsidy? And further, Mr. Speaker, if the order in council hasn't been signed, when can we expect it to be signed?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I expect that at the meeting of cabinet next week, the proposals of the Alberta Hospital Services Commission will be considered and would expect they would be made the subject of an order in council at that time.

MR. SPFAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary McCall followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge West.

Seat Belts

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Highways and Transport. In view of your statements, in the House this afternoon, regarding seat belts, will the government be entering into a program of advertising, promoting the usage of seat belts for the safety of passengers and drivers?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, the program that I announced today was support for the program the Alberta Safety Council is promoting.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, my subsequent question was, will the provincial government be entering into a program similar to that?

MR. COPITHORNE:

I didn't catch the first part of the hon. member's question.

MR. HO LEM:

The supplementary question, Mr. Minister, is, will the provincial government be entering into a program promoting the usage of seat belts for passengers and drivers in 1974?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, we are giving the Alberta Safety Council support in the promotion of its program.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Highways and Transport. Is it policy within the Department of Highways and Transport that the minister and employees of that department that they fasten seat belts while driving government cars on government business?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, the usage of seat belts in Alberta is not a compulsory law.

MR. GRUENWALD:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't my question. But nevertheless, a supplementary to the Premier. Is it policy for the members of cabinet and senior civil servants who operate government cars to wear and fasten their seat belts?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, we trust that all hon. members on both sides of the House, as well as people involved in the positions described in the hon. member's question, would, of course, use the best possible judgment in those matters. But there is no sense of compulsion.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Mr. Speaker, the question requires a one word answer. Is it policy?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, it's not policy to be compulsory - it's policy to use good judgment.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Legislature Grounds - Security

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. Member for Calgary McCall drew to my attention that the watchman who patrols the Legislature grounds and the surrounding buildings was accompanied by a dog. He asked if I would get some information about that. I have been able to do so and I wonder if I may take this opportunity to supply the information.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Doggy stories?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I was asked who owned the dog. I've been told it's owned by Wackenhut of Canada and it is that firm which does the patrolling of the Legislature grounds. Since May 1 the man who does that has been accompanied by a dog when he is on the evening shift. It was May 1 of this year, Mr. Speaker, that that firm was retained for this function.

I was also asked who had trained the dog, and I was told it was trained by Command Dog Services, Edmonton. I have also been advised, Mr. Speaker, that the dog was not attack-trained.

I have today, Mr. Speaker, reviewed the duties of the watchman with the persons responsible for the security of the Legislature grounds. While I appreciate that he has encountered some difficulties in ensuring there is not activity on the grounds that prevents the enjoyment of those grounds by members of the public, as a result of reviewing his duties and the situations he encounters, I'm satisfied there is no need for him to be accompanied by a dog and have directed that the dog no longer accompany the watchman on his rounds.

MR. KOZIAK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. minister either confirm or deny rumours that the dog's name was Albert?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. GRUENWALD:

Mr. Speaker, my questions were exhausted in supplementaries regarding seat belts.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Conflict of Interest - Cabinet Ministers

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Premier. It is regarding the regulations for cabinet ministers concerning conflict of interest.

My question is, Mr. Premier, do ministers have to revise their disclosure of private property interest each year with the Legislative Clerk?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, yes they do, if there have been any material changes they should be filing an amended statement, not just on an annual basis at the end of June but as and when it occurs within a certain period of time. And certainly I have already asked, by way of reminder memorandum to the members of the Executive Council, that if any material changes have occurred, that they file any amended statements that may be required with the clerk at least before the end of June.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question then. Who decides which investments must be placed in the blind trust? Or is this left up to the judgment of the minister?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the question of the disclosure is disclosure of all of the relevant material other than that which is in the blind trust. So it is either disclosed publicly or it's in the blind trust.

MR. WYSE:

One last supplementary question. Is the government considering setting out conflict of interest guidelines for officials of provincial Crown corporations?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, yes. I thought I had dealt with that a year ago. We are in the process - not just for Crown corporations but for all the senior public servants at the deputy minister level - of completing that and I believe I answered it extensively last session. But to refresh the hon. member's memory on that, our approach is that, because the vast majority of the personnel involved did not enter the public service on the basis of such a condition, we have left it - rather than on public disclosure - that they will file with myself personally and I accept the responsibility [of] that particular situation for them. Over a course of time we hope to phase it in to a public disclosure situation, comparable to the ministers.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I wonder if the hon. Premier could tell the house where we get the final definition of a blind trust?

MR. SPEAKER:

Clearly the hon. member might wish to consult a solicitor about that.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Ask Ludwig.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I did consult a solicitor. He must have been a poor one because he said I would have to ask the Premier, and that's what I'm doing.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member's solicitor's advice doesn't amend the rules.

The hon. Member for Sedgewick-Coronation followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Local Organizations - Grants

MR. SORENSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Premier. What is the procedure used in distributing grants to local organizations, for example, is it by mail, by the MLA or by some other means?

MR. DIXON:

By the MLA on the other side.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there is a variety of ways, as there is a variety of grants. It's the importance of making sure that there is a maximum degree of communication and recognition of the voluntary groups involved.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Little Bow followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

Matrimonial Property

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General. Has any consideration been given to extending the date of June 30 to provide more time for recommendations on the report on matrimonial property which was done by the Institute of Law Research and Reform?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I am sure there is nothing definitive about that time limit. There have been a number of statements in the House, Mr. Speaker, by the Solicitor General and others indicating the importance with which the government regards this subject matter. I think the reason for the suggested date was to enable the institute to prepare a final report at the earliest possible time. But certainly there is no limitation on time for people to submit their recommendations to either the institute or the government.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I would just ask a supplementary. To the Attorney General, to whom would the recommendations be made in government, to yourself or to the Solicitor General?

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I think the recommendations might quite appropriately come to any member of the House. I would think that it would be equally appropriate, if they want to address them to a minister, to address them to the Solicitor General or to myself.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller.

Floods - Road Repairs

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Highways and Transport. Would the hon. minister outline the basis on which grants will be made to repair damage to county and municipal district roads caused by the floods this spring?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I have only recently written a letter to all the counties and municipalities to give me the assessment of the damages that have been done. It will be worked jointly through the disaster fund with Dr. Horner, and determined after we have an appraisal of the damages that have been done.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Alberta-Alaska Air Service

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. With reference to the negotiations for air service between Alberta and Alaska, which have been going on for some eight years and which, I understand, are now apparently successful, has the minister any information on when this service will commence?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, Mr. Speaker. We haven't had the information from Mr. Marchand as yet, and I doubt whether we'll have it for a little while.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary McKnight.

Huntington Hills Kindergarten - Facilities

MR. LEE:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Education. Has the minister received any representation from the advisory council of the Huntington Hills Community Association kindergarten in my constituency, requesting a possible allocation of portable school rooms for early childhood education use in that community?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I did receive a very thoughtfully prepared petition from those people containing a good deal of useful background information.

MR. LEE:

Supplementary question. Are there any provisions by which their request might be facilitated through the public or separate school board, through the school buildings branch within the department?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think I could say that I would tend to look favourably upon a request by either or both of the school boards in Calgary with respect to additional portable facilities for early childhood [education] there, provided the utilization guidelines are followed.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Bow.

Meat Industry - Labour Relations (Cont.)

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs. As the Minister of Agriculture has a contingency plan for producers in the event of a meat cutters' strike, does the Minister of Consumer Affairs have a contingency plan for consumers?

MR. DOWLING:

A contingency plan for what purpose, Mr. Speaker?

MR. WILSON:

For the supply of protein in the form of meat, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DOWLING:

Well, there are all sorts of contingency plans, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier, our programs of agriculture and farm production are geared to maximize the production of the farming community. Every one of the Department of Agriculture programs is designed for that very purpose; to keep the farmer producing his produce and to keep him in a position of making a profit so he stays in the business.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Consumer Affairs. Could the hon. minister advise what the contingency plan is for consumers from the standpoint of being able to buy meat in the event of a meat cutters' strike?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Have you got a deep freeze?

MR. DOWLING:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I have no idea that there is going to be a meat packers' strike.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

174. Mr. R. Speaker asked the government the following question:

With regards to Rural Gas Co-ops:

1. What Rural Gas Co-ops initiated gas delivery in 1973 and 1974 to their consumers? How many consumer "hook-ups" are in operation in each respective rural co-op?
2. What is the total number of potential "hook-ups" in Alberta?
3. What are the estimated gross costs per consumer of the rural gas co-ops which have made submissions to the government in 1974?
4. How many gas co-ops have been given a permit to proceed with construction to date?
5. What is the Department of Telephones and Utilities' estimated pounds of resin for manufacture of plastic pipe available for construction of rural gas co-ops in 1974 and the respective sources?

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Assembly agrees to the question. I hope it is understood that where I've mentioned 1974 in the question, I'm thinking in terms of the months January, February, March and April of 1974.

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. member wishing to amend the question?

MR. P. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I was just wanting clarification as to interpretation. I don't think an amendment is necessary.

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, we're quite ready to provide the most recent figures, as up-to-date as possible.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, before Motions for a Return are called, I wonder if I could rise on a question of privilege to respond to a question relating to a motion for a return raised by the hon. Member for Calgary Bow yesterday.

I've discussed the matter of interpretation of the motion for a return with the hon. member and I think I now fully understand the information he is requesting. It would be our intention to submit additional information to complete Motion for a Return No. 131.

MR. WILSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We thank him for his statement made just now and accept his apology.

MOTIONS FOR A RETURN

175. Mr. Dixon proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return showing:

1. The names of registered owners and the legal land description of all property purchased since January 1, 1972 by the Department of the Environment in conjunction with the Department of Lands and Forests, being lands classified as "flooded lands".
2. The names of the present renters, the amount of rent being paid to the government and the location and amount of land rented which was originally purchased by the government as flooded lands in the province.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the government is prepared to supply the information requested and will do so.

[The motion was carried.]

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Moved by Dr. Buck:

Be it resolved members of this Assembly strongly recommend the creation of a select committee of this Legislature to study and make recommendations upon all aspects of ambulance service in rural Alberta.

Moved by Mr. Harle:

That the motion be amended by striking out all words after "Assembly" and by substituting the following therefor: "recommend that the government give consideration to studying and making recommendations upon all aspects of ambulance service in Alberta".

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Farran]

MR. FARRAN:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much time I've got left. Perhaps you could help me with that point. I believe it's around 20 minutes.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, on that request, it sounded like he has talked too long already.

MR. FARRAN:

Can you help me there, Mr. Speaker?

MR. LUDWIG:

Call an ambulance.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Think of something, Roy.

MR. SPEAKER:

I have been informed by the Clerk Assistant that the hon. minister has six minutes remaining of his allotted time.

MR. FARRAN:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I should begin by saying that I find it much easier to speak on this subject than to listen to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View.

MR. LUDWIG:

Same to you, always.

MR. FARRAN:

To summarize my learned address of a few weeks ago on the subject of ambulance service in Alberta ...

MR. LUDWIG:

I thought it was garbage trucks.

MR. FARRAN:

... I would like to suggest that when the government gives this the careful consideration envisaged in the very excellent amendment by the hon. Member for Stettler, it should consider an ambulance service which is based on the hospital system throughout Alberta. The cogent point here is that ambulance service should be regarded as part of the general health delivery system; that the cost of the ambulance service should be shared on a matching basis with the federal government like other hospital services.

The attendants and drivers of ambulances should be of a dual-purpose nature, able to perform as male orderlies in out-patient and emergency departments while they are waiting for calls. This, of course, is a much more productive exercise for them than playing cribbage, which is the usual way of killing spare time in a fire department.

I believe that the ambulance service should be as high in quality as Alberta deserves. The provision of oxygen should be mandatory for all ambulances. It's not enough for an ambulance merely to be a converted limousine of ancient vintage which would be liable to break down on the way to the hospital. I believe there should be standards set for the mechanical proficiency of the ambulances. There should be certain educational standards set for the orderlies and drivers.

There is a question of law involved in exactly how far first aid can go on an emergency basis in the event of an accident. This is a very complicated part of the law of the land and has led to some particularly interesting results in the United States, where good samaritans have found to their horror that they have been charged with causing damage when they had only been intent on helping a victim. So guidelines must be very carefully laid down as to how much treatment can be given by the semi-skilled paramedics of an ambulance crew.

There was an attempt, in Calgary's ambulance service history, to provide a doctor with every ambulance call. But I believe the expense would be prohibitive. Really the ambulance should concentrate, mainly, upon delivering injured people as rapidly and efficiently as possible to the hospital, where expert service can be given.

The question as to whether an ambulance service should be financed wholly by the state or whether it should be let by private contract on a partial subsidy basis is one that the government will also have to consider. In the city of Edmonton a private ambulance service has functioned reasonably well and, I believe, to the satisfaction of most of the population. The private ambulance services in the city of Calgary, in recent years, were not quite so satisfactory which led the city into providing ambulances at state expense.

I believe the government must also give consideration to the degree of ambulance support through the Blue Cross option of a general health insurance network. At the moment Blue Cross only pays, I understand, some \$15 per ambulance call. The cost of ambulance calls is running somewhere in excess of \$20 and in some cases as high as \$30 per call.

I believe the government, in giving consideration, should also look into the question of extra charges which are often made by ambulance companies to people who travel as passengers with the injured. They regard this as an extra call and will sometimes charge an extra \$15 for somebody to travel in the ambulance and hold the hand of the patient. This seems to me to be unfair. The fact that a member of the family travels in the ambulance does not increase the expense to the ambulance company.

The basic question before us then is whether ambulance service should be provided through hospitals and the health delivery system wholly at the expense of the various levels of the state; whether it should be on a contract basis to private enterprise with some degree of subsidy; or whether the users should pay all or part of the cost of the service.

The present situation is that ambulance service beyond the main cities is very far short of a standard of perfection. The whole collection field for ambulance service is a very difficult one. Ambulances may be summoned by a bystander to the scene of an accident, and make a lengthy trip only to discover that the injured persons have been taken by a police car or a private automobile to the hospital and there is nobody there to be responsible for the bill.

This question of bad debts for ambulance services is a very severe one.

MR. LUDWIG:

A point of order. In view of the fact that the minister is labouring under a serious difficulty, could we advise him that his time is up, please?

MR. SPEAKER:

As a matter of fact, according to the clock, his time is not quite up. Perhaps we should allow him 30 seconds grace in view of the hon. member's intervention.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. FARRAN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Incidentally, how much more time do I have, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER:

About 30 seconds.

MR. FARRAN:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I just urge all members to support the amendment, a very thoughtful amendment by the Member for Stettler. I believe it fits the bill very much better than the original motion.

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words on the motion and the amendment. I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Clover Bar for bringing the motion to the Legislature, and I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Stettler for the amendment.

In view of the information given by the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development, I believe the amendment has a great deal of merit. The major objective of both appears to be to have ambulance matters fully investigated in the province of Alberta.

I personally favour the amendment because I see little use in paying committees to investigate something when the information is already available in the office of the minister or in some of the other offices of the department. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I feel the amendment has a great deal of merit. It's accomplishing pretty well what the motion wanted to do but in a different way and probably by a less expensive method.

I think it's good policy at all times to save public money to the greatest degree possible by having information gathered by the regular staff of our departments. This appears to be what the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development has been doing. I

think we should take advantage of that situation and make use of the information he has secured.

The matter of ambulance service is something that when it is required is very, very urgent. It is not very necessary unless somebody is ill or somebody has had an accident or someone wants to be moved from one hospital to another. Consequently leaving it entirely in the hands of private enterprise has not proven very satisfactory, with the possible exception, I say, possible exception, of the very large cosmopolitan areas where there is a high density of population.

In sparsely populated areas private enterprise could not survive on an ambulance service alone - at least in very, very few, if any - and this creates one of the problems. In those areas when one is involved in an accident on the highway or when one is ill and must be moved, it's just as urgent as it is in a centre of high population density.

Consequently, over the years, there have been many methods of providing ambulance service, as has already been outlined, and I don't intend to go over them. In my own constituency there are at least three methods being used.

In the Gleichen area for a number of years, an insurance agent has operated an ambulance. This has meant life to many people who otherwise might not have survived. He has done this for a number of reasons. It is necessary for him to supplement his own income. He is very interested in this type of thing. He's a highly qualified first aid man and consequently the people in that Gleichen area have had available an ambulance service at a very reasonable rate. His rates are probably considerably less than those for ambulances that would have to come from high population centres because of the 60 miles travelling they would have to do as a dead haul.

In another part of the constituency, the funeral parlour in the Drumheller area has operated an ambulance for a number of years. This, of course, is supplementing his income, but apparently he's not too happy with the service and just recently the City of Drumheller and other municipalities have agreed to subsidize the private operation. This is supported, I suppose, by most of the people but there have been some who object to this subsidization of a private operator who is also engaged in another business which most people consider to be lucrative, the funeral business. The fact of the matter is, ambulance service is required in that area and consequently should be provided. Until some other alternative is provided, I can see little hope of the city council in Drumheller or the Minister of Municipal Affairs, on behalf of the ID, simply saying, we'll wipe our hands of the subsidization necessary to keep this ambulance in operation. Should an alternative come along, then of course that does provide a choice.

Another part of the constituency which is only a small part of my area, of my constituency - and this matter was discussed at the annual meeting called by the M.D. of Kneehill; the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests was there and I also had the pleasure of attending - and at that meeting the Kneehill council outlined, at least was questioned, on what was happening in connection with this very excellent service that is being provided in that area.

I think every municipality in the province could benefit from what is going on, what has been going on, in the M.D. of Kneehill. There they established a volunteer work ambulance service. The municipality has taken the lead and has charged one mill to all ratepayers in the M.D. of Kneehill. With this one mill, they were able to purchase ambulances and so on. The second ambulance had to be secured recently. Every town and village in the area also assesses one mill on their assessment. This, however, has not paid the total cost. There is then a charge for those who require the ambulance service. Residents of the municipality or of the towns and villages that contribute are able to get the first 80 miles free, then they pay a fee after that at a scheduled rate. Outsiders who require an ambulance in that area who have paid nothing towards the service are required to pay regular fees that have been set out by the ambulance.

Put one of the wonderful things about this service is, and I'm sure the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs will appreciate it, the volunteer work that goes on. The people who look after the details of the service, the drivers of the service, the nurses who attend the ambulance, do not make any charge whatsoever. It's completely manned by volunteers, and the standard of service that they have given was the matter of testimonies from many people at that annual meeting in Kneehill. So the dedication there has added greatly to reduced costs and the enhancement of ambulance service. It does take dedicated people to do this day in and day out.

Many people thought when the service first started that people would get weary of well-doing and cease giving their services free after a period of time, but that has not been the case so far. The volunteer work, I think, is exemplary and should be commended. It has been the means of keeping the ambulance costs down.

I would like to commend the M.D. of Kneehill and the towns and villages in that area. Most of it is in the constituency of the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests. Some of it is in mine, in the Drumheller constituency at least. At the annual meeting called by the M.D. of Kneehill every year, it's always a pleasure to hear the report of this ambulance service.

Now those are three methods that are already being used. A semi-private one, it used to be completely private; a subsidization of a private operator; and then one that is carried largely by taxes plus a charge for those who receive the service.

It seems to me there are a couple of other points that should be mentioned. In the constituency we have a very excellent municipal hospital in the city of Drumheller. I've always favoured though never have been able to get such a thing going in that area, but always favoured an ambulance service operating from the hospital. It seems to me they have trained staff there and it fits into the ambulance service. The hospitals have to be manned 24 hours a day every day of the year. It appears there would be little additional cost, some, but not too much in having an ambulance located at a hospital and operated from that hospital. I believe this was also favoured by the hon. Minister of Telephones and Utilities a few minutes ago, but I don't want to put words in his mouth. I certainly favour it and I think it is something that the hon. minister, in pursuing this matter, should follow through to see if it is possible to work with our hospitals in establishing ambulance service throughout the province, certainly in the rural areas of the province where there are really good hospitals.

The other point I would like to mention is that I would not like to see anything done in regard to raising the standard so high in our sparsely populated areas that it would eliminate the ambulance service that is there now. It may not be the very best and it doesn't equal the ambulance service found in our large metropolitan areas, but it is an ambulance service. If it's moved and the qualifications are made too high, if those who drive the vehicles have to have too many qualifications such as first-aid certificates and know how to handle oxygen machines et cetera, it may well be that these ambulances couldn't operate. Then, of course, we say to the people, the present service has a low standard so we won't let you have any type of service.

I think it's far better to have an ambulance service with lower standards than no ambulance service at all. Unless we're able to establish some program province-wide, which would be very, very difficult and probably very costly, I do think we should do everything possible in the meantime to make sure that we do not make it impossible for those who are now carrying on a reasonable service at a very reasonable cost and to a reasonable standard to continue to operate. I would hope that would be one of the major objectives of the motion.

There are two other points I would like to mention. The first one is the service already provided by the Department of Highways and Transport through the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. Those who are hurt in automobile accidents or vehicle accidents on the highway and who are unable to pay the ambulance bill do have access to the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. That fund does pay every year for a number of ambulance calls to people. It's a service which many people don't realize is there. It's provided to those who are unable to pay for the service themselves. Those who are able to pay are expected to pay. I think that is an excellent item.

Some ambulance service is possible under Blue Cross. I would hope that in the study of this whole matter of ambulance service in rural Alberta, the present services that are available would be carefully assessed, and then from that perhaps a new type of ambulance service could evolve. But I would hope that we would not interfere with some of the excellent service that is already being given unless we are able at least to maintain the standard of operation that is already in existence in those areas.

There is an employee of the Alberta Motor Association who has developed a plan of air ambulance for automobile accidents. I would hope that this could also be studied along with the other matters of ambulance service. Without going into the details of the plan, which I would be unable to do at this time in any event, the gist of the proposal is that where there are accidents on major highways reasonably close to large hospitals and where there are landing strips, airplanes, small aircraft or helicopters if there are no landing strips, would be able to pick up the victims, and move them to a hospital quickly and quietly. It does have possibilities. I think it would be fairly costly. Helicopters don't operate that cheaply. But it might be well worth pursuing because if you could save a few lives, then, of course, the service would become very very worth while. Sometimes time is of the essence following a serious automobile accident where sometimes a number of cars and a number of people are involved. So that also should be an item of concern.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that of all these methods, I do look with more favour on an ambulance service that might work out of our major hospitals in rural areas. If that can be done I think it will provide a service at the lowest possible rate and one that would require little subsidization.

In an area like Three Hills, where they have pretty long mileages to operate over, where they can operate this service at one mill plus the amount paid by the people who use the service and operate well under that on the understanding, of course, they are presently using volunteer labour - it would appear it might be possible in the province to have an ambulance service operating from hospitals at a taxation cost of two mills, province-wide. The labour picture comes into that and it would depend on what we would have to pay in addition to the present hospital costs. I would hope that would not be too much, it would just be based on the calls and not stand-by service as most of the time there is staff at the hospital.

If we could secure in this province ambulance service of a reasonable standard in all of our populated rural areas at a cost of two mills or in that vicinity, I think the people would be very, very happy to have that service made available. I think it's well worth looking into to.

Again I would like to thank the hon. Member for Clover Bar for bringing the resolution and the hon. Member for Stettler who moved the amendment. I plan to support the amendment for the reasons given.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, may I revert to Introduction of Visitors?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (CONT.)

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you a group of Grade 8 students from Exshaw School in my constituency. They are accompanied by Mrs. Margaret Cole, Mr. Ken Lister, their bus driver, and their instructor and teacher, Mr. Glen McKenzie. I would ask them to rise and be recognized by the Legislature.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS (CONT.)

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Smoky River.

MR. MOORE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking to the amendment moved by the hon. member, Mr. Harle, I don't believe initially, Mr. Speaker, that the amendment substantially changes the intention of the Member for Clover Bar who introduced this resolution to the Assembly. Certainly from the comments we have heard, in the course of giving ambulance service some consideration, it is also valid to consider the kind of service which is available other than in rural Alberta, including the cities in Alberta.

The only other substantial change in the amendment is, of course, the reference to a study by the government rather than by a select committee of this Legislature.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, we also know that considerable studies have been done in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada with regard to ambulance service and it may well be that the government now has in its possession - if those things were gathered together - sufficient information to provide them with facts which would lead to a conclusion, one way or the other, as to the moves which should be made in providing ambulance service.

It could also be quite possible, Mr. Speaker, for the provision of adequate ambulance service to be made much more quickly, given the government the opportunity to go ahead according to the member's amendment to the original motion.

I would like to speak for just a few minutes, first of all commending the members who brought in the resolution and the amendment for making their case for improved ambulance services, in particular in rural Alberta.

The area in which I live, Mr. Speaker, including much of my constituency, is an area which is typical of many parts of rural Alberta wherein there are, at the present time, very little or no ambulance services in existence. I don't want the members, Mr. Speaker, to think for a moment that is entirely bad. We have had, I think, in the community I live in probably not more than one person out of one hundred who is admitted to hospital for various reasons, who is delivered there by an ambulance. Certainly if we were able to call an ambulance at any time without any cost and expect it to come and deliver patients to the hospital, we would be faced with costs that I am sure could not be covered by a simple mill rate levy or by the province making a contribution in that regard.

One of the things which concerns me about ambulance service in rural Alberta is not, in particular, the wheels and the motor vehicle and the siren and the flashing light and the stretcher and so on, which some people may regard as the integral parts of an ambulance, but rather it is the need for trained people to operate that ambulance, whether it be one of those which looks like an ambulance or whether it be a station wagon which is available at all times with a minimum amount of equipment.

Mr. Speaker, in the years I was in business operating a service station I saw a good number of accidents wherein people needed immediate medical attention. Telephone systems and transportation were such that it was not that difficult to get them, in a fairly comfortable way, from the place where the accident may have occurred to the nearest hospital. What was difficult, Mr. Speaker, was finding someone in that community who had the knowledge of how to move them and what should be done immediately, before they could reach the hospital and the attention of a medical doctor.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I think that falling right in line with ambulance service - if you can say, and I believe you can, that ambulance service not only includes the wheels and the vehicle which deliver people from the scene of their accident or their illness to the hospital, but also includes, and more importantly so, those people who are supposed to be equipped and prepared to drive that vehicle. I think we could improve our situation greatly if we were to include in our quest for better ambulance service, a quest in rural Alberta for a system which would vastly [increase] the number of people with first-class first-aid experience. In my opinion there is not now the number of people there should be in any of our communities who have the kind of first-aid ability which is required to do the things which are necessary sometimes in the very first few minutes of serious or moderately serious accidents. That isn't to say, Mr. Speaker, that as some of the hon. members have pointed out - the need exists certainly for well-equipped ambulances operating out of hospitals. I think that's important and I believe there are two different ways that you might approach that in terms of costing.

Mr. Speaker, probably the plan most popular with the general public may be to implement a government-operated scheme or a scheme operated by private industry which is paid for 100 per cent by government. That would be the kind of scheme which would not in any way discriminate against anyone. It would be free and available to all.

I want to carry on with those remarks and say, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health and Social Development who may be responsible for developing such a system, that I believe we must not fail to recognize the need for some form of deterrent by way of charging individuals a certain percentage of the cost of ambulance services. Certainly we have experienced, in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada, the kind of thing which happens when we come in with a health care program of any kind which is 100 per cent paid out of public funds. There then appears to be no deterrent - at least to any great extent - to individuals to use the kind of caution and care they should in using those available services.

Certainly I can see that with ambulance services the situation would be even more difficult to control than it is with services provided by doctors and hospitals. Because, in fact, when an individual calls the ambulance number to get an ambulance to come and pick up a patient, there is no one except the person who is calling, who is probably unknown to the ambulance operator, who has the opportunity to make any judgment on whether or not that ambulance is needed, how serious it is, whether or not the individual is in a serious condition and can be brought to hospital in some other manner.

So I think it is incumbent, Mr. Speaker, that any kind of system we might develop which would provide ambulance services either in rural or urban Alberta, should carry with it, particularly for those who have the ability to pay - and that's the large majority of Albertans - some deterrent effect by way of paying 50 per cent or some other percentage of the total cost of that ambulance service.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I think the other thing you can do in implementing ambulance services - and probably the best thing - is to implement a scheme of support from three levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, to the private

ambulance operators who do exist today and those who might exist in the future, implement a scheme of support to them so that they might be able to substantially reduce the competitive rates they would have to charge if they were charging all that the service actually costs them to operate. In that regard, as I mentioned earlier, you would be retaining some of the principle of payment by those who wish to use the service.

I want to just conclude those remarks, Mr. Speaker, by saying I believe it's extremely important that the government move on the question of reviewing the ambulance services that are available now and take some action in those areas where ambulance services are indeed not what we would expect in 1974, leaving with the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, the caution that we should not involve ourselves in a completely free service. In addition to that, the very important part of ambulance service involving training first aid people and training personnel should perhaps take on a greater degree of priority than it has in the past. We should not, perhaps, direct all our efforts, with regard to the provision of ambulance services, to the ambulance per se, but rather to people who have the ability to move in very quickly and provide the necessary first aid during that period of time from when an individual takes sick or gets in an accident until he reaches medical attention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, after listening to the hon. members who spoke on the motion and the amendment, I'm of the opinion that all the government has to do is read all the advice it got, throw out 90 per cent of it and still come out ahead of the game.

It appears that the hon. Minister of Telephones carried on almost ad nauseum with all that he knows about ambulances, and that in itself might just be sufficient for the minister, Mr. Speaker, perhaps more than he could utilize at the present time.

It's interesting when we deal with motions and amendments, Mr. Speaker, that all that was said in favour of the amendment in not setting up an agency or a committee in this motion was exactly the converse of what was said with regard to Motion No. 5 when I moved a similar amendment. It's rather humorous, but it's the way it turned out. I would like to just sort of apply all that, and then maybe we could proceed to do these things a little faster than our motions sometimes indicate the government ought to move.

I think both the motion and the amendment indicate quite clearly that there is a high level of interest in this issue and perhaps a great amount of improvement is required to give the people the type of service they would like to have. I think that in some areas of Alberta ambulance service is quite adequate. It's provided perhaps through the private enterprise system where there is a great concentration of people. They can afford to operate. But because Alberta is such a vast province and people live in small communities, it may be necessary for the government to step in more and more to provide them with the service they must have. I think it's a question of cost. I just can't imagine a private enterprise, an entrepreneur, moving into an area that has six towns, each 20 or 30 miles apart, and expecting to make a living. So the government must intervene in areas where it just isn't economically feasible to provide the service through the private sector.

I appreciate the remarks by the hon. Member for Smoky River who stated that we ought not to provide it entirely free; that there ought to be some kind of surcharge because people might just take advantage of these things. It's easy to call an ambulance. You might have a serious headache and the quickest way to get treatment is to call an ambulance. But there has to be a bit of restraint on the use of ambulances. Some people in cities, when someone gets a slight cut, then they have an emergency situation. Others would probably take time and deal with it properly.

But all I wish to say, Mr. Speaker, is that it doesn't really matter very much whether we have the motion or the amendment. The indication to the government and the hon. minister in charge is that this is an area where we need some improvement and we need some action to be taken. I don't think we need any kind of lengthy study. I'm sure that the hon. members who spoke indicated that they have a detailed knowledge of all the problems and ramifications of this particular issue.

So with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, it is really of little concern whether we have a committee set up or whether the government conducts a study, because, as I stated, the government does know what the problem is if they can assess their material. The main thing is that we get government action on this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that there was the amendment to the original motion. Although in principle I am in agreement with the original motion, the amendment broadens it.

One aspect of the original motion I did not particularly agree with was that the study or review ought to be done by way of a select committee of the Legislature. The amendment removes that kind of specific method of studying the matter of ambulance service in the province and also broadens it. From just being a study or review of ambulance service in rural Alberta it broadens it to include all of Alberta. I think a wise decision was made on the part of the hon. Member for Stettler who moved the amendment because, indeed, I feel that the whole of the ambulance service throughout the province, whether it be rural or urban, requires a review in many aspects.

I know that not too far in the past, the City of Edmonton contracted with one ambulance company only to provide its services insofar as the city was concerned, with which I am not sure that I totally agree, because if by some chance an emergency arises where every possible unit that can provide the type of service which we normally refer to as ambulance service is required, it would require a very quick move on the part of the city authorities to extend the kind of contract they had entered into with the one company. Or there may be hesitancy and delay on the part of others offering the service that may be required and any such delay may, of course, result in the loss of lives. I think that an overall review needs to be made as to the real kind of consideration that is given where a monopoly - I would say a monopoly is being given to one company when perhaps there are others who wish to provide the same kind of service.

I've also had some complaints with respect to ambulance service where an individual who is in the company of another and has no particular relationship, other than perhaps acquaintance, sees that the individual is in need of immediate medical attention, calls for ambulance service and perhaps, under the circumstances, accompanies that individual to a hospital or wherever the closest facility might be to be able to obtain medical attention. The ambulance company usually requires the accompanying individual to sign a form which generally is interpreted to some degree of responsibility. This sometimes leads to hesitation on the part of individuals completely unrelated or unconnected with the individual who needs the service of an ambulance. It sometimes makes one hesitant about becoming involved. That kind of policy has its own repercussions.

I think there needs to be a review of this kind of policy or need with regard to ambulance service, whether this is a peculiarity of a particular ambulance company or whatever. I think a review of the whole area of ambulance service within the province really does need some consideration.

Some points have been mentioned in relation to qualified personnel or people in each case to be present where ambulance service is being provided. I think that's very important; that there be some personnel standards required and set, but such standards should certainly be realistic to meet the need, whenever the occasion arises.

I think another point was raised but perhaps not very definitively and that is the minimum standard of equipment that ought to be present in any unit used as an ambulance - as a carrier to take a patient from whatever location to a facility of medical service. I think it would be important to standardize the equipment that should be in each unit throughout the province.

It may be necessary perhaps to look at the legislation or the requirements in other provinces, and perhaps to have some uniformity in this area. That may be desirable with regard to personnel and equipment standards.

I think there needs to be some clarification again, whether it now exists in legislation or not, of the right of way of ambulances on highways, whatever classification they may be. We find, as the vehicular traffic count increases, that there are more and more accidents involving ambulances that are already carrying patients to gain some medical assistance. I think there needs to be either reclarification, or if there is an absence in legislation as to right of way, that certainly needs to be considered.

I'm not sure that there doesn't need to be some review of the rights of a patient being carried to a facility where medical service is to be provided. If certain treatment is given, what are the responsibilities of the personnel in this unit who are applying such kinds of emergency medical attention that might be determined as warranted in order to deliver the patient alive to the destination for the medical service?

I think it's important that we support this resolution with the amendment in order that - I rather think there have been areas that have now been reviewed by various departments, or at least within the Department of Health and Social Development, and perhaps by other groups that have requested or, out of self-interest, have already attempted some study and review in the area. I think it's necessary to apply this on a

broad scope, but not in the sense that we need to wait to have a legislative committee appointed to deal with the problem within the limited time frame that members of the Legislature generally have.

I feel it is rather essential that we address our minds to having a completion of this study at an early date. I do hope we will have the opportunity to vote on this resolution as amended this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DR. MCCRIMMON:

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this subject. I've had a number of years' experience in various forms of local government. I would like, more or less, to confine my remarks to the rural area or small towns, because this is something which I know a bit about. It's a different picture altogether in the major urban centres. In one case you have a scattered population, small concentrations of people. In the city I believe an ambulance service can be run, and run as a business. It is a major business in major urban centres like Calgary or Edmonton. In the rural areas or smaller towns, it isn't a business. It's a sideline, usually to another business.

A difficulty in the rural areas is the fact that any type of ambulance service is a 7 day a week and 24 hour a day service that has to be available to the general population in fairness to the population. When you start thinking who in the local area is or can be available for this type of service you're pretty restricted in those who can operate an ambulance as a sideline to their business.

You only have a few groups and those probably include the firemen - some type of local fire service, the hospital, the police, the undertaker's establishment, or a private group or private citizen. When you consider that in each case you have to have trained personnel with the ambulance, it's quite a difficult proposition. In some cases in the rural area it is a combination of some of these factors that make up your local ambulance service.

With the firemen, in most local towns the fire service is usually on a volunteer basis. It's pretty difficult to run an ambulance with a fire service, although your firemen usually have several semitrained personnel - in other words, in first aid and this type of thing - who are eligible for this type of work.

The hospitals, as with most hospitals in most smaller towns, range from 20 to 50 beds. Usually it's staff restriction that prevents the optimum use of a hospital as an ambulance base because particularly at night the staff problem incurs an additional expense that can't be overlooked. There is no way you can normally take two trained staff [members] out of a hospital of 20, 30 or 40 beds and leave the hospital short-staffed while answering an ambulance call.

Now, with the police, usually they will act in a mediator capacity. In other words, they will pass along the message or call. They can act as a clearing house. But really they don't appear to be too anxious to get involved in any type of ambulance service.

In our town the difficulty of ambulance service was a chronic problem that came up annually. For years practically the only one we could get to service the public was the undertaker's parlour. He was very good about this and was on call basically 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He did run it as a sideline.

However, it is always the financial end of it, as was brought up before. The remuneration is pretty small because there just aren't that many calls. You can't afford extra staff. Nowadays it is the usual picture. Everybody wants more time off than perhaps they used to have. The situation is that nobody likes to undertake a situation where they're on call 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

A couple of years ago the undertaker's parlour gave up the ambulance service in our town. It was quite a job to find an alternative. As a matter of fact, it was finally worked out that the Alberta Hospital in conjunction - I think my facts are right - with the town and the county went together on a basis where the personnel from the Alberta Hospital acted as ambulance drivers and staff.

This seems to be working pretty well for several reasons. One is that there is no shortage of trained personnel there. I believe it's tied in with the fire-fighting system at the institution, there is a definite roster of call, I think. This seems to be working fairly well.

The point brought up by the hon. Member for Drumheller, the fact that each town more or less has to have its own separate ambulance service, I think, is very true because there is no way that an ambulance service can cover a large area in the county. Anytime you get beyond 15 or 20 miles the time factor in itself precludes any efficient ambulance

service. If you want an ambulance, you want an ambulance right now. You don't want an ambulance coming from 30 miles away, gathering up the personnel and getting out there. In the case of an hour to two hours, this is too long. We must have better service than that and it must be, in nearly every town, on a local basis of some sort.

There is another point. I don't know whether the hon. minister can sort out a scheme that will cover the province. I think in nearly every case in every town the situation is just a little different. As I mentioned, the situation in Ponoka now appears to be reasonably well solved whereas two or three years ago it was the same as many other towns. But in each town the situation, I do believe, is different. Can you keep this staff on call for this solid period of time, year in and year out, without considerable expense? Actually getting the staff is probably the biggest problem in the country.

The costs involved are probably one of the main difficulties in the rural area and the small rural community because there is no way an ambulance service can pay its own way. It has to be subsidized. The matter of subsidization usually comes through the town and the county. I believe now, of course, there is some help from the Department of Health and through Blue Cross.

But what was a problem for a number of years was the actual collection of bills. Everybody needs an ambulance right now, but once the ambulance has delivered them if they're sick or hurt or something, once they're better it's a difficult job to collect the proper fees for the service. I know that over the years this has been one of the headaches in small towns.

As far as equipment is concerned, most people in an urban area see the usual ambulance here, but it's just not the case out in the country. Most ambulances in the country are not official ambulances which most people in the city recognize, but usually it's a station wagon fixed up with stretchers and the regular situation, but trained personnel to go along with it.

I think these are just some of the points, as far as information is concerned re ambulance service. I know that off and on, pretty well for the last 20 years, I've been connected in some way or another with local government. This has been a constant point of difficulty. The information regarding this problem in the minister's office must be voluminous indeed. As to the requirement for a committee to study the situation, I think he probably has three times the information in his own office than any committee could ever come up with.

With those points that I would like to bring forth, I would like to urge that the motion as amended be passed because I do feel it is an important matter that should be brought to a point and finalized.

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the few thoughts that I feel I should add at this time are based, in part, upon a question in my mind as to whether or not I have spoken on the amendment. I am just wondering whether I should be speaking now or after the amendment has been voted on, and then speak on the motion as amended. But I would say to hon. members that it is my intention to conclude rather than adjourn debate, and to conclude before 4:30 in order that a vote can be taken. It would be my intention to vote in favour of the amendment and then, of course, on the motion as amended.

I think that all hon. members have agreed that this has been a useful subject to bring before the Assembly in order that various views can be expressed and contributions made, from the perspective of the various members who have knowledge of the situations in both urban and rural settings. I think it is important, in respect to the amendment, that our inquiry into the situation involve ambulance service throughout the province rather than just on a rural basis.

There are a number of issues that could be referred to in any discussion of this, and I recognize that many of them have already been referred to in the speeches made so far. Nevertheless, they are numerous. Just to point out a few of the issues and the various alternatives that must be looked at, and the various interests represented in the issue, I thought I would just note that we have, for example, the issue of the private versus the public sector in the operation of ambulance services. This, by itself, is a very considerable issue. We can't allow that to escape our attention.

We have the question that if the province is going to be making help available, say to municipalities, are we talking capital, operating or a combination of both? Ultimately we have the potential financial involvement, in the federal-provincial conference basis, of the federal government. We have the whole structure, for example, of support for the payment of medical accounts that exists under Alberta Blue Cross and the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission.

We have the whole issue of whether or not ambulances which service areas outside of their own should be provincially supported. In cases presented by some of the municipalities so far, it was pointed out that their municipally-based and municipally-financed services, in fact, expand into areas beyond their own jurisdictional obligations.

I don't think I mentioned yet the whole question of air ambulances and service to the North - a matter of continuing review, concern and definitely a need for upgrading, particularly with the new developments in the North. We have the question of training and the expertise of the paramedical manpower required. I would say to hon. members that I have received numerous delegations on this subject.

I have, of course, the guidance of the resolutions passed by the Alberta Association of Urban Municipalities last year urging a new policy in regard to ambulances upon the provincial government.

We have the benefit of the recent experience in the province of Ontario - studies of their costs, how they have found it possible to finance what is a very broad scheme. Our hope would be that when the time comes we can produce one that is even better suited to province-wide purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude. There is much more that can be said and I hope to say, on another and more appropriate occasion in order, if other members are willing, that the vote can be taken.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. minister close the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

Sorry. Adjourn the debate.

HON. MEMBERS:

No.

[Interjections]

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I have concluded my remarks and would look for another occasion on which I might speak again on the same subject.

MR. SPEAKER:

The debate is adjourned in any event at this time because of it being 4:30 on Thursday afternoon.

All those in favour of the motion as amended, please say, aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Aye.

MR. SPEAKER:

All those opposed, please say, no.

[The motion as amended was carried.]

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I believe there is a slight irregularity in procedure. The amendment was not voted on. You merely called for voting on the motion as amended, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

That's right. The hon. member is perfectly right. I missed the concluding remarks of the hon. minister and perhaps got off to a bad start.

If the House will agree, perhaps we could do the thing properly.

Would all those in favour of the amendment please say aye.

[The amendment was carried.]

MR. SPEAKER:

Are you ready for the question on the motion as amended?

[The motion as amended was carried.]

PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS
OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Bill No. 207 The Public Officials Disclosure Act

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, in rising to debate Bill No. 207 on second reading, I wish to state that the previous motion is a very hard act to follow. I thought the television cameras ought to have been here today during that debate and entitled it Sleepy Hollow. It looked as if there was nothing urgent about the motion, and as I said, Mr. Speaker, I'll try to keep my voice down so I don't disturb too many people who were lulled into a restful situation. May they continue that way.

[Interjections]

I woke a couple up, Mr. Speaker, and that's something.

MR. YOUNG:

On a point of order. If the hon. member cannot address himself to the bill maybe he should cease reflecting upon the conduct of other members of the House.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is so obviously out of order that I think he ought to consult a veterinarian to find out what's wrong with him, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh.

MR. LUDWIG:

And don't howl at me, I've got the floor.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is very timely in view of what has happened in other jurisdictions with regard to public officials, both elected and otherwise, getting into business and getting into trouble. I'm not only referring to the situation in the United States but in other parts of Canada. We had a couple of incidents in Ontario where ministers were getting involved in business which benefited them, or would have, had they not been found out. But they got into business with prior knowledge of what would transpire. I'm talking about ministers and even members getting involved in transactions which are beneficial to them merely because they have knowledge as a result of the office they hold. So this bill is very timely, The Public Officials Disclosure Act.

I would also like to point out that, in my opinion, there are situations developing in this province, and I'm making no reference to any particular situation, that if a public official does get involved in business or gets a pay-out because of his position, it is my opinion that today this government can't do very much about it, except to release an official of that nature. So for that reason this bill is important.

Not so much that I expect it to be passed in this Legislature, the Opposition does not legislate in any parliament or legislature, and this place is no different, Mr. Speaker.

But it is the Opposition's responsibility to bring these ideas to the House for debate and to see what the concern is, whether there is a serious concern about providing some form of legislation to ensure that elected representatives who attain high office in government, and other public officials who may be appointed or hired to conduct business, don't get involved to the detriment of the public.

So the issue is very timely and I believe that it calls for legislation. I understand, and I'm well aware of the fact that the hon. Premier of this province followed suit of the situation developed in Ontario where the hon. Premier of Ontario provided guidelines for his ministers. He didn't provide these guidelines until one or two got seriously involved. I'm not saying that they were, in fact, guilty of any breach of responsibility, but the media made the report that ministers had been involved in land transactions and in other transactions which were things that the public did not expect. So this issue is timely and it deserves a good debate and perhaps some decision as to which way we ought to go.

It's also primarily the responsibility of the Opposition to raise matters of this type. One does not expect the initiative to come from the government side, to state that we don't think our ministers would ever consider being in conflict of their responsibilities, so we don't need it. I believe to that extent, Mr. Speaker, it's only proper that a bill of this nature come from this side of the Legislature. Also the timing of it is excellent.

When I talk about disclosure of conflict of interest of ministers I'm not at all satisfied that a secret trust arrangement solves the problem. It's merely moving the involvement of the minister one step from direct involvement.

MR. FOSTER:

What did you have Albert?

MR. LUDWIG:

So this is the situation that I'm opposed to. The secret trusts are not at all adequate because a word to the wise is sufficient. The minister does not divest himself entirely of his holdings or his business and so to that extent, Mr. Speaker, some hon. members may feel that it is adequate. I say that it is not.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education once more wishes to get some information from me. I'm rather amused because he never imparts any to this Legislature, notwithstanding the opportunity that he gets. He asked me, what did I have? The bill is not at all concerned with what I had. I'm saying that I'm raising the issue now and it's timely. It's been raised throughout the Dominion of Canada. It's been raised in Parliament. It was raised in Parliament by the Conservative party - yes, by the Conservative party that was in office at one time. So it's easy to say, what did we have? We didn't have this issue dealt with. Perhaps if the Opposition had been half alert at the time, it might have brought a bill like this before the House. But it's a timely issue, Mr. Speaker. It's been raised - I believe the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, had set rather strict guidelines for his ministers. It was interesting to note that the Conservative Opposition and the NDP Opposition were not satisfied with guidelines alone. They wanted legislation.

So this is not something that has just crept up from nowhere. This is an issue that is timely, and which is being considered in every province. I believe, but I'm not certain of this, that the British Columbia Legislature has passed legislation - at least they considered legislation of this type to provide some means of control of ministers and high officials getting into business.

When one discusses conflict of interest it is quite easy to extend the term to cover all sorts of involvements of ministers, Mr. Speaker. I believe hon. Premier Davis of Ontario stated that he was recommending that ministers divest themselves of any involvement in personal business after they become ministers. I'm saying that has happened in this province very well and very, very adequately. But I believe that there may be two instances of ministers who may be in conflict, not so much being in business that they should not be in, but they may be involved in business to the extent that they should not be making decisions affecting the public.

I'm talking about a person who may be involved in a large ranching operation. For instance, if a minister has such a large ranch that he may prevent people from access to public lands, to rivers, et cetera, one could not expect him to be without bias in dealing with legislation which may remedy the complaints of people - which would provide him with any desire to bring amendments which may be in conflict of his own position, Mr. Speaker. I'm not singling out anybody in particular. I know that ministers have farmed and continued as ministers through many, many years in this Legislature.

But I am saying that there is a limit to how much involvement a person could have as a minister and still be expected to be impartial in reform where there is public demand for

reform. I'm saying that you can arrive at that extent of involvement in land holdings, that it can, in fact, be a clear-cut case of conflict of interest between his duties to the people as a minister and his desire to protect his own interests. I'm stating that in this province this, in fact, has happened. I would not expect a minister ...

MR. YOUNG:

On a point of order. I'm not at all clear how this relates to the bill which, as I read it, calls for disclosure. I don't follow the hon. member's arguments at all and as a matter of fact, I would submit that they are not relevant to the matter in question.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue. Everything I have said so far deals with conflict of interests of ministers, possible interests of ministers, and even though there may be disclosures, there could still be conflict. So I would like to continue with my remarks on the bill, Mr. Speaker.

There has been a tremendous representation, certainly to the members of the Legislative Assembly, for legislation to amend the opening and closing of road allowances, Mr. Speaker. I am now going to become more specific, in view of the interruption, to state that the hon. Minister of Highways ...

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order again then. Unless there is some place in the bill where it can be shown that public disclosure would affect the kind of matter which is being raised by the hon. member, I submit again that his debate is irrelevant to the bill before us.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'm not dealing with clause-by-clause debate of the bill. I'm dealing with the general principle of conflict of interest, disclosure of conflict of interest and what I believe may be a conflict of interest. This has been permitted in almost every debate of bills in second reading in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

If the hon. members opposite like to have a wide-ranging debate when it's one of their bills and like to restrict me when it's my bill, I don't believe that that is entirely an impartial way of dealing with this, Mr. Speaker. I believe that they're awfully quick for restrictive interpretation when their ox is being gored, but they want it wide open when it's one of their bills, Mr. Speaker. Yes, and I'm not through with the point of order, Mr. Speaker. So ...

[Mr. Ghitter rose.]

Sit down. So I believe that we ought to have this thing settled once and for all. Are we going to be restrictive? Or are we going to be quite permissive? We've had bills here, second reading of government bills where a member has three or four more chances of debating the issue. It was wide open.

But when there's a private bill, a public bill introduced by a private member, this is the only time that it can be debated. To be restrictive now is to say, well, let's drop it and forget about it. The reasons for having a wide-ranging debate on a private member's public bill are a lot greater, it's more reasonable to have a broad debate than on a government bill of which we have four or five instances of a broad debate on the bill.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, if the hon. member would get a lawyer to look at the document we have in front of us, this somewhat sopped piece of legislation, he would realize that it doesn't deal with conflict of interest. There's nothing in this bill, Mr. Speaker, that talks about conflict of interest. I wish there were. All it requires is public disclosure.

So on the general principles, let's talk about public disclosure. But let's not raise these peccadilloes that we're hearing about or this talk that we're getting from the hon. member. Let's deal with the principle.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond. But disclosure of what? Disclosure of holdings to ascertain that there's no conflict of interest. I'm stating, Mr. Speaker, that I might consult the hon. member on a legal matter, but he'd be the last man I'd want to consult on the question of interpretation of rules.

MR. GHITTER:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I don't think he could afford the retainer.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that I'd be in a position where another lawyer would gouge me. So you've had your chance.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Suspicion confirmed.

MR. SPEAKER:

With great respect, it would appear that the hon. member is debating the reasons why there should be disclosure. Unless the hon. member's remarks were clearly irrelevant, it would be the opinion of the Chair that he would be entitled to continue.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I am therefore suggesting that the guidelines of the Premier in this regard, guidelines such that ministers would disclose their holdings to determine whether there is conflict of interest, are not sufficient. It has not been determined sufficient in other Legislatures. We have some outstanding Canadians who took the same view that I'm taking that this ought to be in legislation, it ought to be enforceable.

I am not at all questioning any minister's integrity here, nor the Premier's, Mr. Speaker. But I think that if some minister did get involved in a conflict of interest situation, there's no law to prevent him from doing it. Naturally, he might have a tough time being elected next time around, but that may be four or five years hence. Therefore, there ought to be some means whereby an individual, a citizen of the province, can take action to determine whether a minister has been involved in a conflict of interest and has bettered his position because of his being in the government.

I am not at all referring to The Legislative Assembly Act where, if someone has violated that act, he may be sued for damages and recover in that way. There is a wide area of activities of ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly that can be in conflict with their position. They might buy a piece of land knowing from some inside information in the department that a highway will go through. A government project might be built in some particular part of the city and some high official - not necessarily a minister or a MLA - will get wind of this and invest. This has been done. Therefore we have to have legislation to make it possible to penalize people who get involved in this type of action.

I'm sure that some of the hon. members opposite may want to treat this thing lightly as they have many other issues which were brought before them. That indicates how lightly they treat matters which affect the public. They can set their own standard of responsibility in this House and no one can comment personally on them.

But I think this is a serious issue. Much time was taken in debating this issue in Parliament. The British Columbia Legislature took a long time in settling this issue. I believe the question of disclosure of interest by officials - that includes ministers and high-ranking officials hired by the government - is a current issue. As far as I'm concerned, in this province, it is not resolved.

I've stated that secret trusts are not adequate. I would like to urge the government to arrange to have all the secret trusts which the ministers entered into tabled in this Legislature. Let the hon. members decide whether the agreement between them and a trust company is adequate. I don't believe that any one has, in fact, tabled one of the secret trust agreements that ministers had indicated they entered into to remove their holdings from direct control.

I'm also of the opinion that a secret trust does not take away indirect control, does not do away with indirect control. Certainly a trust company is in business and if it has

a trust agreement with an individual who has considerable means, they would like to retain his good will after he ceases to be a minister or an official of the government. For that reason, I believe that an arrangement, a blind trust or a secret trust is simply not adequate to assure the people that ministers will not dabble and make a little killing on the side. I'm not saying at all that anybody here did it.

But I want to get back to the situation in this province that I'm very concerned about, a situation that has developed where one landowner, a large landowner, can defy the wishes of thousands of people the right to go to public lands, to go to the river ...

MR. SPFAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is now clearly being irrelevant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'll state then that I will not pursue that line of reasoning. But I will state this: that a minister may have disclosed his holdings entirely and still be in serious conflict of responsibility, torn between the desire of serving the public, defending, advocating or supporting the public's wishes and protecting his own property, Mr. Speaker. That exists in this province and it's as good a time to raise it as any.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks I urge hon. members opposite not to treat the situation that because we've got the majority, we don't need this. The Premier has set guidelines. If we don't need guidelines, if this is not an issue, why did the hon. Premier give guidelines to the ministers?

The fact that Premier Davis of Ontario has provided written guidelines for his ministers and the fact that the hon. Premier of this province has seen fit to provide guidelines for the ministers is proof that there is a serious problem. He was concerned that he did not want any of his ministers dabbling, that [he did not want] any of his ministers caught in a conflict of interest situation. So he provided guidelines.

I'm stating categorically that those guidelines are meaningless. They are not enforceable. They just simply have no bearing, no influence on officials other than elected officials in this province. I'm saying that if a deputy or some high-ranking official has influence enough to obtain a profit from his knowledge of what is going on in business between government and the private sector, there is no legislation today to charge him with an offence. In fact, the government would be hard pressed to sue civilly an individual who made such a profit, to seek damages from him.

So for that matter, Mr. Speaker, I'm urging hon. members not only to give favourable consideration to this bill, but to bring forth ideas as to how we might deal with the problem generally. In view of the fact that certainly business has accelerated so tremendously in this province and throughout the country, this is as good a time as any to look.

There is no point in saying that we should do it after the fact. There is no point in waiting until some public officials have become involved and then say, sorry, we can't do anything. We'll bring in legislation now. Perhaps to that extent this bill may be somewhat in advance. I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that what this bill is intended to cure, to prevent, is happening in this province today and has happened. The legislation should be favourably looked at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, in addressing a few remarks to Bill No. 207, which is before the House this afternoon, I want to say at the outset that I'm sure all hon. members would want to take whatever precautions are necessary to remedy any situation that may arise from the [involvement] of members either of this Assembly or of the cabinet, or senior public officials in any alleged concepts of corruption, either real or imagined, and to ensure that any elected officials or senior officers in government service do not avail themselves of opportunities like this. It's a matter of what approach is to be taken.

From the point of view of the comments of the hon. member, who I'm sure was well intentioned in bringing forward this bill, I would suggest the bill is not timely, that the bill doesn't get to the root of the problem if there is one, and that the bill is ill-conceived. I wish to deal with each of these three areas if I may, Mr. Speaker, in my remarks to the bill.

First, I think from the very basic premise, there are matters that have to be considered when one looks in terms of the advisability of passing such legislation; I think, first, Mr. Speaker, in terms of individuals who are contemplating coming into public life, as to whether or not they wish to bare their souls. Maybe it is well that they do so from the point of view of all their activities, past, future and present.

I think also in terms of the need for government to obtain high calibre senior officials within government service and the difficulties government has in attracting people of high calibre. I often think the American procedure, Mr. Speaker, of going into industry and contracting out for a couple of years and bringing highly capable men into government is a very good system and a system we should encourage.

But I doubt very much if we would have much success in bringing highly trained and qualified men into government service on a temporary basis if we put invalid obstructions in front of them like The Public Officials Disclosure Act, which would force them to bring out in the public weal any areas of their involvement up to that date. I think people regard their personal lives as something very close to them. Unless there be a very strong reason all their personal affairs should be become public, I would suggest we should not embark too strongly on such a program.

Probably what bothers me most, Mr. Speaker, about legislation of the particular nature that is in front of us is that it will do no good. Legislation of this nature, if we are dealing with unscrupulous, immoral individuals, is so full of legal loopholes, so full of areas that you can get around it, that it is almost nonsensical that we should consider something of this nature.

Now the hon. member took lightly the argument raised by my honourable friend from Jasper Place and by myself when we suggested that the bill doesn't really contain anything about conflict of interest. All it really means is that you disclose your assets. Once you've disclosed them you can stand up and do whatever you want. You can carry on in any manner you will. All it means is that if the hon. member has a few assets and he writes them down in a little book and files it with the Clerk, that gets rid of his responsibilities. Then he can come into this House and speak in any manner he wants, conflict or no conflict, because he has satisfied the only onus that is upon him, the onus to disclose.

There is nothing within this legislation which sets out, well, what will be the result if there is a conflict. The only penalties in this bill are the penalties for non-disclosure. Even from that point of view you can get around that if you go into court, I would assume, although the bill doesn't say what procedures would be followed, whether it be a summary conviction - well, it talks about that but it doesn't talk in terms of how charges would be laid or who would lay them. But all you need to do is go into court and say, I complied with the act to the best of my knowledge and belief. Then that's a defence, Mr. Speaker, and away you walk, free, and you come back and do the same thing. But this doesn't deal with the problems that the hon. member was talking about; conflict of interest and this great paranoia that seems to exist with some members that everybody is doing wrong or everybody is filling their pockets full of the public dole.

MR. IUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the reference of paranoid is entirely unparliamentary. It's certainly a reflection on the kind of gutter thinking the hon. member does.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please. Surely the hon. member doesn't wish to remedy an alleged example of unparliamentary language by substituting another one. The hon. member may not find the expression to be a kindly one, but I wouldn't say it was an unparliamentary one.

MR. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the word "paranoid" had been ruled out and it's a reflection on an hon. member. If that's the kind of language that will be permitted in this Legislature, then we haven't got much control in this Legislature because two can play that game. I didn't expect a ruling, that's why I shot back in the manner I did. This is not a parliamentary word. It's unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, and it ought to be ruled out of order.

MR. SPEAKER:

Perhaps the hon. member was not really referring to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View as being paranoid. He was referring rather to the argument. Possibly the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo might wish to clarify the situation and dispose of it.

MR. LUDWIG:

Well, Mr. Speaker, on a further point ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Would the hon. member please permit the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo to deal with the situation.

MR. GHITTER:

I thank you for that opportunity because I certainly was not in any manner referring to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View. I think the reference to paranoia legislation is well known parlance in the legal trade, with which the hon. member should be familiar. That is a legal term that I'm quite familiar with and that refers to legislation, Mr. Speaker ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

[Interjections]

MR. LUDWIG:

But, Mr. Speaker, by that same term, if I call somebody a s.o.b. and didn't name him, I'd get ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. HENDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, being thin-skinned as I am, I'm sure I would have taken offence at an early point in the discussion if I thought the words of the hon. member opposite referred to anybody in this Assembly.

MR. GHITTER:

Thank you. I would also like to apologize to the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View. I was not referring to him. I was just referring to the nature of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that is drafted with the concept that something out there is happening that really is not.

I would submit that there is little example of these great conflicts of interest that we all face. Now we as public officials and elected individuals, I would imagine, must indeed declare our positions when we are dealing with legislation. The hon. Member for Calgary Bow has done that on a number of occasions. We are all aware of the involvements in the business community of the hon. member and they are of the highest integrity. But when he deals in terms of an area of his personal involvement, he is the first to get up and disclose it. That is the type of morality, and that is the type of integrity which we should be encouraging within this Legislature, the type of morality in which we all say we are here to do a job for the public and we don't need pieces of paper like this to be thrown in front of us so that we have to divulge all of our lives for the public to see.

I would submit that this type of legislation doesn't really do the job. It also interests me, within the Legislature, to see that this legislation doesn't only apply to members of this Legislature, but it also applies to members of councils of municipalities. It also applies to school board trustees. Where are the great arguments of local autonomy that we hear so much from the members opposite as to them governing their own affairs? Now we as a Legislature are to sit back and require our school board trustees and the members of council to do the same thing.

Surely that isn't an area for our involvement. Surely that is for them to decide. If they feel they have problems in that area - and I doubt they do - but if they feel it is a problem then let them cure it in their own way. Surely that is a very important function of this Legislature, to allow local municipalities and school board trustees to govern their own affairs. How many times have we heard from the hon. Member for Calgary

Mountain View as he rises to his feet almost daily, screaming the plight of local autonomy. And yet in front of us we have ...

MR. LUDWIG:

On a point of order. The hon. member ought to be made aware of the fact that there is legislation at the present time dealing with ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please. If the hon. member wishes to make the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo any more aware with regard to debating points referring to the bill, perhaps he might do so when he closes the debate.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, then I rise on a point of privilege. The hon. member's statement is entirely misleading because there is presently legislation dealing with municipal ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. There may be a considerable difference of opinion between hon. members as to whether the legislation has that effect.

MR. LUDWIG:

What about the Hawrelak case?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Give it to him, Ron.

MR. GHITTER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, not only have we faced the same type of intervention within this bill, but the hon. member on another occasion with the ombudsman bill again was endeavouring to encourage this Legislature to force municipal ombudsmen on unsuspecting municipalities. We are used to this approach from the hon. member but I'm afraid members on this side have a slightly different viewpoint as to the responsibilities of locally elected officials. I don't think the section in this particular legislation does anything from that point of view.

MR. LUDWIG:

Read Bill 55.

MR. GHITTER:

May I also remind the hon. member that there are certain rules of this Legislature, and certain rules which give this Legislative Assembly some very strong powers from the point of view of immoral, unethical or illegal acts that may occur. For your reading this evening, may I refer the hon. member to Section 43 of The Legislative Assembly Act, which gives powers to this Legislature to be, in fact, a court of law from the point of view of a number of factors which would be of concern to us in ...

MR. LUDWIG:

I referred to it in my debate. I referred to that.

MR. GHITTER:

... the area of bribes or influence or fees or compensations or rewards. If any member of this Assembly is found to be suspect of any of these very unseemly acts, this Legislature itself has not only the power to suspend but the power to imprison. Now that is a law which has some force to it. That is a law which we, as legislators, can live by. But to suggest that disclosure of assets is going to, in any way, stop someone who wishes to get involved in this area from moving along in that activity, is just naive. Now surely the hon. member who drafted the bill must be well aware of ways of getting around legislation of this nature.

If you would like to hear a few of them - in the point of view of how you would move around legislation of this nature - let me explain to you.

First, from the point of view of matters of disclosure. You have to disclose first your trade, business, profession or enterprise. So assuming you are a doctor, lawyer, whatever you might be, or a farmer, you say: all right, I am a farmer. You need not put down the mortgage on your property or your living expenses. You must put down all other forms of debts. And as I understand the bill you must file first, once you assume office and then on a yearly basis and then the moment you cease office.

Now surely if someone wanted to get around the disclosure aspect of this bill, it would be a very simple matter. Surely all you need do is to have a friend or a limited company with, in the parlance of the trade, a beard or front to cover your situation. And then, 15 days after you have ceased from office, you merely transfer everything into your own name and away you go.

I don't think legislation like this will in any way discourage an unscrupulous individual in the conduct of his activity. It just doesn't seem to me that this is the way to do it.

Mr. Speaker, if the situation they have experienced in the United States which we are all familiar with, in the Watergate matter, surely legislation of this nature would not have discouraged the unscrupulous activities in the United States one bit. As a matter of fact, even very stringent criminal legislation didn't discourage them one bit. So why should it be that we approach this on this Public Officials Disclosures act?

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that the procedure the hon. Premier has followed is the only honourable, the only moral and proper approach. He has stated to his senior officers, his cabinet, that he wishes to know their financial affairs. I think that is reasonable. But he did so on the basis that it would be in confidence and that he would be the one who would have this material under his guise and under his control. I would suggest this is totally reasonable.

May I say then, Mr. Speaker, that legislation of this nature is really meaningless. It is weak. I am not suggesting there may not be better approaches from the point of view of ensuring that we, as elected individuals and our senior officers in government should not conduct themselves and be controlled somehow. But I would merely say, Mr. Speaker, that this particular piece of legislation does not accomplish that.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Anybody else up?

MR. COOKSON:

It's pretty obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View hasn't that much support for the bill he has brought before us. He seems to be unable to create enough interest in the bill to bring some of his own members to their feet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. COOKSON:

The thing which bothers me about Bill No. 207, The Public Officials Disclosure Act, is some of the innuendoes he has proposed in his opening remarks. The member has talked about it being some kind of timely issue. To me this suggests some allegation that because we've had a change of government in this province - for the better, I might add - it is timely now to bring in some kind of legislation with regard to disclosure. I fail, Mr. Speaker, to understand why the hon. member suddenly becomes very interested in public disclosure and in particular land issues.

We know the member has raised on occasion problems with regard to road allowances. It seems to be a feeling in the back of his mind that someone is running off with the land and the property of Alberta. For the life of me, Mr. Speaker, I just can't understand why the member seems so preconceived and concerned with this right of owning property and land in the province.

I am sure over the last 35 years the issues - if there were any opposition at all - may have been raised with regard to ownership of property. The former Social Credit government of the province, one of their philosophies is ownership of property, of private enterprise, great right of the middle individuals.

Then the member seems to be unduly concerned about ownership and about the right to own property in the province. There may be some reason for some of the remarks he made this afternoon. But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, in the words of the member from Calgary Cypress, I believe, that if he has any serious concerns, he should either put up or shut

up. And those were the very terms or words which were used in the debate just the other day.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member would explain which constituency Calgary Cypress is? I don't really know.

MR. DIXON:

Buffalo Cypress!

MR. COOKSON:

Gosh, Mr. Speaker, I hate to refer to that constituency again, but if I have to I will. I suppose it should be called the constituency of Cypress.

The Member for Calgary Mountain View talks about a conflict of interest and I think the Member for Calgary Buffalo has raised this inconsistency in the bill that he has presented to us. But when you talk about a conflict of interest, you could take practically any of the bills that are sitting here on this desk, any of the bills that are brought before this Legislature, and I'm sure you could find instances where there is conflict of interest, either among one or more of the members of the government or the Opposition.

I looked at Bill No. 18 for example, which deals with The Clean Air Amendment Act and some of the problems of trying to keep the air pure, both in the Assembly and out, and I would suggest, with due respect to the Member for Calgary Buffalo, that if we pass this Clean Air Amendment Act or bill, it is in conflict of the interests of the Member for Calgary Buffalo, because, as we all know, we go into committee, everyone relaxes and starts puffing either on cigarettes, cigars or pipes.

MR. STROM:

Not everyone.

MR. COOKSON:

Thankfully, not everybody. The other bill that the Member for Calgary Mountain View presents - hopefully he will get some support for it.

MR. LUDWIG:

Canadian Union College supports it.

MR. COOKSON:

But that's just one of many I've checked through. The Off-Highway Vehicles Act is another example. Certainly there will be some conflict. It requires, I think, a financial responsibility card. It would be a conflict of interest if I had an off-highway vehicle and I didn't have this card when we passed this legislation.

The Wildlife Amendment Act is another example. It has to do with using firearms on roads. Those of us who enjoy shooting from the roads or from the hip, whichever, are dealing with some kind of conflict of interest.

The one that really interested me was The Student Finance Amendment Act which, in effect, cancels out student loans. I have a member of the family who may be involved somewhere along the way. In view of the remuneration that we receive and the time that is spent here dealing with conflicts of interest, that will be a conflict of interest.

If we have to rise in our places and expose to the Assembly and the public at large all these conflicts of interest, a good many of us will never get inside the House, including the Member for Calgary Mountain View.

I just want to deal specifically with a number of the sections in the bill. Section 1(b) talks about current and ordinary household and personal living expenses. Then over in 3(1) it says that the person must, "orally disclose the interest to the Assembly, council or board." Now, Mr. Speaker, does that mean that if my wife hasn't paid the milk bill that I am going to have to rise in this Assembly and advise the members of the Assembly that the milk bill isn't paid? That's what it says. I don't think the Member for Calgary Mountain View intended it to say that, but that's what it says. It says, "current and ordinary household and personal living expenses." And I wish, Mr. Speaker, at this time, to absolve myself of expenses incurred by my wife. They are her responsibility.

I know it's not that easy, the Member for Calgary Mountain View says, but perhaps when we get this statute passed that the hon. minister, Helen Hunley, has just - the Report on the Status of Women - if we get that through, perhaps it will be easier, I'm not sure.

Section 5 of the bill, "The failure of a public official to comply with Section 2 or 3 shall not, of itself, invalidate any matter, proceeding, vote, or contract." Now that's a real inconsistency. First, the hon. member writes in that you must do all this and that you are guilty ...

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I think we're on second reading of the bill. I don't believe we're on clause-by-clause study. That comes later.

MR. SPEAKER:

I think the hon. member might concentrate on the principle of the bill - although it would seem to be in order that he might give some examples to illustrate the kind of principle he is describing.

MR. COOKSON:

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The bill is such a mess that I find it pretty difficult to confine myself to the restrictions of second reading. There are so many gross errors in putting together the bill that there is some question in my mind, Mr. Speaker, whether we should take the time to go on to the third reading. Perhaps we should deal with it now.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is a section in the act that talks about disclosure of property, et cetera, but it doesn't relate to what would happen if there was a confliction of interest. It talks about disclosure, but it doesn't relate it to confliction of interest and I think the Member for Calgary Buffalo has picked this up. So there is an inconsistency and perhaps the Member for Calgary Mountain View might, this evening, take time to study the act and come up with some - perhaps we can move some amendments somewhere along the way.

The final thing that seems strange to me about the whole bill is that one of the sections, in effect, absolves a person completely of any responsibility. If I can read the section to you: "It is a defence to a charge under this Act to show that the public official complied with the Act to the best of his knowledge and belief." It sounds like the things we sign when we make out our income tax returns.

I would just like to say that I think the hon. member has good intentions in bringing the bill before us. I think there is always a danger of abuse when you have to disclose publicly some of the problems. Certainly it should be acceptable that when you have to disclose ownership or property it would be kept confidential in the hands of the Premier or some of his top officials so that it wouldn't be public.

I just want to cite a situation, I think in eastern Canada several years ago, where the mayor, I believe, of one of the big cities, was required to state publicly his ownership in property. This person was a very wealthy person. It was only a matter of a few weeks after this disclosure that there was a kidnapping in that particular family. The suggestion was made - whether it was fact or otherwise - that the two things were related.

So, there is some danger. I don't think there would be much danger in my case because I don't have that much property. But there is a danger in being too public about what property or assets you own.

I think the bill has some merit and perhaps further debate will bring out some of the other problem areas that are creating problems with regard to the passing of the bill.

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, I did not rise to my feet before because I could see that the hon. members on your right were thunder-struck and unable to properly comprehend a constructive and worth-while piece of legislation.

The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo was overwhelmed with his own verbosity. He carried on and delved into the realm of psychology in order to find an edifice in which to hide himself in order that the true worth of this marvellous piece of legislation which the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View has brought before this Legislature could properly be evaluated and placed before the hon. members.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in order to create a real confrontation, in order to destroy the benefits that this legislation would bring before us and to protect the people of the province of Alberta from the implications of what could really be a very serious situation that every public official is presented with - in whatever particular area he is, even in the area of municipal government, and I have followed the situation - how do you proceed with it? A hole in my back alley - a mud hole. My wife said, you're on the town council, get some gravel hauled there. I said forget it, you can't do that in the town of Blairmore. You can haul gravel into everybody's home, but not into your own home.

MR. LUDWIG:

Tell that to Copithorne. He'll fix it up for you.

MR. DRAIN:

Well, unfortunately that would be in conflict with local autonomy and we couldn't carry along in that particular area.

AN HON. MEMBER:

You got that message, did you?

MR. DRAIN:

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the intent of the bill should be treated lightly. Many things occur and have occurred in public life that could well have been avoided had the legislation precluded the involvement of people who are in public life and various enterprises. True, there are far more safeguards today than there were in the past.

But I think the greatest safeguard there is the answer that you must give to your own conscience, in fact. No matter what edifice is built, if the builder has not got the strength of character to conform in the manner that he should in building it, it will not be built and will not be maintained in that direction.

Granted, there are, in certain obscure areas of this bill, some slight imperfections - slight, Mr. Speaker, very slight. I am confident that when this great edifice that will add to the strength of democracy is presented before the Legislature, that with the good will of the members on each side and the desire to build a greater and better Alberta, these alleged weaknesses - because some of them are positions of strength - can be overcome, proper amendments can be brought forth.

The value of this edifice of legalistic ability will be held up as a hallmark for posterity and an example for all the various legislatures east and west, possibly even in the United States, Mr. Speaker. There may be parliamentarians who will use this as a guidepiece in predetermining the proper role to maintain the sanctity and honour of those who hold public office.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, tonight the House will proceed to Committee of Supply, beginning at 8:00 o'clock with the Executive Council votes in the 1400 series. Following completion of those estimates, we will continue with Advanced Education and following that, probably tomorrow, Industry and Commerce.

I move we call it 5:30.

MR. SPEAKER:

Assuming the House agrees we call it 5:30, the House stands adjourned until 8:00 o'clock this evening.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair at 5:28 o'clock.]

