

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Thursday, October 24, 1974

[The House met at 2:30 p.m.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this afternoon to introduce to you a group of 25 students from the Irma School, Grade 7, seated in the public gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Froland and her husband, and Mrs. Smith and Mr. Prior. I would ask them at this time to rise and be recognized by the members of the Assembly.

MR. FLUKER:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly some 30 Grade 8 students from the Racette Junior High School in St. Paul. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Pierre Leroux, and are sitting in the members gallery. I would ask them to rise and be acknowledged by this Assembly.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to file the report of His Honour Judge Kerans into the Cosmopolitan matter. I wish to draw to the members' attention that this report was released to the public some months ago and both in the form it is being filed today and in the form in which it was released to the public, Appendix E of the report is excluded in compliance with the suggestion made by His Honour Judge Kerans on page 7 of the report. Appendix E dealt with possible breaches of the criminal law and I want to add, Mr. Speaker, that it is our intention again as suggested by His Honour to make that portion of the report public as soon as the prosecutions are disposed of.

I would also like to file, Mr. Speaker, the report of the Alberta Law Foundation, and lastly, Mr. Speaker, the answer to Question 191.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter to Mr. David Mitchell, president and chief executive officer of the Alberta Energy Company, by myself, dated October 9. Mr. Mitchell made the contents of this letter public on or about that date, but I believe it should be tabled in the Assembly.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Bureau of Public Affairs government Publications Catalogue, 1973 and the Publications Catalogue for the first three months of 1974.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to file a series of reports, mostly by the Environment Conservation Authority. They are as follows: the complete set, numbers 1 to 8 of information bulletins on the Use of Pesticides and Herbicides in Alberta; the ECA Interim

Report No. 3 of Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, Bow River Basin; the ECA Interim Report No. 4 of Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, North Saskatchewan and Red Deer River Basins; the ECA Interim Report No. 5 of Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, Athabasca River Basin; the ECA Interim Report No. 6 of Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes, Smoky River Basin; the ECA review of Policies, Programs and Proposals relating to the Environment; the ECA final report and recommendations on Land Use and Resource Development in the Eastern Slopes; the ECA final report and recommendations on The Restoration of Water Levels in the Peace-Athabasca Delta; the ECA proceedings of the third annual meeting of the Public Advisory Committee on the Environment; and lastly, a Syncrude Canada report titled, Report on Remote Sensing of the Athabasca Oil Sands: An Overview.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Federal Budget

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier if he has had, or plans to hold, any face-to-face discussions with the Prime Minister dealing with the May federal budget, prior to the federal government bringing their budget down in November? By way of explanation I might exclude the meeting coming up next week, which I understand all the premiers will be attending, on the economy of the country.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, there is a possibility that that might occur at the same time that I am in Ottawa a week today, meeting with the Prime Minister and the other premiers. However, that matter is not excluded from the agenda because the matters discussed there include the matter of resource taxation as well. The communique of the premiers from the meeting in Toronto in September dealt with the position I mentioned in my remarks yesterday on natural resource taxation. So it is conceivable the subject could arise at that time. It's also possible that a separate meeting may occur, but it would be a few days before I would be able to be definitive about that.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the Premier requested of the Prime Minister the opportunity to meet with him face to face on a one-to-one basis as far as that particular portion of the federal budget; has that request been made to date?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, in the communications between the Prime Minister and myself, the decision was that we would leave matters of discussion between the various ministers to see whether or not progress was made. A meeting was held a few days ago involving the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs and the Provincial Treasurer with the federal minister, Mr. Turner, and there was a follow-up meeting involving officials to occur subsequent to that and follow up discussions. It could be, within the course of the next few days after those official discussions have passed, that it's necessary to have such a meeting, but it isn't something I could be definitive about today. The communication between the Prime Minister and myself was left for either of us to communicate to the other if the decision is necessary to have such a meeting.

I might point out in answer to the question, though, that we are involved in a situation here of a federal budget, and the federal budget of course has to be prepared under our parliamentary system, not only without consultation, in the parliamentary practice, with other persons - and other persons would in this case include other provincial governments - but also of course even with the government members in their caucus, by the nature of our principle of a budget in the parliamentary system.

So there are some rather significant limitations on the part of the federal government in having discussions on federal budgetary matters per se with the Alberta government or any other government. Some of our citizens seem to be somewhat confused that it's possible to have an actual accord or understanding on a matter of a federal budget. By saying that, though, it is not to say that we may not be having discussions on a direct basis involving the matter of the principles contained in the May 6 budget which we find so objectionable.

Federal Budget - Royalties

MR. CLARK:

A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Then the Alberta government, as a result of the negotiations, has not been able to get a commitment from Mr. Turner that

he will not introduce the same taxation clause as far as royalties are concerned? We haven't been able to get a commitment of that nature to date?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, again, I thought I was as clear as I could be. One is not in a position to negotiate the terms of a federal budget. The term "negotiation" is simply an inappropriate term. We can have discussions as to what we take by way of principle and, as I mentioned in my remarks yesterday, we led the way, in an unanimous statement by 10 premiers, which I read, objecting in principle to the position taken on the May 6 budget.

It's not just Alberta that is disturbed with this matter. All provincial governments that respect provincial rights are. But it's not a matter of negotiations, and that word which is used by some, I'm surprised, is used by the Leader of the Opposition because we're talking about discussions, certainly, but "negotiations" - you don't negotiate with the federal government about their budget.

MR. TAYLOR:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. In the discussions was the federal government advised that the provincial government would not accept any share of royalties imposed on the petroleum industry in Alberta?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member will have to elaborate upon that question. I'm not sure I understand its import.

MR. TAYLOR:

Under the budget introduced by the Hon. Mr. Turner that died on the Order Paper because of the election, certain royalties were imposed on the petroleum industry generally in Alberta, a portion of which would come to the Province of Alberta. In the discussions with the federal government now, has the provincial government definitely advised Ottawa that the provincial government will not accept any share of those royalties imposed on the petroleum industry?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I think I now understand the question from the hon. Member for Drumheller. Perhaps if the question were phrased in terms of taxes rather than royalties, I believe what is involved there is that the federal government proposals, which died on the Order Paper of May 6, provided taxation measures of the petroleum industry, part of which, because of the nature of the arrangements between the federal and provincial government, would flow back to the provincial government as incremental revenues.

It was our judgment when we made the decision, both with regard to the price of \$6.50 a barrel and our supplementary royalty of 65 per cent, that there were sufficient funds left, both for the industry by way of incentives, and also for taxation, and certainly taxation both federal and provincial. So the Provincial Treasurer and the Minister of Mines and Minerals have made it clear publicly, and I reconfirm, that it would not be the intention of the Alberta government to take further funds from the petroleum industry over and above our royalties that might accrue to us because of taxation measures directed in a discriminatory fashion towards that industry which we in fact object to.

So the answer to the hon. member's question is: we would not take and accept those additional funds. We think they are necessary for continued incentive and exploration in the province.

MR. TAYLOR:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Why would the provincial government not accept these funds which are levied anyway, and perhaps return them to the industry here rather than leave them in the coffers in Ottawa?

MR. SPEAKER:

We should perhaps return to the usual parameters of the question period. A question which asks, why, is of course an open invitation to debate because you have to give reasons and that is debating.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Calgary Millican followed by the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest have supplementaries dealing with other aspects of the matter.

MR. LOUGHEED:

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

MR. TAYLOR:

Would the government ... ? I'm sorry for that error.

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I believe that question is so important that I wouldn't want it left on the Order Paper unanswered. It certainly would not be the intention of the provincial government to leave those funds in federal coffers. It would simply be in essence a waiver of any claim if that could be done in a technical fashion, but in any event to assure that the funds flowed back to the industry for further exploration and jobs for our citizens were not jeopardized.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary ...

MR. SPEAKER:

I had already recognized the hon. Member for Calgary Millican with a supplementary, and I said Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. I meant to say Spirit River-Fairview.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a supplementary question to the hon. the Premier. In recent speeches throughout the province the hon. Premier has indicated that the province is willing to bend a little in order to accommodate the federal government in the argument over resource revenue.

I was wondering if the Premier, Mr. Speaker, was in the position today to outline to the House the areas in which this province could bend a little bit in order that this argument between the federal and the provincial governments could be settled?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is both misleading and inaccurate by its assumption on a number of counts.

First of all, the question of bending a little and the expression which was used in terms of that, was not bending in terms of the federal government but recognizing the position that our industry is in, and perhaps looking at whether or not some additional incentives for those companies that were prepared to continue to explore in Alberta were necessary if the federal government persists in a discriminatory tax approach towards the petroleum industry, which is a base industry of this province. It would be an extreme misconstruction of my remarks to talk about bending relative to accommodating the federal government.

I assure the hon. members, if they don't get it instinctively [they] should get it by terminology, that it is not our intention to do that and we are not looking at it in terms of working an agreement out with the federal government. What we are concerned about is the future viability of a base industry in this province. If the federal government persists, despite a lack of mandate in this province, in discriminating against the people of Alberta who have this base industry, we can't stand idly by and have to respond.

But also implicit in the hon. member's question is again the misconception the Leader of the Opposition seems to have, that we can work out an agreement on a federal budget. Interesting, if we could.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Premier for clarification. Can the Premier advise the Assembly whether or not the government has contingency plans which would relate to either a reduction of the royalty surcharge or any further incentives in addition to the \$90 million rebate from federal corporation tax which he has already discussed?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, obviously the government would be unwise not to consider the setback that Alberta will have if this discrimination persists, as reflected in the May 6 budget. We have such contingency plans and a wide variety of options. I'm sure the hon. member would recognize that it would clearly not be in the public interests of Albertans to reveal the nature or extent of such contingency plans until the federal budget in fact was announced. Again, if we can change the parliamentary system and negotiate the federal budget, that might be a way we could do it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Leader of the Opposition followed by the hon. Member for Clover Bar.

Beef Prices - Investigation

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs and ask if the Department of Consumer Affairs has been involved in doing an investigation between the spread in the prices farmers are getting for their beef as they sell it to the slaughtering houses, and the prices that consumers are paying through retail outlets in the province.

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition will recall that the ministers of agriculture and consumer affairs for the four western provinces met in Regina some weeks ago. At that meeting it was determined that we should request the federal government to investigate the entire beef pricing structure from the cow-calf operation right through. They have not responded in a favorable light at this point, but I'm sure the Department of Agriculture is considering, perhaps, extending their investigations beyond what they do now.

Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture might wish to comment further.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, I might add supplementary to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the federal minister has now said that he would look with favor upon such an investigation. It is our view, after discussion with the other western ministers, that in fact to have a useful investigation of that price spread between what the producer receives and what the consumer pays it should be on a national basis because of the processing industry and so on across the country. So we are hopeful that the federal minister will respond very shortly with an investigation along those lines.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture. In the course of the discussions with the federal minister, has an attempt been made to have some representation from Alberta on the group that will be doing the study?

DR. HORNER:

The representations that were made by the four provincial ministers of both agriculture and consumer affairs, Mr. Speaker, were that we would like to be involved in such a study, and we are hopeful that Mr. Whelan will respond affirmatively to that as well.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Clover Bar followed by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

Television Broadcast

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question either to the Attorney General or to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. It has to do with a certain television show the other evening.

I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, if either the Attorney General or the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation has lodged any formal complaint to the local television station that showed a rather indiscreet program shortly after supper on Tuesday night?

[Interjections]

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, television programming in Canada is entirely under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Radio and Television Commission. The people of that board were in fact here at the same time and probably have taken note of what happened that evening.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. minister. Is he saying that the provincial government is not at all concerned about what was shown on television the other night?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, the government certainly is concerned with what happened the other night. But again the hon. member very well knows that if it is something under the jurisdiction of another government agency, in fact of another government, then these are the people, of course, who have to deal with this matter.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. minister. Has the government lodged any complaint to the federal government or the department concerned about the indiscretion of the show?

MR. SCHMID:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is definitely free to do so himself. We directed all complaints that have been received to be directed to the CRTC.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, we have been trying to tell this government for three years that they are the government and they have to make ...

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Possibly the hon. member might seek time outside the question period to tell the government this.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue the question. Is the government going to make any representation to the federal government or is it not?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is repeating with variation the question which has already been asked twice. The hon. minister is not obliged to reply.

The hon. member ...

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should say that I found the bare facts very interesting in that program.

MR. FLUKER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Someone should explain them to the hon. member who just spoke.

MR. FLUKER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition was at the studio when this was going on. Maybe he could enlighten the House on what did go on.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please.

Perhaps we should conclude that no nudes is good news and ...

[Laughter]

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question of the hon. Attorney General. Has the city police made representation to the Attorney General's department to have this matter of nudity investigated by his department?

MR. LEITCH:

I take it, Mr. Speaker, that this question relates to the rather ill-defined question that was earlier asked. The answer to the question is that complaints have been received by the department to the effect that there may have been a breach of the law. Those complaints are being looked into in the same way as any other complaints we get with respect to breaches of the law.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

Oil Sands - Foreign Labor

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, it's a hard act to follow, but I have a question in a different line to the hon. Premier.

I would ask him whether or not the Premier can advise the Assembly whether he and members of the cabinet met with Mr. Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute to discuss Mr. Kahn's rather bizarre proposal of massive development of the oil sands using imported foreign labor?

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I know I didn't, but I believe that some members did hear the nature of that proposal at the continued request of Mr. Kahn, I guess he tried three or four times. I will refer it to whichever minister it was who was there.

MR. GETTY:

I wasn't there either ... [Laughter] ... but as the minister responsible for a cabinet committee on economic planning, transportation and natural resource development some members of those cabinet committees did meet with Mr. Kahn. It was as a result of the fact that we wondered, since he was talking about the oil sands and how he would develop them, why he was talking to everyone else but Alberta who in fact owns them.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Can the minister advise the Assembly whether or not any agreement came as a result of this meeting or whether any follow-up meetings were agreed to?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, as one of the members of the committee who attended that meeting ... [Laughter] ... I'm pleased to expound on what transpired. The meeting really was to deal with the price of crude oil. Mr. Kahn would like to make members of our government aware of his thoughts on what might happen in the international price of crude oil.

During the latter part of the meeting the question did come up about the oil sands and we had a discussion on his proposals for oil sand development. There has been no follow-up as a result of that meeting with Mr. Kahn.

MR. NOTLEY:

One supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour. In the light of the very definite manpower requirements, not only in Mr. Kahn's proposal but for oil sands development, is it the government's intention to make any representation to Ottawa as a result of the announced immigration changes yesterday?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is clearly stretching the meaning of supplementary. Perhaps he might ask that. Now that it has been asked we might deal with it.

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that I had a meeting of 2 hours and 25 minutes with Mr. Robert Andras on September 30 of this year [at] which we discussed several matters, one of which was the matter of immigration.

MR. NOTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Perhaps it would be a little more in order now [that] I have asked the one just before.

Can the hon. minister advise the House what the position of the government is with respect to the announcement made yesterday by the Hon. Robert Andras?

DR. HOHOL:

We will certainly have to take the announcement in some kind of context of Alberta's as well as the national needs and take a look at the specific proposal. In comment I would simply recall that in the spring session, in looking at the priority approach of using manpower on projects in Alberta industry and agriculture and other enterprises generally, our priorities would rank the matter of immigration about fourth or fifth.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking followed by the hon. Member for Smoky River.

Landing Strips - Government Grants

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Would the hon. minister briefly outline the criteria under which provincial grants are made to aid municipal landing strips?

MR. PEACOCK:

Yes, very briefly, Mr. Speaker, there are three areas. One is identified as airstrip or remote areas, that is, for direct communication. That is in the neighborhood of \$5,000/\$10,000: \$5,000 grant and \$10,000 guarantee. There is the second area in which we have what we call the community strips, that is, for economic purposes as well as possibly for recreation. The limits on that area are \$10,000 up to \$25,000. Then there are what we call the commercial strips, the development-area strips or airports. We have \$58,000 guarantees there and \$50,000 grants.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking.

MR. COOPER:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Could the hon. minister inform the House how many grants have been made up to the present time and in what amounts?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would put that on the Order Paper, I'd be pleased to present it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Smoky River followed by the hon. Member for Vegreville.

Rural Schools

MR. MOORE:

Mr. Speaker, a question to the hon. Minister of Education. As a result of concerns expressed by school trustees and parents during the summer break, I'd like, Mr. Speaker, to ask the minister if the government is prepared to ensure that there will be no further closing of small rural schools, in particular small rural high schools?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, going that far would be a very direct and I think unwanted interference in the affairs of the recently locally-elected school trustees. However, I can say that the Small School Preservation Grant which was introduced by this government certainly was very well received in our tours by the cabinet of some 60 centres this summer. I think we would be prepared to consider expanding that grant, perhaps next year.

There is no question that that grant plus various policy changes has resulted in a significant reduction in the pace of centralization of rural schools in this province over the past two years. I would think a special case can well be made for the small rural high school, and it may well be that an adaptation of the Small School Preservation Grant could result in an even more secure future for small rural high schools in the province.

MR. MOORE:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Education. Is the minister prepared at this time to give any commitment with respect to any new financial assistance for pupil transportation during this school year or in 1975?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I'd anticipate at the annual meeting of the school trustees association in early November making some general announcements regarding transportation assistance, most of which will be revealed in detail next spring. However, I can say that we certainly are cognizant of the unusually rapid increase in the various costs which make up school bus transportation, over the course of the last eight months particularly.

MR. KING:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Clover Bar with a supplementary, followed by a further supplementary by the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the hon. Minister of Education. There are many areas where the parents would like to bypass the small high schools to go to the centralized schools. Will the hon. minister be assisting those people [in] bussing in the areas where they want to go to a larger school?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a case where the very recently elected local school trustee must play a major part in deciding and assessing what his local people wish to do. As I've said to many people, we're quite prepared to accept local boards who feel that, for financial reasons, they have no alternative but to close a rural school. We're quite prepared to accept there. But the government is not going to be vetoing a decision of a local school board. And I think if the honorable gentleman checked with his local board, they wouldn't like his suggestion of their being overridden by what he feels.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, that's a beautiful speech, but the question was: is the hon. minister in a position to assist local parents who want to bypass the small high school to go to a large centralized composite school? That is the question, not the speech.

[Interjections]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, we don't assist local parents from this Legislature. That's done through our delegated authorities, the school boards. And I have confidence in the new school trustees, if the honourable gentleman does not.

AN HON. MEMBER:

That's a laugh.

MR. KING:

Mr. Speaker, in light of the comments by the minister, which I'm sure were much appreciated, would his department also consider further modifications to assist schools which are not only small but are geographically isolated, such as the Worsley High School in the Spirit River constituency?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, that was one of the high schools I was particularly thinking about because I received a number of submissions with the assistance of the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands and the parents in the Worsley area. So certainly that's an area we would be looking at; the combination of isolation and smallness.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview with a supplementary, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure all members will be willing to acknowledge what an excellent brief the Worsley school prepared.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, the supplementary question I'd like to pose to the hon. minister is whether or not the government at this time is reassessing the whole foundation plan as it applies to all rural jurisdictions because of the heavier cost factors through distance and otherwise?

MR. HYNDMAN:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be assessing with the trustees very shortly the concept of whether or not they would find useful the plan where there would be different levels of support, bearing in mind situations where the trustees could demonstrate that it costs more in terms of services or materials or utilities to run schools in one area of the province than another. This could result in a regional kind of distribution of moneys, with different expenditures for different regions on an agreed-upon analysis of costs being higher or lower in whatever part of the province we are discussing.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question to follow that up, Mr. Speaker. Is it the ... [Not recorded] ... of the government to move on this proposal for the next year?

MR. HYNDMAN:

No, Mr. Speaker, not for 1975, but I would see a very good possibility of that being included in the next three-year government finance plan. Certainly moves in this area could be started in 1975, perhaps on a pilot basis.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. Is the minister or the government considering increased grants to some of the centralized schools or rural schools where deficits have occurred and the deficits were not recognized until after September 1, 1974?

Deficits occurred because of a lower student population than was predicted. For example, the County of Vulcan predicted that they would have so many students and ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Perhaps we might get directly to the answer now.

[Interjections]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Well I'll give half an answer to half the question, Mr. Speaker. We are cognizant of the difficulties that have resulted to boards by reason of declining population, in the sense that even if a board has fewer students, if that is a large number of students, it's impossible quite often to adjust such fixed costs as insurance and this kind of thing. So this may well appear as an adjustment for 1975; a declining enrolment adjustment or recognition.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Leader of the Opposition with a final supplementary, followed by the hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. CLARK:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education. Is it the intention of the government to announce, prior to January 1, 1975, a revision upward in the approximate 9 per cent across-the-board increase in grants under the foundation program?

MR. HYNDMAN:

It would be the intention to announce a revision prior to January 1.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Vegreville followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller.

Cow-Calf Program

MR. BATIUK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture. Could the minister advise whether loans to cow-calf operators are going to be restricted to treasury branches, or will consideration be given [so] that other lending authorities would be able to be used?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we have recently concluded negotiations with the chartered banks and some credit unions in the province. They are now going to be part of the program. Operators will be able to take advantage of their local banking institution or the treasury branches and/or some of the credit unions which want to become involved.

MR. MANDEVILLE:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. When will these loans be available to the cow-calf operators?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, the application forms are in the mail now to the counties and municipal offices throughout Alberta. We would expect that the application forms would be in their hands by the later part of this week, depending on the mail, and that starting next week the advances should be available.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller ...

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Did the cattle association and the Western Stock Growers Association have any input into the program and did they approve of it?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, we try to have contact with and discussions with all the farm groups in the province. In direct response to the hon. member, yes, we had some very detailed discussions with the executives of the Western Stock Growers and with other cattle organizations in Alberta.

MR. WYSE:

Would you just finish answering the question. Did they approve of it?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, some of the members of the Western Stock Growers had some reservations, but they had some input into the program and we modified it because of that input and the time which they gave. So we appreciated it very much.

MR. BUCKWELL:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Are there any criteria as far as the loan for the number of cattle, or are there any regulations to go with it? Who can borrow and ...

DR. HORNER:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are. It might be useful perhaps if I made available to the hon. members who are interested the criteria, the copy of the application form and the guidelines that we are sending out to the municipal offices.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. BUCKWELL:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the loan for the full calendar year, say beginning November 1 this year to November, or just to December 31?

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, the loans are in fact for a year, or until the cattle are sold. The best simile I can suggest to the hon. member is that we are trying to follow the cash advance system in grain as closely as possible.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Might this be the last supplementary on this topic. A number of members have not yet asked their first questions and we are running short of time.

MR. NOTLEY:

Can the hon. minister advise the Assembly what progress, if any, has been made as far as discussions with the federal government to involve them in a more reasonable way of helping cow-calf operators in particular?

DR. HORNER:

Well, Mr. Speaker, again, meeting with my counterparts in western Canada and with the very able help of our premiers from western Canada we tried to get the federal government involved. To date that involvement has not been forthcoming. It was our view, and indeed the view particularly of the minister in Saskatchewan, that we couldn't afford to wait any longer on federal indecision, so we had to move ourselves.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drumheller followed by the hon. Member for Bow Valley.

Synthetic Proteins

MR. TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very short explanation is required before my question. There is a predicted world shortage of food and research has indicated that we are now able to change our oil into food. Having in mind this world shortage of protein, is the government giving any consideration to reserving an area of the tar sands for production of synthetic proteins?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Answer that.

DR. HORNER:

Mr. Speaker, having regard to my department being primarily involved in the production of food, we are interested in the production of protein. We have had discussions with several university professors who have been interested in the conversion of petroleum products to food.

I think the most logical one and the one that probably would come forward first is the production of single-cell protein from hydrocarbons, more particularly probably some component of natural gas. These are probably closer to being in commercial production than any other type, and might be useful as an alternate source of food for livestock as well.

MR. TAYLOR:

One supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the government given any consideration or is the government prepared to give consideration to carrying out some of the research required to produce proteins from hydrocarbon fermentations, possibly with some of that federal money that's coming back to us?

DR. HORNER:

That might be a very useful suggestion, Mr. Speaker, in regard to that federal money. There has been some research carried out to date in this area, of course, and our own university here is interested and indeed some of the industries that we have in the Edmonton area are also interested. We will follow up on the suggestion.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

Highway Construction

MR. MANDEVILLE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Highways. The concern I have is for highway projects which were approved this year for construction and have not been completed or won't be completed. Will they hold their priority? I am speaking of projects like Highway No. 1 that was approved west of Highway 36, the Empress road and the Duchess access road in my particular area. Will they hold their priority if they are not completed this year?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, in the case of the projects that aren't being completed this year, most of them will hold their priority unless they are of a nature such that they have a medium to low priority. Some of those ...

[Laughter]

Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. members opposite laugh, but we've had a very difficult year this year on highway construction with shortages of cement, with shortages of material, and weather.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that this month has probably been the best construction month we've had this year. We are very short of cement, probably are only going to get something like 60 per cent of what we need, or maybe even less than that. It's at a very critical stage.

DR. BUCK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Will the pending election have anything to do with the priorities?

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. WYSE:

My question also, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Highways and Transport. It's regarding Highway No. 3 between Seven Persons and Bow Island. What is the specific reason why construction will not be completed this year?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, that's an assumption that may be right or may not be right. There's about half of it finished at the moment. I understand that because Dawson Construction has let the contract out, they prorated the contract out to another contractor, they have had some difficulty in carrying out successful work at a rate that we'd be satisfied with as a department.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker. Who was the main contractor for the highway, and was the subcontractor fired?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Put it on the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is going into great specifics.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, the main contractor was Dawson Construction. The name of whom they subcontracted it to, I'm not sure.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, a follow-up to that. There are numerous outstanding accounts that cannot be collected by the ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. member asking a question?

MR. WYSE:

... yes, I'm just getting to it, Mr. Speaker ... by the small companies that worked on the highway. Will the government guarantee that these payments be made?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Don't worry about it.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should probably know that all the contracts are fully bonded. It's the responsibility of Dawson Construction to pay those bills, if there are such ones.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Might this be the final supplementary on this topic.

MR. WYSE:

Does the government check out the reputation of some of these fly-by-night contractors before they are hired?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that particular question is a very dubious charge, whether they are fly-by-night or not. Dawson Construction is of a very considerable size.

MR. WYSE:

Just a supplementary ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Perhaps we might come back to this. Order please. Perhaps we might come back to this question on another occasion.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Calder followed by the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

ECA Report - Eastern Slopes

MR. CHAMBERS:

Yes, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Lands and Forests and is with reference to the final report and recommendations on Land Use and Resource Development on the Eastern Slopes prepared by the Environment Conservation Authority. My question is: does the minister plan to implement any of these specific recommendations in the near future?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question because, as members will have noticed, that report along with other interim reports was tabled in the Legislature today. The report is regarded by the government as an extremely important one and one that will require very close examination which will undoubtedly take some considerable amount of time because of the complexity and thoroughness within which the recommendations need to be considered. So I would contemplate that it would take some very considerable amount of close examination of the report, and in many instances the back-up information and detail as well, before firm policy decisions with respect to land use on the eastern slopes might be available.

MR. CLARK:

After the election.

MR. CHAMBERS:

Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the specific recommendations in the report on coal mining, I wonder what the minister's policy is with regard to the issuing of coal exploration permits, recognizing that even if a mining lease is never granted, significant environmental damage can be caused to fragile areas during the reconnaissance phase itself?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, the question of coal exploration permits has been a source of some confusion and discussion of late. The situation was, as I think all members are aware, that the additional coal-lease dispositions in the area were suspended at the time the Environment Conservation Authority was asked to hold public hearings and prepare recommendations for the government's consideration. However, we of course had a number of outstanding lease commitments that existed at that time. It was essential to be fair and reasonable in dealing with those outstanding commitments.

As a consequence of this, when we received coal exploration, which are really inventory surveys for the quantity, quality and configuration of the coal resource inventory in the instances that we were able to devise conservation considerations and reclamation requirements that would protect against damage in those areas, we felt it was fair and reasonable to proceed with that inventory work.

I might add just one further and final, but important point, Mr. Speaker, that is: in doing so, all such letters of authority include the recognition that the issue of coal exploration permits in any instance does not obligate the government to undertake developments in the future.

MR. NOTLEY:

A supplementary question for clarification if I could. Do I take it from the minister's answer that the general moratorium on development, which has existed in the east slopes, will be continued pending a final decision of the government on the recommendations of the authority?

DR. WARRACK:

With respect to major land surface disturbance developments, it would be the intent of the government to look at them very closely and continue to not approve major resource development projects that would involve substantial land surface disturbance, prior to full consideration of the Environment Conservation Authority final report and recommendations.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

MR. CLARK:

You've already got the report and recommendations.

Lumber Industry Aid

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, this question is to the Minister of Lands and Forests and comes out of the remarks the Premier made yesterday in which it was indicated that your department was considering some assistance towards a depressed lumber industry. I wonder if you are now in a position to outline what your intentions are in that area?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's remarks yesterday he made reference to the fact that we were considering such a proposal and that it would be announced within a matter of a few days, and that is the case.

MR. SPEAKER:

I regret that the time for the question period has expired and I express my regret to the hon. members who haven't been reached. Perhaps it may be necessary to limit a little further the extent of the supplementaries.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

198. Mr. Clark asked the government the following question:

1. Did the government King Air, CF-AFD, and/or Queen Air, CF-CKM, make a trip to Calgary on the evenings of Tuesday, May 28, 1974 and Thursday, May 30, 1974?
2. If the planes went to Calgary May 28, 1974 and/or May 30, 1974, who were the passengers on the trips to Calgary and on the return trips and what were the dates of the return trips?
3. What were the purposes of the trips?
4. What were all the public meetings attended by all passengers on CF-AFD and/or CF-CKM the evening of May 28, 1974 and/or May 30, 1974?
5. What was the total cost involved in trips of the government plane to Calgary and return May 28, 1974 and/or May 30, 1974?
6. What portion of the cost was paid out of public funds?

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, I have the answer to Question 198.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Mr. Gruenwald proposed the following motion to this Assembly:

Be it resolved that the government study the feasibility of a provincial park on the Oldman River, in the vicinity of Lethbridge, and report thereon in the fall session of 1974.

MR. GRUENWALD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to read the motion first just so the Assembly has the intent in mind: "Be it resolved that the government study the feasibility of a provincial park on the Oldman River, in the vicinity of Lethbridge, ..." and that a report thereon be filed during the fall session of 1974.

I think it should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that the motion is asking for a feasibility study, and it's asking for it within a certain time frame. Now we realize that deadlines, as a rule, call for action. This government has often stated that they are an action government. This would give them an opportunity to prove that statement beyond doubt.

Few, if any, people would argue the point that a proposition such as this of expanding parks would be a good one. I think most people will recognize the necessity and the advisability of an adequate number of public parks in the province of Alberta which are well equipped for the recreational use of our citizens.

Now the population of Lethbridge and southern Alberta is on the upswing. More people are looking for outdoor recreation all the time. Not only in the urban areas, Mr. Speaker, are people looking for recreation areas but the rural people as well. All people in southern Alberta would welcome this type of expansion. When I say southern Alberta, I would go clear almost to Calgary because we have a large area that is usually known as southern Alberta. But I am thinking probably more of the extreme south.

With the development of west Lethbridge, and I am speaking more locally now, and the revitalization of the downtown area, with the improvement of Highway No. 3 - and I put sort of a question mark beside that because I realize that it is not coming as quickly as many would like it to - I think we can expect significant growth in the area, not only in population but in tourism in southern Alberta.

I think also we must consider carefully those who are unable to travel by reason of age, of disability, personal finances, but all will be looking for park and recreational facilities close to home. I think this is an important point, Mr. Speaker, one that lends itself to family recreation. It should be noted that in recent years there has been a very noticeable interest by families who are looking for facilities that would afford them the opportunity to go out together on a Sunday afternoon, or even a Sunday evening for that matter, for lunch, swimming, fishing, just to watch nature, or, as some people would say, let's just go out and listen to the grass grow. At least it's a good statement.

There is serious overcrowding in the park facilities we have now, especially on weekends. They are very busy and I think they are getting busier all the time. So there is a very obvious need for facilities to overcome this crowding. I think we should have more facilities, not only in the parks as we normally know them, but also in roadside rest stops, trailer courts and this type of thing. That would facilitate things for people who live in the area and also for tourist people travelling through.

Now Park Lake, known to many people and certainly all people in southern Alberta, is the closest provincial park that we have at the present time. It's about 15 miles away. It's interesting to note the tremendous use being made of Park Lake. In 1972, according to actual statistics, 342,000 people visited Park Lake. In 1973, the next year, there were well over 400,000 people who visited Park Lake. These are registered guests. And there were over 2,000 trailers registered in that park. So we can see that the increase in usage is very rapid. Park Lake, as far as size is concerned and what the minister is now looking at as far as sizes of parks are concerned, is considered a small park. I think the actual acreage is 188 acres. When you consider the amount of that space which is taken up by the lake, trees, roadways and so on and so forth, there isn't really all that much room for people.

So if larger parks are important and if expansion of present parks is important, then certainly one of the important things to consider is the acquisition of land. The longer we wait I think the more expensive this land is going to be. Of course, skyrocketing prices may make it almost prohibitive to acquire any land adjacent to river frontage. If we wait too long much of this land may not be available at all.

In that area we have many miles of river bottom so we can go as big as we like; we can go as long as we like and we can expand almost to an unlimited extent if we acquire the land at a very early date. That river bottom has the natural setting for expansion of a very interesting park. The ecology is there and I think this is very important.

Any river bottom, but particularly the Oldman River, has the ideal river banks. They have the wild trees, natural growth and wildlife down there. Just last week the whole front page of The Lethbridge Herald showed deer romping and roaming around in the river bottom near Lethbridge. We have beavers down there. We had lots more before we butchered some of them, but nevertheless it's a natural place for wildlife. So we have a beautiful winding river there for miles and miles.

I think this wide river bottom makes it seem ideal for possibly damming up or for excavation for a lake. This might be possible. Not only would that be beautiful, but indeed it would be very practical and ideal for fishing, water-skiing, canoeing or boating, any of these types of recreation which we do on or near the water.

Now an investigation and a study may prove that I'm wrong; it could be. But we really won't know until a feasibility study is carried out and I think this is important.

This particular river bottom, regardless of how far you go on it, has the very distinct advantage of being sheltered from the prevailing west winds which we are quite familiar with and quite adapted to in southern Alberta.

I think many of us, most people certainly in the southern part of the province, are aware of Indian Battle Park in that river bottom. It's small, that's true, but it is also very unique. It's historically interesting and it's in a very beautiful setting. I would imagine that a study may show that the expansion of the present Indian Battle Park may be the thing we would like to do. But I feel sure that the natural setting of the Oldman River, the Indian Battle Park and that whole river bottom makes this proposition a very interesting one.

The provincial parks policy that I believe was stated in 1973 points out many of the things I have mentioned, and that's what makes this proposition look so interesting. It's just a natural. There is room for expansion. It has a natural ecology. It has accessibility as far as people are concerned, all the things we would look for. What I have heard the Minister of Lands and Forests indicate would be desirable qualities for a large park in this province seem to be there.

It's also important to notice, and I have been approached by small industries in Lethbridge and in southern Alberta, that when they try to expand there and attract employees to come to these smaller centres, these extra recreation facilities are important when they are trying to bring people in. I think this should also be taken into consideration.

So I hope the government will give some very serious consideration to this motion and have a real serious look at the expansion of park facilities in southern Alberta preferably, and the bottom of the Oldman River.

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe the Chair was first made aware of the hon. Member for Lethbridge East.

MR. ANDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to speak in support of this motion. I am sure all hon. members will agree that the river valleys of Alberta are truly beautiful and lend themselves very suitably to recreational and park areas.

Lethbridge is the third largest city in the province, with a large trading area and an important tourist centre. The establishment of a provincial park on a site close to the city of Lethbridge would be a sound and sensible investment. It would help take the pressure off the national parks. And in this energy-scarce area it would be welcomed by thousands of people living in the Lethbridge district.

Mr. Speaker, summers in Alberta are short by comparison with other areas of the world, and we must make the most of them. Shorter working weeks provide more leisure time for recreation. Old and young alike enjoy getting out into the open. A provincial park on the Oldman River, as close as possible to the city of Lethbridge, would provide a need for the public. Mr. Speaker, I would recommend that the government contact the city council of Lethbridge and get its views in connection with this matter.

I think I have made my position clear. I sincerely hope that all hon. members will support this motion because a provincial park as close as possible to Lethbridge would be well received by the citizens of that area.

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this resolution I would initially like to say that I applaud the hon. member for bringing forward the principle of the motion, but I think that the motion, as put forward, is somewhat narrow. I think we need to be concerned on a broader scope. And so I would like to put forward at the commencement of my remarks an amendment to broaden the resolution and to give the members an opportunity to debate on a broader scope rather than on the limited area that the motion has been put. As well, I think there has been a time frame set within this motion that I do not think is feasible to be met.

So I would like to move the following amendment: that the words in the motion after the word "Lethbridge" be deleted to the end and the following substituted therefor: "and other based provincial parks close to populous areas throughout the province", so that it would read instead:

Be it resolved that the government study the feasibility of a provincial park on the Oldman River, in the vicinity of Lethbridge, and other based provincial parks close to populous areas throughout the Province.

I have the copies here, Mr. Speaker.

I have moved this amendment because it is not only the area of Lethbridge on the Oldman River, that region, that requires this consideration. Rather than bring forward individual motions from time to time to deal with specific areas of the province, I think this is an opportune time to look at the entire province, the park facilities that are now in existence, their adequacy, how well they conform with the philosophy that we may adopt as to what should the parks which are developed by the provincial government on that scope or level really provide in totality and what should be left to the responsibility of the local or municipal governments.

I was looking at a report that was compiled for basic information by the Planning and Development Division of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation in which a comparison was made between the urban and rural accessibility to recreational facilities, and more specifically I would relate the study to the aspect of parks. In table one in that study, which I believe was made available, was tabled and is public information, the availability of the recreational facilities as between Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Lloydminster and Camrose, some of the major populated centres in the province, as compared to the balance of rural Alberta, the number of parks in rural area based on a population survey of just under a half million, was 134; whereas taking into consideration these urban centres that have been listed based on a survey population of just over 1,100,000, the number of parks specifically was 53. So there is an imbalance of some 440 per cent. Now that figure in itself, of course, cannot be taken at its face value because certain adjustments need to be taken into account. However, it is significant enough to merit some serious consideration.

As well, if we go into the recreation centres which are so much a part of the development of a facility within provincial parks, the facilities in the rural, based on the same population study, were 17 and in the urban, 32. But in percentage of urban-rural relationship, the rural percentage is greater by 50 per cent in ratio to the populace.

Then taking a little more narrow field with regard to urban centres, taking the population of Edmonton and Calgary only in relation to the balance of the province, and here again, looking at specifically the parks facility aspect, on an overall province population, the numbers of population that the survey was taken on was just under 800,000. The number of parks was indicated as 147 in this study, whereas on the urban number of facilities in the way of parks based on a population survey study, there were indicated 40 parks. So there is an imbalance here in favour of the rural parks availability of 500 per cent. Again here, that figure in itself cannot be taken at its face value, other matters must be taken into consideration, but again it is significantly greater. It certainly should cause some concern.

So inasmuch as the principle of the motion, that a study be made with regard to a major centre, although the motion refers to one centre I am proposing, by my amendment, that we must look not only at that one, but again, at others.

I think we need to consider perhaps more extensively what the parks philosophy ought to be with respect to what should be the overall supply in facility, what it should offer to the populace, and again, how that ought to be related to, in its development and in relation to the facilities that really should, perhaps, be the responsibility or undertaking of the local or municipal governments.

I would like to refer to a situation that has been developed here, not perhaps a situation, a direction that we have moved into with regard to the proposed capital city river valley park, and the Fish Creek Park in Calgary. For many years the citizens of Edmonton have been deprived of the kinds of facilities that were available in rural parts of the province with regard to parks and the activity they offered. They were deprived of this because the means used to provide parks within the urban setting were funds raised by taxation against properties within those boundaries. The provincial government did not contribute to or aid to any significant extent the development of these parks within the boundaries. This therefore curtailed the kind of program or development that major urban centres, particularly Calgary and Edmonton, were able to develop.

We now have moved in a direction to alleviate that kind of pressure by the proposed development of a provincial park within the city of Calgary and within the city of Edmonton. But that in itself cannot be achieved unless there is cooperation between the provincial government and the municipal governments as well. The two must work hand in hand. But it also must be recognized that the philosophy the provincial government is expounding with regard to moving to the assistance of major urban centres and the funding which must be provided for these extensive developments certainly must be taken into consideration as to the degree of control or influence the municipal government may demand or wish to have with regard to a development within its boundaries.

I am pleased to say that we have moved significantly with regard to the proposed park for the city of Edmonton but the success or the conclusion of the proposal and of the plan will again depend on the cooperation which will be received from the municipal government here in the city of Edmonton. And I will relate to this particular park in this city. We now have a new mayor and, significantly, a large number of new members in council. Now whether they will have the same kinds of considerations and will give the same kind of cooperation, or greater cooperation, with respect to the further development of plans for the park along our river valley remains to be seen. I certainly hope that we will have the fullest cooperation and the fullest understanding.

We have problems within the city of Edmonton with regard to parks in the older areas. Up until currently the City of Edmonton government continued to say that they just did not have the funds to purchase land within the older areas to make room to provide some park and recreational area. If we get the kind of cooperation from the council and the mayor which we ought to get in the proposed development of the Capital City [Recreation] Park, then certainly there can be no logical reason I can see that the same argument could be continued wherein there isn't the money to be made available in the budget for that kind of consideration.

I think that the people within the core of the city have paid taxes over many, many years and have paid for such facilities time and time again. Here again my amendment, when it indicates a requirement for considering location of parks in the heavily populated areas - it is because the contribution from the citizens of Alberta is also towards that kind of facility and ought to be considered in location.

I think that it is important that we look today not only at having a green park or an area preserved at which, one might say, that certain development doesn't take place. I think we have reached a point, a time in our society because of the direction we are moving, because of the leisure time that is being made available which we now have, [where] it is essential that all our developments take into consideration not only the conservation of natural areas but the availability within these parks of both active and passive recreation in addition to the scenic purposes. I think that it is important as well, when considering the location of parks near major populated centres, to consider how near there is a waterway area which could be linked with a park. That can add immeasurably to the fullness and the development of the kind of facility that we are finding is becoming more and more necessary and is being demanded.

Of course I would, I think, add that the remarks which were made by the hon. Member for Lethbridge West, that it is important to have these parks located where a day kind of travel time and use can be more readily applied, to have them accessible in that kind of way, is very important. Here again economics of families, of citizens, comes very much into play, whether their financial situation is such that they are able to afford to travel any distance. We know that very high percentages of people are at an income level such that they cannot realize the benefit and the enjoyment of activities within the parks simply because of the income level they are in and as well perhaps because they do not have the transportation mode available to them readily.

I would urge then that certainly the motion as it is amended be debated fully this afternoon and that it be considered and be passed, because I think it is far better to look at the province as a whole rather than piecemeal.

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to endorse the resolution by the Member for Lethbridge West and assure you that I certainly endorse the idea of a park in Lethbridge for some of the reasons possibly not outlined thus far.

One, there has been over the years a great intensity in the use of land in that particular area. You find in southern Alberta that in fact people are confined. I suppose this is an evolutionary process of land development.

It was an extraordinary thing when I was a boy to even contemplate the idea that any land would be posted or that people would be deterred by other farm people from walking or trespassing on the land. What occurred, of course, was the development of better means of transportation and more of a flow of people, and I suppose with this increased encroachment in different areas it was no longer a novelty to see someone walking towards your homestead. You were wondering what he was doing and so on. So ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. I apologize for interrupting the hon. member but we are now debating an amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, who moved the amendment was, under our rules, entitled to debate both the main motion and the amendment. The narrow question now before the House, before we get back to debating the main motion or the main motion as amended if the amendment is carried, the very narrow point before the House now is simply whether or not this motion should be amended in the manner proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood or whether it should be left in its original form.

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if it's on a point of privilege or on a point of order I have just noticed that in the typing of the amendment one word was deleted, the word "river" in front of the word "based", and I am wondering what procedure I should follow to have that corrected.

MR. SPEAKER:

Perhaps the hon. member, while the debate on the amendment is going on, might submit a revised text which we could then make available to the Assembly.

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, referring to the amendment which in fact, as I gather, means that there should be a park around all populated areas, I think that is an excellent idea. I think, of course, that here in Alberta we have a park because the province is a beautiful park ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. DRAIN:

... and are you going to ...

MR. SPEAKER:

It's a little narrower than that. The question is whether this particular motion should be amended by extending it in the way which the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood has proposed.

MR. DRAIN:

Well, now I think I'm - the clouds that have obscured the sunshine of debate are now disappearing, Mr. Speaker, and I will proceed further with this particular elucidation.

Other provincial parks in other populated centres ... well, I would think this makes the particular resolution that has been propagated by the Member for Lethbridge West inapplicable. For that reason, I am inclined to oppose this particular amendment, and I often wonder where the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood was when she was reading this particular thing.

We are referring, Mr. Speaker, to a specific problem. We are referring to a problem in this particular resolution which the amendment more or less diffuses, disintegrates and scatters to the four winds. This is what happened as a result.

I have no objection, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, that provincial parks should be close to populated areas throughout the province, be added after Lethbridge. This is quite in order I would think, but I cannot accept that this particular amendment should be accepted in this motion, for the simple reason that if we are talking about a specific problem - and in order to clarify this I want to explain to the hon. members in this Legislature the unique situation the people of Lethbridge are confronted with. They are in an area of intense agricultural development, posted because of the nature of field crops and so on, thereby limiting their abilities to do so many things. The highways are crowded; bicycling, for instance, a walk - it's a hazard, not that the hazard is any greater in Lethbridge than in any other particular area. But because of the nature of the traffic flow that we have, people are involuntarily deprived of an area where they can go peacefully for a walk, and, as the hon. Member for Lethbridge West so clearly remarked, listen to the grass growing on the hillsides and the meadowlarks singing.

However, I cannot help but comment on the accelerated rate of change that has occurred in the Lethbridge area in what is comparatively a brief time, less than one man's

lifetime. There has certainly not been a correlation between the planning and the needs for the future. I think the future has come upon us in Alberta in a manner faster than we expected. The proper method would have been, of course, after the buffalo had been run over, the buffalo traps and the last hide had been sent east; this is the time when the planners should have come in and laid out the cities and the parks, and so on, in a manner we could probably live with. But this has not been done. So the situation has to be retrieved, and what the Member for Lethbridge West proposes to do is retrieve it in this particular resolution.

There are, I see, some certain obstacles, such as a question that arises in my mind of an area in a river bottom that would have high-use intensity. What would be the implication from a pollution aspect from water. I note that the Environment Conservation Authority, in their particular publication on land use, recommend that in fact all river courses be protected by fences and so on, in order to preclude any possibility of such pollution. A certain portion of the flow of the Oldman River is controlled by the St. Mary's irrigation system and some of the irrigation systems on the central stream of the Oldman River itself. It can be expected that this will have to be expanded in order to control the flow, and therefore in the future there would not be any grave danger from flooding in the Oldman River.

I could see as a development of this particular motion that unique facilities could be developed. There are quite a number of senior citizens. The advantages of, say, a fishpond where they could sit and commune with nature and think of the days of their childhood when they could stand behind a tree and bait a hook and have a fish jump out and grab the bait - you know, these are the things they could recall when the hon. Minister of Lands and Forests carried out a program of developing the right kind of park and following up the motion of the hon. Member for Lethbridge, the children in Lethbridge and so on.

So in concluding, Mr. Speaker, in these brief remarks, the need is there; the people are there; realization must be given to the fact that transportation will not always be available in the free and easy manner that we have today. In fact, it will not be possible for future generations of Lethbridge to climb into a car and travel westward into the mountains and enjoy the benefits of the beautiful Pincher Creek-Crowsnest constituency, because they won't have the gasoline.

These are some of the things we can expect in the future, that transportation will be more expensive. People who are brought into a beautiful area of recreation, which I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge West conceives when fully developed, will be less inclined to go helter-skelter across the country. For that reason, and many others, I certainly feel that the amendment should be defeated and the context of the original motion should be carried out.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DIACHUK:

Mr. Speaker, just a couple of points on the amendment as presented by the Member for Edmonton Norwood.

I appreciate the fact that this resolution was a sort of victim of circumstances in the spring and did not get debated in time as it was originally presented and reported thereon in the fall session. I therefore feel that the amendment, as presented by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, does permit us to debate it more fully today, otherwise we would almost have to adjourn our session and take a feasibility study and still report back to the fall session, and I believe that that wouldn't be the wish of all the hon. members of the loyal opposition.

I really feel that broadening this resolution as amended, or as proposed to be amended, would give us an opportunity to debate it more fully. I therefore support the mover of the amendment.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the amendment, it is a belated recognition by the hon. member who moved it that perhaps she should have spoken on the issue. She tried to get in on the coattails of a fairly good motion to broaden the thing.

I think the hon. Member for Lethbridge West who moved this motion had something specific in mind and he did propose a specific issue to the Legislature for support. Frankly, the amendment is innocuous. Passing it or supporting it will not alter anything as far as I am concerned, as far as the meaning or the intent of getting a park in Lethbridge is concerned.

I believe that when we look at what is happening in this province with regard to parks based elsewhere, when you look at the Alberta Wilderness Association report and see how this present government is desecrating all wilderness with permits for coal exploration, we had better be concerned about where these parks go and the more the better.

I believe the hon. member, Mr. Gruenwald ...

DR. WARRACK:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, I'm sure inadvertently, has said something that is not the case. The hon. member has ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. minister will have ample opportunity to refute what the hon. member has said when he is recognized.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I did not say anything inadvertently, that is not the case. I said something deliberately that is very much the case, Mr. Speaker. I refer this pamphlet to the hon. minister ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. With great respect, the Chair, perhaps, was a little lax in drawing attention to the fact that in launching out on the latest topic the hon. member has strayed considerably from the relevance to the amendment.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, but in the interests of sometimes putting a minister straight who is not on the ball ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. LUDWIG:

... allow a little latitude in debate and it always has happened, Mr. Speaker. I'll get back to the amendment.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the amendment does not take anything away from the motion, but on the contrary it doesn't add. I think it's a lot of nonsense and I think, if we can get them both passed, so much the better, but I'd like to see the hon. member's motion passed. He had a specific request. He did his homework and he prepared an address to this House. The amendment, as far as I'm concerned, is innocuous and I would like to see it defeated. But if we have to tolerate it to get the motion passed I would go along with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER:

You don't like parks in Calgary.

MR. R. SPEAKER:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one or two comments with regard to the amendment. Certainly the amendment takes advantage of the concerns of the Member for Lethbridge West [who], as a member of this Assembly, is very concerned about the needs of the Lethbridge residents and their needs for recreational facilities.

In the south we have Little Bow Park and we have Park Lake, which are provincial parks. Many of the users of those two parks are people from the Lethbridge area. They use the Little Bow park for the purpose of boating and use Park Lake for camping, visiting and sort of family activities. But we really need in the area a park near Lethbridge so these people do not have to travel so far. A park on the Oldman River would certainly take pressure off these other provincial parks which are overloaded and have been overloaded for the past two or three years.

I think the hon. Member for Edmonton [Norwood], in introducing her amendment, has recognized that not only is there a concern in the Lethbridge area for this type of facility, but there is certainly the same concern in many other areas of this province. The population and the people of this province need this kind of facility.

I think on that basis, I don't think I, myself, as a member, or most likely the rest of us, would vote against the amendment as it is. But I would like to make my point very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the initiative that is being shown by the Member for Lethbridge West in bringing this idea to the front has certainly been one that has been taken advantage of by the member from Edmonton.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, with those remarks I would certainly support the amendment, hoping that it would be supported at this time and that we can amend it and then talk about the main resolution and even support and pass that today because this whole area of parks is certainly one that is very, very important to the people of Alberta. We want to be the ones who initiate ideas and the leaders to bring about good development.

MR. BUCKWELL:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say one or two words on the motion and the amendment to it in talking about provincial parks. In my constituency I have two, the Park Lake Provincial Park and the Willow Creek Provincial Park.

I don't know just where the confusion has come in, because I'm certain that in listening to the minister in the spring session he did not, at that time, say that every community was going to have its own provincial park. Inasmuch as I had a letter from Granum, a copy of which was sent to the minister, and also from Claresholm, both assuming they were going to get their own provincial park when there was already a provincial park, say, several miles to the north of them, I think when we start talking about provincial parks we're going to put the minister particularly in a very rough position. If every little community thinks it is going to have a provincial park and if the government is going to support and keep up such a park, it's going to get completely out of hand.

Several years ago I spoke on the same park mentioned by our Member for Lethbridge West. I even suggested Indian Battle Park itself become a provincial park because the city of Lethbridge and many other places of that size have heavy financial burdens in supplying sewer and water in a growing community as well as keeping up a park of that

nature. This park is a natural park as far as I'm concerned because it is in its natural setting. It has a history because, as far as we know, the last Indian battle in North America was fought there. In fact, less than two weeks ago a cairn was unveiled in Lethbridge by Assistant Commissioner Seppala in memory of that last Indian battle in this area.

I think we do need more provincial parks, but I favored this one in particular because it was within the boundaries of the City of Lethbridge. They had an opportunity to use their city buses to take old-age pensioners and many families who can't afford to take a holiday, say to a provincial park or even a national park. That these people be able to go down and spend the day in the river bottom in a controlled and developed park, I think is well worth looking into.

I think we should try, and maybe the mover of the amendment has tried to do her best. In fact, she accused me last night. She said if I was opposed to her I did it in such a nice way, but I think she has the right spirit in the sense that if we can get the government to take over as many provincial parks as feasible, we should try to work along this line.

I would like the minister, if he has not already spoken, maybe to dispel this idea that every little community is going to have its own provincial park, because I don't think this was his intent. I think it has been taken wrongly that each community thinks it is going to have its own little particular park and the government is going to pay for it.

As far as this park in Lethbridge is concerned, a city of close to 45,000 people, [since] we can spend the amount of money we have done in the City of Edmonton to develop their park and what we have done and are going to do in Calgary, I think the City of Lethbridge and maybe even the City of Medicine Hat deserves some consideration.

MR. HANSEN:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks on the amendment. I feel that broadening this motion as it stands, to study the feasibility of provincial parks, is in the right direction.

I could use our area. Where I come from, we're very short of parks and I would like to thank the minister for taking time last winter to go and look at an area for a park up there called Lund's Point which was designated as a park during the cabinet tour.

I think the studies of all areas should be looked into because in our area we're short of lakes - we're not short of lakes, but we're short of facilities that a park provides. This study of all areas would cover all of Alberta and determine the sites that were most necessary to accommodate more people.

In my area, up at Cold Lake, a park is now designated; we have a park at Bonnyville and Moose Lake, but the one at Moose Lake does not handle tourists and the people of the area. The other lakes are very crowded. Sometimes people of the area they live in haven't the facilities at their own lakes and the tourists are camped all around them. This is why I would like to support the amendment and have a study done of all the areas.

Why I support this is, looking at some of the things in my own area, we need docking facilities for boats at a lot of the lakes which fit into the parks branch. I think we can get more parks in operation. I would ask the minister that the Lund's Point Park be developed next summer to take some of the pressure off the lakes as they are now.

Areas all over Alberta should be studied I think and should be looked at to help all the people in Alberta, and the people who come to Alberta should have the facilities at their disposal when they arrive here. They spend their money in the province of Alberta and I think these facilities should be supplied to them.

There are beautiful areas in the province which have been left too long. The development should have been started years ago and this feasibility study would bring those to light.

I would once again like to thank the minister for taking his time last winter to come up to Cold Lake to look at the park area ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. With great respect, the hon. member is a considerable distance from the amendment.

The narrow question which is before the House is whether or not the House wishes to debate the merits of the park at Lethbridge as proposed by the motion, or whether it prefers to debate the question of provincial parks generally around the province. Until that question is settled, hon. members, with great respect, are not entitled to debate the merits of the main motion as amended.

MR. HANSEN:

I would just close then by urging the House to support the amendment so we can go deeper into the subject.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

DR. BACKUS:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak for a few moments in support of the amendment. In no way do I wish to detract from the effort on the part of the hon. Member for Lethbridge [West] in bringing forward the concern he has for his constituency, and the needs of the

people in Lethbridge for this type of facility. On the other hand, the way the original motion was worded would indicate that we should debate at this time whether the forces of the Department of Lands and Forests should be taken from other areas in order to do a feasibility study and produce a report for this House in the relatively short period that still remains of the fall session.

It's certainly my feeling that any debate on this would create a contest between the needs of the people of Lethbridge and the needs of the people in the rest of the province. Although all of us here represent our constituencies collectively, in debate I feel that we represent the people of the province.

It's therefore my strong feeling that for us to debate a local question in one area is liable to create the situation where some of us would appear to argue against the needs and the rights of the people in Lethbridge simply because we perhaps feel that the needs of the people in our particular constituency should have equal priority in the overall picture. This, I don't feel, we are here to debate.

I think the amendment was very nicely done in that it definitely left that part of the motion in indicating that the prime function of this motion was concern for the people of Lethbridge, and therefore recognizing the fact that the mover did bring forward and express this concern for his people. But at the same time it also recognized this broader responsibility that we have in this House of also recognizing the need of Albertans as a whole, and recognizing the fact that we should perhaps use this opportunity brought to our attention by the hon. Member for Lethbridge [West], nevertheless brought to our attention to debate the question of the need for this type of park in all areas of the province. Therefore, I feel very strongly that such a wide-ranging debate would be far more valuable to the House and far more valuable as an indicator to the department in showing the needs in the province as a whole.

I feel, in fact it is the concern of an individual representative, an individual member in this House, to bring the specific need of his specific area to the attention of any of the ministers, that there are many other routes than in the course of debate.

In my own area of Grande Prairie, we are also seeking a similar type of park facility. The people of the community were encouraged in fact to get together and work together, both the city, county and other concerned bodies, to bring their needs directly to the attention of the minister.

I certainly, in support of my own constituency and in support of this application, also attended meetings with the minister on the matter. I would certainly, in my own parochial way, feel that this has probably as much priority as the needs of the people in Lethbridge. Because there has been this tremendous local effort to outline the areas and the nature of the park development that would be required, they should certainly have every encouragement. Therefore, it raises the question in my mind as to whether, in debating the original motion without the amendment, I should speak in favor of Lethbridge specifically, or whether in fact one should oppose the motion that the very next park that has to be developed has to be in Lethbridge.

Therefore, I feel the amendment widens the area. It gives us all an opportunity to speak about this lead generally throughout the province, while at the same time we have the opportunity to bring, in other ways, the needs of our particular constituents to the minister without necessarily having it a question of priorities debated by the House.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that the mover of the amendment has done so very reasonably in bringing it in to the broader field. At the same time, she has done so very reasonably in recognizing the mover's initiative in bringing this type of motion and the needs of his constituency before the House. But I wouldn't want it to be so limited that that was the only possibility we spoke about.

DR. WARRACK:

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in discussions of this most important matter to the people of Alberta. Certainly I would like, at the outset, to make three things clear. First of all, I very much support the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood. It's consistent with the spirit of the resolution she was a part of proposing to this Legislature relative to these kinds of parks in metropolitan centres where an increasing percentage of the people in Alberta now live.

Secondly, I would like to say in a rather personal way, and through you, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Member for Lethbridge West that I have a very great deal of sympathy for the Lethbridge situation generally and in terms of parks. After all, I did live there two summers during the course of my university days and rather enjoyed them. So I am very much sympathetic to the proposition that the hon. member puts forth. In addition to that, as a matter of fact it was only last night that I spoke to His Worship Mayor Andy Anderson on this subject, among others.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say that I have had the opportunity, to personally visit Park Lake, the provincial park that was referred to a number of times during the course of discussion this afternoon so far, and every other provincial park in this province. In addition, I have had the opportunity to visit personally a number of the potential provincial parks that have been suggested by various associations, various MLAs and our staff relative to future expansion possibilities throughout the province.

I very much support, as I said at the outset, the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood. I thought the hon. Member for Grande Prairie and Minister of Public Works put it very well, as in fact did, I think, a couple of the members from the other side including my friend from Pincher Creek-Crownest who indicated he would vote against the amendment but, as far as I could tell, spoke for it.

Relative to this point, as sympathetic as I very much am relative to the park outdoor recreation needs of the people in the Lethbridge area and the people in the city of Lethbridge specifically, the recognition of those needs just has to be in a context of priorities, and considering the relative needs in other areas of Alberta as well.

Can you imagine the situation we would be in in this Legislature were we to take strictly - can I use the word "parochial", because it has been used before - parochial viewpoints on various matters including parks. Because the only possible way that another MLA, one of the other 74 in this House, could protect himself or herself in the debate would be to tack on another amendment parochial to their individual constituency or, alternately, to pose yet another resolution on the Order Paper dealing with park needs in their specific constituency. There would then be at least 75 resolutions. As a matter of fact, I know of a number of constituencies where there is more than one future potential parksite. And as a matter of fact there are some in my own, Mr. Speaker. So we would be in a position where we would not be discussing policy in this Legislature, and by not discussing policy in this Legislature we would certainly be in the position that we would not be taking into account the overall viewpoint of the needs of the public interest of Alberta, but instead subjugating them to individual area and regional - if you like - parochial considerations.

So it's very clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be thinking in terms of the broad policy context within which we must look to the present and future policy and developments in the province of Alberta. As a matter of fact, I think it is fair to say, both interpreting the remarks of members from this side of the House and the other side of the House, that a great deal of recognition was suggested of agreement with the provincial parks policy position paper that was tabled in the House in May of 1973. That was the basis of subsequent action on a policy basis with respect to the new provincial parks act that then ...

MR. LUDWIG:

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

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe the hon. minister is aware ...

MR. LUDWIG:

... for the members on ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

DR. WARRACK:

I was unaware of that, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure the whole House that I am even more concerned about that than the gentleman from Calgary Mountain View. Therefore I shall beg leave to adjourn the debate politely.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. minister adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

Before we go on to the next item of business, hon. members are aware that the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, in moving the amendment, pointed out - or shortly thereafter pointed out - there were some difficulties with the text. They have now been straightened out. They will not have any effect on the debate because they in fact express the sense of the amendment as it has been understood by those who have debated it.

The amended text now reads that Resolution No. 1 under private members' business be amended: "by striking out all words after the word 'Lethbridge' and by substituting the following therefor: 'and other river-based provincial parks close to populous areas throughout the province'."

I mention that just for the record.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, that's an entirely different meaning to the motion as far as I am concerned - entirely.

MRS. CHICHAK:

Mr. Speaker, if I may speak on the point of order. In my initial opening remarks on the debate I had stated that the words following the word "Lethbridge" be struck out and I read my motion. Then I brought it to the attention of the members that I had noted the one word "river" had been omitted in the typing and was asking if I might be permitted that correction. So it does not change any other text at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT ORDERS
(Second Reading)

Bill No. 214
An Act to amend The Department of Consumer Affairs Act

MR. TAYLOR:

Mr. Speaker, I have great pleasure in moving second reading of Bill No. 214, An Act to amend the Department of Consumer Affairs Act. This bill is designed to assist the minister in carrying out the duties of the Department of Consumer Affairs. One of the sections of The Department of Consumer Affairs Act, being 4(b), states, "The Minister"

- (b) may cause to be investigated complaints of practices that
- (i) are in contravention of Acts for the protection of consumers, or
 - (ii) appear to be detrimental either to a business or to a consumer, or
 - (iii) are unethical business practices;

However, there do not appear to be any real teeth in the bill which would enable the minister to follow up the findings of these items of protection of the consumer, practices which are detrimental or practices which are unethical. I do think that if we expect the Department of Consumer Affairs to carry out its job as set out in the act there should be some authority whereby the minister can enforce or, rather than enforce, have some teeth that would be effective in carrying out those duties. The very fact that such legislation is on the books, I think, will probably be a major factor in people not carrying out their gouging, if I may use that word.

In dealing with this particular amendment which would recommend that the minister have authority to recommend to the Attorney General that any person who contravenes a provision of any act under the administration of the minister be proceeded against according to law, I don't think he really needs legislative authority to do that, but I thought it would be well worth while to enforce his position by putting it in legislation.

Secondly, to do such things as he considers necessary to correct practices that appear to be detrimental to either a business or a consumer, and stop any practices which are considered unethical business practices. I think the object of every government in Canada, and I'm sure the object of the provincial government in Alberta is to have fair practice in business to the greatest possible degree. I don't think under any society it's possible to have complete cleanliness in business operations. There is always some shyster who wants to make a fortune faster than he would by charging normal profits, et cetera.

I believe that the people generally, the rank and file of the people, are becoming more and more concerned, perhaps because of the increased cost of living and perhaps because they are finding it increasingly difficult to make both ends meet at the end of each month. There are a lot of other factors involved. I acknowledge that, and I don't want to interfere with normal practice in our free enterprise system of supply and demand. I think that is excellent and I think competition, where it works, is excellent too.

But in spite of competition where it is effective and where it is in evidence, and in spite of supply and demand, we occasionally and periodically have instances where we have the appearance of gougers. There are some big gougers. I think possibly the best example which has come to the Legislature in that regard was the statement by the hon. minister himself that some few operators had charged double, or almost double, for antifreeze after the media had led people to believe there was going to be a shortage. Naturally people could not take a chance of being without antifreeze and so when they thought there was a shortage, or there was indication that there was a shortage, they were prepared to pay almost anything to get antifreeze. I think many of us would be in the same position because we can hardly operate our cars today without antifreeze as we did 20 or 30 years ago. It's a different mechanism entirely and it would be very, very difficult to do. So that perhaps was an example of big gouging in the sense of small articles. I'm not thinking of very large items at this time.

One of the things that came to my attention just recently is what we might call small gouging, which I'm sure the hon. minister will be interested to hear if he is not already aware of it. That is in the price of cigarettes between the Highways Building and the Legislature Building. For some time there has been a difference of five cents in a package of cigarettes. Today I checked. The price recently went up, but the price in the Highways Building is 80 cents per package and in the Legislature Building it's 85 cents per package. Now it's difficult for me to understand why there should be a five cent differential in the price of cigarettes between the Highways Building and the Legislature Building. Somebody is making five cents more than he should be making. I don't smoke. It doesn't affect me personally but I think it's unfair to those who are purchasing cigarettes. I would suggest to all hon. members, instead of buying your cigarettes downstairs, just slip down to the Highways Building, save yourselves a nickel and get the fresh air on the way down to help undo the damage you are going to do to your lungs by smoking the cigarettes after you buy them.

I do think in seriousness though that this should be looked into. Whoever is responsible for the increase of five cents between two buildings so close together it makes me think there is something wrong somewhere. Now maybe there is something I don't

understand about cigarettes that are a block apart, but it certainly seems to me that this is the type of little gouging that perhaps should be stopped before it gets very big.

If there is authority after the monitoring of prices, and I think the department has been doing a good job as far as I can see from the reports which have come out on the monitoring - I think this is good. But if we are going to monitor, then surely there should be the opportunity to follow up and take effective action if the monitoring reveals something that is unfair to the consumers of the province. That is really all this bill is doing, giving the minister some teeth with which to carry out those duties.

There are two or three other things I would like to mention. The Batten Report, in dealing with this type of thing, probably in the '60 - '68 period, indicated that grocery stores at that time, not every one but generally, were charging the consumers about \$15.32 more per year per person than what they really should have been doing, and [for] every individual person dealing in their store over a year they made an additional \$15 over the regular profit. The Batten Report suggested that this should be checked into. At that time a family of four, a father, mother and two children, were being charged \$61.28 per year more than they should have been. Now if that same practice is going on in our grocery stores in the province of Alberta, we could probably add at least a quarter to that and be very safe, saying that every individual purchaser is paying at least \$22 more than he should be paying in groceries, and that every family of four is paying \$73 or \$75 more per year over and above the profit.

I realize that you can't run business, and the hon. minister in his answers has given some indication of that, and I don't think we want the government trying to run business. But I do think there has to be some equity when we are continually asking our workers not to increase inflation by asking for more wages and then [they] find that the prices of things keep going up. The worker gets to the point where he just has no choice but to either get more wages or go on strike. We are talking mostly of people in the low-income brackets. These are the people who are having a difficult time to make both ends meet. You might say, well, what's \$73 to a family over a year? Well, \$73 may make or break many, many families in this province over a year in regard to their grocery bill. If it's being charged unfairly then certainly it should be checked and there should be authority to stop it.

Another item the hon. minister mentioned in the question period was the double pricing. I notice that what he said is being carried out in all the stores where I have checked it. They have signs up stating, if it's double priced you pay the lower price. I think that is good. I commend the department for initiating that, and I believe they did initiate that program. That is wise. I don't think the stores should be double pricing and then charging the higher price.

A chap sent me a letter and this little folder which contains not double pricing, but triple pricing. He has shown the three tabs on an audio cable. The first price was \$1.39. Then on top of the \$1.39 there is another tab for \$1.89. And then on top of that there is another tab for \$1.98. When he purchased it, the dealer insisted on charging \$1.98 in spite of the fact that there were three prices on it. At this particular store, I don't suppose there is any real authority today saying to him, you can't charge \$1.98. As I understand from the statement of the minister, this was suggested to our businesses and most of them adopted it. Of course, the chap didn't have to buy it and he probably could take it back. But the fact that everyone doesn't have the time to shop around and look for the best price on everything, I think places some responsibility on government to see that those who don't carry out the reasonable suggestions where there is double or triple pricing, if the lowest price is not charged, should have some action taken against them.

The other point that I'd like to deal with is what is really going on behind the scenes in regard to a lot of the pricing. Last summer I checked gas prices for instance in Alberta, Washington and British Columbia. I paid all the way from 52 cents per gallon up to 71 cents per gallon in these various jurisdictions. The highest wasn't in the States. I got gas down there, regular gas though a smaller gallon, at 52 cents, and converted probably this would be 58 or 59 cents per gallon to us. In British Columbia there was a vast range. It was generally 67, 68, but in one place, at Blue River, I paid 71 cents for a gallon for the same type of gas from the same company. It's difficult for me to understand how in Vancouver the price is 67 and in Creston the price is 67 and in Yahk the price is 69. When you go as far as Washington it's 52 or 59, if you want to convert it to ours. Even in Alberta the price varies all the way from 62.9 to - well, I bought gas for 54.9 in the Calgary area. I've bought gas for 9 cents cheaper in Edmonton at a self-serve station than I could at the station of the same company in the city. Wiping the windshield I realize is an extra service given, but hardly 9 cents a gallon.

No wonder people wonder at this variance of price. Now I think maybe someone will say, well, isn't that what we want. We want people to be able to charge a different price and consequently the people can shop around, get the best price. Isn't there some merit in that.

I think we have to go a little further than that and find out what is really going on behind the prices. For instance, the major oil companies in their self-serve stations are selling gas cheaper than they are selling gas to some of the companies which carry their name. Now, that makes me suspicious. Is there something going on behind the scenes whereby the major companies are trying to get rid of the lessees. Are they a thorn in their sides. Is it a case of the major companies wanting to get into this thing entirely on their own. Are they underselling to eliminate competition. Well, it makes me suspicious when they sell it at a wholesale price to a lessee which is more than they

themselves charge the public at a retail counter after setting up the pumps and so on. There is something there that needs to be checked into. I think many people are wondering about this very thing. I don't know whether the government has this matter under investigation at the present time or not. It's something that has been discussed for a number of years; lessees and the major oil companies have been at variance.

A report issued when we were in government indicated some pretty serious things going on that I, personally, felt were very, very wrong, not fair to the lessee and not fair to the consumer. But I think if we're going to have an effective consumer department we have to have authority for that department to look further than just the price on the pumps in connection with gasoline. I think it has to go further. What is the ultimate objective. Is there something going on that's going to culminate in the people of the province being obliged to pay higher prices a little bit down the road. As the hon. Premier said yesterday, there is a responsibility on government to make sure that we not only look after the people of today, but also look after the people of tomorrow. If we set the scene today and set the climate today whereby competition can be eliminated and then they charge what the market can bear, we're certainly not doing anything to our children or our grandchildren - I mean your children and your grandchildren. It's something that should be checked into and looked at very, very carefully in my view.

There's another item that concerns me quite a bit in connection with this. I think possibly a good example was what happened with the price of sugar this last summer. We grow sugar in the province of Alberta, beet sugar. Just as we have the oil and the gas right here, the people of Alberta say, why should we have to pay more in Alberta than they pay in British Columbia where they are probably using our gas, or they pay in Washington where they are probably using our gas. I was never able to get a logical explanation of why that is so, when I was in government or since. There may be factors that I don't understand. But right now I feel very much like the man on the street who says, how is it possible to send the gas to B.C. and then you pay less than you pay in the province of Alberta - there are examples of that - or to Washington or California. And then you pay less than you pay in the province of Alberta. It was produced here. And the same thing with sugar.

I think probably sugar is a little bit different in that sugar has to compete with cane sugar. But I'm not sure that the price of sugar in Alberta has to rise every time cane sugar rises. If the factors are there that show increased costs in order to get a reasonable amount of profit to the producer, then I think our people would accept that. But I think rather there is an artificial policy of keeping the price of sugar from beets low enough to just have a competitive edge over cane sugar. In my checking, there is very little difference but beet sugar is always just a trifle below the price of cane sugar. Because the price of cane sugar increases, why should the people of Alberta have to pay an increased price for sugar that is produced right in our province.

I agree with the hon. Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa in his remarks about making sure we keep our producers in business. The hon. Minister of Agriculture here has been speaking similarly. And I agree completely with that. If we don't keep our producers in business here in Alberta or in Canada, whichever way you look at it, then it's going to be pretty serious for the consumers down the road. I've said to many, many city people who are complaining about the cost of articles produced in the province of Alberta, in regard to how much they have to pay, and who think the farmer is getting too much, that I don't think the farmer is getting too much. In most cases the farmer is not getting enough. I've always taken the stand that unless we keep our producers on the farm, the time will come when the corporate farm will have complete control. Then the city people will have something to scream and holler about because the corporate farms will charge all the market will bear.

It is in the interest of every urban person in this province and every hon. member of this Legislature to do everything possible to keep the family farm there because that's the best assurance we have that we will have fair prices for our production in this province. I think they should get a fair price so they will be content to stay on the farm and keep continuing to produce. No farmer is going to continue to produce at a loss year after year and no one with anything between the ears is going to continue to work as hard as he has to on a farm if he doesn't get a reasonable return, and we should insure that he gets that reasonable return.

But that's not the part I'm wondering about. The part I'm wondering about is in the province of Alberta. Many of the people of Alberta wonder why it is we have to pay more for goods produced in Alberta than do the people in Toronto and Montreal and Vancouver.

I checked prices this summer when I was in these particular places and I was quite amazed to find there was quite a difference between - well, there was some difference. It was on the lower side in Toronto than we could buy it here. Beet sugar, you could buy it cheaper. Sugar from beets, you could buy it cheaper in Safeway in Toronto than you could in Safeway in Edmonton.

Some of the other products have the same effect. Well, let's look at sugar the time I checked it. In Edmonton the price was \$1.95 for a five-pound bag. The following week I was in Toronto and the price there was \$1.73; 20 cents cheaper in Toronto and here we raise sugar in the province of Alberta. Albertans pay more for produce grown in Alberta than the people in Toronto and Vancouver pay. And the same thing was true of flour, potatoes, cabbage and ham. In Vancouver I found the price of eggs and sirloin steaks just a little bit higher than what it was in Alberta, but in Toronto the price of sirloin steaks and eggs was less than what you [would pay in] the stores in the province of Alberta.

I'm sure the hon. minister and the government don't want this to happen any more than any honorable citizen in this province wants it to happen, but the fact is it is happening and that's why I suppose the Act was put in the words it was, that the minister would have authority to deal with matters that appear to be detrimental either to a business or to a consumer.

Is there something going on that government and the consumers and the people generally are not aware of in regard to the pricing techniques of some of these items. If not, how is it we can ship these things to Toronto and they still charge less than we charge in Alberta? I recognize that world price has something to do with some of these but certainly it doesn't have anything to do with some of the others. And if we are basing it on world price, and sugar probably is in that category, there is some argument that the people of Alberta should not get less for their sugar than the people of any other part of the world. But in some of the other production it is not so and I would personally like to know - and I think the consumers department has the machinery to check into this type of thing - is something unethical going on or is there a logical reason the people of Alberta, the people of Edmonton and Calgary are paying more for their ham and potatoes and cabbage than are the people of Toronto and the people of Montreal. I can't understand it because certainly the freight alone is a factor that should increase the price further east.

I am not wanting the price to go up for the people of Ontario or the people of Quebec, but I do want the people of Alberta to have a fair deal on price too. I think there is a growing concern on the part of many people in the province of Alberta who are gradually learning the facts. The question is: why do we have to pay more for the things we produce than do the people who buy this produce 100, 500 or 1700 miles away. They get it for less. I realize the freight structure has something to do with it. I realize you can ship things east much cheaper than you can ship things from the east to the west. That is something that needs correction. Even that should increase the price of the vegetables and of the cabbage that is going to Ontario from the province of Alberta because there is freight involved, and certainly the people of Alberta should not be expected to pay that amount.

So the point I am making is that the department, I believe, has the legislative authority now to look into some of these things. I think it needs the legislative authority to show that if they find gouging the minister can take drastic action.

We say, those of us who believe in free enterprise, that we want government to stay out of business as much as possible. I agree with that within limitations, but I think there is a logical place for government to step into business when the people of the province are paying more than is logical, when something may well develop into a noncompetitive state later on and the people will be subjected to all the market will bear and where there are actual unethical practices.

Mr. Speaker, I don't suppose the wording in this particular bill is the best in the world. I endeavored to make it constructive so that it would enable the minister to carry out his responsibilities; to give the consumers of this province - because that is our responsibility - the best price possible; to eliminate unethical practices that may, well down the road, mean higher prices for all of our people, and to deal definitely with practices which are detrimental, either to other businesses, to the future of the province or to the price the consumer is paying.

MR. SPEAKER:

I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway was leading the tie.

DR. PAPROSKI:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to speak on consumer legislation is to speak on behalf of the constituents of the province of Alberta. So, Mr. Speaker, I consider this a special privilege to take part in this particular debate.

Mr. Speaker, on one hand I compliment the hon. member opposite for thinking of the consumer after the Department of Consumer Affairs had been formed by this government. But I often wonder, Mr. Speaker, where he was over the many years before the consumer department was formed. It is difficult to understand his concern now after these years.

Mr. Speaker, on one hand he claims he believes in free enterprise and on the other hand he quickly states there is a differentiation of 5 cents on a pack of cigarettes between one building and another. He says maybe we should control this. I have difficulty to understand what he means.

MR. CLARK:

Where do you stand?

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the question of non self-service stations, where there is overhead and service calls and the total care of a car, surely merits an increased cost per gallon of gasoline. And I suggest to the hon. member opposite, the next time he doesn't purchase his gasoline at a non self-service service station, that he beware when he calls these service stations for a call in the middle of the night or during a winter day. So Mr. Speaker, these things are the ill-defined areas which I have difficulty in following when the hon. member talks. So it is not surprising, Mr. Speaker, that when I

read over Bill 214, An Act to amend The Department of Consumer Affairs Act, I find it, Mr. Speaker, superficial, quickly formulated and fleeting.

To review, Mr. Speaker, the amendments and in reference to 4.1(a), Mr. Speaker, [which] reads for the minister to recommend after one contravenes the provisions of the Act, is asking the minister to be a daily policymaker and an adjudicator. Mr. Speaker, I suggest these contraventions should be clearly spelled out well ahead of time so the minister knows and, I suggest, the judicial system knows where they are going.

In reference, Mr. Speaker, to 4.1(b), he mentions, to do such things as he considers necessary. The question, Mr. Speaker, quickly, is what are "such things"? What is the word "detrimental"? I suggest, Mr. Speaker, again, this is all too clumsy. He claims it has teeth, and I suggest it is totally toothless. It's ill-defined for both the consumer and the businesses alike, unless there were another page, or further application or qualification regarding these words and phrases.

So, Mr. Speaker, in all sincerity, I suggest that Bill 214 lacks clarity, it lacks definition and direction. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is civil service heavy-handed and I don't think we need more bureaucracy in our government, or any government.

I suggest the consumer has had enough of this type of nondirection or nonprotection, or lack of protection, over the past many years when the 'then' party was in power. The consumer and the business operator require clearly defined direction where the rights, Mr. Speaker, of both are upheld. Yet there is requirement and need, a sincere need by both the consumer and the businesses for expeditious resolution of their issues no matter what party is involved. And this resolution should be dealt with quickly, properly and well.

So I feel, Mr. Speaker, that this government will bring about a bill which will deal with these matters in a much better way than Bill 214. When I speak of this type of bill that should come about, and I suggest it will in very short order, I would like to indicate to the members of the Legislative Assembly some of the aspects and some of the criteria that good consumer protective legislation or a bill should have, which is not contained, I suggest, in Bill 214.

Number one, it is not enough to prohibit one or two deceptive practices after the fact. I suggest that many, many dollars and hardships have come about as a result of many deceptive acts that have come about and then action is taken later and the harm is irreparable or too late. So the first thing is the need to stop a deceptive practice before it is started rather than have a deceptive practice take place, then make laws and such things as the hon. member opposite indicates, to outlaw these things and make other laws which are vague and often too late. In other words, not on a post mortem basis.

Number two, I feel, Mr. Speaker, we need to protect the rights not only of the consumer but also the business people against deception, against immorality and unethical practices. I feel that a good consumer protection bill should assist and direct the courts [as to] what constitutes an unfair act. What is harsh? What is this unconscionable act, Mr. Speaker? And when the hon. member opposite continues to speak of gouging, I challenge him to define what he means by the word "gouging". It is time, Mr. Speaker - I think we should get to the meat of things here and try to define these things so the consumer will know. Because if the hon. member opposite in this Legislature doesn't know what gouging is, I can assure you that the consumer, too, will be confused.

Mr. Speaker, number four, I feel is important in consumer protection legislation, it should indicate the need and the manner for mediation of both parties concerned. Mr. Speaker, the importance of this is that it is common knowledge in law, and I am sure that our legal colleagues here would know very well that some 95 per cent of our problems are resolved very well by mediation.

Number five, the supplier of the goods and services. If he violates an act he should make full restitution of the lost money or go to court. This is the type of item which should be in this consumer protection act. Mr. Speaker, I even suggest that a third party should be able to take action on behalf of a consumer or a group of consumers for recovery of money, if not also damages. I suggest here that the third party could be, as the hon. minister has mentioned on a number of occasions, the Consumer Association of Canada or some such organization. The consumer should be informed why prices have gone up so he can make an alteration in his direction and changes. He should be offered maybe the alternatives of where to go to get the best price.

As I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, I am tired, I am tired of hearing the word "gouging" and nobody defines what gouging is. People talk, Mr. Speaker, of having free enterprise and not having a spread in prices, and nobody tells us what are the parameters of this. So, Mr. Speaker, as we talk of this, if the hon. members opposite don't have the guts to come up with this definition then I suggest the members on this side will in due course.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Do it now.

DR. PAPROSKI:
Remember we brought in the Department of Consumer Affairs.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Later, not now.

AN HON. MEMBER:
When was it done?

DR. PAPROSKI:

Mr. Speaker, this government has indeed brought in that department to recognize consumers across Alberta and I suggest we will bring in legislation that will in fact further protect the consumer and uphold the rights not only of the consumer but of the businesses surrounding that consumer. We will, Mr. Speaker, offer resolution and direction on a predeceptive basis and not on a 'postdeceptive' or post mortem basis in the very near future.

Thank you.

MR. McCRAE:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few more remarks on this bill. I would like first of all to congratulate the Member for Drumheller for bringing in this Bill 214, An Act to amend the Department of Consumer Affairs Act. I think his intentions are good. The motivation behind the bill is excellent. I think it's an area where we need a bill very definitely. I think, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that this bill lacks authority and precision and the definitiveness that is required in this area. I would like to congratulate him for bringing the bill forward. I am afraid I can applaud his intentions but cannot support his proposed actions.

While I'm on my feet, I'd like to congratulate the minister for his energetic action - administration of his new department. I think he's going about it in the proper and complete way. He's not rushing off, tilting at windmills or chasing down wild rumours. He's working away, he's building up a competent staff, he's monitoring prices. I think, frankly, he's done it very, very well indeed, and I am sure that some time in the very near future we'll see draft legislation that we can all support and discuss rationally, and possibly there will be some consumer and public input to it too.

The shortcomings I see, Mr. Speaker, in this bill are in 4.1(b). I see no problem particularly with 4.1(a). It requires that the minister recommend to the Attorney General that any person who contravenes the provisions of any act under his administration be proceeded against according to law. Mr. Speaker, that's fair enough and certainly that's the way it should be. I think no more and no less would be expected of any administrator of any act and that he take appropriate legal action or cause it to be taken for any infractions of the act.

The problem I see with the bill is in 4.1(b) which stipulates that "The Minister shall"

(b) do such things as he considers necessary to

(i) Correct practices that appear to be detrimental to either a business or a consumer; and

(ii) stop any practices that are considered unethical business practices.

Now, listening to the Member for Drumheller and his pricing monitoring across Canada, I think it was extremely well done. I was glad to hear it. I'm sure my wife would like to know where some of these bargains are. I congratulate you on your efforts. It sounded to me though, sir, as if you were almost advocating price controls. I think that was repudiated by the electorate across Canada some time back in July. It sounded like you were advocating price controls in all areas except the farm sector. And I don't quarrel with you, that the farm sector should not be subjected to price controls. I think there should be a fair return. I think all other businesses and people in the market place are experiencing the same cost increases that the people in agriculture are, and they are anticipating and requiring additional returns to them as well.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the teeth that the member thought he was giving to the Minister of Consumer Affairs are in actual fact fangs. The powers he would give the minister are far too broad for any democratic nation. I think this is something you might anticipate in a totalitarian state.

MR. LUDWIG:

You can talk to Russell about that.

MR. McCRAE:

The minister is constrained to do such things as he considers necessary to correct practices that appear to be detrimental either to a business or a consumer. There are no guidelines, no definitions at all. The minister's judgment is apparently absolute and, of course, the judgment, the moral values that would be applied to different situations would be values of the minister himself or people who work for him.

We heard a little debate earlier today during the question period on the attitude toward a TV show - I missed the show, I gathered it was rather a provocative one - some people liked it, others quarrelled with it. I think that's a fair indication of the different moral standards or ethical standards that people bring to bear on a situation. I think it would be totally unfair to give the minister this power and expect him to apply it wisely. There is no way on earth, with the numerous complaints that he would get from our constituents at large and the MLAs in general, there is no way on earth that he could properly operate this section of the act.

Surely whatever the minister is supposed to be doing in the way of redressing these wrongs should be spelled out clearly and definitively in the Act. I share the confidence of the last speaker that in due course we will see an act that will prescribe, number one, the penalties that the minister or the courts or whoever is going to impose the penalties should impose for particular infractions; and number two, the type of business conduct that we're trying to proscribe or prohibit.

The second concern I have with the proposed statute or bill ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Thirteen minutes to go.

MR. McCRAE:

... is that it stipulates, "The Minister shall do such things as he considers necessary to stop any practices that are considered unethical business practices." Again, what standards are we to use. Is it simply what the minister thinks in an instant case, what he thinks should be prohibited as being unethical? One can imagine any number of situations such as a wage earner, a low wage earner or a person without a job going out and buying an extremely high-priced car. Would it be considered in someone's view that the vendor was being unethical in selling the car to a person who might well not be able to pay for it, or could you apply a different standard and say it was unethical for the person who bought it, unethical for the businessman to expect him to sell the car to the prospective purchaser.

I think it's too vague an area and it just couldn't be good legislation. Legislation when it's placed on the books has to be understood both by the people it is designed to protect and by the people it is designed to constrain in their activities.

On a lighter note, I've heard some complaints by purchasers of upland game licences that the government possibly should be charged with unethical practices for selling licences for birds when they weren't quite as plentiful as one might have anticipated. I'm sure the Minister of Consumer Affairs would take no pleasure in trying to satisfy that complaint of any constituent. I'm quite certain there are a lot of birds out there anyway, Mr. Minister.

AN HON. MEMBER:

You're almost as bad as ... [Inaudible] ...

MR. McCRAE:

In listening to the Member for Drumheller's remarks, and he expressed concern about sugar prices rising, oil and gas prices rising and all sorts of prices rising, I was interested in the release from the Drumheller area last week which received wide publicity in the Calgary papers. It was to the effect that land prices in the Drumheller area were escalating wildly. There was a statement that German interests were buying farmland that was worth \$200 to \$300 for about \$500, and then turning around and speculating and spinning it off to Arab interests, OPEC money, at about \$1,000 an acre. I'm wondering, would you consider that to be an unethical practice, is that some sort of rip-off, should the farmer be prevented or prohibited from selling to the Germans? Should the Germans be prohibited from - who determines what the standards for pricing are? I say, Mr. Speaker, it sounds to me from the introduction of the bill that the member is probably suggesting something perilously close to price controls. I don't think the people here want price controls.

So on those two grounds, Mr. Speaker, although I can applaud the intention of the mover of the bill, I cannot support the bill because of its uncertainties.

I would like to speak very briefly of the situation in Calgary, the staff the minister has assembled there. From my experience with them I think they are doing just an excellent job in monitoring prices and protecting the local consumer. I have had a number of complaints from consumers, constituents, about purchases they have made of houses, automobiles, other things where they have received less than what they thought was a satisfactory purchase. Their legal contracts were apparently satisfied; the obligations were met, but the customer, the consumer was still extremely dissatisfied.

When these people called me I was able to refer them to the department, and the people in the minister's department down there are energetic, they are on their toes. They were able to take the situation in hand, get the consumer and the vendor together and arrange for an improved situation. In the case of the house sale substantial improvements were made to the house. It was without legal redress at all; it was through the area of mediation. It appears to be working very effectively in that area. We may need further controls, but I think at this time, at least in the Calgary office, we are seeing excellent performance by the minister's staff.

On those few notes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say I cannot support the bill although I can applaud the intention behind it.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. BENOIT:

I would like to address myself briefly to this bill, and particularly because of its being in second reading the principle of the bill and not necessarily the details, although I will have to make some reference to the details because of the comparison between this and the bill itself, and the bill which would be repealed by the Department of Consumer Affairs act.

I think we should be addressing ourselves to the principle. The whole principle of the bill is that there should be some teeth in the bill. That's all that the hon. Member for Drumheller was asking, that some teeth be put into the bill. The present Department

of Consumer Affairs Act makes no provision whatsoever for any kind of penalty for those who violate the terms of the bill.

I would like to draw attention to those who are nitpicking about the terminology, for instance the words, "detrimental" and "unethical". These are the exact terms that are used in the bill itself in Section 4 of The Department of Consumer Affairs Act. If you can't determine in the amendment what these things mean, how are you going to determine in the bill itself. So I would like to clarify that aspect of it.

The other thing I would like to draw attention to is the fact that this Department of Consumer Affairs Act makes no provision whatsoever for any kind of penalty, and that's all that the new amendment proposed here is asking for.

Now in the original consumer affairs act there was a penalty provided for violation and it is my feeling, Mr. Speaker, that there is no possible way of making any statute effective unless there is some kind of penalty attached for violation of the bill. I think it is a poor law that's put on the books any time, regardless of who put it on. I know there are some that have been on for some time and there are some going on every day that have no penalty for violation. What is the purpose of the bill, or how can it be enforced if there is no penalty for violating it? So I'm in favor of the bill, and if anybody quibbles with the wording, they have to quibble with the wording of the original bill as well as with that of the amendment.

That's all I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, that we need some teeth in the Consumer Affairs bill which is presently in existence, the kind of teeth that were in it before and the kind of teeth that are being proposed in the amendment before us today.

MR. LEE:

Mr. Speaker, I won't have time to make the remarks that I had anticipated, but I would like to make just a few brief comments about Bill No. 214. As others have done, I would like to commend the mover for presenting this bill. He has given us a recognition, I think, of the need for a more extensive, statutory consumer-type of protection. But like others, I'm not in accord with the method which he has proceeded with.

I don't think Bill No. 214 does adequately respond on a number of counts to the kinds of protection that a consumer needs in the market place. I'd like to direct my brief remarks to the kind of protection that I think we need in an act for the consumer, not the broad kinds of power that we have put in this particular act. I would prefer that we had an act in itself rather than placing in regulations, which would be the only way that we could really delineate specific kinds of practices, I would rather see practices codified and delineated within an act itself. Such an act for instance was provided in the United States, the Uniform Consumer Sales Practices Act which was produced and which I understand now has been adopted by some 47 states of the United States. And I understand that Ontario and British Columbia also followed a similar kind of format to this in which actual practices - deceptive practices, unconscionable practices - were stated within the bill itself, giving a kind of predictability in the market place, not only for the consumer but also for the small businessman who has to function within this particular area. This is the kind of predictability, the kind of codification which I think we need.

In Bill No. 214 there is a further weakness in that in 4.1(a) there is provision for the minister to undertake administration of particular acts. Those acts that are now under the administration of the consumer affairs department, I suggest, don't adequately delineate or show a protection for the public in consumer areas. So this Bill 214 I think, gives an excess of discretion in the area of consumer protection and a further delineation is needed. In fact, I would suggest that an act in itself couldn't even go far enough in codifying particular practices, and perhaps the department would have to be further involved in working with particular industries in developing codes of conduct for automotive retailers, for instance, another for food retailers and other services, and so on beyond an act itself.

I think also an act has to provide a statement of the procedures that a consumer can go through for redress and restitution. Other speakers have noted, I think, that current consumer law does not really protect the consumer except for punishing the person who is undertaking a deceptive or unconscionable practice. But there is no provision in current law for redress and restitution.

I think we have to put in an act itself that there will be certain procedures and certain flows in consumer law which will provide for an intervention by a consumer affairs department, not necessarily the courts, but where a criminal sanction, a fine has to be undertaken, then this would be done through the courts. This bill doesn't provide for this type of thing. In fact it perpetuates the kind of criminal emphasis we have in much of our law without a provision for any kind of restitution or redress. I think we have to provide for mediation and investigation. In the bill, for instance, in the States - and I understand in the B.C. bill - they have a provision they call an assurance of voluntary compliance where a supplier can sign a statement saying, I promise not to do this again. In actual fact it has proved apparently to work fairly well, in that it stops something, provides for redress but at the same time doesn't bring down the heavy hand of the criminal law upon the offender.

Thirdly, just in closing, I think that an act like this needs some provision for consumer representation for a department, for an agency, to represent or act as an advocate. This is mentioned in third-class civil or group actions. And this once again, I think, has to be delineated right within an act itself. So although I do commend the mover for the presentation of this bill, I do believe we need a bill in itself, an act which will delineate and codify procedures and actual deceptive activities.

I note that in the Votes and Proceedings we have a bill that has been introduced, Bill No. 78, The Unfair Trade Practices Act. I look forward to this act and the debate and hope that this will be the type of approach we are taking.

Thank you. I would move to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER:

May the hon. member adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, realizing there is a sitting this evening, I waive advance notice of business in the House tomorrow morning starting at 10 o'clock. But tomorrow we will move into second reading of Government Bills in the following order: Bill No. 63, The Land Titles Amendment Act, 1974; Bill No. 66, The Alberta Opportunity Fund Amendment Act, 1974; Bill No. 68, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1974 (No. 2); and then on page 2 of today's Order Paper, Bill No. 69, The Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 1974; Bill No. 70, The Trust Companies Amendment Act, 1974, and if there is time, Bill No. 75, The Attorney General Statutes Amendment Act, 1974 (No. 2).

MR. SPEAKER:

The House stands adjourned until 8 o'clock this evening.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair at 5:30 p.m.]