

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Thursday, February 13, 1975

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER:

The Assembly is probably accustomed to getting static from the Speaker, but this time it is in the sound system so I will have to speak to you without using the sound system. If I am not heard, I hope someone will signal.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

MR. COOPER:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a public petition from 858 residents of the Mannville Municipal Hospital District No. 1, praying for immediate action on certain recommendations which they allege have been presented to the Minister of Health but in respect of which no action has been taken.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to pursue this matter during the Oral Question Period at tomorrow's sitting of this House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 25 The Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 1975

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being The Alberta Income Tax Amendment Act, 1975.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly review the four principles embodied in the bill. The first is to establish for the 1975 taxation year a 10 point reduction from 36 per cent to 26 per cent ...

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I don't believe it's permitted to debate the principles of a bill on first reading, and the hon. minister ought to know it.

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, we are not debating principle. It is simply an outline of the basic elements and principles of this bill, which has been done in this Assembly for many years, indeed decades.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:

It is difficult to draw an exact line between the details of the bill, sometimes, and its principles, but I would suggest that when the hon. Provincial Treasurer gets into exact specifics, he is perhaps going beyond the ordinary scope of introduction.

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, the personal tax reductions in the Budget Address are provided for in the bill, as well as the tax credits to offset additional taxation for the oil and gas industry announced in the Alberta Petroleum Exploration Plan.

[Leave being granted, Bill 25 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 21 The Unfair Trade Practices Act

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 21, The Unfair Trade Practices Act.

This statute you will recall, Mr. Speaker, was introduced last fall during the 1974 session and allowed, by design, to die on the Order Paper. The purpose of allowing it to die, Mr. Speaker, was to provide for the public, the business community, consumer groups and other interested people to make representations regarding the contents of the bill. Since that time we have received upwards of 30 presentations by the public ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. minister is going well beyond the scope of the introduction of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, the basic principle of this bill is to provide civil redress for consumers who have suffered some form of suffering as a result of an unfair trades practice.

[Leave being granted, Bill 21 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 232 The Anti-Organized Crime Act

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill 232, The Anti-Organized Crime Act.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill, when enacted, will make provisions through this act for the enforcement of legislation to prosecute those people engaged directly or otherwise in criminal activities in this province.

[Leave being granted, Bill 232 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 234 The Restrooms in Public Premises Act

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill 234, The Restrooms in Public Premises Act.

The purpose of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that there will be better restroom facilities at no charge to the public in all public places.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Hear, hear.

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

[Leave being granted, Bill 234 was introduced and read a first time.]

Bill 227 The Alberta Action Council of the Status of Women Act

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 227, The Alberta Action Council of the Status of Women Act. The main purpose of this bill is to establish a 22-member advisory council reporting to the Minister of Consumer Affairs with nine main responsibilities.

[Leave being granted, Bill 227 was introduced and read a first time.]

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and the Assembly, some 90 very enthusiastic Grade 9 students from Laurier Heights school. They are in the members gallery, 60 of them, and another 30 in the public gallery, accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Gibson and Ms. Neuman. I would ask them to stand at this time and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. YOUNG:

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, some 27 students from McQueen School in my constituency and my community who are accompanied today by their teacher, Mrs. Norman. These students from Grade 4 and 5 are in the public gallery and I would ask them to rise and be recognized.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, sir, and the hon. members of this House, four executive members of the Victoria Community Association in Calgary: Mrs. Iris Penlington, Mrs. Larry Penlington, Mr. Benoché and Mr. McLeod. They are here visiting Edmonton and different government departments on community matters. I would like them to stand and be recognized.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in introducing to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a gentleman who has been long active in municipal politics. I speak of Mr. Carl Hennig, now retired, who is the former councillor in the town of Fort Saskatchewan.

I would like Mr. Hennig to stand and be recognized by the House. He is in the public gallery.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. DOWLING:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a response to Order for Return No. 102.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Petrochemical Industry

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct the first question to the Minister of Industry, and ask the Minister of Industry if the Government of Alberta is in the process of acquiring land in the Red Deer area which will be used for a large petrochemical development in the Red Deer area?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question then to the Minister of the Environment. How much land has the Government of Alberta either acquired for itself or assisted in the acquisition of, in the Red Deer area?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, none, to my knowledge.

MR. DIXON:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister of industry and development regarding the petrochemical industry in Alberta.

Has the hon. minister or the government received a reply from Ottawa yet to the request that Ottawa favor Alberta for a petrochemical industry rather than an increase in the industry in eastern Canada?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we, as a department, have been speaking to Ottawa in this regard but we have had no comments from them.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question. Does the government plan to have meetings with Petrosar Company of Sarnia, Ontario and the Alberta government? Are there any meetings planned?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, not with our department. Maybe my colleague, the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals, would like to respond.

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, I might advise hon. members that representatives of Petrosar have met with representatives of the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question either to the Minister of the Environment or to the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Have officials of either department or of the government helped in the acquisition of land in the Red Deer area?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, companies that are interested in purchasing property for various reasons often come to the department in regard to land capability, whether it's five or four or three or two or one, and the department offers this advice to all that come to the department.

In regard to a number of companies with respect to their interest in locating in Alberta, many companies come to the department in terms of getting some assistance in regard to the classification of land all over the province.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. Has he or officials of his department given advice or assistance to petrochemical firms which are interested in acquiring land in the Red Deer area?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, we have given advice to many companies, some in the Red Deer area.

MR. CLARK:

Some in the petrochemical business?

MR. YURKO:

Several forms of business, including the petrochemical business.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Industry. Has the Dow Chemical project at Fort Saskatchewan been dropped, in return for a guarantee of supply of feedstock from Alberta Gas Ethylene, to be located in Red Deer?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, Mr. Speaker, not that I am aware of.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Industry been involved in discussions between Dow and officials of Alberta Gas Ethylene regarding a supply of feedstock?

MR. PEACOCK:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. In the course of the discussions, have you discussed Red Deer as the location for the Alberta Gas Ethylene plant?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, it was announced in this House by the Premier some time ago that Alberta was anxious to establish a world-scale ethylene complex in the province of Alberta, and that several companies interested in developing this might be able to get together which, at that time, would include the Dome, Alberta Gas Ethylene and the Dow complexes, and that the location in which they would establish their plants would be open for negotiation by the private sector.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. In the course of those discussions has the government discussed with Alberta Gas Ethylene the possibility of location in Red Deer?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, we have discussed many locations with Alberta Gas Ethylene.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Red Deer.

MR. CLARK:

More specific. In the course of the discussions has the minister discussed the possibility of Alberta Gas Ethylene locating at or near Red Deer?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, as I stated, we have discussed many locations, which includes the area the hon. member referred to.

MR. WILSON:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. During these discussions, has the minister been advised of purchases already made of property and houses?

MR. PEACOCK:

No, I'm not aware of them, Mr. Speaker.

DR. BUCK:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. minister in a position to indicate to the House if the government has killed the Dow-Dome project in Fort Saskatchewan?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we are encouraging the program of a world-scale petrochemical industry and its complex in the province of Alberta.

DR. BUCK:

That is a beautiful piece of skating, Mr. Speaker, but the question was: have they killed the Dow-Dome ethylene project in Fort Saskatchewan, not in Alberta, that's in Fort Saskatchewan the hon. minister ...

[Interjections]

... Mr. Speaker, have they killed the project in Fort Saskatchewan, the Dow-Dome ethylene project in Fort Saskatchewan?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, I don't know anything about a Dow-Dome project in Fort Saskatchewan. If he is referring to the Dow project in Fort Saskatchewan, that is a different situation.

AN HON. MEMBER:

He wouldn't know.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals further to his answer to my question. I wonder if the minister could outline to the House the nature of the talks between Petrosar and the Alberta oil marketing commission?

MR. DICKIE:

Mr. Speaker, as I recall, the representatives of Petrosar met with representatives of the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission within the last two weeks. The purpose of their visit was just to familiarize the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission with their plans and their proposals for the development of Petrosar. I think that was, in general, the discussion which was carried on.

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a further supplementary question to the Minister of Industry. Have there been any commitments, verbal or written, given to Alberta Gas Ethylene concerning construction of a plant in the Red Deer region?

MR. PEACOCK:

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have had, as I have previously stated, many discussions about a world-scale size ethylene plant in the province of Alberta, including the area of Red Deer.

MR. LUDWIG:

Which portfolio were you ... [inaudible].

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Have there been any commitments at all given by this government for an Alberta Gas Ethylene plant in the Red Deer region - any commitments, verbal or written?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. leader is simply repeating the same question. The minister is neither obliged to answer nor comment on the question.

MP. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, then a supplementary question. Could I put the same question to the Minister of Advanced Education?

[Interjections]

MR. DIXON:

Final supplementary question ...

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, just before my colleague asks the next supplementary question, can we assume from that the Minister of Advanced Education knows nothing about it either?

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

MR. FOSTER:

If he asks whether he could put the question to me, my answer is yes he could.

MR. CLARK:

Then stand up. It's so seldom you get the opportunity to.

The supplementary question then: is the Minister of Advanced Education knowledgeable of any commitments, written or verbal, that the Alberta government has given to Alberta Gas Ethylene regarding the development of a plant in or around Red Deer?

MR. SPEAKER:

There's real doubt as to whether any hon. member is entitled to go down the front bench and ask each minister in turn whether he knows the answer to a certain question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary question. Maybe this could solve the matter, Mr. Speaker. Which location does the Government of Alberta favor first for the establishment of a world-scale petrochemical industry in our province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

In Alberta.

MR. DIXON:

Which location - in Alberta?

AN HON. MEMBER:

What priorities in Alberta?

MR. DIXON:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see the government get serious. This is a question ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

That's right.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member's question has been put, and I believe it has been heard. If it hasn't been heard, perhaps it might be repeated.

MR. DIXON:

Well, I'll make it very clear, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government could inform the House which location in Alberta they would prefer a petrochemical industry to be built first?

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, these subjects are under negotiation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, good.

MR. PEACOCK:

When a decision is reached we will be glad to inform the House.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Attaboy.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker ...

[Interjections]

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Might this be the final supplementary on this point.

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary. What are the priorities of the government then in their studies as far as location of a petrochemical industry within our province?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Right, right.

MR. PEACOCK:

Mr. Speaker, to be located in Alberta.

MR. LUDWIG:

I rise on a point of privilege. I believe that it's a sad reflection on the leadership of the ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order, order.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please. The hon. member is commenting on an answer which perhaps doesn't satisfy him, but if he is rising on a genuine point of privilege would he start off by saying what that point of privilege is.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my point of privilege is that we have witnessed a discredit to the leadership of the Premier of the ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please. The hon. member is persisting in what I suspected he was doing in the first place.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, speaking on the point of privilege, I think the answer is ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Order, order.

AN HON. MEMBER:

On a point of order.

[Interjections]

MR. HO LEM:

On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the answer given was really misleading in that it ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. The hon. member is also not entitled to comment on the answer in that way. If there's time perhaps we can come back to the topic again in the form of questions.

Caretakers' Strike - Calgary

MR. CLARK:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the second question to the Minister of Labour and ask what progress he is able to report on the caretakers' strike in Calgary?

DR. HOHOL:

The situation is a dispute of some considerable magnitude. The parties are apart. We're doing everything we can to bring them together to continue discussions and to bargain collectively at the table.

MR. CLARK:

Further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister met personally with officials of the Calgary Public and Separate School Boards during the course of this dispute?

DR. HOHOL:

Yes sir, I have, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK:

A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Has the minister met personally in Calgary with the representatives of the caretakers, their union?

DR. HOHOL:

No, I have not met in Calgary with the representatives of the union.

Senior Citizens Centres

MR. ANDERSON:

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Health and Social Development. Is there any provision for grants to assist in establishing senior citizens centres as proposed by a senior citizens group in Lethbridge?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to the type of centre that is normally thought of as a recreational or drop-in type of thing, the normal rule is that the premises are the responsibility of the local group usually working with the municipality. If the group can get the approval of the local preventive social service program for funding the operating deficit, the provincial government will pay 80 per cent of the operating deficit.

I might point out that where premises are not owned and are rented by the drop-in centre, the rent is allowed as part of the expense in calculating the deficit.

MR. ANDERSON:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is any consideration being given to include these centres in senior citizens lodges which are to be built in the future?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there is a proposal at the present time, that the hon. members will recall was announced by my colleague the Minister of Telephones and Utilities and myself in Calgary a few weeks ago, where just that sort of thing is being contemplated for Calgary North Hill. In addition to the proposed future senior citizens lodge on that site, it is proposed that the phasing of it will be that some other facilities, being an auxiliary hospital and the sort of recreational and activity centre that I think the hon. member has in mind, would be built first.

Northwest Industries - Employees

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour. Can he advise whether he has been in contact with the management from Northwest Industries with reference to the intended layoff of 150 employees by Northwest Industries?

DR. HOHOL:

I haven't personally, Mr. Speaker. Officials from my department and from Canada Manpower have been and are working at this.

MR. LUDWIG:

Can the hon. minister advise whether any steps have been taken to attempt to forestall the intended layoff or to delay it?

DR. HOHOL:

No, I couldn't specifically. This is the information that the management of the company and the people from Canada Manpower and our own manpower division are working at.

Pincher Creek Hospitals

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, this question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Social Development and it arises out of the possibility of the hon. Premier turning the Legislature out on grass any time now. Therefore I would like to have some information from the hon. minister.

The question is, Mr. Speaker: has the minister budgeted in his estimates for the Pincher Creek hospital?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, my memory of that project is that it would be premature for this year's estimates to have anything for the Pincher Creek hospital other than the planning and design stage. Any budget for construction would follow that.

MR. DRAIN:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister see the time frame as somewhere in the next 24 months?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I think that is really getting a little bit too precise for me. The board is working along with the Hospital Services Commission and the architects, and precisely what stage they are at, I just don't recall. The hon. member will recall that an announcement was made a few months ago that this was the procedure that would be followed.

AHC-CUPE Dispute

MR. WYSE:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour. It's a follow-up to a question I posed to the minister yesterday regarding the dispute between the AHA and CUPE.

My question is: did the minister indicate that the dispute is between these two parties and does not really involve the provincial government?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

MR. WYSE:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. It is regarding the Budget Address and it reads: "Hospitalization payments will be increased by \$69 million ... to maintain Alberta's high standards of health care and provide improved incomes for Alberta hospital workers." It would appear to me to be a bit of a contradiction ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Is the hon. member debating the point?

MR. WYSE:

No, Mr. Speaker, I'm just getting to my question. Will this include increased salaries to the Alberta hospital workers, and what portion is earmarked for salaries?

MR. MINIELY:

Mr. Speaker, it's normal and customary for the Budget to provide the funds to the hospitals. As the Budget indicates, the hospitals then negotiate with their employees.

The Budget Address indicates that historically 75 per cent goes to salaries and that's what the Budget Address says. But we fund the hospitals and they make their decision in negotiations as to what portion or percentage of the additional funds provided goes towards salaries and what portion goes towards other hospital expenses.

MR. WYSE:

One other supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Provincial Treasurer. If the provincial government refuses to increase the grants, from where do the hospitals get the dollars to increase the wages?

MR. HYNDMAN:

That's a hypothetical question.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is asking a hypothetical question.

MR. WYSE:

It's not too hypothetical right now, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

If it starts with "if", it can't be anything else.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

Auto Licence Plates

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, in asking the question today I'm following your suggestion of Wednesday, that in view of the time already allotted by the Chair on the topic of licence plates on Wednesday, further questions on this topic might be asked at another time.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on this question and would like to direct the following question to the hon. Minister of Highways and Transport.

In view of the two-month delay in the delivery of the licence plates this year, will the hon. minister be pressing for compensation, having regard to the fact that the moneys accruing to the treasury, delayed for an additional two months, would result in loss of revenue by way of interest on this money? Based on 10 per cent for the two-month period, that would mean approximately over half a million dollars to the province of Alberta.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, it's a little difficult to understand what the hon. member was saying because he had his head down reading his question.

It was difficult, but I gather what he was saying was, were we going to be asking the company for some restitution because of the delay in the licence plates delivery. That has yet to be determined because we have not got the delivery of them, and until the final delivery is made, those decisions will be made.

As far as the interest goes on the licence plates, delay in paying them, that is resting with the people of Alberta. I'm sure they're not objecting to having that extra \$20 for an additional two months.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Can the hon. minister advise the House whether in awarding this contract to Signal Industries of Saskatchewan a penalty clause was included relative to the delivery dates, as is normal practice in these important contracts?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I can assure the honorable gentleman that the contract is valid and protects the interests of the Alberta citizens.

MR. HO LEM:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. For the clarification of the minister, I was asking whether a penalty clause was included in this contract?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is repeating the same question which he asked a moment ago.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, but what I'm saying to the hon. minister is that I would like him to direct his answers to the question.

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. minister advise why the contract was given to the Saskatchewan company before the tender time was closed?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh.

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, that's a wrong assumption. The tender was not open until a specific time, and all tenders were opened at the same time. Anybody who wanted to have representatives there at the opening of the tender time was able to do so.

MR. HO LEM:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Did the government offer any assistance to the purchaser of this equipment, in the way of financial assistance or credit given to the purchaser?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HO LEM:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister advise this House whether the government offered any assistance to any Alberta company, for instance the company that did the painting of the plates?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, the group that is doing the painting is a subsidiary of the company that was successful in the bid.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, it was the bidder of the lowest tender who received the contract as we do in all contracts, unless very unusual, and then the second bidder would be taken only upon an order in council.

DR. BUCK:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. minister remember or indicate to the House how many tenders were submitted?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I can't recall the number of tenders submitted but I know there was more than one.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, can the hon. minister indicate to the House how many Alberta firms tendered?

MR. SPEAKER:

That is a matter - as a matter of fact, we have been getting more and more into detail of a nature which would ordinarily be sought by a question on the Order Paper.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a supplementary question to the hon. Solicitor General. Can the hon. Solicitor General indicate to the House if the people who had to be let go at Fort Saskatchewan jail were relocated in other ...

[Interjections]

... the civil servants who were in charge of making the ... Mr. Speaker, my question is: can the hon. minister indicate to the Legislature, were the civil servants who were in charge of the licence plate program relocated in other portions of the Civil Service?

MISS HUNLEY:

It's some time since we made those arrangements and I don't remember the exact details, but I am under the impression that some continued service in Fort Saskatchewan.

I believe one retired on sick leave but I'm not positive. If the hon. member would put it on the Order Paper I will get the exact details for him.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Highways. On what basis was the equipment owned by the government at Fort Saskatchewan jail sold to the present manufacturer?

MR. COPITHORNE:

Mr. Speaker, I would prefer that you put that on the Order Paper because I don't have the details.

Fort Saskatchewan Jail - Training Programs

MR. SORENSON:

A question to the hon. Solicitor General. On Tuesday the hon. Solicitor General indicated that the licence plate facility had been removed at the Fort Saskatchewan jail since this activity could not be related to any job upon release. What are the trades presently being taught at this institution?

MISS HUNLEY:

That's a fairly lengthy answer too, Mr. Speaker. We have made considerable changes out there. The specific building that was used for the manufacture of licence plates has been enlarged and we're using it now for some vocational training.

MR. SORENSON:

A supplementary to the Solicitor General. Does the Solicitor General's department render any aid to released prisoners in obtaining employment upon release?

MISS HUNLEY:

We do indeed, Mr. Speaker. We have a liaison officer with Manpower and Labour who works with us in attempting to obtain employment. We encourage very much the use of day parole so that prisoners might go forward and obtain employment, and subsequent to their release they can go right into the labor force in this province, which we think is a very useful thing.

We are attempting to upgrade their training and education. We have made some considerable improvement in that line. We feel we have more to do in order to make it

possible for them to return and to lead a useful and productive life in society, and that's our goal.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, for the point of clarification. Did the hon. minister say there were so many programs that it would take a long time to indicate to the Legislature what these programs were? Is that what the minister said?

MISS HUNLEY:

I don't know that I said there were so many. There are numerous, and some relate to a few people taking part in them. It's quite a change we have made out there in the last year. I think it's a very useful one. There are many activities, but there are also many more that need to be done, Mr. Speaker.

DR. BUCK:

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the hon. minister just take a few moments and tell us about some of the major ones?

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. We are getting well beyond the scope of the question period. This would be information which the hon. member might wish to seek via the Order Paper.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, the major ones. That wouldn't take too long.

MR. SPEAKER:

Even the process ...

DR. BUCK:

It would take five seconds.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please. Even the process of selection might take a while.

Alberta Labour Act

MR. DIXON:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question today to the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour. My question relates to an Alberta Labour Act charge being thrown out of court in the case of the slain service station attendant, John Berze, who was a constituent of mine.

I wondered if the government or the department plan any changes in the Act or regulation in order that it could be more enforceable?

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, the judgment was based on the regulations rather than The Labour Act. At the present time, officials of my department and those of the Attorney General are studying carefully the judgment brought down, the basis for it, and the recommendations and evidence for the recommendations will be given to me in due time.

In the meantime, it would be precipitous and probably improper to comment, except in this way, Mr. Speaker. We were very clear, as a government, as to the intent of the regulations of the Board of Industrial Relations as they relate to the Act. Whatever it takes to make sure that that intent stays in place in regulation and in statutes, those actions will be taken.

MR. DIXON:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. What action is the department taking to ensure that underage workers are not being employed in the all-night type of operation? Are you doing any research or any checking? This is what I'm really asking.

DR. HOHOL:

Yes, we are, Mr. Speaker. The normal procedure for department officials who are the labor standards people is to visit places of employment from time to time and examine the books, examine the employee-employer circumstances in the workshop or the work site to make sure they conform to the orders of the Board of Industrial Relations and to The Labour Act.

MR. WYSE:

Supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker. Were these regulations being enforced before this incident last summer?

DR. HOHOL:

I'm not sure I follow. It's a matter of law, of course. If the hon. member is speaking about murder, it has been against the law for some years, but the ...

MR. WYSE:

I think the hon. minister knows what I'm talking about.

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I honestly don't.

AN HON. MEMBER:

I can see that.

MR. WYSE:

Was the regulation being enforced before this incident happened regarding hiring younger people below 18?

DR. HOHOL:

I suppose I have to restate my prior answer by saying that officials of my department inspect places of employment from time to time. Enforcement is a matter of law and for law officials.

Irrigation Projects

MR. MANDEVILLE:

Mr. Speaker, my question is a follow-up question to the hon. Minister of the Environment which I asked earlier in the week. It is in regard to the inflationary estimates on the cost of irrigation projects for the province.

I was wondering if the minister would be able to report to the House the increase in the estimates of these projects, and also will the federal government be picking up the increase in the estimates?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the four major structures that the federal government had committed themselves to are the Carseland weir, the western irrigation districts headworks, the Brooks aqueduct and the Bassano dam. When the agreement was signed, the agreement stipulated that the federal government was to build these four structures and at that time the cost estimate was \$16.5 million. Since then the structures have been estimated to cost \$26.3 million.

The Carseland weir is now completed. The western irrigation district structure is scheduled for completion in August of 1975. The Brooks aqueduct is currently under construction and rehabilitation of the Bassano dam remains to be acted upon.

But again I wish to reiterate that the agreement with the federal government isn't based on any sum of money. It's based on the fact that the federal government will rebuild these structures.

Women's Emergency Shelter

MR. BENOIT:

My question, Mr. Speaker, is a further question to the Minister of Health and Social Development regarding the Edmonton Women's Emergency Shelter.

What kind of specific, ongoing discussions or liaison now exist between the Metis and Native women and the volunteer women who previously operated the Emergency Shelter?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that process of discussion actually took place some months ago and pointed up the fact that the two groups were not entirely in agreement as to how the centre should be operated, or who should operate it, although there was a desire on both sides to cooperate with the other.

It was a result of that situation, and growing out of those discussions, that the City Centre Churches Corporation agreed to act as a central agency that would be willing to receive the cooperation of both of the groups the hon. member has been asking about. The facility began its operation on that basis in December of 1974.

MR. BENOIT:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. The minister previously indicated that it was a temporary arrangement. Is the government actively involved in attempting some type of permanent arrangement, and if so, what is the involvement?

MR. CRAWFORD:

Mr. Speaker, officials of the department may well be actively involved at this stage. The sort of involvement I had anticipated was that the present situation would probably give rise to a - if not a coalition of the two previously existing groups, then the formation of a new society, a new nonprofit organization that would take over from the City Centre Churches Corporation. But I don't know precisely the stage that's at.

Energy Corridor

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with the proposed energy corridor. I'd like to ask the hon. Minister of the Environment: now that the Syncrude project is going ahead, has the government started acquiring right of way?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Energy Company is a corporation of the Province of Alberta. When it decides to construct the pipeline it will be required to obtain easements entirely on its own volition, as any other company in the province of Alberta.

The Government of Alberta has bought some land in the corridor which may or may not be used for pumping stations and storage points, and may buy some more land in the future. However I do want to indicate to the House, as I have on several occasions, that there is no time planned during which the government will purchase the land it requires in the corridor. This will be done over a series of years, perhaps 10 years or longer.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. minister. Has most of the land that has been acquired been purchased and then leased back to the farmers affected?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, each particular piece of land has a different set of conditions on it; where the farmer wished to have the lease given back to him, it was, in every case. Some farmers didn't wish to take the lease; one or two sold outright, so in that case the land was transferred to the Department of Lands and Forests and that department will administer that land on the longer-term basis for the government and will lease it to whomever wishes to make use of it in terms of its agricultural capability.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary. Can the hon. minister indicate to the Legislature what steps were taken to prevent speculation of the land involved?

MR. YURKO:

A number of steps, Mr. Speaker, but one of the steps was the fact that I instructed the department that they were to buy no land which had been transferred in title during the last year.

DR. BUCK:

Mr. Speaker, can the hon. minister indicate to us how they are going to acquire that land then, the land that he thought might be speculated upon?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I indicated the time plan for purchasing land by the government is not a short-term time plan but a long-term time plan. The government made all the information public with respect to the location of the corridor. So if a speculator wishes to go and buy land in the corridor and hang onto it, he certainly can.

But there is no guarantee whatsoever that the government will come along and purchase that land from the speculator, if you wish, next year or the year after or in 10 years or in 20 years. He might have the land on his hands for some 20 years before the land is purchased by the government, if in fact it is purchased at all, because the government hasn't committed itself to purchasing all the land in the corridor.

DR. BUCK:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little in the dark ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

DR. BUCK:

... as to how you are going to run a corridor if you don't acquire the land. Mr. Speaker, is the hon. minister saying then that the Alberta Energy Company will not buy the land outright; if they can't, they will have to expropriate it?

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Energy Company will obtain easements in the normal way that any company obtains easements. Where the land is owned by the government, it will obtain an easement from the Department of Lands and Forests; where the land is owned by a private owner, the company will obtain an easement from the owner.

On the longer-term basis, there are some key parcels that are necessary; for example, the land around Skaro is intended to be an area of a massive terminal. The government has purchased a considerable amount of land in that area. The land at Hardisty is intended to be a massive storage and transfer point. The government has in fact purchased quite a bit of land in that area.

But in between the key sites and the pumping stations, which may be located 50 miles apart, the government doesn't have to own all the land; it can use easements for that matter. But there are some areas, for example river crossings, which are key to the crossings of a number of pipelines on a longer-term basis, and these parcels may in fact be purchased.

DR. BUCK:
A final supplementary ...

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. member is now asking his second final supplementary.

DR. BUCK:
This is my last final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

DR. BUCK:
Mr. Speaker, is it government policy or will it be government policy to buy the entire corridor that is affected and then sell it back, or lease it back to the farmer, just retaining the portions required for the corridor?

MR. YURKO:
I think I have answered the question fully in terms of the policy.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Agreed.

Crowsnest Pass Agreement

MR. WYSE:
My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce. Possibly the minister has answered the question previously in the House, I'm not sure. Has the government taken a definite stand on the continuation of the Crowsnest Pass agreement?

MR. PEACOCK:
Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have. We have come out affirmative that the Crowsnest Pass agreement should not be affected or tampered with until the anomalies and cost disclosure are fully made.

MR. WYSE:
Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Have any of the inequities in rail transportation between western and eastern Canada been resolved in the past year?

MR. PEACOCK:
Mr. Speaker, they haven't as such, but I must say that we are close to coming to an agreement and understanding that some of the anomalies and some of the requests that the western provinces have been asking for will be met in the near future.

MR. WYSE:
Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. We all remember one year ago when the hon. Premier indicated that Alberta would not in fact accept the one price ...

AN HON. MEMBER:
It wasn't price we're arguing.

MR. WYSE:
... for crude unless the steel and other commodities were under one price. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the minister could indicate if this has happened yet?

MR. PEACOCK:
Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to a very complex question in relation to these anomalies we're talking about which are included in the long-short haul and the difference between finished and raw products, and so on and so forth. I have stated before that we are getting close to an understanding and we hope some benefits will be derived in the near future from the withdrawal of these anomalies.

MR. SPEAKER:
I believe the hon. Minister of Manpower and Labour wishes to supplement an answer given previously.

Alberta Labour Act (continued)

DR. HOHOL:

Mr. Speaker, I believe I understand the question of the hon. Member for Medicine Hat-Redcliff to mean whether or not the regulation requiring a minor working the night shift to be under the constant supervision of an adult, whether this regulation was in place at the time of the murder.

This is how I now understand the question, and if that is the case the answer is yes, the regulation was in place. It was on that basis that the department laid charges with respect to that particular incident.

MR. WYSE:

I understood that the regulations weren't enforced, and I think it's bad taste to go back and prosecute some of these ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Order please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Order, order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

124. Mr. Wilson proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

Copies of the contracts and letters of assignment commissioning:

- (a) Loram International Ltd.;
- (b) Price Waterhouse & Company;
- (c) Foster Research Ltd., and
- (d) Hu Harries & Associates

on the Syncrude assessment studies.

[The motion was carried.]

125. Mr. Wilson proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

Copies of all the monthly engineers' cost reports received by the Government of Alberta on the Syncrude project to date.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for clarification a question of the mover of the motion. It presently reads: "Copies of all the monthly engineers' cost reports ..." and I was wondering, inasmuch as the monthly report had other things such as progress on labor matters, construction matters, pictures of progress, and so on, whether he would want merely the cost reports extracted or whether he would like to have me suggest an amendment which would read: Copies of all the monthly reports received by the Government of Alberta on the Syncrude project to date. I would also add: subject to the concurrence of the Syncrude participants.

MR. WILSON:

Well, Mr. Speaker, in rising to answer the queries of the hon. minister, he will recall that last week we asked for all of the monthly reports and the government voted it down. I ...

MR. SPEAKER:

Are we now debating the point, or are we discussing a point of order?

MR. CLARK:

We're discussing the point of order.

MR. WILSON:

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for clarification of the minister's question that he posed to me.

All members will recall that last week we asked for all of the reports, and I understood the minister just now to say that he was prepared to suggest an amendment or to amend the motion for a return to give us all of the reports. I would like a clarification of that point so that if we are going to agree to it I want to know what we are agreeing to.

MR. GETTY:

That's reasonable, Mr. Speaker. The point that was under some debate last week, as I recall, was that the hon. member was requiring all reports that came, including from the deputy minister, to the minister. We made the point, and the House agreed, that these were interdepartmental memos and would not be provided as the normal order of the House.

What I am saying here, to make it clear, is that I did suggest in that debate that there were actually monthly reports made by the Syncrude participants which were passed to the government, not created by any of the public service. Those monthly reports have more in them than just "engineers' costs" as referred to here. So what I was suggesting is that we seek the concurrence of the Syncrude participants to provide for the House copies of the monthly reports which they provided to the government.

MR. SPEAKER:

Now we are going to have to deal with this in some definite way that can appear in the Journals. If we are going to have the motion amended, I would welcome a formal amendment of some kind. If we are going to debate it as it is now, perhaps we might proceed with the debate.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I'll try to present the amendment that would get us on to the right reports, I hope.

AN HON. MEMBER:

So do we.

MR. GETTY:

The way the motion would now read: Copies of all the monthly reports received by the Government of Alberta on the Syncrude project to date prepared by the Syncrude participants, subject to the concurrence of the Syncrude participants.

MR. SPEAKER:

Perhaps the hon. minister might send a copy of the amendment for the Journals. As I understand it, the amendment proposes that there should be added to the motion: prepared by the Syncrude participants and with the concurrence of the Syncrude participants.

I might respectfully suggest that those two expressions might be turned around for a little clearer word order.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to debate the point. I would like to raise a question. I'm not sure whether you are suggesting or would rule that the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs has spoken because I would then be unable to raise my question with him. But if he can respond again, I would like to raise a question, so could I have a ruling on that first?

MR. SPEAKER:

I think we are dealing with a point of order which is now evolving into an amendment. Once that amendment has been properly put, it will be open for debate and the hon. member would then be able to debate it or he might prefer to wait to debate after the amendment is adopted or defeated.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I will speak to the amendment. I would simply say that in my view, Mr. Speaker, the information provided to the government by the Syncrude people would now be the property of the government.

I would also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the interest of the government at this point in time, or putting it another way, [of] the people of Alberta, is such that I would like to stress to the hon. minister that if he feels it is necessary to approach the Syncrude people to get their permission, he impress upon them that this is the kind of information which at this point in time must be made available to the Legislature and to the people. I don't think it can be argued any longer that it is only in the interests of Syncrude that we have to assess it; we have to assess the information in the interests of the people of Alberta.

It is quite possible that the minister will suggest to us that the permission will likely be forthcoming, but I would stress again that in view of the developments that have

taken place, I think it is important and imperative that this kind of information should be made available. And I would hope the minister would impress upon Syncrude, if there is any suggestion that it should be withheld, that it be made available.

MR. SPEAKER:

Just so that we're clear what we're discussing, I have received a copy of the amendment. It omits the word "engineers" and extends the scope of the motion to cover all monthly reports. It says: Copies of all the monthly reports received by the Government of Alberta prepared by Syncrude participants subject to concurrence of Syncrude participants.

[The motion as amended was carried.]

126. Mr. Wilson proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) The total cost of the Alberta Energy Company advertisements for its senior executive group, which appeared in several newspapers during November and December, 1974.
- (2) A breakdown of the above advertising costs by newspaper.
- (3) The terms of reference and fees for the services of Peat, Marwick & Partners with regard to the advertisements and executive search functions on behalf of the Alberta Energy Company.

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, this follows along the type of motion that has been placed before in the House. I must once again place before the House the position that the government has taken with regard to this kind of motion having to do with the Alberta Energy Company. That is, by the government's policy statement to the House and the position we have taken, the Alberta Energy Company will operate like any other company within the province of Alberta; that it will be managed on its day to day operations by the directors and management of the company, and that it would not be the government's intention to get into the habit of the day to day operations on such matters as the fees a newspaper might charge the company for advertising in that newspaper.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I must request that this motion - I would prefer that it be withdrawn, but if it's not withdrawn in accordance with policy, that it be defeated.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, we're running up against the same problem again, vital information is not being provided. I think it's legitimate information and that is why I went to the extent of introducing a bill on this particular matter. When the minister gets up and states that this is like any other company, it is not like any other company. Nothing is further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. We control the purse strings of the company; we're obligated to spend a quarter of a billion dollars on the company, maybe more if they need it. There is no end price on this company. I believe we have directors and people in high influence in the company. When the minister can stand up and announce that this company will not be issuing shares because it isn't expedient or proper at the present time, not in the public interest, we're not entirely at arm's length, Mr. Speaker.

I would feel that any company that I had a major interest in would have to communicate with me as to what's happening. If this company ever made a bad move or ever made a decision that was not in the public interest, this government would be responsible entirely for it. They set it up. It's a creature of this government; it's financed by this government. It's financed by the people's money. The minister stands up and says, well, we're not getting into it. Frankly, I'm not buying it. I don't want to say the minister is not credible, but I don't believe this approach. I don't buy it at all that we are at arm's length because I think they must get together.

If the hon. minister is doing his job, he's got to know what's going on in that company and not say, well, we threw \$250 million and if we happen to make a bad choice of a manager or a bad choice of a president, it can all go down the drain. I think people would have to be alarmed if this happened, Mr. Speaker. How far can we go this way? Three or four more deals like this and we could be in real trouble.

I don't think the minister's answer is satisfactory. He says, well, we don't want to get into the habit of getting involved, which means that we had been involved. If he doesn't want to, then we have to look at the whole structure of the company and get something to know that the minister cannot get involved. I'm saying that the minister can, and I would support his involvement in this company. Somebody has to know what's going on in that company. If somebody in this government has to know what's going on in this company, we better be able to find out.

But there's a veil of secrecy now between the Alberta Energy Company and the people of the province who put up the money. This is the kind of veil that we as the opposition want to pierce. When I use the word "pierce", I don't mean spear. We just want to find out what is going on. We wouldn't be doing our job if we were not pressing for this kind

of information, Mr. Speaker. This is our problem in Ottawa; this is our problem in every legislature, and it's a bad problem here.

The hon. minister is using what I call a pretty lame excuse to say that we're not getting involved if he says, I can't get it; I can't get it, I haven't got the authority. But I say the minister has authority. Somebody had authority to pass this legislation. I'm not just being difficult. I'm standing up for what I believe to be a right. The hon. members in this House have some right to demand information. There's no reason we shouldn't get it. I think the public would feel very good if the government said, we're going to watch this company so that it doesn't make some bad moves; we're going to watch it so that everything it does is in the public interest, and if it wanted to do something that wasn't, we'd be in trouble.

I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that I'm extremely disappointed because [of] the way the minister is reacting to this kind of question. This kind of demand is that in the event that the company decided to issue shares ... if the company decided to go to the market, I'm predicting that a handful of well-to-do people could end up with the shares. We have no say about what what will happen.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Agreed.

MR. LUDWIG:

If this is the case, we've defaulted. We've faltered in our responsibility in saying that we're making provision; we're trumpeting the fact all over the province that the people can invest, but the company's going to decide. The company is vulnerable if that's the position, because the major investors can get hold of the bulk of the stock that is intended to be issued to the people of this province. I'm saying that the little man won't have a look-in. If that isn't the case, the minister could say it isn't the case. I'm saying he's waffling then, because either it is the case and he can't touch the company, or if he can deal with the company, then tell us that he will get us this information and keep us informed on what is happening with the Alberta Energy Company.

It's supposed to be the biggest thing that ever happened in Alberta - at least we've put in the most money - and we're taking the position that from now on the MLAs are not going to know what's going on. If the MLAs can't find out what's going on, Mr. Speaker, who will? If we can't get the minister to disclose information about the Alberta Energy Company, then it's a secret association, a secret corporation designed perhaps to enrich a few Albertans, a few investors and nobody else.

I think the minister ought to change his stance and tell us that he feels that he can get us this information. I say he can. If he can't, then we've created a creature that can walk away with \$200 million and nobody would know the difference. So I don't believe that they have all that freedom. I don't believe that the minister should be able to get away with saying, sorry fellows, it's hands off; it's an arm's-length operation. I don't believe that it is, Mr. Speaker. I don't think many people do believe that it's an arm's-length operation.

MR. RUSTE:

Mr. Speaker, there is one other matter I would like to raise at this time because of the events of the last number of weeks, and that is the matter of the government, through its involvements, getting into the total amount of the power plant and the pipeline. Certainly, here again the Alberta Energy Company may be at arm's length, but government decision has affected what has happened there. I submit when the minister rises in his place and tells us what we should know, I think it's time we get up and insist that where public moneys are spent - and certainly the Alberta Energy Company is getting more and more involved whether he likes it or whether we like it or not - certainly we're entitled to have this type of information so we and the people of Alberta can judge what is going on.

I would say it's legitimate information and you can't help but think, when seeing what has happened in the last few weeks, what the next step might be. The government is going to say, well here's something else for the Alberta Energy Company to get into.

So I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this information should be forthcoming to the public of Alberta and especially to us as legislators.

MR. STROM:

Mr. Speaker, I think my views are quite well known in this regard. I placed a question on the Order Paper some time ago in regard to the Energy Company and it was turned down.

I do not accept the arguments which have been advanced by the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs that really this is a company the same as other companies. I would like to point out to him that by his own statement the government will always retain 50 per cent of the shares of the Energy Company. And I accept his statement. I see he nods his head in agreement.

If I may follow that up. As 50 per cent shareholders through the government, I, as a citizen or resident of Alberta, have a direct interest in the company. All we are really saying is that on behalf of those people, we believe there is certain information which should be made public.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, that as an opposition we are not going to be able to force our views on the government. But I want to make it very clear, it is very important that the

government come to some decision as to how reports are going to be made. At the present time, I do not have any clear understanding as to how this is going to be done. I think it is essential, Mr. Speaker, that reports be made available because of the government's 50 per cent equity in the company. I, whether I invest a dollar individually, am still a shareholder and entitled to whatever information any company shareholder is entitled to.

It has been suggested we might ask the questions directly to the Energy Company. Mr. Speaker, I do not think that's necessary. I cannot accept that argument. I think it is the responsibility of the government to provide to the greatest extent possible all information which they can to us.

If they are going to turn this one down, I would hope that very very shortly we might have some statement made by the government as to the kind of reporting we can expect from the Energy Company because I am sure the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs will have to admit you cannot just simply state it's a company, just the same as other companies, and let it go at that. You must recognize several factors related to it.

One of the arguments I used last time when I discussed it, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that the chief executive assistant to the Premier has transferred to the Energy Company. Whether he was hired by them directly or whether he was asked by the government that they take him on, I don't know. But it certainly raises questions in my mind as to whether or not the government has by this method attempted to have some control in regard to its operation.

I'm not being critical of it. I'm simply pointing out that that's a fact of life we have to live with. I think for that reason and many others I have made previously in this House, the government should be very carefully assessing the method of reporting used in regard to the Energy Company to the Legislature.

MR. WILSON:
Mr. Speaker ...

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

HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

MR. WILSON:
We are indeed in a very very ridiculous situation in Alberta ...

AN HON. MEMBER:
Agreed.

MR. WILSON:
... when we find the government has the gall to pass a special warrant for \$75 million to provide interim financing for the Alberta Energy Company ...

AN HON. MEMBER:
Open government.

MR. WILSON:
... without bringing it to the Legislature and then have the gall to tell us they are not even going to indicate what the money is being spent on. They are not going to tell us how this company is being run. They are not going to tell us anything about how the public's funds are being utilized in this company. This is indeed a very ridiculous situation and it's a sad situation, Mr. Speaker, for Albertans, I'm sure.

Mr. Speaker, this motion for a return refers to some advertisements which were run all across Canada. Mr. Speaker, those advertisements are regarded as stupid and idiotic ads. They are the laughingstock of every professional executive search company in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear.

MR. WILSON:
Absolutely ridiculous waste of money!

Mr. Speaker, this zeros in on just one small segment of the problems this government is bringing down around their own ears by spending the taxpayers' money, not being prepared to be accountable for it and not getting legislative approval.

Once again, it's a situation where this government is acting like they own everything and that they are the boss. They own everything. They are not trustees for Albertans. They own it. That's the typical attitude. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, this attitude will be the demise of this government if they continue in the arrogant underhanded fashion they seem to be delving into more and more at every opportunity.

No further, Mr. Speaker, this government has also said that the salary of the president of this company is no business of the members of the Legislature and it's no business of the public of Alberta. That's another arrogant approach to the whole lack of accountability of the taxpayers' resources. Albertans' money is being spent with no indication of any accountability ever forthcoming.

No, Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous situation we are facing in Alberta with this type of government by frustrated chairmen-of-the-board types.

The Alberta Energy Company has been bungled from day one. All hon. members will recall, when the articles of association were presented and it showed a huge commission that could be paid to anyone ...

AN HON. MEMBER:

A million dollars.

MR. WILSON:

They didn't even have to be a licenced broker or dealer or securities firm - payable to anyone. It just has been bungled from the word "go".

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, most certainly this government had better do a little soul-searching. It had better look inwards a little and determine just what it is trying to perpetrate on Albertans because it certainly isn't democracy as has been customarily practised in Alberta and that Albertans have come to regard in high esteem.

What is the government trying to hide in the Alberta Energy Company? Why are they taking the position that they don't want to release any information on it? What is this bungled mess they are trying to keep covered up?

Mr. Speaker, the situation is very serious, not only from the money standpoint - and that's bad enough because of the millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds which are being expended with no apparent accountability - but even more insidious is the attitude of the government that they do not have to make any accountability to Albertans.

[The motion was lost.]

MR. RUSTE:

Open government.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Mr. Ghitter proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that the Government of the Province of Alberta consider the advisability of creating a natural resources development plan designed to assist Alberta corporations in obtaining loan capital to be utilized for future resource development in the province.

MP. GHITTER:

Mr. Speaker, the need for the presentation of this resolution for the consideration of all hon. members arises basically from many recent occurrences within the province of Alberta, within the Dominion of Canada and throughout North America which have placed many of our small independently owned Canadian companies in a position where at the present time it appears that they are unable to obtain adequate financing to meet their future development requirements.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the many difficulties that have been experienced by the oil and gas industry during the past two years. This House has debated at great length, and I believe with a high degree of understanding, the importance of a viable, a creative oil industry in the province of Alberta and the responsibilities that we as legislators must undertake to ensure the continuance of exploration in the province of Alberta, and more particularly of our smaller independent Canadian-controlled explorers.

It has not been easy for these companies, Mr. Speaker, during the past two years, and this is for many reasons. First, I think the complexities of the oil and gas industry throughout the world have changed dramatically throughout the past two years, and I doubt that the oil industry will really ever be the same as during the traditional periods under which the oil industry first entered the market place in Canada and elsewhere in North America.

Over and above all of these factors of an international basis, I believe that the oil industry also found itself in the middle of a very severe jurisdictional dispute between the province and the federal government; a dispute which was so fundamental to the nature of Confederation that this government had no alternative but to stand and be heard in order to avoid the attempted takeover of our natural resources by a federal government.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I support the actions of this government over the past 18 months, as I know hon. members in this House have basically agreed by virtue of the many votes they have placed in favor of legislation presented by this government.

However, Mr. Speaker, we must also recognize that the oil and gas industry fell somewhat unwittingly into a very difficult period caused by uncertainty. This causes us to again re-examine the position of the small independent Canadian explorers as they endeavor to conduct their activities in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, may I suggest that it has not been very easy for the small independent companies in Alberta. They are facing many problems that we must be aware of and many

problems which we must consider. That is the reason this resolution has been placed before the Assembly.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the 17th Alberta Legislature proudly endorsed an Agricultural Development Corporation. We proudly endorsed an Alberta Opportunity Company and I believe that all members of this House were very supportive of these bills when they came forward for debate. I think that hon. members have really not been disappointed by these programs, as evidenced by the immediate need in both our agricultural and our commercial communities; the needs for these funds as they have been moved out of these opportunity companies and agricultural development fund to our citizens.

However, neither of these two funding agencies can assist the small oil and gas entrepreneur in their needs. As a result, there exists today in Alberta a gap in our government's ability to assist a most important sector in our economy, namely the small independent Canadian-owned and -operated oil and gas company. We must not allow this to continue. Accordingly, the purpose of this resolution today is to propose the immediate creation of a natural resources development fund to assist Alberta corporations by the creation of a lending agency to be utilized for Alberta corporations for the future resource development in this province.

Let me explain if I may, Mr. Speaker, in further detail the difficulties that are being experienced by our small independently owned explorers in the province of Alberta in their endeavor to obtain funds to allow them to continue their operations. Let us first examine the traditional sources of funding that these companies have usually in the past had opportunities whereby they could obtain funds from these sources.

First, the conventional banking sources. Traditionally, the Canadian chartered banks would assist small Canadian oil and gas companies in debt financing on the basis of the reserves of these companies and the taking of security under the Bank Act. This debt financing was made available to these companies on the basis of their future potential reserves. The companies were also allowed 12- to 24-month periods to initiate payback arrangements. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Our chartered banks have severely cut back the amount of funding they will grant to an oil company on its reserves. They further require immediate payback arrangements which are very difficult for our small companies to adhere to. As a result, our banks are not advancing loans on future oil and gas production in any meaningful amount in the province of Alberta today. Thus the traditional source of debt financing has been severely restricted in our economy, placing our small oil and gas companies in a position where conventional sources of funds are no longer available.

Banks have also discontinued using equity stocks as collateral for loans. They will not consider any stock with a market value of less than \$2 a share as satisfactory collateral security. Shares with a market value of over \$2 are discounted by our banks to approximately 25 per cent of their present market quotation. Furthermore, under Section 82 of the federal Bank Act, commercial banks are not allowed to participate in equity ventures.

This further hampers the financial institutions from acting as a source of development funds for the private energy sector. Traditionally, major shareholders of small independent oil and gas companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange could lodge stock as collateral security which was granted by way of the reserves and the use of the stock. This is no longer acceptable to the chartered banks, obviously due to the severe failure of energy stocks to maintain prior high levels on the Toronto Stock Exchange. As a result, the banks are very suspicious as to the redeemability of such security and are not impressed any longer with the lodging of stock in public oil and gas companies as securities.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the small independently owned and operated oil companies in the province of Alberta can no longer rely on their most traditional source of funding for their future endeavors, namely the chartered banks that carry on business in the province of Alberta.

A second traditional source that was available to the same publicly-owned types of companies in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, was of course the sale of the stock of their company in order to sell stock and obtain funds for their future needs. This is no longer practical. First, it is too costly. Small public companies endeavoring to sell stock and raise further funds are finding as a result of the requirements of our regulatory agencies, both our securities commissions and our stock exchanges, that the costs of placing a small underwriting on the market is so exorbitant and so fraught with difficulties that it is almost totally impractical for many of our companies to sell their shares on the market.

Over and above that, Mr. Speaker, underwritings in this day and age for a stock relating to the energy sector is almost an impossibility, and as a result many Alberta companies who proceed to Bay Street to endeavor to obtain underwritings find nothing but a wall from the point of view of their ability to sell their stocks.

It seems then that new issues are almost impossible to place on our markets and as a result another traditional source of funding for our oil and gas economy is no longer available.

[Mr. Diachuk in the Chair]

A third source of funding in the oil and gas sector has been funding of joint ventures through American investment in our economy. This is accomplished due to what used to be

satisfactory taxation laws in the United States of America which would allow a businessman to write off the investment should there be no return on the investment.

This of course is no longer available and is not coming into Alberta the way it used to. The reasons for this are many. First, there are many opportunities in the United States and many regulations in the United States which make joint partnership ventures, as traditionally utilized in the industry, unrealistic in this day and age. The strong impetus from the point of view of the American government to keep funds within the United States has also placed onerous restrictions upon American investors from the point of view of putting deals together to invest money in the Alberta economy. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the third area of traditional sourcing of funds for the oil and gas sector is now negated. Certainly the same reasoning applies from the point of view of a Canadian investor, to the extent that under our present federal tax laws, a Canadian investor would indeed be foolhardy and foolish to place any personal money into the investment in a high-risk business, as of course the oil and gas industry really is.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, another source of traditional funding has dried up, and we are now in the position where the small independent company in the province of Alberta has nowhere to turn in its need to obtain further funds.

There are two other factors that we must consider, Mr. Speaker, from the point of view of the tremendous need that exists in the province of Alberta for the obtaining of funds by these companies. We are forcing our gas companies, for example, to accept TransCanada contracts so that they can take their letter of commitment from TransCanada to the bank and raise funds, for some banks will accept a TransCanada Pipelines commitment, from the point of view of lending money to these companies for their future needs.

This results in our government on the one hand endeavoring to force the price of gas up and break the monopoly of TransCanada, while on the other hand we are forcing the owners of the gas reserves in our province to deal with TransCanada to get the letter of commitment, in order that they may obtain financing. We are defeating our very own purposes, Mr. Speaker, if we are to allow this to continue. Yet if these same companies could receive debt financing by a resource company funded by the Province of Alberta - and I'm talking about debt financing, not grants - these companies could hold on to their reserves and would not be forced to sell to TransCanada, and the objectives and policies of our government would be allowed to grow in the sense of obtaining higher prices for our gas.

The second area of concern, Mr. Speaker, is the area of the movement of drilling rigs. As our small explorers cannot finance future development in this province, they of course do not need drilling rigs. I am concerned over recent statistics, particularly the statement of the general manager of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, Mr. Porter, who stated that only 55 per cent of Canada's drilling rigs were contracted by the oil industry in the first 10 days of 1975. This compares with 70 per cent at the beginning of 1974, and 80 per cent two years ago.

What this means, Mr. Speaker, of course is that many of our smaller companies, because they cannot obtain funding from traditional sources, are placed in the position where they have to curtail their activities in the province. This results in their not hiring the drilling rigs, and this results in the drilling rigs having to examine other locations in the world where they can obtain proper sources of funding and work.

I would think, Mr. Speaker, that if we were able to fund our small explorers, they would need the drilling rigs, and the drilling rigs would then stay in the province of Alberta. I would also think, Mr. Speaker, that this same funding process could be used to assist businesses to purchase drilling rigs, on the commitment that this Alberta natural resource funding agency would finance in total the purchase of rigs, if we receive the commitment that these rigs would be utilized in the province of Alberta, and that they would stay in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that now is the time for us to act from the point of view of the creation of this fund. The success of the Agricultural Development Corporation, the success of the Alberta Opportunity Company, is evident for all of us to see. But certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think the time has come for us to recognize the most basic of our industries - an industry that now is facing, due to recent events, a very dire and important need. And I can think of no better way for the funds of the citizens of the province of Alberta to be invested than through the use of a natural resource development fund to assist an industry which has assisted this province so greatly over the past 15 years.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Mountain View followed by the hon. Member for Pincher Creek.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, when one reads the motion, it appears like a very interesting motion and maybe has some merit. But I didn't hear the hon. member say whether he is actually recommending that some kind of program be set up where the government would guarantee loans to the industry we're talking about. It appears, from reading the motion, that that is what is intended. I'm saying that it's rather an interesting development that someone on the government side ought to move a motion like this when we have so many programs now where the government is guaranteeing loans to agriculture, loans to industry, loans to many aspects of our economy.

We're looking at what once, recently, was the most viable industry in Canada. The industry that was in fact the main lifeline of money to this government and has been for

many years. I think it's obvious that there's trouble in the industry, notwithstanding that the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals said several days ago that things aren't all that bad, we've never had it better really, when you look at the statistics. But notwithstanding that, I believe the small independent petroleum industry, and a lot of people in the petroleum industry in a lot of firms in this province, are in trouble.

The question now is: are the people prepared to go so far as to have the government guarantee loans to them to keep them operating? The motion and the speech given by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo, which was a well prepared speech, is an admission of a sort that there is trouble ahead. And I suppose if we get into any worse trouble, maybe we might have to go that way to keep the petroleum industry operating. But I'm saying that it wasn't so long ago, not so far in the past, that it was the most viable industry in North America. The petroleum industry was something that carried Alberta from the depths to the heights. That is what we got out of the industry in this province.

We're looking at risk business. We're looking at the situation where the banks are no longer too happy to advance the money because they haven't got the confidence of repayment. The banks are very much in business, and they're very much in the lending business - not only the banks, but other institutions - but they now want the government to get behind and back the repayment because they haven't got quite the confidence in the industry. And that is what we have been talking about in this Legislature for a long time; that there has been a loss of investor confidence. Banks are the investors in the initial stages of business. They want to get their money back.

I am rather concerned about the fact that the hon. member who spoke did not tell us what role this government played in placing the industry in the position that it finds itself now - that it may need government guaranteed loans to keep operating. Somewhere, something is going to have to give because, as I've stated, we have government guaranteed loans for almost everybody except the professions. Just about everybody who is in business, if he wants to set up a business we need in Alberta, can get a government loan. Municipalities are receiving government guaranteed loans through MFC - all sorts of businesses. Now we come down to oil. I wonder whether that isn't sort of the last-ditch stand?

I think that when we look at the problem - the question - what role has the government of this province and the federal government played in placing the industry in the position it's in? I say rather a serious one. I believe both this government and the federal government were cutting the apple tree down, as it were, to get at the apples. Now they find out they can cut the apple tree down only once and it's all over.

So they've pushed the industry into deep water and, as I stated before, they're now throwing it a life preserver and expecting the industry's eternal gratitude. We'll lend you money now that at one time you were able to get elsewhere. We'll guarantee the business now. I think that this government is, to a great extent, to blame for the lack of confidence in the industry by investors because it appropriated unto itself the Suffield area, which is going to be a sure thing. They're going to take that as a sure kill. Nobody's worried about the risk. It's too good to let private enterprise deal with it.

They've got the pipeline from the tar sands. They say it's a sure thing. I think it's almost a sure thing. They've got other involvement where the government is going to do all right. Whether it will do as well as it used to from taxation from the very viable industry, remains to be seen.

But I think that the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo brought a tremendously good issue to the floor of the House. We're in the position now, and I believe that it's a sincere position taken by him, that the industry needs help. It needs financial help. The banks are saying, we can't get our money back quick enough. I think the main problem is security - that they cannot get money now on their own undertaking, on their own security, and we're looking for a new approach.

I frankly would oppose this at the present time. I would have felt a little different had the hon. Minister of Mines and Minerals or the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs come up and stated that we've created problems in this province that we now have to rectify; we pushed the industry down, we were greedy, we took more and we're giving some back. This is a statement that needs not to be emphasized because we know that the government is throwing back incentives and royalties to the industry which it took away only a short time ago. So, the admission is that we have bungled, we have made a mistake, we have been too greedy, we invited Ottawa to jump on the backs of the industry and now we should probably get together with Ottawa to see if we can bail them out.

I think there ought to be a hearing between the hon. Premier and the hon. Prime Minister to see if we can't have a more sensible approach to the whole business. We've made a mistake, and if we continue this way we are going to be not only guaranteeing loans to the industry, we are going to be throwing in money at \$200 million a crack to get something going because private enterprise won't go in there now.

I have to get back to the issue of investor confidence. I'm saying that we threw \$200 million in to Syncrude, not because it was such a good deal - it may turn out to be but nobody here today knows that it is such a good deal, they are just saying it is, and saying isn't enough. The hon. Premier can say nothing else. What else can he say but that it is a sure winner. He can't say anything else. He said that six months ago and

fell flat on his face. He is saying it again, because he can't tell the people in all honesty that we stuck our neck out, we bailed a project out.

We sucked Ottawa and Ontario into giving \$400 million because we didn't think it was good enough for us. Now we are going to keep falling all over ourselves telling everybody that that is the best coup, the best deal this government ever pulled off. This is the culmination, Mr. Speaker, this motion urging the government to throw in some guaranteed support for credit, for funding for the oil industry because of our policy in the past.

I think maybe we ought to have more answers and more admissions from the government, rather than the veil of secrecy over many things including Syncrude, and the Alberta Energy Company. Let us have the answers. Let's have the whole picture here because things aren't quite the same as we're being told they are. We have one minister who said a week ago that everything is fine, everything is good, we are doing much better than ever before.

We have an hon. member who is very knowledgeable telling us, let's look at a way of aiding the industry. It may be a first for Alberta, but it is a very poor first, Mr. Speaker.

MR. YURKO:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I have been privileged to be reading yesterday's Hansard, particularly in relationship to some of the remarks I made. I would like to indicate a serious error in Hansard of possible consequences that I think the matter should be brought to the attention of the House.

In speaking I would like to refer to the following paragraph:

But, Mr. Speaker, worst of all was a home-grown fellow. He danced around, in my estimation like a Rumpelstiltskin jumping for joy that the project was failing. For this was his greatest political plot. Votes, votes, votes - that's all he saw at the expense of jobs, jobs and more jobs for Albertans. He never cared. Heavens. His was a political plot - in my estimation, Mr. Speaker, irresponsibility of the highest order.

Mr. Speaker, what I did say was "a political plum," not "plot." I checked my notes again, Mr. Speaker, and that's what I have underlined in a very effective way. I referred to a "political plum." I would like to inform the House that I have informed Hansard of this very serious error in their printing.

Thank you.

MR. LUDWIG:

Saved the day.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Before the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest addresses the Assembly, is it agreed that the hon. Member for Calgary Bow may revert to the introduction of guests?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS (reversion)

MR. WILSON:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature, the Bowness 144th Guide Company from the constituency of Calgary Bow. With us today are company Captain Helen DeCoteau, Lieutenant Judy Elliott, Lieutenant Anne Hosack Junior Leader Denise Whaley, and 13 guides who are working towards their citizenship badge.

Mr. Speaker, they came by train today and they have visited the Provincial Museum and Archives. They are over here this afternoon and are going back to Calgary by train tonight. I would like them now to rise and be recognized by the Legislature.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS (continued)

MR. DRAIN:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to address myself to what I regard as a very worth-while resolution on the Order Paper which was put there by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo who articulated very clearly in his golden voice the problem and defined it very clearly for the understanding of the hon. members. I also have to remark on the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View in which he elucidated some of the underlying problems which relate to the cash flow of industry.

I think probably some of the problems are due, Mr. Speaker, to a unique situation that we are confronted with as a result of escalating costs and rising inflation. In order to amplify those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased, with your permission, to quote from Policy Review and Outlook, 1975: Restructuring The Incentive System which was put out by the C.D. Howe Research Institute and which I would recommend to all hon. members. It is simple reading, gives a very able analysis of economics and is available in the library. This one I bought myself; I didn't know the library was that up to date, but it is, Mr. Speaker. I refer now to the position insofar as cash price increases in relation to profits,

Corporations find that during periods of rapid price increases they are reporting some profits created by inflation simply because the nominal values of inventories and fixed assets are rising so quickly. Moreover, corporations have to pay tax on these illusory profits, and these taxes can be paid only by using up the firm's real capital base.

and this is on the problems we are faced with, Mr. Speaker.

Companies are also caught in a financial squeeze because the costs of installing new production capacity is soaring while the firm's ability to raise funds in the capital market is diminished by the impact of inflation on interest rates and stock prices.

As identified by the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo. "In this kind of situation, it would not be irrational for management of a firm to decide that it can maximize profits" and so on. Well, Mr. Speaker, this illustrates to a small degree some of the problems that are being faced by firms in the matter of increased prices and lower profitability. Of course, a major component of this is the constant increase in the amount of taxes that are taken out of the industry thereby weakening their bases by government.

Mr. Speaker, in my view you are thereby creating a situation that forces government movement into the realm of industry. The scene is laid and the results will have to be, as the situation we find ourselves in, the reappraisal of the philosophical viewpoints of governments and opposition in relation to the realities that we face in the matter of furthering the natural resource development of the province of Alberta. The roles, Mr. Speaker, that the provinces can play in this particular matter are indeed significant.

I go back to this report, and I wish to read into the record, with the hon. members' permission, the following: "The three oil-producing provinces can make an extra contribution to the well-being of the country by using their resource revenues to make productive investments" - and I emphasize "productive investments." "This revenue comes partly from Canadian consumers and is, in a sense, a tax on the use of resources. It is therefore important to recycle this purchasing power back into the economic system as soon as possible." I endeavored to make this point in my brief remarks on the Budget, which I hope to get back to.

At the same time this revenue is really a form of capital rather than current income, since it is the payment for the sale of the provinces' resource base. It is therefore important that this revenue be channeled back into the economic system in a manner that will replace the depleted fixed asset - such as the oil reserve - with another fixed asset that will generate future [earnings].

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, could there be a better way than the intent of the resolution that the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo brought before this Legislature?

If resource revenues are simply put into government bank accounts, they will be [recirculated] via the banking system, but the banks will not be in a position to use these short-term deposits to fund long-term investments. As we explained earlier, Canada needs a sustained investment program in productive capacity, and the provinces can use the resource revenues in ways that would significantly influence the industrial structure. They can [also] bring about a substantial improvement in Canada's wealth by ensuring that the money goes into [industrial] projects that will continue to generate payments of wages, interest, and dividends in future years.

By contrast, if the provinces are content to invest [their] resource revenues in new government buildings, they will not generate this future stream of incomes. Alternatively, if the revenues are used to finance current operations of the province, to pay wages directly or to make transfer payments, for example, the real capital earned from the sale of a valuable fixed asset will be consumed and will lose all future [earning] power.

This I submit, Mr. Speaker, would be an irresponsible direction to take in utilizing the resource revenue that we know has a limited amount of life. So then, in making these advances, unquestionably in the form of loan capital, there is a certain amount of lender's risk involved. Hence, I would think that it would be a reasonable assumption to conclude that some equity participation in order to share possibly the profits as well as the losses should be included in the advancement of the resolution of the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo.

In this new world of 1975 with the problems that we face, I think that we have to think boldly of the future; we have to innovate. The philosophical viewpoints of

yesterday may well not be able to cut the cloth in a manner that will be suitable for the problems that we have today.

I urge the support of this resolution. I appreciate the intent. I regret the trend in the world is in the direction that it is, but we in Alberta, as in the rest of Canada, must live with the realities of the situation as we find it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McCRAE:

Mr. Speaker, in rising to comment on this motion, I'd like first to compliment the Member for Calgary Buffalo on bringing this urgent matter to the House. There is just no doubt that the small oil companies in Calgary, the independents and the smaller operators, are in a difficult situation dollar-wise.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Oh, no.

DR. BUCK:

We're glad to hear that.

MR. LUDWIG:

Give them a special warrant.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What about you?

MR. McCRAE:

They're having a difficult time finding the equity capital and the risk capital necessary to sustain them in the business. There are, Mr. Speaker, any variety of reasons that we could go into. The Member for Calgary Buffalo outlined a number of those that have caused the industry difficulty. There are some others. I'd like just to say, in the few moments remaining to me, Mr. Speaker, that I think the recommendation that the government give consideration to the establishment of a fund is a good one.

I don't know that I would be prepared without a considerable study of it to support the utilization of tax dollars for this, particularly in the exploration end of it. It is a very high-risk business. Adverting to what the Member for Pincher Creek said that if we loan money to exploration companies in exploring, we should share the profit as we share the risk. I would think, Mr. Speaker, that we should consider very carefully ...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Chair unfortunately has to interrupt, it being 4:30. We have the next order on the paper.

MR. McCRAE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn the debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS:

Agreed.

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

Bill 213 An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act

MR. HO LEM:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take pleasure in rising on second reading of Bill 213. The purpose of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to promote safety and to make the general public more aware of the safety features of traffic safety.

Now I would like for a moment to refer to this bill, Mr. Speaker. This an act to amend The Highway Traffic Act. The Highway Traffic Act is hereby amended by adding the following section to Section 80 - Section 80.1(1):

In this section, "seat belt" means an arrangement of straps or webbing designed to hold a person steady in a seat.

In subsection (2):

Every new motor vehicle sold on or after July 1, 1975 except a motor cycle, shall be equipped with one seat belt for each passenger seat, and where a seat is designed to accommodate a number of passengers, the seat shall be equipped with a seat belt for each of such passengers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just speaking briefly on subsection (2), I think that in the manufacture of automobiles today it calls for safety features such as seat belts. It would really be a shame if the people were not educated to use these safety features.

When I look back to the olden days where we had the older cars, many of the older cars were without these features. In the early days, cars were equipped only with the two-wheel brakes. Since then, of course, we've improved it. We have called for and made the manufacturers comply with the safety feature by providing four-wheel brakes. In the area of vision and how it affects and contributes to safety - these have all been improved.

What I'm trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is to explain to the House how these safety features have been evolved, planned, implemented and accepted by today's travelling public. So I'd just like to say that certainly while we have these safety features, we should take advantage of this equipment.

This particular bill, Mr. Speaker, also calls for the mandatory use of seat belts when driving on public highways that are specified and prescribed for speeds of at least 50 miles per hour, or not over 50 miles per hour. I think this is a very important regulation in that today when we are talking about the new cars or the high-powered cars, certainly it's a different proposition than riding in cars made several years ago.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this bill makes it illegal for anyone or any person to "remove or disconnect any mechanical device equipped on the vehicle that would encourage the use of seat belts." In effect, Mr. Speaker, this bill calls for the mandatory use, makes it illegal to disconnect mechanical devices equipped on the automobile, and calls for regulations to the manufacturers that they should include these safety features in the manufacture of the automobile.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the public is generally more aware of the safety aspects in everyday living. In other words, we are more safety conscious, not only in the area of traffic but in all fronts. There are safety regulations in various industries; in the agricultural industry, in the manufacturing industry and in the oil industry. We see there are safety features implemented and required in stores where the general public may visit. We see this in schools where certainly there are safety features to protect our students and that sort of thing. I think when we are talking about public stores, public places and buildings, we see that the elevators must come to certain standards, the escalators are properly side-guarded and that sort of thing. Then we go to the safety features in hospitals where we have to ensure that the corridors are a certain width, that certainly there should be so many exits based on the number of beds on a particular floor.

So actually these types of safety procedures we are going through are now adopted and accepted. I think when we are talking about traffic safety, we can just talk about pedestrian safety. We are guided by street lights on busy corners; we are governed by the jaywalking by-laws. These things, Mr. Speaker, have been accepted by the general public. I think in the area of seat belts that certainly much consideration should also be given to encouraging our people to use this type of thing in their cars.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to the seat belt legislation which was implemented in Australia not long ago. We find that the results have certainly been very encouraging. Eighty per cent of the people in Australia willingly accept this proposition of seat belts. There is really no great difficulty in the enforcement of this legislation. As a result, the traffic fatality is down 20 per cent in that country.

I think that while we are talking about statistics, we shouldn't overlook the other point; that while we are talking about fatalities and so on certainly we should also think about the elimination of the great degree of suffering as a result of loss of limb, sight and other permanent injuries. If we were to take a look at that, certainly we think about hospital costs that are involved as a result of careless driving and accidents. In Australia, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to report that certainly hospital costs are down 50 per cent in regard to that particular aspect of the hospital administration towards the accidents, as a result of traffic accidents.

In Canada more recently, the Province of Nova Scotia has implemented seat belt legislation. I think I should mention that this legislation in Nova Scotia has not been received with an initial reaction of general public acceptance. The reception was hostile. In fact the Premier of Nova Scotia made a public statement in this regard after the initial reactions were received. But as it progressed, Mr. Speaker - the acceptance in Nova Scotia has been progressing and certainly the people in that area, and particularly the legislators, feel it is a step in the right direction. So it would be interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, just what comes out of that area of the country.

I think the main objection to the seat belt legislation lies in the objection to individual rights. A lot of people say, it's my own life. I can do whatever I want to do with it. It's none of your business, it's my business. I would like to remind these people that certainly there is a law against suicide. That involves a person's own life but it's still against the law.

In the area of enforcement, once this is done and implemented by the House, I think enforcement would no longer be a problem. Because once it receives public acceptance it will be just like jaywalking; it will be accepted by the general public.

I recall in Edmonton when the jaywalking by-law first was instituted, they just about had a policeman on every other corner and many many summonses were issued and fines

resulted. But certainly today you don't see policemen on the street corners trying to implement the jaywalking by-law. So I feel that once this has been accepted, we wouldn't have the problem of enforcement.

Regarding individual rights, I suppose we don't question when we are passengers on a plane when the stewardess makes the announcement or asks us to put our seat belts in place or buckle up. No one I can see really objects to that. Again I think it's just a matter of education and acceptance on the part of the general public. We talk about individual rights in regard to motorcyclists. They are required to put on helmets. I don't see any problem in that respect regarding individual rights.

When we are talking about individual rights, I feel that not only does the driver or the passenger in the car have individual rights, the wife and family of these people also have a right. They have a right to express concern for the safety of their husband and spouse. Because certainly if the head of the family happens to be killed needlessly, that creates quite a hardship for the widow and for the family.

I would like to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to this brochure on that point. This brochure is produced by the Alberta Safety Council and it says: "Wear your safety belt. It's a nice way to say I love you." I think this has a message. I think if my wife were to say, wear your safety belt because I love you, I would know what she was thinking and that certainly she was concerned about my safety and, rightfully so, concerned about the safety of herself and the family. So this is a very nice way, Mr. Speaker, of putting it.

Today we find that people's attitudes are changing rapidly. Two years ago when you mentioned the proposition of mandatory seat belts you got all types of objections. Last year, when I introduced a similar bill in this House, I had several phone calls. But again I detected that the people were possibly 50 per cent for and 50 against. I detected that on a talk show I was on in Edmonton after I had introduced that bill.

But today it is very encouraging to note that many of these same objectors, two years ago or one year ago, are the very people using seat belts. I see more evidence of it as each day goes by. In fact some of my colleagues on this side have seat belts equipped in their automobiles, and they sort of hesitate before starting up. If you don't happen to have the seat belt fastened, they sort of hesitate before they go. So this is encouraging.

I think the government should charge itself with the responsibility of educating the people by way of safety programs so that we can get acceptance for this type of procedure.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if we were to hear that one person died needlessly in a hospital as a result of abortion or something else, there would be such a hue and cry throughout Alberta that we might just turn around and be very much on the defensive. The government and the hospital board would be called upon and put on the carpet, and we would certainly have a lot of explaining to do. I think there is no difference in this area of traffic fatalities. It means a life. And a life, whether it's on the road or in the hospital, is still a life to me.

As I have mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the attitude of the people of Calgary and Edmonton and all over Alberta and everywhere is changing. This is indicated [in] a letter I got from the Alberta Safety Council. It reads:

Recently, a lengthy and well written letter to the editor appeared in the Calgary Herald. The writer said in effect that he opposes mandatory safety belt laws. He upheld the idea that it is no one's business but his own if he chooses to use or not to use safety belts. That is fair enough as far as goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Safety Belts primarily prevent injury or death, but they do more -- they sometimes prevent an accident from becoming a disaster and there is positive evidence that when safety belts keep a driver behind the wheel, everyone is safer.

In this same letter, it gives several examples. Example one:

An unbelted driver took a corner too fast. He was thrown off balance and lost control of the car. A collision resulted.

Another example:

A car sideswiped a parked car. The driver (unbelted) lost control of the car, which swerved across the roadway where it collided with an oncoming car. No injury resulted from the collision with the parked car, but serious injury occurred to occupants of both cars in the head-on collision.

And here is an example coming out of Calgary.

In Calgary, a driver of a light car ran a red light and collided with the right side of a station wagon going through on the green. The lone occupant of the station wagon (unbelted) was thrown to the right side of the vehicle. In this passage he was fatally stabbed by the ... open door of the glove compartment.

Had he been using the seat belt, "it is altogether likely that no injury at all would have resulted."

So, Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives you a few examples of just how dangerous it is to drive or ride without a safety belt attached.

I was talking to Mr. Ken Manning, chairman of the Calgary branch of the Alberta Motor Association, in regard to my bill. This was last year when it was presented. His reply:

Dear Mr. Ho Lem:

Thank you for your interest in matters pertaining to highway safety and in particular the matter of seatbelt legislation which we discussed a few weeks ago. ...

For your information, I enclose a copy of the Canadian Automobile Association's policies and resolutions and would direct your attention to Policy 3.5 and Resolution 3.5.1 appearing on page 18. This policy and resolution spells out the stand taken by the C.A.A. with which the Alberta Motor Association is affiliated.

This letter goes on to say that the Alberta Motor Association "is strongly in favour of the use of seat-belts ..."

But I would like to refer for a moment to the resolution coming out of the CAA. Under Policy 3.5, Compulsory Use of Safety Belts:

The Canadian Automobile Association urges all provincial governments ...

Urges all provincial governments, Mr. Speaker:

to enact and enforce legislation requiring all occupants of all motor vehicles to use ... safety belt assemblies as required to be installed by federal standards.

And Resolution 3.5.1., Mr. Speaker, Compulsory Use of Safety Belts:

WHEREAS the wearing of lap and shoulder safety belt assemblies have a proven record of reducing or eliminating fatalities or injuries in motor vehicle collisions;

WHEREAS despite concerted efforts by governments and private agencies to inform motorists of the benefits of seat belt usage, many motor vehicle occupants still do not wear the safety belt assemblies;

RESOLVED that all provincial governments enact legislation requiring all occupants of motor vehicles to use ... safety belt assemblies as required to be installed by federal standards ...

Having read that, Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, I hope that the members of this legislature would whole-heartedly support Bill 213.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. ZANDER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking to the second reading of Bill 213, Mr. Speaker, the question that arises is the definition of a motor vehicle under the motor vehicles branch. I also note in the bill the definition given a vehicle that exceeds a speed limit of 50 miles an hour or more. Since the motor vehicles act defines a vehicle to be driven on a highway other than a car or a truck, I wonder if the hon. member would have been more distinct in classification of motor vehicles under the highway motor vehicle act.

But speaking on the merits of the bill, Mr. Speaker, I think we could possibly say there are pros and cons as to the use of seat belts in a motor vehicle, and by a motor vehicle I mean a truck or a car. I can only relate my experience in 1974 in giving the advantages and disadvantages of wearing seat belts. It was my misfortune to come upon two scenes of an accident, one in B.C. and the other one on Highway 16 West.

At Radium, B.C. two ladies were driving a car. They wore seat belts. They went over the cliff some 300 to 500 feet down. One of the two ladies wearing the seat belts was alive when she was extricated and brought up to the highway. The other one was dead. However, there was a four-year-old child who never had a seat belt on. How she survived that accident is still a mystery to a lot of people.

In the accident on Highway 16 West, a Volkswagen - two ladies were driving - left the highway and caught on fire. I was about the fourth to arrive. Try as we might, we could not get the ladies out of there because we didn't have a knife to cut the seat belts. I don't know today, Mr. Speaker, whether those two ladies survived. But certainly all those who made an attempt to extricate those ladies from that Volkswagen were seriously burned in the attempt to rescue them.

We may say, in the examples noted by the hon. member who just spoke, that there are certain advantages in the case of an impact, two vehicles colliding head-on; that there is evidence that there is sufficient reason to wear seat belts. Whether the government or any government can successfully supervise or enforce the wearing of seat belts - as all hon. members know, you don't have to wear a seat belt. In a matter of seconds, if you see

a highway patrol or somebody approaching you or sitting on a highway, you can put the seat belt on.

DR. BUCK:
Driving?

MR. ZANDER:
Yes, if you drive a Ford.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Oh, come on.

MR. ZANDER:

So, Mr. Speaker, the question also of individual rights. And as so nicely put by the hon. member who just spoke, we are looking at the rights of the individual, whether he wants to commit suicide or not by using a seat belt or by not using a seat belt. Sometimes I have to agree with him that government must evaluate, study and then perhaps it may step on the general individual rights that the person has in the province of Alberta, because as the hon. member stated, I don't have to wear them. It is my life. It is my body. So it is my right and my judgment whether I should wear one or not.

Of course the other aspect of it, Mr. Speaker, is that when one of these sad accidents happens where the person is perhaps injured to an extent where he must spend probably two or three or six months in a hospital, it is in the public interest that we have to look at the dollars and cents which are spent by a government under the medicare system. The driver or occupant of the car may be seriously hurt or completely injured where he becomes a burden on society.

These are the areas of concern, Mr. Speaker, that I have. The other point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, was - I know there are other members wanting to speak, so I'll make this very short - although an individual in the province or in Canada is right 50 per cent of the time, and it has been proven, it has not been proven that wearing seat belts is a complete safety factor. You have the 50 per cent factor which, in most cases, indicates that in some cases a life could have been saved by not wearing a seat belt or he may have been injured to a lesser degree by not wearing seat belts. I would hope, before we pass legislation to make it compulsory for citizens of this province to wear seat belts, that we make every effort to study, research and bring back the report to the Legislature whether the research proves that wearing seat belts is an effective way of saving people from being injured or killed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. Member for Innisfail.

MR. DOAN:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in my place to speak against this bill today. Bill No. 213 amends The Highway Traffic Act by requiring the use of seat belts by all persons in a motor vehicle which is on any public highway where the prescribed speed limit is 50 miles per hour or more.

Mr. Speaker, the sentiment of this bill is appreciated. Automobile accidents continue to take lives and cause injury at a shocking rate. Public reaction to this situation has been strong. One is tempted to speak out as an outcry. It is little wonder that members on both sides of this Assembly should turn their attention to methods of curbing traffic deaths and injuries. For this reason, it is appropriate that measures such as the one outlined in Bill 213 should be debated by this Assembly. We all agree that something should be done. The question is: what should be done.

The specific question raised by this bill is whether [the] wearing of seat belts should be made mandatory for highway driving under the law, presumably on the pain of some penalty. No one will deny the wearing of seat belts is of some help in reducing the extent of injury in highway accidents. There is little doubt that people should be encouraged to use seat belts. One step has already been taken in this direction by the requirement that all new cars must have seat belts. Public education programs, agencies such as the Alberta Motor Association and our Department of Highways are helpful in this regard.

However, we must be aware that encouraging people to use seat belts and making sure the car has seat belts are very different from enforcing people to use seat belts. It is to this latter element of coercion which is embodied in the bill before us, it is to this latter principle that I take exception.

Mr. Speaker, for the reasons I shall outline I think there is an important principle here which should not be taken lightly. By ensuring that all cars have seat belts, we have provided citizens with the opportunity to buckle up if they so desire. We have afforded them the freedom of choice. By requiring that seat belts be used, the freedom of choice is lost. As one who accepts the principle that the fewer laws we have, the better off we are, I think we should attempt other methods of encouraging the use of seat belts rather than more rules and regulations. Indeed one might question the whole idea of government regulations to protect people from their own folly. Where one person's actions cause harm to another, regulations are more acceptable. However, where only the individual is affected, such regulations are less acceptable. Furthermore, as I have

already suggested, there are other more appropriate means to encourage the use of seat belts. In the long run, any attempt to encourage automobile safety must depend on the willing support of the community.

Mr. Speaker, the surest way to prevent accidents is to promote defensive driving, which includes driving cautiously and taking safety measures such as keeping your vehicle under control at all times. One cannot legislate such community support. It can only be encouraged. Opportunities for driver training can be presented and monetary incentives to undertake them can be introduced. But the necessary attitudes cannot be legislated.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most telling difficulty with a bill such as this is the difficulty in enforcement. How are the police, whose job is difficult enough already, to determine who is and who isn't wearing seat belts? Even if one were to stop every car on the road, there is nothing to stop a driver from putting the seat belt on just before the check and removing it just after. This is quite apart from the difficulty and inconvenience for motorists and police officers in checking every car.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the only persons who would be consistently caught under such a law are those who are injured or killed in a highway accident. Those who are killed cannot be charged, but those who are injured are likely to have suffered enough and learned their lesson. Also, those who may lose insurance benefits, even though not at fault in an accident but because [they were] not wearing the seat belts, would suffer too much for the nature of their crime.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that while there may be some reasons for mandatory use of seat belts, there are some unanswered questions which must be resolved before we make a move such as embodied in Bill 213. For example, are we certain that the seat belts contained in most cars are good enough that people should be penalized for not using them? Are we sure that some injuries are not caused by the use of some types of seat belts, which might be avoided without them? While I still maintain that the use of seat belts is likely to cut down the injuries, we must have definite answers to these questions before enforcing people to use them.

Mr. Speaker, seat belts won't make careless drivers careful, and in causing discomfort to many drivers and passengers could in reality cause accidents through lack of driver concentration. What is happening to the rights of the individual? Are there no limits to insidious government intrusion into the private life and freedom of the individual? The key to any safety program is the level of community support. The fastest way of diminishing that support would be to indulge in such harebrained notions as trying to increase seat belt use by decree. Fortunately this province, from what I understand [of what] our Minister of Highways said, is unlikely to legalize compulsory seat belt use.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the universal use of automobile seat belts would result in a significant decrease in the number of traffic accidents and serious injuries. However, a law making it mandatory to buckle up, as is suggested in Bill 213, is of dubious wisdom and effectiveness. Indeed it is questionable whether our Legislature should make laws to protect a person from his own follies, as distinct from laws designed to protect other people from his follies.

Mr. Speaker, on the principle that the fewer laws which restrict individual freedom the better - however, sometimes the collective good requires such laws - the problem is to draw the line between the requirements of that public good and the excessive legal harassment. Certainly the government has a responsibility to pass laws requiring manufacturers to produce cars which are safe, and that includes the provision of safety belts. One might further argue that because of increased dependence on things like medicare and social assistance programs, government can legitimately try to guard the public purse from unnecessarily severe injuries and from the expense of supporting the dependants of people unnecessarily killed. Does this argument cross the fire line? Perhaps. But even if it doesn't, there are other considerations which weigh against the proposal.

Mr. Speaker, in all probability a seat belt law would be broken frequently, not out of maliciousness but out of laziness, carelessness or long-time prejudice against seat belts. Enforcement would be difficult and, if pursued diligently, would result in a great deal of bitterness against the law itself. One can see the charge being laid at the discretion of the arresting officer. One can see it also being laid against the otherwise innocent accident victim who may already have learned his lesson from his injuries.

Mr. Speaker, all this is not to detract from the fact that the use of seat belts is a sound practice which should be encouraged. But so are good eating habits and abstinence from tobacco. As far as possible, let's leave self-directed regulations up to the individual, especially when the effectiveness of external regulations is open to question.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me the question is, how do you enforce safety to protect the general public? Does the public generally want it? If we are going to pass legislation to force the driving public to wear seat belts, we will have to increase the police force. There is no sense in passing laws, then not enforcing them.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to live in a society where half the population is checking up on the other half.

MR. LUDWIG:

How about Check Stop?

MR. DOAN:

It seems to me people must be given some freedom of choice. I am opposed to legislation being passed making it compulsory to wear seat belts because I think it is an infringement on the right of choice.

I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by making explicit my stance against passing this bill at this time. This does not mean we should not consider this idea perhaps for reintroduction at a later date. However, there are questions to be answered first, and we must use every effort on a voluntary program before making such compulsory moves.

MR. SPEAKER:

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

MR. BATHURST:

Mr. Speaker, in participating in the debate on Bill 213, I would like to commend the hon. Member for Calgary McCall on showing his interest and concern about the safety of the motorist.

When we look at how many people lose their lives on the highways every year and every month - and particularly it seems to be stressed that whenever a long weekend comes around, there are between 75 and 90 people slaughtered on the highways across Canada - I think it is an obligation of every member of this Legislature and every citizen of the country to be concerned.

However, I must say that I am going to oppose this bill. I believe seat belts are in a very little way, if any, responsible for the death of the motorist. I still feel that the nut behind the wheel is the most responsible.

Quite often we hear the statistics that a greater number of people lose their lives by not wearing seat belts. I cannot disagree more than on this issue. Very often they will say that in an accident a person is thrown out and killed. But there is nothing to show that that person could have been killed before he flew out of the car or was thrown out. As I say, maybe that person was dead before he was thrown. There is nothing to say he wouldn't have died otherwise.

Out of dozens of examples in my own constituency, I would like to mention just a few. There was one incident where a man and lady were travelling and at an intersection they piled in with a gravel truck. The truck driver was not hurt. He was able to pull the lady out of the car. The man, a person [of] 180 pounds, was in a seat belt. He couldn't loosen the seat belt. The person was in perfect shape. He went to his truck to get something to be able to get the seat belt. By that time, the car exploded and the person burned. The lady is living and [in] the best of health, but the man lost his life. Here is one example where definitely the seat belt was the cause.

Just a couple of years ago, a good friend of mine [was] travelling from Edmonton [with] his wife. Their teenage daughter was sleeping on the back seat. Again at an intersection a car didn't stop and piled in on the right side. The girl was thrown out. Nothing happened to her, not even a scratch. The driver was thrown out. He was [injured] but he's all right today. The impact of that vehicle was so great that the seat was torn away from the car. But that lady was almost cut in two by that seat belt belted to the floor. So here again, whether she would have lived or not, the seat belt was responsible for that death.

Less than a year ago, it was during session last spring, a couple - and the boy particularly was very close to me as a relative and dear in other ways - came up to me and told me that they were going to get married at the end of June. They wanted me to act as their master of ceremonies. That night they were going out to Mundare to the minister to make arrangements.

They never reached their destination. At the junction of Highways 15 and 16, where they were going to make a left turn, there was oncoming traffic so they stopped. The car was signalling for a left turn. Somebody from behind piled in. The gas tank exploded. Here again there were people close by and they were able to pull the girl out. The boy had his seat belt. He was very much alive but he burned. These are three examples of a good number that I know.

So I feel it is not up to this Legislature to decide how a person should die, whether in his seat belt or out. Furthermore if such legislation were enacted, what would happen with the insurance? So few people use seat belts [that] I think the insurance would at once have a clause that they would not be liable, just like they do with anybody drinking. I think this would create a real problem.

I myself never use a seat belt. I feel it's very uncomfortable, knowing the many things that happened. Mr. Speaker, I intend to oppose this bill and I would encourage the other members. I think that we are not ready to back such a bill.

Thank you.

MR. LUDWIG:

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend the mover of the bill for bringing this issue to the attention of the Legislature. I think this is a good place to discuss safe driving.

Some hon. members say we shouldn't legislate to protect people from their own folly. If you look at the legislation we have, we have such legislation now. We have legislation to protect the gullible from the unethical. We have legislation to protect people from doing certain things. We have people wearing helmets when they ride bicycles or motor bikes. One might say that sometimes a helmet might cause more injuries than not. But we

feel it's a step in the right direction. And safety, with the way we drive and the number of vehicles now, is an important factor.

One thing I'd like to point out is that in airplanes the same principles of impact - with the ground or building or some other reason you might crash - the same principle applies as in an automobile. Everybody is asked to put a seat belt on and nobody objects. I don't think we could expect 100 per cent obedience, but all safe driving schools we have, all programs we pass around, that we pay for, stress safety and recommend seat belts.

It isn't something that people have a very strong point of view on, that they say well, it's against my principles and I shouldn't have it. It's a question of concern for the safety of people who drive. Most parents, if they have their youngsters drive say, well put the seat belt on. I'm often reminded by someone in the car [to] put the seat belt on. And I have to admit that I seldom drive without it.

There may be people who for medical reasons can't wear a seat belt. I think that it gives you a feeling of well-being. There may be a time when it's better if you didn't have it. I think we could go a long way towards making seat belts a little safer if we had a standard buckle; the same kind of buckle to undo the seat belt in every car. You can go to three or four different cars and you fumble around how to get the thing off. If you know the seat belt and it has a standard buckle, you should be able to undo it very quickly if you are in some problem. But sometimes these buckles are different and you have to find out how they work. With most of them you press a thing or flip a little lever and it is undone.

But I think we have to look at safety. We have to look at the cost of not wearing a seat belt. Recently, and not so recently in many decisions dealing with accidents, injury cases before courts, almost invariably the judge will ask the plaintiff, the injured party, have you had your seat belt on? I think if many people knew that in many instances the judge will make a lower award in injury cases where the seat belt wasn't on than he would otherwise, a lot of people might not want legislation. They might just say, I will put my seat belt on because if I do get into an accident, I might just have to lie. When the judge asks an injured party, was your seat belt on and then states, if it wasn't on, I'm going to make a slightly lesser award - this is a fact and I think the public doesn't know this.

But I think when we spend money on safe driving programs encouraging people to wear safety belts, when we tell all drivers to put their safety belts on, when people spend, I suppose in the aggregate, millions of dollars paying for these belts - every car has five or six, it depends on the car. They cost money. We pay for them and they are designed and recommended for better safety. You can always exceptions that, belt or no belt, if you smash two cars together head-on at 60 miles per hour, nothing can save you. But in many minor cases, in many many accidents in the city, sometimes a safety belt would make the difference.

I actually feel that although we may be telling people how to wreck their own lives, I think the adverse reaction would be very small. There were people who objected to legislation or regulations requiring any motorcyclist to wear a helmet. He said, it is our freedom; if I don't want to wear it, I don't have to. But you will find that all sensible people who ride motor bikes: all police, all the experience motorcyclists, all groups of cyclists all wear helmets because they know it is smart and it could just save a life. I would say that in the balance of probability it is better to have a safety belt on than not.

I think that in aviation particularly, I want to make that distinction again, you would not think of taking off in an airplane or landing a small plane or a big plane unless you were belted in; not because the plane is such a dangerous thing and seldom do you need the belt, but the plane can bounce, the brakes can go, you can land badly, you can nose-dive in a bit and the belt is definitely a safety feature.

I think that before we try to put an idea like this down we should look at the statistics, we should look at figures, we should look at the opinions of experts to tell us that it is a nuisance at best. I don't believe it is, and I think that even though you could end in the situation where you'd wish you hadn't had one, I have a feeling of well-being, a feeling of safety when I drive with a safety belt on. Even though some hon. members may feel we ought not to tell people how to conduct their own lives, I think it is a worthy bill and it is worthy of the support of the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DIACHUK:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a few comments on Bill 213. In listening to some of the presentations here this afternoon, I find it easy to agree with the pros and the negative arguments.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Typical PC.

MR. DIACHUK:

It is so difficult to legislate anything that is really in the best interests of man, yet I believe the mover of the bill did present his bill because of his interest in the safety of his fellow man. As a member of this Assembly and one who is involved in the free enterprise of insurance, I do know that the insurance industry has on many occasions recommended that this be an educational process; that the public be educated about the

definite, positive and good points of wearing seat belts. But I have to say I don't recall at any time that they felt it should be legislated.

Even the students' workbook that the Alberta Safety Council produces makes reference to it in a way that I think is very good. It's an educational way, and possibly we should provide a chapter such as this to all our students who are going through high school. For instance when they say:

Your Car in Motion

We drive by two sets of laws, man made enforced by police officers and laws of nature.

It goes on to say:

Force of impact, is the contact of two bodies, one or both of which are in motion. Safety belts properly fastened help the wearer to overcome sudden forces of impact. Not all infractions of man made laws are detected, but there is no escape from the basic natural forces that act upon your car.

I think this type of message given to many people will even convince the hon. Member for Vegreville possibly, even if it is uncomfortable, to wear his seat belt if he realizes that, while he drives his automobile, he is sometimes at the mercy of centrifugal force or any other momentum that is there, and might help him in saving his own life.

At the same time I agree with the hon. Member for Innisfail that, you know, this is all we need, another piece of legislation that our overworked police force has to try to implement and try to police. Then even to try - as one of the sections of the bill, not to disconnect the mechanical device equipped on the vehicle that would encourage the use of seat belts. This would provide another problem for the Department of Consumer Affairs. You would have to find out whether the automobile was sold with the mechanism disconnected before it was bought by the new owner. Who do you find at fault on these things?

DR. BUCK:
They'd study it.

MR. DIACHUK:
I only hope this type of legislation would not be brought in, but that we bring out a program through our Department of Education to provide an avenue, a vehicle for educating our public, possibly as we do in the public trying to educate people that fluoridation does prevent cavities. Maybe this is what we do. We don't legislate that everybody has got to have fluorine in their water to prevent cavities, if the hon. Member for Clover Bar is so interested in legislation.

In all fairness, it is uncomfortable at times. You come out of a big reception, you've overeaten, you put on a seat belt and, you know, it's kind of difficult to drive. At the same time in this bill it does say that persons, and I would gather that a child is a person ...

MR. LUDWIG:
Agreed.

MR. DIACHUK:
... and you know, many of our children, if you try to have them strapped in a seat belt for any longer than five minutes - you know, you could be driving with your family and be liable for several fines if you have a family the size I do. I'd have to pay about five or six fines every time we drive down the road because there's no way that our children would want to stay strapped.

Mr. Speaker, I see that it is coming to the end of the afternoon. I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN:
Mr. Speaker, tonight we'll start Committee of the Whole with Bill No. 4 and proceed from there.

MR. SPEAKER:
In accordance with the Standing Orders, I now leave the Chair until 8 o'clock.

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

