

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Monday Evening, February 10, 1975

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair at 8 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS (continued)

[Adjourned debate: Mr. Ruste]

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, in listening to the Provincial Treasurer deliver the Budget Address the other evening, I couldn't help but think he was of the opinion that Alberta didn't exist until 1971. It's rather interesting, I have come across two or three quotes I would just like to use at this time. I think they tie in with the Provincial Treasurer's attitude: "Excessive amount of money in government hands has moved us into a socialist economy." Another I think could ably describe the government at this time is "the doctrine of instantaneous changing circumstances," and we have this from time to time. They are going off one way and then another. In The Albertan the other day I saw one, Today's Choice, When you get something for a song, watch out for the accompaniments. Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side are certainly intent on watching out what is going with it.

I think the hon. members for Little Bow and Calgary Bow put the case very ably on this side of the House this afternoon when they described the style and tone of the Budget debate: the image-building, and I go on to say government by press releases.

I think it was kind of interesting today when the Minister of Education got up and announced they were going to have further funds for some of these more remote areas and so on. Now this, Mr. Speaker, is really long-term planning. Late last year he announced the 15-per-cent increase in the foundation program. Now I thought, here, this is good, here is long-range planning. But I think the heat in the kitchen got a little too warm, Mr. Speaker, so now they found some more funds to put into the fund.

The Minister of Industry and Commerce was dealing this afternoon with the matter of freight rates and Alberta's position as it relates to Confederation and the work that was being done by the present government. I think I would like to remind the hon. members this took place quite a while ago as well. It is an ongoing thing. Certainly I would hope that if this government is able to come through or break the nutshell, shall we say, at the federal level, so much the better.

I would like to quote from the hon. Member for Red Deer's paper. This goes back regarding the federal-provincial conference, February 1969. It goes on to say, and I'm quoting:

Premier Harry Strom's opening address to the federal-provincial Constitutional Conference ... was an excellent summation of legitimate grievances about the way Confederation works for Alberta ... his presentation was probably the most succinct summary of Western problems ever uttered in Ottawa, let alone broadcast to a national audience.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's look at things the way they are. You know, the more I listen to the hon. Provincial Treasurer - and I like his style, he is a very able man. I understand he has his degree in accountancy - he is coming in now - I couldn't help but think of a column by Art Evans that was in The Edmonton Journal a while ago. It was titled Such Super Ballyhoo. It goes on to say, propaganda has taken precedence over performance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't find words that suited better the occasion than the Provincial Treasurer, when he was trying to impress upon the people of Alberta that I've done this, I've done this, when in fact it was as the Member for Little Bow pointed out this afternoon, the municipal councillors, many of the people who are in the senior citizens homes at this time, the man on the street - they are the ones who have done it. We as members of this Legislature are nothing but custodians of the funds that belong to those people.

Now he didn't mention, in his Budget debate, the growth of government. He did mention, of course, the 855 new permanent civil servants that are going to be added in

this year's Budget, but he didn't say anything about the payments made to members of the Legislature and the Cabinet. I took some interesting figures here. I go back to March 31, 1971 when the figure was in excess of \$852 million. Three years later, Mr. Speaker, that sum had grown to \$1,868,000. Now he didn't mention these things.

There was another document that was tabled the other day, Mr. Speaker, that I found most interesting, an order for a return. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tabled it; dealing with the printing services of government. I find there the paper war of government and press releases. This report pointed out that there were no less than 60 million photocopies annually within government. They talk about a paper war or whatever it might be, but that is certainly an indication of it.

Mr. Speaker, in going on, I would like to discuss a bit about my own constituency because I think there is a share in this Budget for the people I represent. I know that over the year I have made representations to various ministers. It's rather interesting. I met this afternoon with the Minister of Highways endeavouring to get some more money for Highway 41 and some of the others.

We have been in contact with the Minister of Health regarding a senior citizens home and the hospital complex at Wainwright. We certainly appreciate the matter of the new health centre that is going on in Provost. I did a little bit of arithmetic on that, Mr. Speaker, and here is \$6.33 million. When you consider that to the area of Provost and district - and I'm not begrudging them that - but if I look at Wainwright and district, we should have in excess of \$11 million. If you take it on the same per capita basis for the province of Alberta you would be well in excess of \$2 billion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering, I say this and I've said this before, maybe we are spending \$10 where \$8 could do it. Maybe we are spending \$10 where \$7 could do it. I think we want to watch that very carefully. Certainly I would hope the highways, the health care centres, municipal and so on, can be looked after in my constituency as well, from the Budget funds that are available at this time.

I was rather interested, this past summer, when the Premier visited the Wainwright constituency. Looking through the manifest for aircraft, I find the Premier going on one of these cabinet tours. I understand he used two aircraft to get to Provost; one as far as Wainwright, a winged aircraft, then he used a helicopter. The interesting part of it, Mr. Speaker, is that on the helicopter part there is no mention of who the passengers are. Really, when you get down to a manifest such as that - it says "20 passengers on two helicopters" - it becomes meaningless. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that maybe some of the passengers were political workers out getting ready for an election that may be in the offing.

At the meeting in Provost, I was interested in a comment the Premier made - and it's too bad he isn't in his seat at this time. He was telling about his visit to a school in that area and he said one of the students asked him a question about what he was going to do about the grain handlers strike that was in operation at the west coast at that time. The Premier replied - you know, I could just see the parents that morning sort of prompting their child to ask this question. Do you know what his answer was? That's a federal matter. Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed in the attitude of the Premier; just flippant, it was a federal matter. Certainly I, as one of the more or less 60,000 farmers in the province of Alberta, was being inconvenienced. I was losing money because of that. Yet the Premier of this province said: well, it's a federal matter. I just mention these things to show that maybe some of them should be looked into a little more.

I might also mention that on March 28, 1974 there was a reply to a question tabled in this Legislature by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs dealing with the lodge additions and new lodges for senior citizens. It spells out here, "Wainwright - one 30-bed addition". Mr. Speaker, I was in Wainwright a week ago and I certainly didn't see anything going on as far as construction toward that goal. I'm just wondering if this Budget, in its reference to senior citizens homes or lodges, will be delayed the same as that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to get into a few things on the matter of agriculture. I'm sure the Minister for Agriculture would miss it if I didn't have something to say. We had a motion for a return tabled in the House earlier this session and in that there was reference in a few places to the matter of debt consolidation. I submit, Mr. Speaker, if we're running into this situation in the year 1974 or early 1975 when we've had a record year - and I'll admit that - I think of what's going to happen when things tighten up as they will.

The Minister for Agriculture has been given credit for a lot of things. I would just like to mention here ... I'm looking back to livestock on farms. I can well recall when the Minister of Agriculture was on this side of the House, he stood up and said, be expansionary, produce and we'll get out and sell. I think he remembers as I did after the fall session when there was a group of farmers on the steps of this Legislature Building. They told him in fact, you told us to produce and we'll sell. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think we have all realized now you can produce but you're not always going to be able to sell.

Reference has been made to the hog industry and it's kind of interesting. The population of hogs from '71 through '74 is down 22 per cent. There is one where the price maybe hasn't been as strong as it could have been, but it certainly hasn't been the disastrous proportion that the livestock or cattle industry has been.

I'm looking at statistics again; it's rather interesting to see that farm cash receipts are up. This refers to some figures from Statistics Canada. Total cash receipts from farming operations, January to July in millions of dollars, it compares '74 against

'73. I'm going to use percentages, Mr. Speaker. In Manitoba it was up 89 per cent in that period. In Saskatchewan it was up 128 per cent and in Alberta 77 per cent. Does that mean, Mr. Speaker, our Minister for Agriculture in Alberta is a third-rate minister of agriculture? It would sort of make you almost believe that when you look at the figures, wouldn't it?

I submit, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture in this province had about as much to do with the grain income in 1974 as he did with the building of the pyramids we had in biblical times.

[Interjections]

We get into the matter, Mr. Speaker, of selling and promoting. I was rather interested in an article in The Calgary Herald where one of the reporters wrote about this big excursion to Japan to sell agricultural products. This is well and good but I can also remember the federal Minister of Agriculture standing at the farmers' union convention in Alberta in Edmonton this fall. He said, you know it's interesting to be in an airport, here's the delegation coming in from one province, it's been out on a selling mission; another one leaving. He was in effect saying, how fragmented can we get. I know here according to this article there's maybe \$200,000 spent on one excursion. I understand there was a barbecue that was sent over costing about \$800 for air freight. Is that benefiting myself as an individual agricultural producer?

I would like to deal a bit with the senior citizens. Much has been said about this. There's a release by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs dated January 15 and it said that "In response to numerous resolutions received from the Alberta Senior Citizens Home Associations the new rates are as follows: maximum rates for single rooms, \$130 (per person)." Up \$20, Mr. Speaker, and that comes into effect on May 1.

Then we find, Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne they are going to raise the payment to the senior citizens to \$235 a month. I asked the Minister of Health and Social Development whether that would offset. He said, well, it depended on the case. But I submit here that we have one case where the rental rate is being raised by \$20 and offsetting that - maybe not even offsetting it enough - is the matter of it going up to \$235 a month.

We see another order in council dealing with the civil service. Here is one that raised some of the senior civil servants by \$10,500 to \$48,000 by one stroke of the pen. Now how do our senior citizens feel with that type of treatment? Another one ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

... [Inaudible] ... the home-owner.

MR. RUSTE:

Yes, the member referred to the matter of home-owner. You know it's kind of interesting when we look at the Speech from the Throne which refers to the senior citizen rental home-owners tax discount being raised from \$100 to \$150. Doing a little research in the city of Edmonton, I find that some of the better homes in the city of Edmonton are entitled to as much as \$969 of education tax refund. How does the senior citizen, who has built this province and who rents his home, feel when you get that type of comparison?

Another matter I would like to deal with briefly, Mr. Speaker, is the matter of some more of the propaganda that emanates from the government. Here is a new one that has come out lately. It is entitled Alberta Postscript - Newsletter For Retired Public Servants. Now maybe this is good but it's all adding to the paper war. I am just wondering what it does do.

I noticed one pensioner received the following with his last pension cheque. It says: "To assist retired public servants of Alberta and their dependents, the Alberta government has increased your pension by ... [so many dollars] 11% per month". Then it gives a summary of your pension. The interesting part, Mr. Speaker, [is that it] then goes on to say the overall percentage increase is 24.85. Now how far back in history are they going to get the 24.85 per cent when in fact it is 11 per cent this year, and last year, if you want to look at the figures, they increased it by 5 per cent which is far below what it should have been. Yet they have the nerve, shall we say, to come along here and say that overall it increased 24.85 per cent. Now what does that do to the individual?

This is getting back to retired civil servants. Some of them are down to pensions as low as \$17.61 a month, Mr. Speaker. So I just raise this. I might mention also that on January 15, 1975 the Dominion Bureau of Statistics indicated the cost-of-living increase was 12.4 per cent. The 11 per cent given, Mr. Speaker, didn't even cover that.

Mr. Speaker, time is going on but I would just like to relate to you one of the things I have come up against as an individual. In speaking to people, I point out that we, as members of the Legislature, have Hansard available. We get into the area of cost. When they hear it is \$15 they certainly are disappointed, especially when we can get a Hansard from the federal level at \$3 a year for a session that is much longer. I think we had better look at this in the provincial field if we are going to have it open and available to the public. Certainly that could be reduced a lot further.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other things I could deal with such as the proposed planning act. This goes into the area of government and, I might say, intrusion into the municipal fields. I think it is rather interesting in looking at the planning act with the message of transmittal and the major objective to provide a stronger direction in overall planning by the Province. It goes on to say:

Greater public interest cannot be viewed from the point of view of residents of towns, cities, counties and municipalities but rather from the point of view of Albertans collectively.

I think we had better be pretty careful as legislators [about] what we are going to be asked to approve in this Legislature. It goes on: "the significance of cabinet approval for regional plans is not to be underestimated." I think we have to be pretty careful here too in what we give, especially from what we have seen in the matter of government intervention in municipal fields and so on.

Now we get into the matter of resources, Syncrude and many other things. I would just like to say here that I don't think Albertans will ever know the damage that has been done to the economy of this province. Oh yes, you may say we are ahead of all the rest of them. But how much further ahead could we have been if government had kept faith with industry, had kept faith no matter whether it's a big industry or little industry that goes on.

Certainly we can well recall, many of us, when Alberta crude was being sold in the Canadian market for more than world price. And here we've got into a situation where certainly if it hadn't been for the last-minute steps on a spur-of-the-moment decision, maybe one of the industries in the tar sands wouldn't have gone operational.

They are talking a lot about what they've got out of the resources. Not long ago I asked the Minister of Mines and Minerals what the royalty on coal was. He answered, 10 cents a ton. I can remember, Mr. Speaker, when the members who are on the government side now were over here, why 10 cents a ton for coal royalty. And that, Mr. Speaker, was back in the '70s, not in '75, and the energy picture has changed.

[Interjections.]

Mr. Speaker, another thing I would like to deal with briefly this evening is the matter of ... I sat in on the Canadian Radio-Television Commission public hearings and there was a concern expressed there in the application by CKUA of Edmonton for extending their coverage in the province of Alberta. There was certainly concern expressed there about political interference in the broadcast industry. And, Mr. Speaker, when we see what's happening with the Alberta Communications Network and that, I think we have reason to be concerned about what might happen once government gets involved in some of these things.

Mr. Speaker, I questioned the Minister of Lands and Forests - and I see he's not in his seat at this time - some time ago about government sharing and business, and this goes back to "Pulp firm expansion report threatened" out at Hinton. Being the Minister of Lands and Forests some time ago, I realized what was going on there. But I was utterly amazed to find that there is a report of four cabinet ministers of this province sitting down with industry out there on a profit-sharing basis. Evidently they are not satisfied to get their share through the dues that are paid on stumpage, through whatever way you want to call it, but they want to get involved in the business of that group; they want to share with them, and in sharing of course they've got to have their auditors in there and everything else. And I'm disappointed - it goes on to say: "In a prepared statement, Dr. Warrack said 'considerable progress was made, with much more work to be done.'"

Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day as far as I'm concerned if we're going to get into that situation where we have the Pacific Western episode, we have IPSCO, we have several other things that are showing up where government gets involved. When are they going to get into maybe the farming business? You may say that's far-fetched but certainly it's possible down the road if we've got a greedy government that's looking to get in, not only to run the business but take the profits.

I was rather interested in the statement made in the speech by the president of Imperial Oil. And I'm just going to quote a part from his talk, where it says: "Clarification is needed as to what the royalty rate in Alberta will be when prices increase."

Now is this, Mr. Speaker, confidence that industry should have? They want to know where they are. Over the years Alberta has built a reputation of dealing not only with business but industry, with individuals, that they could trust government. And yet we have here case after case where there is a flagrant abuse of that trust. What can you expect of industry when you get that?

This little paper, Edmonton Report, here's another one that came out here that's kind of interesting. It is referring to "two gov't policies worry city officials ..." and it goes on that the mayor avoids an open showdown. It says: "... city hall, were disappointed with the amount of the grant, but were afraid to voice their resentment."

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we get a government that's afraid to speak out regardless of whether it's for or against, I think we're getting into a serious situation. Are we getting into a situation where the government is saying via the pipeline that feeds out into the country, you come to us this way or through that person and then you'll get something? Is that the open government that the members opposite are talking about?

MR. HENDERSON:

They don't talk about it ...

MR. RUSTE:

I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, we have too many of these things which are certainly disturbing to many of us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to discuss another thing and that is the submission by the Alberta Federation of Labour in January 1975. I'm going to quote a part of it:

For the third time in less than twelve months, the Alberta Federation of Labour finds it necessary to speak on the rights of the Civil Service Association of Alberta. Government promises to extend the collective bargaining rights of government employees excluded from the jurisdiction of the Alberta Labour Act remain unfulfilled. ... it has taken three years to set up a task force on Civil Service Collective Bargaining.

Mr. Speaker, when I look back into the records, I find a letter dated August 13, 1971 from the Premier of this province, at that time Leader of the Opposition. In that letter there is this one paragraph and I want you to notice it:

In conclusion, I would like to state that a Progressive Conservative Government would move very quickly to give the Civil Service a much broader and definitive Act which would give the members the same basic bargaining rights enjoyed by organized labor in the Province.

AN HON. MEMBER:

He didn't expect to get elected.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, that statement was written by an individual who had more than average education, who understood the intent of every word of that, I submit. Yet here we have it almost four years later and this is what you have in the submission of the Alberta Federation of Labour to the government. I submit that statement then is in the same category as the statement the Premier made to me and is recorded in the March 12, 1974 Hansard when he was talking about agricultural credit.

How are we or the citizens of Alberta supposed to take at face value some of those statements which were made? I think the Member for Little Bow today outlined abundantly clearly many of the cases where the Budget Address didn't live up to what it should do. In fact it wasn't true. Certainly I don't think it's any wonder some of the things that are happening, such as a report that even at the Premier's own nominating convention in Calgary when one of these ... when they spearheaded the standing ovation. I understand at that convention only about half of them stood. The manipulation of the standing ovation didn't work. Mr. Speaker, maybe this is what he's getting through to more and more of the people of Alberta.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to refer briefly to the conclusion in the Budget Address. I certainly think we all appreciate the matter of the reduced personal income tax. But I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, couldn't this have been made for the year 1974? Maybe I as a farmer could have made a few dollars in 1974, maybe I could have benefited from it. But if the Minister of Agriculture goes on with some of his ways this year, maybe I won't have so much to report in 1975, nor will I be able to get that much for it.

I was also disappointed, Mr. Speaker, there is no place in the Budget that deals with the price of fuel to the farmer. There's reference to the existing one, but I submit when you look at the Foster report where the price of crude oil is going to rise substantially, surely the government is going to look not only at the farmer as a fuel consumer but all of us who consume fuel in this province and protect us from the world prices or the near world prices which will be in that area.

The other one is the support for social and other government services. Well, I submit, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to build and build and build a bigger and bigger civil service, maybe there won't be any unemployment. There won't be anybody else but those in the civil service. Partnership programs is one where I've outlined my position pretty completely, I think.

So I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, here is a government that feels nothing was going in Alberta until 1971. But I submit, Mr. Speaker, such things as The Human Rights Act of 1966, the senior citizens homes program, the nursing homes program, highway campsites, provincial parks, Alberta with no sales tax, no estate tax, the start of the home-owners tax discount, the Alberta commercial corporation, the municipal finance corporation, yes, even the Ombudsman, seed cleaning plants, rat control programs to mention a few, were all instigated.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when you really study the Budget Speech of the Provincial Treasurer last Friday, maybe you will find changes in names, but nothing else really. They've got more money, sure. And as I pointed out, that's not due to the present government, that is due to the international forces. Certainly they can change the name of a program and then deceitfully say, it's first.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that Alberta will never know how much the loss of trust in industry, whether it be large or small, will cost Alberta in the years ahead. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that it can be regained.

Thank you.

MR. RUSSELL:

Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate in this particular Budget debate. I enjoy participating in the debating parts of the

House activities and last but not least, this is a pretty outstanding Budget. I think any MLA has to be pretty proud to get up to talk about this one.

I've been listening with a great deal of interest to some of the comments that have come from the other side of the House and I think one or two of them bear a little response before I get into the topics that I wanted to talk about with respect to my particular responsibilities.

There seems to be a theme, Mr. Speaker, from the other side of the House, that they can't find any direction in this Budget; there is a lack of thrust. They're looking for directions or policies. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, they are making the same mistake some hon. members made when they went over the Throne Speech. They weren't reading very carefully. They weren't looking very carefully. Or else they didn't want to believe what, in fact, they saw. I was a bit surprised too, no matter what side of the House hon. members sit on, to hear phrases like "windfall" and "more money than they know what to do with," still being used.

AN HON. MEMBER:

That's right.

MR. RUSSELL:

Municipalities coming hat in hand - I haven't seen any of those. I remember them coming with more than a hat in their hand in 1971. But they haven't assumed that posture since then.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I think in the Canadian interest, for Alberta's part in Confederation, in these times to be using the term "windfall" when we're still getting less than fair market value for our depleting natural resources, indicates a fair degree of irresponsibility.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who agreed to it?

MR. RUSSELL:

It's not windfall at all. And I'd ask the hon. members where they were during the past three and a half years when the present government worked so hard and confronted the federal government so vigorously; confronted the industry in trying to get better prices and better royalties. Mr. Speaker, I venture to say that if the hon. members on the other side still held the responsibility of government, Alberta oil would be selling for 4.40 and the provincial royalty rate would be sixteen and two-thirds per cent.

MR. CLARK:

Sixteen and two-thirds per cent of the world price ...

MR. RUSSELL:

I also recall, Mr. Speaker, some of the things the other side did with respect to fuel taxes. It seems to me it was in 1970 that the previous government upped provincial income taxes by 6 points, from 30 to 36 points. And now, a short time later, because we're showing or reaping some of the rewards of some work that was carried out in the past couple of years, they're all excited and they say, well, we can't find any directions or we can't find any thrust. We know what your directions and thrusts would have been: ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Upped.

MR. RUSSELL:

... less than market value; low royalty rates; keep that provincial income tax up; sock it to 'em with the fuel tax, freeze the municipal assistance grants: we know.

[Interjections]

But they don't like to hear about those things, Mr. Speaker. They get really nervous when we even talk about some of the bold decisions we have taken with respect to steel and transportation and the development of the tar sands.

Those things were controversial. They were bold. They were far-reaching moves. I submit they took imaginative leadership and a great deal of courage. We did them and I think they are being well accepted by the public. Chatter as they may, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is unable to tarnish the image of those particular decisions or actions.

So I repeat what I started out to say, Mr. Speaker, it is with a feeling of pride that I stand and participate in a Budget that brings new and expanded programs to the citizens of Alberta, that reduces taxation, and puts aside a pretty hefty chunk of incremental revenues, interest for future citizens. Now I don't know of any other contemporary North American government that has been able to do that.

Granted, some of it has been due to unforeseen world conditions. But I submit ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh, come off it.

MR. RUSSELL:

All right. Mr. Speaker, you know, I didn't hear any of the hon. members on the other side, I didn't hear any of the industry reps, at the open hearing in 1972, give any indication of what was going to happen with respect to certain international situations.

AN HON. MEMBER:

We knew it all.

MR. RUSSELL:

But I do submit the citizens of Alberta are ready to give credit where credit is due for giving better market value and higher returns as our share of those resource revenues. The day of reckoning is come and we shall see, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to talk about two things in the Budget that are of particular interest to me. First, a few remarks relating to the Department of Municipal Affairs, then I would like to finish my comments by offering some observations on housing, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, talking about municipal affairs - again, you have to be amused when the members on that other side get exercised and talk about they can't find directions. I think it was perhaps the Member for Spirit River-Fairview who kind of overlooked that little item of \$85.8 million in property tax relief. I submit that is a pretty significant direction. It's only one that is tied on to, and is complementary to, what I submit is a pretty dramatic move in the field of municipal financing and municipal assistance.

I would like to just point out, Mr. Speaker, three direct ways in which there has been, I submit, a pretty noticeable turnaround and improvement in the field of municipal financing. First of all, the expensive social programs oriented primarily towards people - those which expand at a more rapid rate - have been virtually removed from the residential property tax; in fact they have [been] and we are a long way in removing them from the nonresidential property tax. So the first important principle, Your Honor, is to remove those rapidly escalating social programs as a municipal responsibility supported by the property tax.

Secondly, there has been a very dramatic increase in municipal assistance grants, that is, direct transfer of dollars. There also has been an increase in the number of kinds of grants. I submit that transportation and recreation are two of the outstanding examples. When you add those on to the dramatically increased unconditional municipal assistance grants, you will see that tied in with the first policy - that is, of more clearly defining responsibilities of each level of government and at the same time increasing the unconditional financial assistance - those are two pretty important moves for our municipal governments.

Another important thing we have done is make available to our Alberta municipalities an unlimited source of capital funds for borrowing and fix the interest rate for those funds at 8 per cent. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the benefits of that particular move are twofold.

I think it is interesting to note too, in passing, that the former government, the members who are now looking for a direction of course, had frozen the level of capital borrowings by municipal governments at \$50 per capita ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Shame.

MR. RUSSELL:

... and that rapidly growing municipalities like Edmonton found it necessary to go to financial markets outside the province at higher interest rates to try to finance their growth programs.

Those kinds of problems are gone now, Mr. Speaker, because the municipal governments have unlimited capital funds right here in Alberta which they can borrow as they see fit. The interest rate will be subsidized at 8 per cent, which I submit is probably the most attractive interest rate that any municipal government is able to achieve insofar as borrowing, at least in Canada, is concerned.

So those are three very important things: the clear definition of responsibilities that do lie with each level of government; substantially increased direct assistance by way of transfers of funds, and interest-subsidized unlimited capital funds for growth programs. I submit that is a pretty effective package of municipal assistance to have achieved in three and a half years. There is more to be done; we recognize that and I do give the hon. Leader of the Opposition marks at least for recognizing that.

We've, as you know, tried to work in partnership with the municipal governments, and the federal government in this instance, in two ways. Number one, of course, Alberta is supporting the tri-level task force research report which is now under way with the involvement of all provinces outside of Quebec, insofar as the responsibilities and revenue requirements of levels of government in the coming years. We also, of course, have our own Provincial-Municipal Finance Council which is carrying on the work originally started by the Farran task force and carrying on improvements to the programs I've just mentioned.

I was interested in the previous speaker's comments relating to The Planning Act because I did intend to talk about planning. If he would quote from the letter of transmittal that went along with that draft planning act, I wish that he would read all of it because of course it says it invites criticism and comments from any interested group.

It says it is a discussion paper; it does not represent government policy. That is how we are writing this act, Mr. Speaker. It's an experiment in getting all the comment we can and letting the users of the act write it themselves. I'm really pleased with the response there has been.

I think that now we are talking about Budget it's important to recognize at this time what the financial support for planning is. In Vote 2125 under the Provincial Planning Board you will see that grants have gone up from just over \$2 million to just under \$3 million, in excess of a 40 per cent increase in direct grants to our regional planning commissions.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that kind of financial commitment certainly represents a very strong direction insofar as the enhancement and encouragement of provincial planning are concerned.

Two very important studies that will be undertaken by the Edmonton and Calgary regional planning commissions will be the final phases of the Edmonton and Calgary growth studies.

We've heard a lot of talk recently about city size, city form, quality of environment in the urban setting, et cetera. The province is anxious to see those two particular studies finished so we'll have something factual and far-reaching when we do sit down and talk to the municipal governments about their future physical size and the nature of the environment that the municipalities are building.

Another important thing which perhaps has been overlooked, and I say it represents a very firm commitment and a very strong direction, is in Vote 2121, the office of the Northeast Regional Commissioner. You'll see there again, Mr. Speaker, when we get into the detailed study of estimates, very substantial funds allotted for fees and commissions. These are for planning purposes.

I think it's important to recognize that that northeastern region probably constitutes what I would say is a complete new regional planning area on its own. And of course the municipal governments and the population are not there to form a regional planning commission, so the proper planning and groundwork for future development is being taken care of through the commissioner's office.

I submit that is an important commitment to take at this time, Mr. Speaker. We're saying we believe that the tar sands, the Alberta oil sands, are going to develop on an orderly basis and we want to be ahead of the physical development of the oil sands resource with our own physical planning done.

I could mention some pretty unfortunate planning that has taken place in past years with respect to resource growth towns with transportation systems, and I hope that by benefiting by past mistakes and by instituting future planning, we can overcome that.

I submit just in the Department of Municipal Affairs, if the hon. members want to, they can in fact find some pretty important thrusts or directions or policy statements which the critics have been saying don't exist in the Budget.

I would like to move now, Mr. Speaker, to a few comments on housing. The Alberta Housing Corporation, I think, is rapidly becoming one of the most effective Crown agencies of its kind in the country. It has been, as you know, beset by a great number of problems. Notwithstanding that, we've kept putting more and more increased responsibilities on that corporation. Generally speaking, it's responded well and I'm confident the programs that are in front of the Legislature at this session for approval, if given to the Alberta Housing Corporation, will be carried out effectively.

We mentioned what the commitment budget was in the Throne Speech and I think it's important to remember that commitments and actual dollars budgeted in the fiscal year are, when you come to programs like housing, two different things. To give you some idea of the increase we're looking at, Mr. Speaker, last year because of a change in the fiscal year for the Alberta Housing Corporation, the budget that was presented to the Legislature for 15 months for capital purposes was \$109 million. We're looking at just under \$133 million this year for a 12-month fiscal period.

I think it is important to recognize also that the pattern of the past two years has seen interim adjustments as the year goes by and as we gauge the demands of the construction industry on the direct lending program. So when you look at the \$133 million initial budget for 12 months as compared to \$109 for 15 months for the last fiscal year, I think that is a very significant step and commitment to make.

Just a few comments about specific programs. I think this year's budget for the Alberta Housing Corporation will see a start on a backlog of several hundred public housing units which have not proceeded because of a land dispute the agency has had with municipal governments. It appears that a solution to that is very close at hand. If that is the case and if the municipalities want to, there should be several hundred public housing units under way in Alberta during the next fiscal year.

Insofar as rural housing is concerned, again we have increased our commitment to that program, Mr. Speaker. You know that last year the rural housing program, which had been proposed in the Budget, got off to some legislative snarls because of difficulties we had with respect to title on rural farmland insofar as the federal agency was concerned. We have overcome those. As of tomorrow I think the rural farmers in Alberta will be able to participate, through the joint auspices of the Agricultural Development Corporation, and the Alberta Housing Corporation in a pretty exciting program of two parts. First is a part that involves nonsubsidized direct loans for Alberta farmers which were not available before, and secondly a program of interest-subsidized housing for Alberta farmers according to a sliding scale based on net family farm income.

This present Budget proposes an expansion of the program I have just outlined to \$5.5 million for a proposed 200 units, in addition to the ones I have just mentioned for the next fiscal year.

Insofar as Metis housing is concerned, we are pleased with the progress that has been made in working with the Native people themselves and getting them involved in constructing, managing and making decisions on their own Native housing programs. This year we are proposing \$6.6 million for Metis housing which we think will cover another 200 units.

Insofar as senior citizens housing is concerned, Mr. Speaker, the lodge program for 1975 was announced early this year in order to try to cope with the problems of design and site acquisition at an earlier date. We have a program which has been forwarded to the Alberta Housing Corporation for 10 lodges, for 503 additional beds and 16 lodge additions, for another 240 beds. For the first time this year, Mr. Speaker, there is a new element added to the senior citizen housing vote. We have a vote of \$1 million in direct grants to the foundations throughout the province to be allocated on a proposal basis.

Our cabinet tours and the consultant we have had working for us on kitchen and food services have pointed out very clearly to us that a number of the lodges could do with some upgrading, whether items of interior design, new furniture or flooring. There is a variety of those kinds of things which the foundation budgets, because of their annual deficits, have not allowed them to do. This year - the first year of this program - \$1 million in unconditional grants to senior citizen foundations throughout the province for upgrading lodges.

The program of self-contained units is going into its third year, Mr. Speaker. That's one that's been very popular; almost too popular. We've almost been overwhelmed with applications that have come in. There's another \$11.7 million for continuation of the self-contained program. As we travel around the province now we're able to see some of the results of that particular initiative. I think if things go well, we'll see some very large ones come on stream, particularly those which are sponsored by religious or church groups, in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton in particular. There is a very nice response to that program.

Something else is happening, Mr. Speaker. I don't know, maybe it's an isolated instance, perhaps not. I hope not. It happened with the highrise unit built under this program in the city of Lethbridge. We had a private Lethbridge family come forward and, because the building itself was being paid for by the province and turned over to a local foundation to run, the family decided it would like to contribute something so there was a donation of \$35,000 for a solarium on the roof of the Lethbridge highrise.

These are the kinds of things that we'd like to see happen. Taking the responsibility for fund-raising away from the sponsoring group allows them to go in with either programs or additional physical improvements to those buildings. It shows that public agencies and the private sector working together can accomplish something.

Also in the Alberta Housing Corporation this year, Mr. Speaker, the Budget provides \$4.5 million for staff housing in remote units. I think this is mostly in the north, some of course in the eastern slopes; but there again is a firm commitment, a firm direction insofar as government involvement and the necessary support staff is concerned. If you're looking for commitments, policies or direction, take a look at the \$21.8 million of capital committed for further physical expansion and development in Fort McMurray. I think, if we put another \$21.8 million into development of that area, it represents a pretty positive vote of confidence in the future of Syncrude and the oil sands.

The direct lending program, Mr. Speaker, is one that's been very very popular. The initial vote for that this year is \$65.4 million and that's going to mean homes under the ownership principle for approximately 2,500 Alberta families.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the firm directions and policies that I know of just in the two agencies I'm responsible for. I suggest that hon. members can find clues like that in other parts of the Budget.

I'd like to conclude by congratulating the Treasurer for bringing in what I think is a dynamic budget that reflects the unique position of our province and the achievements of this government.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc followed by the hon. Member for Camrose.

MR. HENDERSON:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll first advise the hon. members of the House I don't intend to be very long in this debate. In fact I hadn't really thought of getting into it until the Minister of Municipal Affairs did. One or two things he remarked about rather inspired me.

One of the first questions asked when we left the Assembly Friday night - I think it was by one of the members who is seated opposite - was what I thought of the Budget. My remark was, well, I haven't figured out whether I should bow to Mecca or to Miniely. After listening to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I've concluded he's the man we should probably be looking at.

Mr. Speaker, the one item I wanted to speak briefly to is the question of the heritage trust fund. It seems to me this has probably got to be the most important decision that is going to be made in this province in this decade. It's going to have significance for many years to come.

I would like to suggest to the government that, while undoubtedly they must have some game plan in not proceeding with the legislation - because they were going to introduce it last year and then it was not introduced, at least that was my understanding, for some reasons relating to the dealings with the federal government. But I really wonder whether it's in the public interest to delay bringing the legislation in because I suggest, to the hon. member seated opposite in particular, that by delaying the introduction of the legislation all the government does is encourage everyone - this applies to all members on both sides of the House and the public in general - to focus attention on ways of spending the money as opposed to investing it. I know that's the concern the government has. But by procrastinating they aren't directing public attention towards investing it.

One thing the government is going to find out is that while it's extremely popular to have money to spend in election years, there are a lot of liabilities attached to it, as I think the government is learning quite quickly. I think it's probably the view of the average individual that he doesn't think the government should be running a public savings account for him. If he wants to save some cash, he wants it in his own bank account. I think the government has got to shift away from talking about how much money they have in the heritage fund and say how much money they've got invested for the benefit of the future citizens of Alberta. As I say, I'm not being critical. I don't know what the government has in mind, why it's hesitating in bringing the legislation before the House. But the hon. Treasurer left me with the impression, maybe it's the wrong one, during the result of the question period that it's even questionable whether the legislation for the heritage fund would be introduced at this session. I don't know whether that's the right conclusion or not, but that's the conclusion I came away with.

I think the sooner the proposition gets before the public, the better it's going to be so far as the future members of this Assembly and the public are concerned because we can get on with the job of discussing where it's going to be invested to pay future dividends and hopefully thereby detract from the pressures that [have] come to promote tremendous giveaways.

I had somebody in the news media ask me after the Budget, what did I think of a Budget like that, where they were only guaranteeing the elderly people \$235 a month. From there the discussion went to the 30 per cent of the Alberta population that is below the poverty line. That magic poverty line is something that's a figment of the imagination of sociologists; nonetheless everybody talks about it. I pointed out, well of course if you want to compare statistics, every province has the same percentage and there are probably some higher than 30 per cent. But the answer wasn't to turn around and take the billion and a half dollars that is in this reserve fund and distribute it on a per-capita income basis. Well, no they didn't think that should be done. Nonetheless there is going to be a lot of pressure, continuing pressure, to spend the money, spend it foolishly instead of investing it.

The sooner the government gets on with the chore of getting the propositions and the ground rules for the heritage fund before the public for debate - I don't suggest the government has to rush into making decisions on it - but I think getting it before the public to debate the relative merits of where it should be invested is a far preferable alternative to playing footsie with it. I realize the government has said it will listen to what the public says. But until the government gives some indication of what they're going to do with it, the public is at somewhat of a loss as to what on earth they should be saying on the particular subject, other than promoting more giveaways.

I would like to comment just briefly on the question of housing that the Minister of Municipal Affairs brought up. I must confess, as a retiring member of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly one of the major areas about which I find I'm concerned. I'm concerned as a member of the Legislature but also as a parent, father of six children. I look at my children - three married and three unmarried - and I look at the price of housing today and wonder how on earth they're ever going to own a home such as I do, particularly when I look at the federal guidelines for subsidized housing in some of the major urban centres.

I believe anybody below \$18,000 a year in some place like Toronto qualifies for some sort of housing subsidy. By that standard, as a member of this Assembly - and my only income comes from being a member of this Assembly - I'm way below the poverty line. If I were going out on to the market today under these circumstances to buy a house, there's just no question about it. The income that I enjoy as a member of this Assembly, there's no way in the world I could talk about buying a house, no matter how much money the provincial government was prepared to loan me. I just couldn't do it.

While I'm pleased to hear about the public housing, I have some reservations about it and I don't really think it's a substitute for promoting private ownership. While my friend who is usually seated on the far left is all in favor of public ownership and public everything, I still think private ownership in that particular area at least has a lot to commend it.

I would like to draw attention again to one of the areas the government should be doing something about, and the Legislature can do something about, the question the cost of land that goes into housing developments. Some of it has just got to be absolutely ridiculous. The arguments about pressures from the United States market and so on have nothing whatever to do with it, and I think there's quite a bit of room for action in that regard.

I'm pleased to hear the program for the senior citizens lodges. I suggest this is probably one of the cheapest and best investments the government can make so far as the housing problem is concerned. For every individual who moves out of a private home into a

senior citizens lodge, that's just one more house on the market for younger people to have the opportunity of enjoying. And certainly once the senior citizens lodges are built, there's no drain on the taxpayers' money.

One thing I am always amazed and amused at, as long as I've been a member of this Assembly, is the way people are prepared to do anything - that architecture and real estate are some sort of god. They ignore the fact that it isn't building these things that costs the money; in most cases in parts of the province where there's a hospital or school for example, it's operating them. And this is where it has got to be one of the best programs on the part of the provincial government and the senior citizens accommodation so far as easing housing conditions is concerned, because there are no ongoing operating costs attached to it. On that basis the provincial government should be able to afford to build them and give them away to meet the full demand, and not be subject to any ongoing criticism from any quarter. It's a good investment and it certainly helps not only the elderly citizens of the province who are prepared to move into these units, but it also helps the other younger people coming on the market and looking for housing.

Mr. Speaker, I had one other comment I want to make about mistakes in planning but since the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here I guess I won't bother making it. I was just wondering how close he came to probably one of the colossal blunders in planning in Fort McMurray. But he seems to have avoided that particular problem for the moment, so I am just going to suggest to him he might be a little more cautious about being critical of the decisions of the past.

Two more brief comments. When I listen to some of the glowing phrases directed towards the Provincial Treasurer about his Budget and the comment about not knowing whether I should bow to Mecca or Miniely, I am also reminded of my first experience in 1963, running for this particular office. In the course of defending the then government's record on what it had derived from the oil and gas industry for the benefit of the people of Alberta, I was waxing quite eloquent on the subject and I thought doing a fine job, when one of my opponents suggested that I was even suggesting that Mr. Manning had taken the credit for putting the stuff in the ground in the first place. I think maybe some of the gentlemen seated opposite are just verging on the same problem - maybe have gone a little bit over it.

The only other comment I want to make was really for the benefit of my friend from Spirit River who isn't in the House. In a rather sentimental moment, when it was spoken in the Throne Speech, I wished every member who was running in the next provincial election well, and wished them re-election. I included the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, but the one thing I forgot to tell him was that I didn't wish any of his other colleagues any success. The remark was strictly limited to him.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, the best wishes of the people of Camrose to you.

Also, Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, approximately two months ago, we had about 350 people jammed into the Duhamel Hall in my constituency, not only to hear really a great Albertan, but also a great Canadian. The occasion, Mr. Speaker, was years of toil and research and the publication of the history of the Duhamel district, Battle River Country.

Mr. Speaker, that evening those people heard the Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable Ralph Steinhauer. Also, about two weeks ago, on that occasion, at the Camrose Lutheran College - the time was 6:30 and it was at the annual meeting of the Camrose Chamber of Commerce. Again, the guest speaker, our own Lieutenant-Governor. On behalf of the people of the Camrose constituency, may I express our appreciation to Mr. Steinhauer, who has truly won our hearts.

Also, not long ago, about 40 months ago, Mr. Speaker, I was elected to this Assembly. You know, it has been really fun working for my constituents. It has been one of the greatest experiences of my life.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Theirs too.

MR. STROMBERG:

My constituents have kept me busy. Really, at times they have kept me hopping.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember an experience I had shortly after the election. At about ten to six one morning, a farmer from Forestburg phoned me. His hired man had run away with his wife and had taken his half-ton. He wanted me to get that half-ton back because he wanted to combine with it that afternoon. Very fortunately I was able to get the half-ton back without the wife. If she had come I would have lost his vote for ever.

But seriously, Mr. Speaker, after the election, when I had an opportunity to view what I had inherited from the former administration, it was enough to make one wonder if I wouldn't have been better off to have stayed on the farm, minded my own business and voted Liberal.

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. STROMBERG:

We were in a situation where the City of Camrose had had zero growth for a number of years. Our three towns and our seven villages were broke financially and morally, declining populations ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Sad.

MR. STROMBERG:

... declining assessment. What was really hurting was the number of farmers throughout the area who were calling it quits ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

How come there are so many auction sales now?

AN HON. MEMBER:

They were getting loans to buy cattle.

MR. STROMBERG:

... the dislike of many of our financial institutions to take security for property in these towns and villages. In other words, Mr. Speaker, rural Alberta was sick.

The highways and secondary roads that were needed in my constituency were something that you hoped for in your lifetime; if not, in that of your children.

Due to the "no-no" attitude of the former administration in regards to grants, that great institution, the Camrose Lutheran College, was giving serious consideration to closing its doors.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents pleaded with the former administration for area telephone expansion and for rural gas but all of the hearing aids were turned off.

Remember what it was like trying to buy a farm or start a business? If you could prove to the lending institutions that you didn't need the money, they would loan you all you needed - instead of considering a young man's ability, his horse sense, his ambition. Those truly were the bad old days. Things weren't so rosy down in the "Rose" constituency.

Many of us here, three years ago, during the Throne Speech, voiced our concerns. Mr. Speaker, it is rather nice to review what has taken place in Alberta since Albertans turned to the better three and a half years ago. The road back to recovery has been fast. It has been smooth under excellent leadership. There is not one town or village in my constituency that lost population last year. Our city of Camrose has really taken off like gangbusters.

Mr. Speaker, at this opportunity I would like to table the building permits for the year 1974 ending December 31. In a nutshell, that report tells the story of what has happened to Camrose. In 1971 the building permits for residential, commercial and industrial, construction and for public institutions were \$2,400,000. In 1974 that figure had tripled to over \$6 million.

There is no question about it, Mr. Speaker, a number of government decisions contributed to this remarkable growth, such as the move of the Agricultural Development Corporation to Camrose, currently employing about 60 people; the Brooks Steel plant, Homeco industries, and quite a few others; of course the policies of the Department of Agriculture in making lending available to the young farmers, and the policy of the Department of Industry enabling the businesses to prosper and expand. Mr. Speaker, we have had a considerable number of businesses take advantage of the Alberta Opportunity Company. We're very proud of that fact.

One of the trends, Mr. Speaker, quite evident in rural Alberta today is the number of farmers who, upon retiring, choose to retire in their own communities, not Edmonton or Calgary or Penticton, or Victoria ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Or Kamloops.

MR. STROMBERG:

They are retiring in their own hometowns because of the quality of life which has been made available through this government. For instance, Mr. Speaker, one program I might mention is the paving of our streets in Rosalind, Ferintosh, Edberg and Bawlf.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud down there to have at Daysland 10 double-occupancy units containing 20 self-contained units for the area's senior citizens. This is a first for Alberta and a model for the rest of the province. The Alberta Housing Corporation now informs me that they have approximately 5,449 units in the province and applications for about that many more. It was an especially great day for us and for the citizens of Daysland when the Premier came down and officially opened the Daysland Lions Club Senior Citizens Village.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of members of this Assembly who have indicated they will be retiring. The Assembly is going to miss these members and the province owes these people a really tremendous debt of gratitude for their public service. It is with a little note of sorrow and considerable relief also that after the next election the hon. members for Calgary Mountain View and Clover Bar will not be with us. Sorry about that, Walter.

DR. BUCK:

We have plans for you too, Gordon.

MR. LUDWIG:

How about you?

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, during the Throne and Budget Speeches certain members opposite have indicated our back row is not standing up and bringing our viewpoints forward.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Right

MR. STROMBERG:

Well, three years ago we stood up and told our viewpoints. I just listed to you some of the accomplishments in there. We don't have to stand up in this Assembly and bring our concerns. We go down and talk to that front row and we get something done. It isn't like the old days when we had the dictatorial ...

DR. BUCK:

How about PWA? Tell us about PWA, Gordon.

MR. STROMBERG:

What about the beaver, Mr. Speaker, in Elk Island Park? The farmers cannot get any action in Clover Bar; they have to come to the Member for Camrose. What about the poor people in the agricultural society at New Sarepta? They can't get any help from Clover Bar, they have to come to the Member for Camrose. Really, Mr. Speaker, if some of these members would quit playing old-man hockey and attend to business and let us work within our own constituency, I think we would get along fairly well. But I think I will stop on that point, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

More. More.

MR. STROMBERG:

We don't have to rise in this Assembly and bring our points.

MR. LUDWIG:

Well, why do you?

MR. STROMBERG:

I went to the Minister of Northern Development two years ago. We had a delegation in; we told him the ideas of the Lions club of a first for Alberta. Very quietly he went to work, he dealt with Alberta Housing for us. We have a first in the province, I mentioned it. We also have another first through that minister in a co-op in mobile home housing for Ferintosh.

That very beautiful Solicitor General - in three hours I can get a return on a memo that I send her. That's cooperation.

We had a situation in my constituency ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Get an RCMP check ...

MR. STROMBERG:

... that no fault of ourselves, due to I don't know what you'd call it. We had a Minister of Highways build a bridge for over \$10,000 from nowhere to nowhere. We had a provincial park in the most beautiful part of Alberta. Under it was a coal lease and the coal company was going to mine it. I went to our minister - the people in Forestburg went to the Minister of Lands and Forests, we sat down and discussed it. He has settled the situation and we have bought that coal lease back. After that, Mr. Speaker, we found out about a lot of other parks in the province that had oil leases under them, that had quarries under them. There was everything under them. I wonder sometimes when they bought these parks if they ever checked titles. Really.

We had a delegation in to meet the Minister of Mines and Minerals. We expressed our deep concern with the Bruce/Holden gas field, with unitization. The minister said, I'll have an answer in six months. He asked the ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Premier.

MR. STROMBERG:

Well I don't know about that. But I'll tell you something, I asked the Premier, the law society, to give him an opinion. I think we'll have a favorable answer on it.

We went to the good doctor of Public Works. We told him we needed these provincial buildings. He said sure, I think we can get you three or four, and we've got some.

Then of course, Manpower and Labour. We had the misfortune in my constituency of losing just a tremendous man due to a heart attack, our federal member of parliament, Harry Kuntz. A number of our constituents had problems with the federal government on unemployment insurance. They took rather a dim view over there in the south-side office of rural MIAs butting into their business. Our Minister of Manpower and Labour was of the opinion that these were Albertans and he would go to bat for them. Believe you me, there were a lot of people in Camrose who appreciated it. We didn't have to raise that up in the back row here. We didn't have to bring that to his attention. He went to work.

Our Provincial Treasurer - in our community, the community of Daysland 20 years ago, asked your side for a treasury branch. Mr. Speaker, the hearing aids were off. Our Provincial Treasurer said yes, I'll give you five treasury branches because you need them. We appreciate that.

[Interjections]

Our Minister of Education - two weeks ago we pointed out to him that with the student enrolment dropping we were having problems. He made the announcement today, in response to a question of mine about a week ago, that funding would be available. That's cooperation.

Of course, our Minister of Agriculture - I don't know what I'd do without him. ... [interjections] ... To the Minister of Health and Social Development - we had our problems with one of our big payrolls in Camrose, the Rosehaven institution. They were minor. But the minister came down with his deputy and his assistant deputy; he sat down and talked to these people. I didn't have to raise it on this side of the Legislature.

Environment - our floods last spring, the break of the Armana reservoir, the dam in the city of Camrose - we've had tremendous cooperation from him.

Industry and Commerce: I mentioned three industries that he encouraged to come into Camrose. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, I was so impressed by the work of the Minister of Industry and Commerce that I promised if I ever had an increase to my family I would call my next son Fred - Fred Stromberg.

To a native 'Camrosian' who grew up in Camrose, worked in Camrose - Bob, the message from the people in Camrose: thanks a million.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, everyone in Alberta loves our Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

To our Minister of Telephones and Utilities for the times he has come into my constituency for the official opening of rural gas co-ops; the cheques he has sent out have kept me busy delivering practically every weekend. Last Sunday I sent one - I believe it was in to Clover Bar; on the edge of Clover Bar - for \$114,000 to the Iron Creek Gas Co-op. We didn't have to wait 8, 10 or 12 years for it. We got gas in eight months in this province.

To my colleague who sits directly over here, we don't seem to have any problems in common in northern affairs or anything along that line, but he came down and spoke to my nomination.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Well, that's all he does.

MR. STROMBERG:

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Highways and Transport. Three years ago I told him - he didn't believe our roads could have been in that condition. The minister came down to the Camrose constituency. We met him at the boundary with a 1961 half-ton Chev truck without shock absorbers. I drove the minister through my constituency as fast as that truck could go. Mr. Speaker, the minister must have got the message because today we have 58 miles of graded base road, 38 miles of pavement and a lot more to come this year. Now that is government in action.

Mr. Speaker, for the last three and one-half years I have been trying to hold my peace over here ...

MR. WILSON:

Now you can let go.

MR. STROMBERG:

... or keep the peace, but there are certain remarks - enough is enough.

MR. WILSON:

Open up, Gordon.

MR. STROMBERG:

When certain lawyers and, I'm not sure of the occupation, but people who wash shirts start speaking of agriculture, I get very nervous - school teachers included. They make the statement about the price of gas to the farmers in Alberta, realizing that in that socialized country of England it is over a dollar a gallon and in the hotbed of all socialism, Sweden, it's about \$1.60 today.

To talk of fertilizer, I would just like to know what that sister province to the east of us is doing about fertilizer. I do know that this province has encouraged a fertilizer plant to start in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury. There have been talks opened between the Department of Agriculture and the Government of Mexico on a trade-off between phosphate, potash and coal.

Really, Mr. Speaker, for the Member for Spirit River-Fairview to speak - and I have noticed this for three years - he will speak in this Assembly and we won't see him for two more days. He will not stay in his chair to be answerable.

We have a trend that is developing in Camrose. I have noticed it. We have a number of good people coming in; refugees from Saskatchewan and British Columbia. I would like to suggest to our Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs that perhaps he should give serious consideration to setting up stations at these border points where we could give out care parcels to these people coming in.

Now I get just a little bit uptight when somebody can start talking about agriculture.

We have people in Camrose from our sister province to the west who are carrying bumper stickers on their car: "I can't Barrett." Now when this fellow, "I can't Barrett," comes into our province two weeks ago and starts telling us how to run our province, and then we have the Toronto-based NDP telling us this is how it has got to be and this fellow is in the middle and he's trying to tell us - well, when this fellow "I can't Barrett" comes out here with 100,000 unemployed in his province today, Mr. Speaker, that is getting just a little too thick.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud ...

[Interjections]

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, and the Member for Clover Bar, I'm very proud of the achievements of this team in the Camrose constituency. A record of cooperation with our city, our counties, our towns, our villages, a record of cooperation with service clubs, chambers of commerce, organization, working together with the Government of Alberta.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Camrose, in light of the fact that he's got so many roads built, can he tell us if the road between Kingman and Camrose is going to be finished next year.

MR. STROMBERG:

Yes, the minister has indicated to me that the road will be finished only up to the boundary of Clover Bar. We've never had any representation from that constituency. We've asked for representation ...

DR. BUCK:

The hon. member is sworn to tell the truth. That is a mistruth and I would like the hon. member to withdraw that because that is a lie.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to withdraw that statement because it is an outward lie and he knows it and ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is entitled to disagree with another hon. member on a matter of fact if he wishes to, and the way he can express that disagreement is by taking his place during the debate. But the hon. member is not entitled to accuse any other hon. member of this House of telling a lie, the reason being that a lie is a deliberate and knowing untruth. He can call a statement mistaken if he wishes to, but he may not call it a lie. I would ask the hon. Member for Clover Bar if he might deal with the matter further.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I'm sworn to tell the truth and the hon. member has told a lie.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. I would suggest that the hon. member might wish to give some further thought to the matter so that we can get on with the debate. Surely the hon. member has been in the House sufficiently long to know that it is not suitable for any hon. member to enter into the mind or conscience of another hon. member and to be his judge as to whether he has deliberately told an untruth or whether he's done it through misinformation or error. The hon. member's statement goes much too far for that.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member another question?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. There is no other business before the House at the moment until we have completed dealing with the hon. member's statement.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, there is just no choice except for me to stand in my place. When the hon. member has made the statement that he has made, when it is an untruth and an outright lie, I have no choice but to state it as such.

MR. SPEAKER:

The member is entitled to call it an untruth if he wishes, in other words, to say that it's false or wrong. But he is not entitled to say that any other hon. member has made a statement which is deliberately untrue. This is going too far. I would ask the hon. member to deal with that aspect of the matter and then when he's recognized in the debate he may deal with the question of fact.

DR. BUCK:

It is not my decision to know if he meant it to be an untruth or not an untruth, but when he is saying that I did not tell a truth, then I must stand in my place and say that, in my judgment, the hon. member maybe did not willingly say it was an untruth. If he wishes to withdraw, that's fine.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is entitled to say that something which another hon. member said was not in accord with the facts. This the hon. Member for Camrose is entitled to do and so is the hon. Member for Clover Bar, and any other hon. member. But the hon. Member for Clover Bar has just touched on the essential core of the question when he acknowledged that it was not for him to enter into the mind of another member and to make a judgment as to whether or not an untruth was deliberate because that is what constitutes a lie and that is the aspect of the matter which I would respectfully and sincerely request the hon. Member for Clover Bar to deal with further.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, before I say that, may I ask a question of the hon. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER:

If it's a question I'm permitted to answer, I'll be delighted.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, are you asking me to say that he unwillingly spoke an untruth? Willing or unwilling ...

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member wishes to put it on that footing? I would think that would be acceptable, as long as he withdraws the expression "lie".

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to withdraw the expression "lie". Perhaps the hon. member in his exuberance stretched the truth a bit and, Mr. Speaker, possibly that's what he meant. Maybe he didn't intentionally stretch the truth a bit. I will gladly withdraw the fact that he willingly told a lie.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View is next on the debate.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to listen to the hon. members opposite tell us how big everything is in Alberta and how they are responsible for everything that took place. But I didn't expect them to brag about the fact that because of them even the smaller communities are growing in population. I didn't know the Conservatives were all that prolific. I got the impression that population growth is nothing else than good old private enterprise. Let's give credit where credit is due. Let's not hog it all.

I think the hon. Provincial Treasurer ought to be told that not everybody believes him when he tells us all these great revenues we have are the result of our management, it's what we did. Certainly one recognizes there have been some changes made for the better, but no one is foolish enough to believe the windfall revenues were caused by anything the Conservatives did now, or before, or will do. They've got a tremendous lot of windfall revenue and everybody knows where that came from. So let's not be foolish. You can't fool the public. You can't fool the press. You can't fool the media. They know where a great portion of it came from.

I'm recognizing that the hon. Provincial Treasurer has made some good adjustments but he can't say it resulted in a budget of \$2.5 billion and \$500 million spent or committed without approval of the Legislature and that everything is just great in Alberta. Sure the Budget has helped and touched a lot of people. When I look at the welfare increases, certainly we recognize the problems caused by inflation, Mr. Speaker. Well, inflation has taken away some of the things we gave them. If you want to compare the dollar today and five years ago, that 40 per cent doesn't make any difference. You brag about 40 per cent

increases. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is great at this, that somehow we're giving them more and the municipalities are so happy now. They're so lucky, they can go into debt all they like. We made it possible for them to go into debt.

I can recall the theme song of the Tories, when they were in the opposition, was to wipe out municipal debt. They were going to get rid of all this debt. Everybody who was a Tory was screaming, we've got to stop the municipalities going into debt. I always thought those municipalities which did go into debt acquired something. I know one municipality near Calgary which has no debt. It has nothing else either. So it's a question of business. Sometimes a person says, I have a \$30,000 mortgage, I'm in debt. But he has a good home.

I don't hear that talk anymore, from all the Tories, that we've got to stop the municipalities from going into debt that quickly. There will have to be some kind of breakdown. They've changed all that now. They don't talk about it. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs indirectly tells the people of Edmonton and Calgary, you've never had it so good. We've given you more and you can borrow more. You can go into debt all you like because we've made it possible. He then expects their eternal gratitude because he says, we've given you more money.

At one time I heard nothing else but the fact it was the people's money to begin with. So they are giving back to the people some of the money they got that they eked out and saved and penny-pinched and acquired. Now they're giving it to the people. They don't tell the people we got a lot of breaks in the last two or three years. We got windfall revenues and we're obliged to turn some over to you. They forgot at one time that they were preaching the story that we ought to share our revenues from mines and minerals with the municipalities. It's all the same people.

I think we ought to be grateful for a big budget and that there is not all that much collected in taxes to raise it. But all isn't well with everybody. The hon. Minister of Highways said we're used to a life of luxury in Alberta. Not quite, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people in this province today who are marginal wage earners and it's a toss-up whether they should continue to struggle in the face of inflation, large families, having to pay mortgages, make a payment on the car and something else or fall back on welfare. There are many like that. So I don't think we have solved that problem, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the hon. minister would like to do a careful assessment in this province to see how many small businesses are in real trouble: family businesses, private businesses, individual businesses. A lot of them are going broke, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about \$2.5 billion and \$300 million worth of special warrants and there are businesses going broke daily in this province, because they can't get credit. I'm not saying that sometimes it isn't their fault but it's a fact of life that many family businesses are in real trouble. There are probably more businesses going broke in Alberta today than ever before. So let's not be too smug about the whole thing. We have to look at these problems.

One concern that I have - and I think the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo will probably back me on this - is the question ...

[Interjections]

He's done worse than that. He'll recognize the truth when he hears it, Mr. Speaker. I think he will.

This is the question of senior citizens, Mr. Speaker, who sold their homes and moved into apartments. They got good prices for their homes two years ago, a year ago. It was a good move for them to sell their homes and get into apartments. They got into apartments. They had everything figured out how they were going to live happily and have enough for this and that and maybe a little trip. They didn't reckon that in two years or so rents would go up 35, 40 and in some cases 50 per cent.

These people are caught. They sold their homes and budgeted for a nice, comfortable living until their purchasing power was confiscated by inflation and other causes; as high maybe as 50 per cent. These people are hurting. I know that the government has adjusted things in their favor but it is not good enough. These people got trapped in the shortage of accommodation in Calgary. I'm talking about Edmonton also, another area where the tight housing situation has naturally caused some of the landlords to adjust their rents upward. It's the law of supply and demand. So these people are hurting.

There are many people today who have to move. They were given notice that their rents are going up. They're learning that when they move from one place to another the rents are automatically raised. The cost of accommodation and homes is hurting a lot of people in this province. It's hurting all the more because here we talk about unlimited prosperity for some people. We are talking about billions in the budget now, some people are not doing so well. I think when we see what we are doing for the senior citizens, it's all very supported. I think most governments that can afford to, will do well for their senior citizens. But let's not forget the fact that by the time we talk a year from now, we will probably know that they will probably buy 20 per cent less for their money, as if we turned around and taxed it out of their hands, Mr. Speaker. So things aren't all quite that rosy. I want to urge the hon. members here to keep a lookout, not for those who are doing so well for themselves. There are problems.

The income tax reduction was a great idea. I believe that many of us raise - I went after the Provincial Treasurer and he's going to do something for little business and wage earners next year. In '77 he has a program that will help them. The question is, why

didn't we do something last year? Wasn't our management every bit as good? Wasn't our concern for the little man every bit as good?

MR. BATIUK:

Rome wasn't built in one day.

MR. LUDWIG:

Now we're talking - we got a windfall and we're helping people but we're helping them next year. There was no logical reason the income tax could not have been reduced last year. A lot of the people who are going broke might have done better in smaller businesses had they had a tax break last year.

It is all right to say it's coming all over the place now, so we are going to reduce taxes for 1975. I think the Premier would be wise to call the election before they start filling out the income tax form because a lot of them will not be all that grateful for the thing.

When you talk about income tax, it is helping again - typical Tory government policy - those who are earning more, more. The man who has to pay more income tax is going to get a better break from the income tax reduction than the man who is a marginal wage earner. This is a fact of life. So let's not fall over ourselves as to how well we did for people, because we didn't do that much good for everybody.

Many people who will save \$100 in income tax in 1975 already know it will help. A hundred dollars to some of these people is a great amount of money. But their income will be reduced in purchasing power within a year to where they are buying less for it, notwithstanding the income tax reduction.

I think that when we talk about how good things are out on the farms - there are many farmers who can afford lots of things. They can afford big loans. They are good operators. But there are many farmers that a reduction in gasoline tax - many people in Alberta would have appreciated a gasoline tax reduction. Certainly no one in this House would stand up and say we need the money.

One of the reasons for taxation is either to cool inflation or that the government must have revenues for services it provides when it doesn't get windfall profits, Mr. Speaker.

So the gasoline tax is forgotten. I suppose they feel we've done enough for people all around, we will save that for future elections. These are some of the things we have to be concerned about.

There is nothing more pathetic, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, than to talk to some senior citizen who sold the house last year, had rented an apartment for \$165 and now is paying \$265. That person has been hit. We have to watch this thing because continued tight housing is going to make those people who are tenants very unhappy. They are not going to worry about making a little bit extra from the government when the landlord was obliged - and I am not criticizing the landlord, because he's in business - to take it out by way of increases. We all know this is happening daily. It is happening and hurting a lot of people.

I think when we look at our budget, it isn't enough to say our budget is very big. Sure it is big and we have the money and we have a good province and we need a big budget. We have been extending services, and many of the services we started. We started - we had to budget tightly. There wasn't money coming in from every side.

But now that we are getting it easily, it would be a sign of responsibility, Mr. Speaker, if we stopped bragging about how big it is, to see how well we manage and to see how much we lay by. I don't think there is going to be very much left when this year is over.

When they talk about the Alberta heritage fund - that's a great move. Social Crediters have been raising that issue in the House for some time and the money is here to do it. But I wonder if we get two or three tar sands projects whether we are going to be bragging about how much money we have in the kitty for a heritage fund. A few more shotgun marriages like we have with this Syncrude and we will probably be looking for more money. It isn't all just as rosy as we say it is.

I must get to Syncrude because we talk about the great leadership we have. I think it is a sad reflection on leadership when one day they can come up and say, we've got the best deal you people have ever got. Everything is go. You never need look back again. That was six months ago. In the meantime, the whole thing collapsed. As I stated, the Tory quicksands have arrived, almost unplanned and unexpected.

Then we get into a situation where, in spite of the buoyant economy in this province, in spite of the \$2.5 billion budget, in spite of \$300 million being put into the economy here and there by way of special warrants, we are in fact begging private enterprise to invest in what the Premier touted once as being the greatest thing that ever happened to Alberta. We are now going around begging these people to come in ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Inviting.

MR. LUDWIG:

... yes, we are begging them to come in. We are inviting them to come in but they are not coming in, Mr. Speaker. We have to throw in something to sweeten the pot, like \$200 million from Alberta and \$300 million from Ottawa, which is also ... a lot of which is Alberta's money ...

AN HON. MEMBER:
Hear, hear.

MR. LUDWIG:

... and \$100 million from Ontario. [It is] such a good deal Ontario didn't dare get in any deeper. It just wanted to be in a bit on this. It is strange that the only people who are letting private enterprise sink or swim are the socialist provinces. They haven't got a piece of the action. I wonder why not. But is it such a hot deal and eight or ten years from now are we going to get some return on our investment? If this government lasts that long I suppose?

I'm concerned about project number two following the Syncrude project and numbers three, four and five. I'm not at all impressed with the fact that we are out there blowing this thing up, it's such a great deal, we've done it again. The hon. Premier has once more pulled off a coup, outsmarted everybody in the whole business including the government and we've got it made.

Mr. Speaker, let's just wait and see whether this is so. He didn't want to go in. He was obliged to go in to save the project. If that isn't so, I've been listening to the wrong man. He had to throw in \$200 million to make it go because private enterprise soured on it. I am thinking if that project, Mr. Speaker, is half as good as the hon. Premier says it is, private industry would be fighting to get into more of it. But they are skittish now, they are afraid. They have lost confidence in something, and particularly in the ground rules under which we operate.

I think we like to brag a bit about how we listen to everybody. The hon. Member for Camrose stated, we go to the front row and talk and they listen. Yes, they listen and they do a tour of the province. They do a hit-and-run job on Calgary and they never talk to the council people. They don't know what is wrong with the city except that Russell breezed through there once and said we are a bunch of ingrates. What do we expect, we've never had it so good.

So they are talking to the people, Mr. Speaker. I would like to tell you how I talk to the people. I went to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association convention and they passed a resolution. Here is part of it to tell you how this government listens. They talk big and they listen to everybody, but I don't think they are doing much about it.

Now therefore be it resolved that the Alberta Government be requested to amend the terms of the Provincial Ombudsman to provide for jurisdiction over municipalities of the A.U.M.A.

That is a unanimous request from all the municipalities. They represent about as many people, are elected representatives of as many people almost as we are here. The major cities unanimously voted for this and the government is going to turn a deaf ear because it wasn't something they started. If it wasn't theirs, it wasn't going to be done. These people have spoken and the minister and all the ministers and hon. members are not listening. We like just to talk and brag, everything is biggest under us. It's never been so big until we got here. I think there is a grave difference between bigness and greatness.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Hear, hear.

MR. LUDWIG:

I think I've touched on those issues I wanted to touch on to remind the hon. members here that it isn't everybody who came in on the good things. You go to Bridgeland, to Riverside, Renfrew, Sunnyside or Parkdale. Go to some parts of eastern Calgary and they don't feel too buoyant about \$2.5 million. If they get an increase in their welfare cheque, it will hardly reflect a higher standard of living for their children, and some of them don't wear good clothing, Mr. Speaker. It's all the harder to bear because they see the affluent side of Alberta. So let's not be too smug as I stated before. I know every constituency has this kind of problem.

You take a look at even some of the professional people, some of the civil servants, CUPE, all those people who are working for salaries. The cheque, the pay they get appears quite large, Mr. Speaker, but it doesn't buy so much. It buys 40 per cent less by way of food, clothing and housing than the same kind of cheque did two or three years ago. But food and some other items have gone up 20 per cent in one year. So we mustn't be all that smug. We're talking about a big budget; we're going to need a bigger one. Wait till the labor problems get solved this year. Wait till they all come in and say we want a bit of the windfall revenue.

I'm telling these people who come and talk to me and write to me that if you don't get your house in order this year you never will, because when the governments and businesses who say we've never had it better in this province cannot afford to pay the workingman enough that he can have something left over at the end of the year, the workingman will never get it. He's going to have to live from hand to mouth as long as he's working, and if not I suppose the government can come up and say, we can afford to put him on welfare.

These are the problems we have to look at. This is the other side of the coin. We all look at ourselves and feel that we've got it pretty good. There's a lot of affluence. Nobody would deny there is a lot of prosperity, a lot of good things and a lot of affluence. On the other hand, I would like one MLA to get up in this House and say there

are no poverty and no hardships, no low standards of living, no people worried about not being able to buy proper food, or worried if they can pay their bills in this province.

Perhaps it's not everybody who feels I owe a lot of money and I can go bankrupt. Many people who owe money worry themselves sick because they don't know where they'll get the money to pay these things. These are the things we ought to emphasize, and particularly in this House when there are so many members opposite who do not seem to be too concerned. They must be but they're not saying it.

We have so many people standing up telling us how great we are, how well we're doing, it's our management, the windfall had very little to do with it. We got it easily; we're going to have a spree and we're going to be big spenders while it lasts.

I don't think the hon. Provincial Treasurer, when he brought in his Budget, was careful enough to caution us that maybe four, five, six, but certainly ten years from now, this money is going to be hard to come by and we're going to have to cut standards or raise taxes. He mentioned it, but casually. So we have to be warned that somebody in this House has to state that we have to provide. We have to take care of those.

But I object now - I always did and I always will object to any government schemes or tax schemes where those who have more get more help. We have two obvious programs by this government. One is the education tax reduction scheme. It is inequitable, and nobody can convince me otherwise, that the people in Bridgeland and the people in all these other areas, the older people, are getting \$150 and those on Nob Hill are getting \$700. This is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I think some MLAs ought to fight it. This government knows it's wrong. Instead of helping to reduce inequality, they're contributing to it. Once more, Mr. Speaker, the income tax thing should have been graduated so that the man who has less might have had a bigger portion of the discount.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. COOKSON:

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure this evening to say a few words about the Budget that was brought down last Friday; although sometimes I feel that this is an exercise in futility, especially when I listen to some of the, presumably, opposition coming from the other side. The Member for Calgary Mountain View who just spoke wondered why we hadn't done something about the business tax last year. You know instead of it being next year, I couldn't help thinking that if he hadn't talked so much in the Legislature last year probably we could have passed this and got it through.

MR. CLARK:

... you'd better sit down.

MR. COOKSON:

The Member for Calgary Mountain View reminds me of the type of individual that we had in every classroom when I was instructing. When they got the best of us, Mr. Speaker, we put them in the corner and they just kept on talking, so it really didn't do too much good.

What really amazed me, Mr. Speaker, was the voracious attack on the Budget, and this was led off by the Member for Little Bow for whom I have considerable respect. Mr. Speaker, when he started to criticize the Budget because of its style and because we used, for example, the term "our government" instead of I don't know what word; probably "your government" - my goodness, how does this hon. member expect to go out sometime in the future and win an election? I can just hear him on the podium talking about this terrible Budget the government and the province brought down and saying the style was wrong and we should have used the term "your government" instead of "our government." I wish him luck. He's going to need it.

Mr. Speaker, the Calgary McCall member, the hon. Mr. Ho Hum ... pardon me, Ho Lem, says we have a right to be told of the economic outlook in the province. My goodness, all he has to do is look around and he will see just how well the economy of the province has been going.

AN HON. MEMBER:

That's right.

MR. COOKSON:

I can start off and list a good many things that have happened in the last four years. If you want me to I might just start off with a \$1.5 billion potential in a reserve fund for the future development of this province, Mr. Speaker. This year we have a surplus accumulated over the last four years, something in the neighborhood of \$200 million, after three continuous deficits by the former government. Now if that isn't performance I don't know what it is.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

MR. COOKSON:

I could talk about the fact the province has virtually no unemployment, if he wants to talk about the economic outlook of this province. Virtually no unemployment. I could talk about the education tax refund in the province that has come off all the property. This involves literally hundreds of millions of dollars. Mr. Speaker, I could talk about the fact that over the last year or year and a half this province has created at least 40,000 new jobs for Albertans. I would like to hear anyone criticize that as not being an example of performance.

I could go on into the area of road work that has been done in the province. I could talk about the work our Minister of Education has done in the areas of education; just for example, the announcement this afternoon about the assistance to small schools and in particular those in the rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, I think if you are going to go out and fight an election, the members opposite had better pull up their socks and at least start attempting to find some potential weaknesses in the Budget which was brought down. The Member for Little Bow seemed to imply that it was their suggestion that we cut out or reduce personal income tax ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. COOKSON:

... and create a heritage fund. This is rather interesting because the former government had nothing to put in a heritage fund in the first place, so how could they think of it? If they wanted to create a fund with a deficit I could see them thinking about it.

AN HON. MEMBER:

They gave that to us.

MR. COOKSON:

A debt fund would be a better term.

The Member for Spirit River-Fairview, who often visits the Legislature and spiels off a little bit about ... Well, this document, Mr. Speaker, is a sort of minority report on foreign investment. I can see why it's a minority report. It says it's A Better Way. It really looks like a document a Grade 10 student might have put together to try to get himself through Social Studies. He talks about multinationals, multcorporations, multi-this and multi-that and really doesn't get down, I don't think, to the real crux of the problem.

This province couldn't conceivably have developed to the point it has today without foreign investment. If the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview thinks he can go into his constituency and sell to the farm people up there that they can possibly expand or even develop without outside sources of funds, even borrowed, they are sure different than they are down in central Alberta. The Province has a long history of borrowing and financing. The former government borrowed on the open market from New York and whatever. A lot of that money, Mr. Speaker, was borrowed at 3 and 4 per cent interest. You can go back into school borrowing and municipal borrowing and you can see those large funds borrowed at those low interest rates. Today, they are a great thing to carry because we can turn around with our surplus which is going into this fund and invest it at 9 or 10 per cent interest.

The Member for Calgary Mountain View, I think it was, was talking about paying off all the municipal debt. Now wouldn't that make sense, Mr. Speaker, if we took a million dollars and paid off our debt of 3 per cent so we couldn't invest the money in turn at 10 per cent.

MR. LUDWIG:

The hon. member is misquoting me and giving a meaning to my statement that I did not intend to give it. I stated that's what the Tories said when they were in the opposition.

[Interjections]

No, I am entitled ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Would the hon. Member for Lacombe just resume his chair for a moment until we hear the point of order.

MR. LUDWIG:

The hon. member attributed a certain meaning to my words which was not intended and not given. I did not recommend that we wipe out the municipal debt. I stated that that was what the Tories were saying when they were in the opposition. They were attacking us for not having wiped it out. That's what I said - just to clarify his thinking a bit, Mr. Speaker.

MR. COOKSON:

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary Mountain View is worried about business. He says they are all going bankrupt and collapsing or that there's a terrible problem in business. I just want to commend the Provincial Treasurer for bringing in this document entitled

Alberta Business Taxation and Incentives. There are several sections in here that are particularly interesting. I think that the Member for Spirit River-Fairview should read this document carefully because I think it lends itself to the sort of thing this government is attempting to do.

For example, on page 7 it lays out the fact that in the case of corporations there will be incentives to "Alberta-controlled and Alberta-resident." If this isn't a step in the right direction, I'd like to know what is.

The part that particularly interested me was page 8. I'd just like to read from the document to point out the importance it will have in small business in the province.

For Canadian-controlled Alberta-resident corporations, we propose a reduction to 6 per cent of the rate of provincial tax on the first \$500,000 of taxable income allocated to the Province of Alberta subsequent to enactment of the Legislation.

Now,

For new Alberta-controlled and Alberta-resident corporations, once the Alberta Act is instituted, there will be a tax holiday for a three year period from date of incorporation or \$500,000 of taxable income, whichever is reached first.

The point I'd like to draw to your attention there was - I think the Member for Calgary Mountain View again suggested that it was a typical Conservative policy to help those that didn't need help and not help those that needed help. It points out pretty clearly here, that those low-income corporations are exempt 6 per cent on that first \$500,000. Over and above that, they go back up to the rates which would normally apply.

The other part of this document which I didn't have an opportunity to speak on and which really is part of the Budget, Mr. Speaker, was a section that dealt with Alberta investment incentive corporations. This permits a company to put surplus funds into a corporation and they would be permitted to put in 250 per cent of their surplus in calculating their taxable income. I felt that this was a worth-while concept to encourage Albertans to invest in their own province.

There is just one comment that I might make - I'm sorry that the Provincial Treasurer isn't in at the present time - with regard to this document and perhaps I can raise it at a later date. That is that we have a large number of businesses in the province which are not incorporated.

We have a large number of farm operations. I've always wondered why it wouldn't be possible to assist those small businesses, in this case small farm operations, to accumulate sufficient property and, in the case of the farm, sufficient land to obtain what would be called an economic unit. On that economic unit that person wouldn't be required to pay income tax. In other words, if one had a quarter section and he needed a half section in order to have what would be described as an economic unit, there should be some way in which he could acquire and make payments on the other quarter section without having to pay tax on his payments. To me that would be a worth-while project to undertake. It would allow a small farm operation to expand without the additional burden and penalty of income tax. Then they could sock it to him all they wished.

The Member for Wainwright - you know the Member for Wainwright interests me. He seems to have a hang-up. In fact I think he's had a hang-up since the last election. He says that the fact - I imagine he was intimating the fact that the government opened up royalty payments and perhaps had not increased royalty payments - that the province hadn't kept faith apparently was having some effect on the economy.

I just want to repeat - if you want to talk about confidence in a province I can talk about it all night. I want to repeat, we have the lowest unemployment in Canada. We have a balanced budget with a surplus. We have produced enough social reforms, I think, in particular for senior citizens, that we don't have to take a back seat to any other province in Canada. You know when the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, keep talking about a windfall, of course they want to talk about windfall because they can't think of anything else to talk about.

MR. LUDWIG:

You don't want to, do you?

MR. COOKSON:

If it hadn't been for some of the qualified people on the front row and some of the initiatives they took and the tough bargaining that went on between here and Ottawa, we wouldn't be in the situation we're in today.

[Interjections]

The attitude of some of the opposition members, and I don't want to be misquoted but I'm pretty sure the Member for Cypress - he's not in his seat at the present time - but I'm pretty sure he intimated that he was concerned about difficult feelings between Alberta and Ottawa, that this thing was breaking down some kind of confidence in something or other.

I thought that was the Member for Highwood. He seemed to intimate, Mr. Speaker, that we shouldn't have raised the royalties. Well, my goodness, we were in a two- or three-year deficit, prior to taking office in the fall in 1971. Is the Member for Highwood

suggesting we should have continued at that royalty rate way below world prices and shares in royalties? It just seems such a lot of nonsense.

I found, in checking the report on foreign investment and I will quote if I may to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, from page 47. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet again I'd like to commend the people who were involved in the work on foreign investment, despite this Grade 10 document on multinational, multicorporation, multi-whatever, minority report - I understand why it's a minority, because he couldn't get anyone else to support it. A Better Way he entitles it. It is just a great thesis for somebody in high school. But on page 47 - and you know, the member is always talking about their taking over our country. We're losing control and the money is flowing down to the United States or whatever. In this case in the oil and gas industry, I think some 80 to 90 per cent is operated by capital from the United States. And this document, on page 47, says as follows, in 1974-75 it shows:

... projected revenues of \$784.1 million for the current fiscal year. This represents 40 per cent of the total projected revenues of \$1,934.5 million. Of interest is a comparison of actual receipts for the fiscal years 1970-71 and 1971-72 with corporate taxable income in 1971 declared by corporations in the mining industry and allocated to Alberta. The receipts total \$230.9 million and \$270.0 million respectively and the taxable income totals \$82.4 million. These figures point out that although the corporations in the mineral fuels sector are predominately foreign controlled the province of Alberta's receipts from only petroleum and natural gas in the sector are three times the taxable income of the corporations in this sector.

It simply says there's more than one way to skin a cat. So when the Member for Spirit River-Fairview goes out, I hope he will be able to quote this because again, there's more than one way to skin a cat.

What you want to do, Mr. Speaker, is get all the money you can in here, get it invested and get the country going which is what this government has done, and then tap it off the bottom. I think we've done, Mr. Speaker, a pretty fair job of this. I don't think we have to take second place to any other government in Canada for the way in which we have negotiated and encouraged foreign money to come into our province. At the same time we have total control over how this money is to be spent and how much is going to be tapped off to the provincial coffers.

The real point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is that a strong government can readily control the funds within the boundaries of its locality, or province in this case. A strong government can readily pass legislation or whatever is required to control essentially what happens within the province. I think the studies on foreign investment indicate the Province of Alberta has done as good a job or better in this respect than any province in Canada. It is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, the Province of Alberta today is one of the 'have', 'have', 'have' provinces in Canada, simply that reason.

Just to turn to a few things within my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the various departments for the cooperation my people have had. I can't boast or document perhaps all the things that have happened in the "Rose City" of Camrose, but I think probably if I were to sit down, I could document a number of things that have happened. I think probably, Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things that our government, or your government, Mr. Speaker - the opposition is concerned about that pronoun; it really doesn't make that much difference - has done in the province is the program of decentralization and the spinoff effects. I think probably that is one of the things that have meant more than anything to my people.

We have a constituency that over the last 30 years has not grown. Our towns and villages have slowly deteriorated. They are made up of a large number of retired people from agricultural industry and they just don't seem to have the viable funds and capital to develop.

I think, for example, that the town of Lacombe has upwards of 30 per cent of the population in the senior citizen class. They are a remarkable group of people and we need our senior citizens. I want to commend the government for the programs that have been initiated to bring their minimum incomes up to a point where they can comfortably retire and enjoy their twilight years.

Again, we have to have young people coming along. That's one of the objectives. I have said before in my constituency, if we can turn the tide of events so that I can be assured there will be jobs for all the young people who come along in that constituency, well, I think our government has accomplished one of their main objectives. I look forward to that.

We have a number of industries starting up now in the general area. Red Deer is finally starting to move. We have to give some credit to the Minister of Advanced Education for that.

Again, I want to commend the Provincial Treasurer for the Budget he has brought down, for lowering income tax. This again affects those in the lower income brackets. I think we have something we can be proud of. I hope the members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, will be able to come up with something more positive than I have heard in the last few hours of debate so that if and when we go into an election we will have something we can meet across the podium on.

MR. BATHUK:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER:
May the hon. member adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:
Mr. Speaker, I move the Assembly do now adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER:
Having heard the motion for adjournment by the hon. House Leader, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:
The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

[The House rose at 10:22 p.m.]