

[Leave granted; Bill 223 introduced and read a first time]

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Thursday, December 11, 1975

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had under consideration the undermentioned private bill, and begs to report the same with a recommendation that it be proceeded with, with certain amendments: Bill Pr. 7, being An Act to amend The Calgary Convention Centre Authority Act.

The Standing Committee on Private Bills has had under consideration the undermentioned private bills, and begs to report the same with a recommendation that they not be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 4, An Act to Incorporate the Institute of Accredited Public Accountants of Alberta; Bill Pr. 5, An Act to provide for the Extension of Time for Filing a Statement of Claim by Hector Couture Beyond the Period Allowed by The Limitation of Actions Act.

The Standing Committee on Private Bills begs to recommend that with respect to the undermentioned private bill, fees less the cost of printing be refunded: Bill Pr. 5, An Act to provide for the Extension of Time for Filing a Statement of Claim by Hector Couture Beyond the Period Allowed by The Limitation of Actions Act.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 223
The Parents' Liability Act

MR. KUSHNER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being The Parents' Liability Act. The purpose of this bill is to make parents liable in a civil suit for their children's action when children cause damage, to a maximum of \$1,000 in damages. The court would have the discretion to allow compensation to be made by provision of goods or services where parents are not able to pay.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to beg leave to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this House, some 70 Grade 10 students from the Archbishop MacDonald High School who are visiting us this afternoon under the guidance of their teacher, Miss Phyllis Schumacher. I would ask the students to rise and be recognized.

MR. TFSOLIN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Legislature, 15 students of the FCS instructional aids class from the Lac la Biche vocational school. They are accompanied by their instructors, Mrs. Maureen Beaudry and Mr. Ernie Sehn. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and be recognized by the members.

TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table four copies of an agreement signed between the Minister of Agriculture and Uniform.

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I have a reply to Question 188, placed on the Order Paper by the hon. Member for Little Bow, which I would like to table at this time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Office of the Premier

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned during my remarks in the House on November 12, I wanted to deal as a separate matter with the subject of the very complex question of possible restrictions on foreign absentee ownership of land in Alberta. The government has been assessing its position on this complex question.

As members are aware, we've been monitoring the degree of foreign purchases of land in Alberta since June of this year. The preliminary reports indicate that, after landed immigrants are excluded, the foreign purchases of rural land for the four months June to September, 1975, were only 2.2 per cent of the land sales, and were well scattered throughout the province. This data must be treated with reservation, as improvements in the monitoring system are still in the process of

being completed.

Mr. Speaker, these reports would tend to discount alarm in this area and the need for urgent legislative restrictions; however, the government is concerned about the longer term situation and believes it is desirable to take some action soon to protect against anticipation of a much more extensive interest by foreign investors in acquiring Alberta land as a hedge against international inflation.

Prime agricultural land, recreation space, and multipurpose undeveloped land are highly sought-after commodities in the world today. From an investor's point of view, investment in such land in an area of political stability, as Alberta is, becomes an attractive and logical prospect for non-Canadian investors. We must be aware, too, of the large funds of petrodollars in the world seeking a safe haven.

Therefore we have concluded that sales of land to foreign absentee owners, although not yet a serious problem, could well become one in the near future. On the other hand, we must be very careful that legislative restrictions do not turn off foreign private risk investment in job-creating joint ventures with Albertans. Our prosperity to this stage, as noted by the recent select committee report of this Legislature, stems a great deal from the significant risk investment by non-Canadians in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I was pleased by the positive response by European investors to my remarks when I spoke in Frankfurt in October, during our recent mission, when I stated that, although their investment was welcome, it wouldn't be welcome if it was strictly in land acquisition and was not part of a job-creating activity.

In addition to monitoring land sales, members will also recall the Legislature amended the Public Lands Act in 1973 to preclude sales of public lands to non-Canadians. Further in 1973, the Legislature established a Land Use Forum to consider, among other matters, the extent, if any, to which the historic rights of the landowner to dispose of agricultural land ought to be restricted. We anticipate that the Land Use Forum will be reporting in 1976 and that some of its recommendations might assist the Assembly in assessing legislation respecting foreign ownership of land.

Some Albertans, Mr. Speaker, have suggested we follow the legislation of Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island which restricts land acquisition by persons who are not resident of the province. The basic weakness of this approach is that it permits a foreign citizen resident in the province to acquire land while preventing Canadian citizens from other provinces from doing so. The result is an undesirable limitation upon Canadian citizenship.

The Supreme Court of Canada has recently made it clear that, while recognizing the right of provincial governments to control or restrict land ownership within the province on the basis of residency, the province cannot pass a law which would restrict purchase of land on the basis of

citizenship, on the premise that citizenship is strictly a federal prerogative.

At a first ministers' conference in May of 1973, common concern was expressed by the 11 first ministers that the ownership of land by persons not resident in Canada already presented a problem in some parts of the country, such as Prince Edward Island, and could become a problem in other areas unless solutions could be found. The conference agreed to set up a federal-provincial committee of officials to identify legal, constitutional, and land-use problems related to foreign and non-resident ownership of land and to examine ways in which the federal and provincial governments might co-operate in dealing with these problems.

Mr. Speaker, I am today tabling a copy of this report to first ministers by the federal-provincial committee on the foreign ownership of land. After assessing this report, evaluating the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada respecting Prince Edward Island's legislation, and contemplating the attractiveness of Alberta land as an investment, the government decided to move toward restrictions upon foreign absentee ownership of land.

Our first step was to follow through with other provincial governments on the federal-provincial committee report. At the Premiers' conference in Newfoundland in August, I asked that the matter be placed on the agenda and presented an Alberta position paper, which I am also tabling today. Agreement was reached by all provinces to continue discussions on this developing issue with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I also corresponded directly with the Prime Minister on the subject in August and received an important reply dated September 5, which I will now table. I want to quote from certain key paragraphs of this letter from the Prime Minister to myself:

In order to avoid these constitutional uncertainties the federal government is prepared to amend Section 24 of the Canadian Citizenship Act so that the capacity conferred thereby upon aliens to own land in Canada would be made subject to such terms and conditions, including complete prohibition, as might be imposed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council of the province where the land is situated. It would be our view, however, that under the amendment, such terms and conditions could not:

- (1) restrict, on the basis of citizenship, acquisitions by landed immigrants ordinarily resident in Canada;
- (2) conflict with Canada's international legal obligations;
- (3) discriminate as between aliens on the basis of their different nationalities (except insofar as more favourable treatment

- is required by Canada's obligations under international law);
- (4) hinder foreign states in acquiring property for diplomatic and consular purposes;
 - (5) apply in respect of any acquisition of land effected in the course of a transaction considered and subsequently approved by the Governor in Council under the Foreign Investment Review Act.

And I'm continuing, Mr. Speaker, with the quotation from the Prime Minister's letter of September 5:

This would not, of course, preclude further action by Parliament to regulate foreign ownership, either under the Foreign Investment Review Act or other legislation should such action at any time in the future be deemed appropriate. However, it would clarify the [powers] of [the] provinces to regulate ownership of land by aliens.

With respect to point 5 above, you may recall that when the federal-provincial committee of officials on foreign ownership of land met, the Foreign Investment Review Agency was in the process of becoming established and the possible relationship between the Foreign Investment Review Act and [the] acquisition of land by foreigners was not fully appreciated. Virtually all businesses, of course, own some land and, therefore, it would seem imperative to ensure that conflicts between the operations of FIRA and the provinces (i.e. provinces operating within the authority to be delegated to them under the proposed amendment to the Canadian Citizenship Act) be avoided. FIRA, of course, would continue to consult on all [of] those transactions under review which are of direct interest to the provinces.

Premier Campbell has written to me suggesting that the question of land ownership become a subject of discussion at some future meeting of First Ministers. As I indicated above, the federal government does remain concerned about land ownership controls operating to deny Canadian citizens and landed immigrants the right to own land in a province simply because they do not reside in that province. And as also noted, a number of provincial governments, including yours, are also concerned about this aspect of land ownership con-

trols. Therefore, I agree that this is a matter which could be considered for discussion at a future First Ministers Conference. In the meantime, however, would you please let me know whether you wish us to proceed with the proposed amendment to the Canadian Citizenship Act.

Mr. Speaker, I then replied in a letter of September 22, 1975 -- I also table that letter -- and stated as follows. To the Prime Minister:

As I indicated in my statement to the Sixteenth Annual Premiers' Conference in Newfoundland [on] August 21 and 22, the Alberta government is concerned about the ownership and control of land in Canada by aliens and believes steps should be taken whereby provincial governments could deal in an appropriate way with this problem.

We feel . . . there is considerable merit to the proposed amendment to the Canadian Citizenship Act which would enable provincial governments to regulate the foreign control and ownership of land within provincial boundaries.

We would certainly agree with the first four limitations which have been set out in your letter. However, with respect to point 5 of the limitations, we wish to reserve judgment until we've had an opportunity to assess the operation of Phase II of the Foreign Investment Review Act which goes into effect on October 15, 1975. To date, the consultation procedures between the provinces and the Foreign Investment Review Agency have been most satisfactory. We anticipate that co-operation and full consultation will continue once Phase II is in effect, but before registering our approval of this limitation, we wish to have the opportunity to consider it in light of the operation of Phase II.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I received a reply from the Prime Minister on November 4. I also table that message which stated as follows, and I quote:

I appreciate your general support of the proposal to amend the Canadian Citizenship Act to enable each provincial government to regulate the ownership by foreigners of land within the province. I note, as well, your acceptance of four of the five limitations set out in my letter. I am hopeful that you will soon find the fifth limitation, whereby provinces could not impose conditions that would apply in respect of any acquisition of land affected in the course of a transaction consid-

ered and subsequently approved by the Governor-in-Council under the Foreign Investment Review Act, to be acceptable as well. To this end, I am sure that the consultation procedures that have worked well between Alberta and the Foreign Investment Review Agency in the application of Phase I of the Foreign Investment Review Act will continue to be effectively applied with respect to Phase II of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are still in the process of reviewing the implications of this fifth reservation in the federal government's proposal to amend the Canadian Citizenship Act relative to the Foreign Investment Review Act.

Our initial reaction is that such a limitation is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons, including unnecessary interference by the federal government in the disposition of property rights in the province. However, we have not yet reached a final conclusion, and we will now await the recommendations of the Land Use Forum, expected early in 1976.

Mr. Speaker, we felt that hon. members would want to be fully acquainted with the current developments so that they could consider the possible nature of restrictions upon land acquisition and what exceptions might be valid in contemplation of the government introducing legislation in the House after we reconvene in 1976.

Mr. Speaker, our most valuable resource is obviously our people. Our second most valuable resource is our land. Equitable legislative initiatives in this area will be a difficult challenge for members of the Assembly.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the announcement made by the Premier today with regard to the government's concern and those steps of consultation with the federal government over the course of the last many months. We welcome the Premier outlining the government's concern in this area.

Might I simply make three comments, Mr. Speaker. I think it's appropriate members of the Assembly should recognize that, at its convention this week in Edmonton -- I believe it was Tuesday -- Unifarm passed a resolution urging this Assembly to give very serious consideration to the kind of legislation Saskatchewan has, with a limitation of a \$15,000 transaction.

In speaking for myself and my colleagues, we recognize some of the divisive portions of that legislation in Saskatchewan which, in fact, make it possible only for people who live in Saskatchewan to acquire land and excludes people from other provinces in Canada. Nevertheless, the resolution passed by Unifarm is indeed timely and, I think, worth the consideration of members of the Assembly.

Secondly, I would draw the attention of members of the Assembly to the private member's bill by my colleague, the hon. Member for Clover Bar, which we had the opportunity to discuss earlier during this

fall session. The purpose of that resolution being on the Order Paper was to draw the attention not only of the government, but of the people of the province, to what we regard as a very serious situation in the acquisition of agricultural land in the province by non-Canadians, especially people from some of the European countries and from the Middle East.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the comments made by the Premier today might I say we are pleased the government is in basic agreement with the federal move to change the delegation as far as citizenship is concerned so that if arrangements can be worked out, the province would in fact be able to move in this area.

But I would say this: as a result of the statement made today by the Premier in the House, this is a signalling to investors all over the world that within the next few months steps are going to be taken in the Province of Alberta to exclude foreign ownership of land in Alberta.

I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members of the Assembly, that in light of the Premier's statement today we should very seriously consider saying that that limitation should apply as of today, and not sometime down the road. This statement being made today -- a statement which we welcome, Mr. Speaker -- is in fact saying to non-Canadians who want to invest in Alberta, get in here now. You'd better get in before the next few months. I am sure that's not the intention of the government's action. Nevertheless, that's going to be the result. And that's why I think it's vital, Mr. Speaker, we give very serious consideration to making the legislation retroactive to today, December 11.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Firearms Regulation

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Solicitor General and ask if he plans to issue a position paper dealing with changes in policy regarding the registration of firearms in Alberta.

MR. FARRAN: No, Mr. Speaker. The changes in regard to legislation pertaining to firearms is a federal matter, similar to the Criminal Code. All the province does is enforce the law and regulations passed by the federal government.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can rephrase the question to the Solicitor General and ask if it is his intention either to table in the Assembly or to make some public announcement with regard to the way in which the Solicitor General's Department is handling the regulation or the registering of firearms in the province.

MR. FARRAN: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CLARK: A supplementary question then to the minister. Has he had representation from a number of small businesses in the province which, over the past short period of time, have had their licences to sell guns restricted or withdrawn?

MR. FARRAN: Mr. Speaker, I've had conversations with pistol clubs, gun collectors, and gun dealers. In almost every case, they were making representations in anticipation of something which had not happened and was not going to happen. Under the law they have the right to appeal any action in regard to a permit to a provincial judge within 30 days.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary to the minister. As a result of the change in the government's policy, which I believe took place on July 15, have licences to sell firearms been withdrawn from some sporting goods operators in the province?

MR. FARRAN: Not so far as I know, Mr. Speaker. I would advise the hon. Leader of the Opposition to perhaps be patient and await the outcome of deliberations presently under way in the House of Commons to amend the Criminal Code in regard to restricted weapons, and perhaps to introduce new licensing procedures in regard to sporting guns and rifles.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary to the minister. I always appreciate the patient advice of the minister.

Is he prepared to table the guidelines to local registers regarding firearms, I believe dated July 15, 1975, in the Assembly?

MR. FARRAN: No, Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention. Guidelines to registrars are in the nature of advice to police and law enforcement bodies, and do not have the same status as the law and regulations under the law. Guidelines can be changed from day to day. I don't believe it is proper to make them a public document.

Syncrude Accounts

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my second question to the Member for Edmonton Calder, who's on the board of Syncrude. I'd like to ask if he could indicate to the House whether the accounting manual has been completed between Syncrude and the Alberta government.

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I believe that in line with government policy, I should refer this to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, as the acting Minister of Energy and Natural Resources in his absence today, I'll take the question

as notice and the minister will endeavor to provide the answer on Monday.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Member for Edmonton Calder. Is the member and representative of the government on the Syncrude board in a position to indicate whether, in fact, the Provincial Auditor is involved in pre-auditing the work being done on the Syncrude site, pre-auditing prior to payment of bills?

MR. CHAMBERS: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would refer that question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. HYNDMAN: I'll take the question as notice, Mr. Speaker.

Agricultural Grants

MR. HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Due to having two farmers' unions in Alberta, and now signing a contract with Unifarm, has the NFU or any other farm organization received money from your department?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the particular arrangement with Unifarm was not a grant, but a contract for services rendered. The Department of Agriculture provides extensive grants to a number of farm organizations and commodity groups throughout Alberta to provide them assistance in marketing, production, and other areas.

Mr. Speaker, as I recall, this year the National Farmers Union received grants from the Department of Agriculture. I believe in September of this year, I agreed to provide them with a grant of up to \$20,000 to assist them in a leadership training program.

MR. COOKSON: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Are the funds provided for the National Farmers Union, Mr. Minister, to be applied strictly in Alberta? Or do they derive funds from other parts of Canada?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, with reference to the particular grant I talked about, the National Farmers Union has a leadership training program involving young people right across Canada. We agreed to provide matching 50-50 dollars to the National Farmers Union for the costs they incurred in the leadership training program as it related to young people coming from the Province of Alberta.

Land Ownership

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the hon. Premier. It's a follow-up to the ministerial announcement of today. Perhaps the first question could be for clarification. My understanding is that the Government of

Alberta will not take a formal position with respect to the fifth provision of the Prime Minister's letter concerning the foreign review committee until after the report of the agricultural forum.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Premier is: can he advise the Assembly whether there has been any indication from the Prime Minister when the Government of Canada will introduce the change in the Canadian Citizenship Act?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, no, there hasn't been any indication at the moment, except indirectly through officials that the Prime Minister is awaiting responses from all the provincial governments. I believe he has received some, such as from Alberta, but not all. I believe it's a matter of getting them all into the Prime Minister's office and then making an assessment of it.

For our part -- and perhaps I should clarify, having regard to the initial portion of the hon. member's question -- we will be discussing over the next few months with the federal government at both an official and ministerial level the nature of that fifth limitation -- what's intended by it, and how it will work -- because we are concerned with recent developments by the Foreign Investment Review Agency within Alberta and its interpretation of some of the agriculture and farm sales which some of the members are aware of. We are concerned that that might be going in a track different from the one the Prime Minister may have envisioned by his limitation in the letter to me, governments being as large as they are.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Premier. From his discussions with the Prime Minister, is he in a position to advise the Assembly whether the federal action in amending the Canadian Citizenship Act is contingent upon all the provinces accepting all the conditions set out in his letter? Or at some point will there be federal action, whether or not there is total agreement among the provinces?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'm not in a position to answer that at this time. But I would hope to be, in not too many weeks. Certainly at the time the House reconvenes in 1976 I should be in a position to answer that question.

I had purposely delayed a direct communication with the Prime Minister either by telephone or letter until I had made the statement here in the Legislature and we had a little better chance to assess the Foreign Investment Review Agency's action in Alberta in agricultural land.

I'll take the question as notice, Mr. Speaker, and certainly would try to respond at the next opportunity in '76.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Is the government prepared to make representation, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition suggested today, that if and when any

change is made in the Canadian Citizenship Act there be an element of retroactivity to stop possible land grabs in the interim?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my statement, 2.2 per cent of rural land sales -- and that's of the sales, not land -- in that period is certainly not a very large acquisition. We are watching it on an ongoing basis, monitoring it month by month. It is difficult to have retroactivity in this area, but certainly it is a subject we will be discussing with the Prime Minister and will be considering ourselves. Frankly, I see a considerable concern in retroactive legislation of that nature. I think we should all be very appreciative that we are going to be dealing with legislation here that will have great implications for the province and will be very complex and difficult.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the hon. Premier. Is it the government's intention to table in the Assembly, either today or in the next day or two, the initial report under The Land Titles Amendment Act so we will have some idea of what that 2.2 per cent represents, where the land is purchased, and what the sizes of the parcels are?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly make that information public. I can't give a commitment as to what the time would be. When it is in a form in which we can make it public, I will do so.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose one final supplementary question to the Attorney General. Is he in a position to advise the Assembly how many corporations have applied for exemption under that provision of The Land Titles Amendment Act, 1974, that makes allowance for exemptions?

MR. SPEAKER: That is a question of some detail. If the hon. Attorney General happens to have the answer, we could deal with it. Otherwise, it should go on the Order Paper.

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the specific number of companies which have applied. However, it runs in my mind that something like 12 or 13 have, in fact, received exemptions. If the member would like details of that, I'd be happy to get them.

Gas Line Freeze

MR. TFSOLIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Utilities and Telephones. In regard to the natural gas line freeze which occurred during the past day in the area of Fort McMurray, what steps have been taken to remedy the situation? Secondly, what are your department's considerations for handling such emergencies in the future?

DR. WARRACK: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member did speak to me about that matter. I'm now in a position to report. As the heavy load came on about 7 o'clock this morning in Fort McMurray, there was a freeze-off of natural gas supply. I am informed by Northwestern Utilities this was restored as of 11 a.m. today.

In addition, on the second part, I'm also informed that the company does have a contingency plan by way of an emergency mobile propane supply, in such instances where there might be a freeze-off that cannot be rectified in a short period of time.

Health Care Premiums

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Member for Lethbridge West, the member on the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission. Are there plans, or has consideration been given, to increasing health care premiums in early 1976?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I would refer that question to the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, I've had that matter under active consideration. I have made no policy decision on the matter at the present time.

Dental Care Program

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Member for Lethbridge West. In discussions of programs, has any consideration been given to including denticare programs for young children?

MR. GOGO: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd have to refer that question.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, the matter of denticare is a matter which my colleague, the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health, and I have had under study in our respective portfolios. Again, no policy decision has been made by the government at this time.

Health Care Insurance Commission

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Member for Lethbridge West. Has he made any recommendations with regard to picking up back debts and cutting costs within the commission in the discussions he has had as a backbencher MLA?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I would again refer that question.

MR. MINIELY: Mr. Speaker, if I heard the question correctly, it was: has any consideration been made to the recovery of back debts and the cutting of administra-

tion costs? Mr. Speaker, in the first matter with respect to the collection of outstanding debts of the commission, Dr. MacLeod, the chairman of the Health Care Insurance Commission, reviewed that matter with me. I instructed him that he should make every attempt to collect medicare premiums from those who could afford to pay. But for those on lower incomes who could not afford to pay, no serious legal action should be taken against Albertans on lower incomes who may be outstanding in their premiums.

With respect to the administration, Mr. Speaker, I think when the hon. Member for Little Bow sees the upcoming budget of the Health Care Insurance Commission, he'll be able to make his own judgment as to the effectiveness of the cutting of administrative costs.

Husky Oil Refinery

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Business Development and Tourism. During the past months, negotiations have been going on between Husky Oil Ltd. and the Government of Alberta regarding the location of a major oil refinery in Alberta. I was wondering if the minister is in a position to report on the status of this project at this time.

MR. DOWLING: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I should say that the hon. member had considerable to do with the location of the Husky plant at Lloydminster.

Very shortly, Mr. Speaker, the president of Husky Oil, Mr. Nielson, will be announcing the construction of a major refinery in the Lloydminster area which will cost some \$73 million and employ approximately 150 people. It will be completed about 1978, will manufacture a full range of light oils, asphalt, and road coverings, and will be the largest coking plant in western Canada.

Hail and Crop Insurance

MR. MANDEVILLE: My question is to the hon. member who just asked the question, the hon. Member for Lloydminster in charge of -- the MLA on the crop insurance board. The question is: what led to the recent \$15 million special warrant requirement by the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation?

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I would refer that question to our very capable Minister of Agriculture.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the \$15.5 million special warrant which was passed recently was the result of a number of changes made in the delivery of Alberta hail and crop insurance to farmers. The overwhelming response resulted in some 19,000 farmers taking out insurance under the program in

1975, compared to about 13,000 in 1974. Almost the entire amount of the special warrant was used to pay the federal government's 50 per cent share of the premiums of the farmers involved. That amount of course is 100 per cent recoverable.

Gas Line Easement

MR. BATHUK: Mr. Speaker, I would direct my question to the Minister of Utilities and Telephones. Mr. Minister, in The Rural Gas Act there is provision for exemption of The Dower Act to provide right of way easements for member-owned gas co-ops.

Could the minister advise why there isn't similar exemption for county-administered utilities, which give identical service to the farmers?

MR. SPEAKER: It's very doubtful whether the question is in order as it stands. No doubt reasons were given at the time the particular statutory condition or provision was passed by the Legislature. I think perhaps the hon. member might be starting a debate on a statutory provision. Perhaps the question might be rephrased in some other way.

MRS. CHICHAK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a supplementary. Is the minister or the government giving consideration to this extension of coverage?

DR. WARRACK: My first task, Mr. Speaker, will be to discover the nature of the legal problem involved. If it turns out in the ensuing evaluation that there is indeed a problem, we'd certainly tackle trying to solve it.

Oil Sands Research Fund

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the hon. Member for Banff, who is on the Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority. Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that 21 companies have made application for over \$354 million to the fund, which has a limit of \$100 million, can the hon. member indicate if Canadian companies will be given priorities in deciding who gets some of the money in this authority?

MR. KIDD: Mr. Speaker, I'd refer that question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, I'll take notice of the question. I might add, though, that the Member for Banff is doing an excellent job in serving on the commission.

MR. CLARK: If he's doing such a fine job, let him talk.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address another question to the hon. Member for Banff. Would he indicate when we can have an announcement on who the recipients will be, as far as applications to the trust fund are concerned.

MR. NOTLEY: The lucky prizes.

MR. KIDD: Mr. Speaker, I would again refer that question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. HYNDMAN: I'll take the question as notice, Mr. Speaker.

MLAs on Boards and Commissions

DR. BUCK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does the hon. Premier consider that the taxpayers' money is being spent wisely by having these MLAs on boards and commissions?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I might say that as far as we're concerned, even in the very short time that it's been involved, I think all ministers would agree that it's been a tremendous assistance to the ministers to have the support and backing of the MLAs who are involved in these matters. I think there's no question in my mind that it's going to considerably improve the total administration of the government.

DR. BUCK: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will the hon. Premier be able to inform the Legislature if the backbenchers who are on boards and commissions will or will not report to the Legislature?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think our view is that their involvement as members of boards and commissions is in the same sense as you would have an involvement as, if you like, a parliamentary secretary, under that concept of parliamentary democracy. But in our view the responsibility for being answerable in the Legislative Assembly rests with the minister.

Petrochemical Development

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask a question of a minister. Rather than playing games, I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we get some information in the Assembly. My question is to the Minister of Business Development and Tourism.

In view of the question I think I asked a week ago, I wonder if the minister could advise whether there have been any further developments with regard to Alberta Gas Ethylene and the first major petrochemical complex in Alberta.

MR. DOWLING: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can. The ERCB, or Energy Resources Conservation Board, recommendation that the Alberta Gas

Ethylene plant be located at Joffre has apparently been brought down. I have a copy of it here. That recommendation will be dealt with by cabinet in due course. The ERCB recommendation is based on a number of things: the availability of the resource, the efficient use of the resource, and the net benefit of the plant to Alberta.

MR. COOKSON: A supplementary to clarify the response. Am I clear, then, in interpreting that the further decision rests with the cabinet?

MR. DOWLING: Yes, that is correct. The ERCB renders a recommendation to cabinet.

Weather Modification

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. A short explanation is necessary first. For a number of years, research has been carried on in hail suppression and weather modification.

Are we reaching the point where firm recommendations can be made in regard to the findings of this research group? Secondly, does it appear that research will have to be continued for a number of years yet?

MR. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that two years ago we did shift from the basis of doing a lot of research to a practical application program coupled with some research. My colleague and former Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Horner, established a Weather Modification Board, which is involved in the practical application with respect to hail suppression, and at the same time in trying to achieve some research results.

At that time, and it's two years ago, Mr. Speaker, we envisioned that it would take five years of that kind of work before we would be in at least a better position to say that there are in fact very practical ways to control hail, and we're still in the process of determining whether those ways are by cloud seeding with aircraft, or by other means.

The experiments, both practical and experimental, will continue again next year, and hopefully the following year. I would expect, Mr. Speaker, that possibly by 1978 or '79, we would be in a much better position to evaluate the effectiveness of our program and to judge whether the costs involved are worth it.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary to the hon. minister. I might base it on the point that I believe progress is being made in hail suppression.

During the next three years, will the group be spending any time endeavoring to increase or decrease the amount of rain as the need arises?

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, for the year 1976, we don't envision any actual practical work

by this group in rain increase. However, Mr. Speaker, members should know that many of the members of our Interim Weather Modification Board as well as department staff have been involved in meeting and attending in other jurisdictions, mainly in the northern U.S., where rain increase programs are in effect and being applied actively. So, Mr. Speaker, I think over the last couple of years the group has been able to gain a lot of knowledge about rain increase programs. We felt that rather than getting involved directly in rain increase programs here, we could use the valuable experience obtained in other countries. We are trying to gather that together. It may well be that in the future there's some practical application for that kind of program in Alberta.

Prosthetic Services

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. I wonder if the minister could indicate what the status is of negotiations between the department and the Edmonton Artificial Limb Company?

MISS HUNLEY: Since I'm not familiar with the term, the Edmonton Artificial Limb Company -- I'm more familiar with a Stauffer operation. Apparently the department has not been very successful in its negotiations. We've asked the Stauffers if they would make an offer to sell. They did, but we considered it unacceptable based on an appraisal we had done in preparation for this. So the matter is more or less at a stalemate at the present time according to my information.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister for clarification. The department does feel that it has a certain financial obligation toward the Stauffer operation. Is that correct?

MISS HUNLEY: No, that's not correct, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of things here which I think should be clarified. One is: is there a financial obligation? It's my opinion and the opinion of my colleagues in my department that there is not a financial obligation in this case any more than in any other business enterprise in which they feel the government has intruded. Those could be a variety of things. It could be a secretarial college which is no longer in business because the government has started teaching that at its educational institutions.

We did acknowledge that we would be interested in purchasing if the price was reasonable. We then had an assessment made as to what, to our best knowledge, would be a reasonable price. This has not been found acceptable by the Stauffers. Therefore we don't have a willing buyer and a willing seller.

The philosophical question is, as I alluded earlier, when the government starts providing services and intrudes into pri-

vate enterprise, what then is the philosophical obligation? I guess, that's a matter of debate.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Has the minister met directly with the Stauffer operation? If not, does she plan a meeting in the next few weeks?

MISS HUNLEY: Personally I have not met with the Stauffers. I believe my predecessor, the hon. Mr. Crawford, met with them early on when this was first raised. When I entered the picture, I understand it was a matter between lawyers. I felt that since it appeared to be a legal matter, the legal people should deal with it. That's my opinion at the present time.

MR. P. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. In 1971 a study was commissioned by the government through Moncrieff Montgomery and Associates relating to prosthetic services. Has this study been reviewed by the minister, and will the findings be made public?

MISS HUNLEY: I have not personally reviewed the report. It was not made in '71; I believe it was made in '73. I personally have not reviewed it line by line. It's a fairly detailed report. I have had it reviewed and summaries given to me. I do not expect that document will be made public, because it was made for information of the government in arriving at a decision.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, as clarification of one of the answers of the minister with regard to meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Stauffer, is she prepared to meet with Mr. and Mrs. Stauffer at some point in time to discuss the situation and to clarify some of the communication between them and government?

MISS HUNLEY: Yes, I'd take that matter under consideration. I'd like to talk to the legal department and ensure that indeed, we don't have two lawyers negotiating. I was under the impression there were, until today. I found that perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Stauffer now do not have a lawyer representing them, though I'm not sure of that. Usually when it's a legal matter, I prefer that legal people deal with it. If that fades into the distance and no longer develops, I would take meeting with the Stauffers into consideration when the opportunity presents itself.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary to the minister. This is with regard to the philosophy of government expanding and certain private companies going out of business.

Has the minister done a survey in the area of other private prosthetic establishments in Alberta? Has she examined the effect of government expansion on those private companies?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, there are four prosthetic companies.

The same offer was made. I was not the person who made the offer, and I'm speaking from memory. As I understand it, an offer was made to four different companies saying, if you wish us to buy, will you make an offer. One individual indicated she was not interested. That was the end of the conversation. I believe the other two have not come forward with any offer. In my opinion, the only outstanding issue is the Stauffers. I feel the others have now been concluded.

Land Ownership (continued)

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the hon. Premier. With regard to his statement today on foreign ownership of land, I wonder if he could indicate whether the percentage of the total acreage of land sold during the time period monitored was different from 2.2 per cent.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, going from memory -- although it's in my file here -- I believe a higher proportion of urban land was transacted, of course with different conditions. That's not to say we're not interested in the transactions involving urban land. We are, but we're giving a higher priority in terms of our attention -- that's why I put the emphasis on the rural land.

Ministers' House Responsibilities

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier. It's not meant to be argumentative.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Premier: is it not true that in other jurisdictions, parliamentary secretaries do in fact answer questions in the absence of cabinet ministers?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. In the first place the hon. member flatly contradicted himself in regard to his prediction as to what would be in the question. Secondly, if he wants to have parliamentary research done, perhaps there are other means for having it done.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could rephrase the question and get it within shooting distance of being parliamentary. To the hon. Premier: is the government giving any consideration, since the example of parliamentary secretaries was used, to having members on commissions and boards answering when the ministers are not available in the House?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, there is possibly some merit to that, because it is true the parliamentary secretaries as such, in the absence of ministers in that system, in fact would reply. But we made the conscious decision, which I think we've expressed in the House in debate, not to

follow strictly the approach of parliamentary secretaries. What we felt was better was to have members of the Legislative Assembly on the government caucus involved in the same scope of activity, working and assisting the ministers who have the primary responsibility in these areas -- and, as I've mentioned, I think very effectively so, even in the short time it's been in operation. There could be a case where there was an extended absence by a minister when that might be something which would be appropriate. We'd certainly keep a close attention to that thought.

Cosmopolitan Report

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a question to the Attorney General and ask when we might expect Appendix C of the Cosmopolitan report to be tabled in the House. Just as a matter of background, it was indicated to us, I believe, it would be tabled sometime in the future.

MR. FOSTER: Mr. Speaker, I am not personally aware of any commitment which may have been given on the tabling of that appendix. But if it was, I will check the commitment first of all and respond further.

Municipal Boundaries

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask one further question, if I might. I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs a follow-up to a question I posed two weeks ago with regard to representation of people in the Warburg and Breton area on the question of reshaping of municipal boundaries in that area.

Has the minister had the opportunity to discuss the matter with the boundaries commission, and what action has been taken?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I did have an opportunity to discuss that with Mr. Leslie, the chairman of the boundary committee. He was of the impression that a fair representation of those people from Warburg did attend at a hearing held on December 4 and 5 in Sangudo. He feels their representation was well received. The complaints of the citizens of that area have been noted and will be included in any forthcoming recommendation.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask one supplementary. The same day I asked a similar question as far as the folks at Breton were concerned.

What provision has been made for the people in the Breton area to get to the boundaries commission?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I don't recall the reference to the town of Breton. I do recall reference to a town of Genesis. I believe the same question . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Genesee.

MR. JOHNSTON: My apologies to the town and citizens. I do believe the same answer is applicable there as well.

Day Care Centres

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health. It's a follow-up to the question on day care centres I asked the other day. A very brief word of explanation: as I recall, she mentioned the possibility of encouraging on-site or employer-sponsored day care centres.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. minister is: is the Government of Alberta giving any consideration to providing some leadership as far as employees of the Civil Service Association are concerned in making day care centres available in government buildings where possible?

MISS HUNLEY: Mr. Speaker, we already have some similar day care centres. I believe there's one at the Alberta Vocational Centre. I believe the university also provides one. It's an idea I would like to develop and discuss with my colleagues, because I think there is a good opportunity for government to lead the way there. But we haven't had time to direct our attention to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

223. Mr. Notley asked the government the following question:

- (1) Does the Government of Alberta require that Syncrude and Great Canadian Oil Sands respectively post a bond for the purpose of assuring reclamation of disturbed land?
- (2) What is the amount of such bond (per barrel levy) and what amount of money is expected to accumulate for each year over the next decade from each company?
- (3) What is the expected yearly interest on each reclamation bond?
- (4) Do the companies or the government obtain the interest on such bonds?
- (5) What arrangements, if any, have been made to use the interest for environmental research?

MR. HYNDMAN: Agreed.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

215. Mr. Notley proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) A copy of all studies done by the Department of Manpower and Labour and/or the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower on the use or potential for use in Alberta of temporary imported labor under an 11-42 category of visa or similar arrangement since January 1, 1972;
- (2) a copy of all studies relating to the flow of immigrants into the province in terms of the demand for immigrant labor, the effect on wages in Alberta, and the supply of immigrant labor in relation to demand since January 1, 1972.

[Motion carried]

218. Mr. Notley proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) An itemized statement of costs, for each member of the Executive Council listed separately, of remodelling, renovating, redecorating and/or refurbishing the office(s) occupied by that member of Executive Council, during the period August 31, 1971 through March 26, 1975;
- (2) an itemized statement of costs, for each member of the Executive Council listed separately, of remodelling, renovating, redecorating and/or refurbishing the office(s) occupied by that member of Executive Council, during the period March 27, 1975 through November 30, 1975.

[Motion carried]

220. Mr. Notley proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) A copy of a study by Bill Meneley and Earl Christianson on groundwater flows in the Athabasca Oil Sands;
- (2) a copy of all environmental studies on the Athabasca Oil Sands by Arleigh Laycock of the University of Alberta.

MR. DOWLING: Mr. Speaker, regarding the first portion of Motion 220, the study was done by two employees of the Research Council of Saskatchewan. It was done for a private sector organization called the Oil Sands Environmentalist Study Group. It was done for this private sector organization by a Saskatchewan organization, so we have no control over that study.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the second part of that request, that's a paper published by a University of Alberta professor and the government really has no direct responsibility to table it. I have copies, and as far as I know it's a public document and has been for some time.

MR. NOTLEY: In view of the answers of the hon. Minister of Business Development and Tourism and the Minister of Environment, I would ask permission to withdraw Motion for a Return 220.

MR. SPEAKER: May Motion 220 be withdrawn?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

224. Mr. Clark proposed the following motion to the Assembly:
That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

All grants given to Sport Alberta by the provincial government for the purpose of the 1975 Alberta Summer Games in Red Deer, including the amount of each grant and the reason for each grant.

[Motion carried]

225. Mr. Clark proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:
Copies of all studies, documents, and submissions prepared by, for, or submitted to the Department of the Environment which deal with the Canadian Johns-Manville Company Ltd. plant to be located in the Innisfail area.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we ask that Motion for a Return 225 stand.

MR. SPEAKER: Is this request by the hon. minister acceptable to the Assembly?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion will stand.

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

1. Mr. R. Speaker proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that, the Legislative Assembly urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation to repeal Sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 of The Environment Conservation Amendment Act, 1972, so that the Environment Conservation Authority may, on its own initiative, inquire into any matter pertaining to environment conservation.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, in moving the resolution standing on the Order Paper in my name I want first to make the statement that I feel that under the act of 1972 the environmental act at that time was certain-

ly emasculated and had much power taken away from it.

The Authority to that point and up till now has certainly served Albertans very well as an environmental ombudsman. Prior to the amendments introduced in 1972, the Authority was free to inquire into any matters pertaining to environmental conservation. Mr. Speaker, it could do it on its own initiative, and I think that is the real point in this resolution.

The 1972 act changed that. The Authority could inquire into any matter pertaining to environment conservation only, and I quote from the act, "after consultation with the Minister". Mr. Speaker, this phrase "after consultation with the Minister" appears in the act a number of times and certainly makes the point very well. At that point no longer could the Authority act on its own initiative. It had to consult the minister. I think that's where our concern has been.

Other sections of the amendment act of 1972 were similar in effect. Virtually all the Authority's affairs were subject to ministerial review: its banking affairs, its ability to appoint public advisory committees, and a control on the duties and functions of those committees.

Mr. Speaker, the channel of communication to the Executive Council was transferred in large part at that time to the Minister of Environment. The opposition at that time raised the concerns. We felt very concerned about the bill of 1972. We pointed out the effect it would have on the Authority. We raised questions about the power over the Authority to be invested in the Minister of Environment. As we all recognize, those concerns were ignored, there were no changes and the government continued to put through the legislation.

We feel that the situation at that time demanded the Authority be free to act on its own initiative. I'd have to say, Mr. Speaker, that the circumstances today are even greater. The demand is even greater that these powers be returned to the Authority. In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I think we can't suggest that the powers of the Authority have not been for the protection of Albertans. We feel it has done a good job in that area. We'd have to commend it in the highest terms as to how it has carried out its actions under this new legislation. At the present time it has retained the respect of Albertans and has been a good ear for Albertans. But it needs the independence it had prior to the 1972 legislation.

We feel that serious pressures are building up in Alberta today which demand this free and independent attention of the Authority. What are some of those? The Dodds-Round Hill proposal needs its attention. The development of a petrochemical complex in Red Deer, the development of the tar sands, and the many other future coal developments talked about in this province are some examples of areas where we need this independence of the Authority. We feel the Authority must be free to pursue these and other areas of concern to Albertans as we seek to develop this province.

It must be able to act on its own -- not after consulting with the Minister of Environment but on its own -- when it sees the need to take action is certainly there.

For example, we have the case of the tar sands. It took a private group called STOP to raise the serious questions about the potential problems with emissions from the tar sands and the respective plants. There were serious questions about the Syncrude project.

Following that concern, we filed in this House a report commissioned by us which raised similar and equally serious questions about the Syncrude project. Even in light of that, I think what is more important, and perhaps most appalling, is that at this time we have the ECA itself making certain recommendations that it do certain things. I quote from one of the reports. This is the report with regard to the Review of Interaction between Migratory Birds and the Athabasca Oil Sands Tailing Ponds which was filed in this Assembly on November 13. In the report the recommendation from the ECA says this:

That the Environment Conservation Authority be requested by government to prepare for and hold comprehensive public hearings at an appropriate time on all environmental aspects of the development of the Oil Sands.

At this point the ECA is asking to be asked to conduct an inquiry, to hold a hearing, Mr. Speaker. We feel this is just not good enough, that it's rather disgusting. As I recall from my experience in this Assembly, and prior to 1971 when the Conservation Authority was put together -- and I was involved in some of those discussions -- one of the things we were very concerned about was the independence of an authority such as that, an independence to review subjects and concerns where they saw action should take place. Under this recommendation that's not happening. It's asking to be asked, Mr. Speaker.

We feel the Authority should be free to pursue topics like this on its own, without having to ask the Minister of Environment for his permission. But under the legislation, it can't. It must consult with government, a government that we must recognize at this point in time has more than just a passing interest in the Syncrude project and, certainly, its profit margin; a government that has a direct vested interest in the future of that particular project.

If I go on and look at other quotes made in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, by the Minister of Environment during question period on November 14, they support this type of special consideration given to Syncrude. In the Minister of Environment's remarks on the technology to be employed at the Syncrude plant to control emissions, he referred to a "design freeze" in respect to the final plans for Syncrude. The minister went on to say that he assumed a third plant in the tar sands would employ "better technology". Therefore, the implication is that Syncrude's designs are frozen, that improvements in technology will not be

demanded of Syncrude but rather of the next plant. Could this apparent double standard indicate a special type of relationship between the government and Syncrude?

When you look at another quote of the Minister of Environment, in a question asked about the standards for GCOS, we find in Hansard that he said, GCOS is being instructed "to improve the control facilities" it now has. You ask yourself, what is the difference between GCOS, Syncrude, government, and the relationship? I think all that relates to the autonomy and authority of the Environment Conservation Authority.

Mr. Speaker, concerns such as this demand the ECA be returned to its independent status. We feel it cannot be subject to ministerial control. Also, we cannot assume there will be benevolence on the part of the minister to give them some latitude that they have had in the last few years.

Let's look at another report tabled in the House on November 13, with regard to the Carseland Cominco/CIL Chemical Fertilizer Project. In that report, the authority recommended that:

When major industrial or resource development is proposed for new areas or where public interest is high, the Environment Conservation Authority should be required to hold public hearings or conduct an enquiry as provided for in Section 7 of The Environment Conservation Act (1970).

Mr. Speaker, here again, the Authority is not asking for the freedom to call or hold hearings. It is recommending it be required to do so. Mr. Speaker, is this the response of an agency that feels free to respond on behalf of Albertans? Perhaps it is an indication of the frustration and restraint it feels upon the freedom it should have.

I think this Assembly must respond to the pleas of the Environment Conservation Authority. We must return its freedom to initiate inquiries. We must also give serious consideration to the recommendations it has made.

In commenting on the point I have just made, we find that the Minister of Environment has said outside the House that the government is not ready to adopt this recommendation as public policy. Rather, he stated words to the effect that government is playing it by ear in calling ECA hearings. Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable. That's just not good enough, when we ask a body to do a job. The number of projects and their nature certainly demand ECA attention.

We recognize that ERCB hearings will be held on some of the projects mentioned, for example, the Dodds-Round Hill project, as they were on the Alberta Gas Ethylene Company Limited plant. Mr. Speaker, what we have to recognize is that these hearings by the ERCB are highly technical and not designed or intended to attend to public input on environmental matters.

However, if we look at the ECA, at the

present time it has much of the public confidence. Participation at the recent ECA hearings on the Red Deer River demonstrates this confidence the public has in the Authority. Concerns expressed there by many, on such matters as industrialization and other topics, certainly support the need for ECA hearings on such matters. We feel the Authority must be given the freedom to respond to such concerns, if not required by statute to respond.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter an era of rapid and potentially harmful growth in this province, with more and more Dodds-Round Hills, with equally harmful coal gasification projects to come forth in the future, we feel the public must be given its ombudsman for the environment. That ombudsman must have independence and freedom to review cases where he sees concern. The point of this whole resolution, Mr. Speaker, is that to do that, Sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 of The Environment Conservation Amendment Act, 1972 must be repealed.

This is the first step. I ask in this Assembly that serious consideration be given to that resolution and that the government, in its wisdom and objectivity, recognize the need to return the authority and independence the ECA once had. I can urge members of the Assembly to support that point of view.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer a few words on this resolution. I'd like to start off by possibly asking three questions of ourselves. In my mind, question number one would be, shouldn't the minister know what's going on in his department? I listened to the Member for Little Bow. He feels the Authority should have a free rein, go in whatever direction it wants to without any guidance, without any restrictions. He says the demand is greater now than it's ever been. I hope so -- but when you speak of demand, how do people like me or other MLAs get this Authority to act on our behalf, if we don't have any guidance from the minister? We can speak to the Authority. It can go in any direction it wants and say, you've just got to wait your turn. We'll hear you two or three years from now. What would it do differently than right now, I'd like to know? It has the authority from the minister to go about their hearings. How would it do it differently if it had a free rein?

Mr. Speaker, my second question is, have there been any refusals to this Authority by the minister? That I would like to know. If so, why and where? That is question number two.

The hon. Member for Little Bow spoke of restraint by the minister. The Authority feels it's being held back and it shouldn't be. Mr. Speaker, it's a surprise to me to listen to the member speaking today of loosening up the reins, let everybody go their direction, when just two days ago he said, "Albertans expect more budgetary responsibility." He goes on, Mr. Speaker, and says:

Mr. Speaker, in my judgment Albertans and most Canadians are calling at this time

for responsible action in monetary policy and in spending policy. They are calling for men and women in government to be willing to say no to most interest groups, lobbying groups, and other groups that motivate reckless spending from the public purse. These spenders, I feel at this time, would rather see our country spent into fiscal chaos and into a galloping monetary inflation. It is at this time we, as legislators, must take a stand.

Mr. Speaker, he goes on, saying that we're spending money "like drunken sailors". He says:

Let us lead, not as foolish and simple men of empty words and a shopping bag full of promises of one new government program after another, but as aware and concerned Canadians and Albertans who recognize [that they] will surely come to pass in this nation unless a positive response and responsible actions are taken now.

Mr. Speaker, if there were refusals by the minister, there would be a need for some correction. He says that the Authority "is asking to be asked". Well then, they should go to the minister and say, we've had a request to look into certain environmental problems in a certain area. I'm sure they will be recognized and not turned down by the minister.

If we let this go through, I'd like to see the hon. member ask the minister: what are they doing in Lac la Biche, Fort McMurray, or so on, on some problems? The minister wouldn't have any knowledge, so he couldn't answer the question. Then they would say, big deal, the minister doesn't even know what's going on in his department.

Mr. Speaker, I can't follow the words of the Member for Little Bow. He ends up saying:

Albertans expect their provincial government to get more serious about fiscal and budgetary restraint in government spending.

If we don't do that, and we let the Authority go on their own, what is the cost to us? Where do they start? Where do they stop? He ends up by saying:

Mr. Speaker, they expect restraint. [This] means saying no to wasteful bureaucrats and people who want to continue to enlarge our government in Alberta.

Just the opposite words [to what] he said today.

Mr. Speaker, my third question would be: who is asking for this change? Is it the opposition, or is it the Authority itself? I have never heard of the Authority asking for changes. I think by working together, after consultation with the minister, we can get the most done for the least spent.

Mr. Speaker, hearing the two speeches means one of two things to me: that when the hon. member spoke two days ago, [as] in Hansard, on the ninth, the speech wasn't his, he was just reading it for somebody else. Otherwise he wouldn't have turned around today and said, let's loosen up.

Mr. Speaker, if we go along with this resolution, what does it mean in dollars and cents? How much staff are we looking for to do all the things they have to do? He says "the demand is even greater" -- then how many more people will they have to have? How much bigger will our government get, contrary to his response of two days ago? Would they look into problems just in Alberta, or across Canada, or indeed across the world? What would be their budget, what would be their aim, and what would be their objectives? Those are the kinds of things I'd like to know first. Who do they answer to -- anybody, or nobody? I can see, Mr. Speaker, where the budget and staff needed to do the things that the hon. member speaks of would probably take all of our heritage fund, and then some.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in having priorities. In this case, who would set our priorities for this commission? Would it be themselves, would it be the minister? If the minister asked them to do a certain project because he thought, as government, it should be looked into, would they tell him, well, sorry you'll have to wait for two or three years, because we're on something else we think is better? I'm sure this Authority would have different views, such as we have in this House. What they might think is important might not be important to me, or the Member for Drumheller, or the one from Drayton Valley, or so on. That's the kind of thing we have to set up as a priority. Would they forever be in hearings -- from one hearing to the next, all over the country? When do they stop for their decisions?

Mr. Speaker, I wonder what we're elected for, if this Authority can go around without any consultation with the minister or MLAs. After all, if there were hearings in my area, I'd like to be responsible for them. Where does the blame go when the Authority sends in its final report? It doesn't go to the Authority. The first person to be condemned is the MIA for that area, plus the government. So, if I'm going to get the blame, I want part of the game.

Mr. Speaker, this Authority has worked well, as pointed out by the member, and I think it will continue to work well. I see no problems with consultation. It's like having a hired man. You tell him to do something, then you expect him to do it. You consult him, but if he starts to tell you what he should be doing and you're paying the shot, something should be looked into. I wonder what type of members we would have on this Environment Conservation Authority board.

Let's go back a few years. We have a lot of people concerned about conservation, and I guess I am too. What would they be looking into? Some of the things that come to my mind could be grazing leases. Will

they give authority to clear more grazing leases? What about our woodlot areas which are set aside for the small loggers? Would they come to a standstill because we have to have a hearing to find out if we can cut that tree, or that tree, or that one there? What about farmland clearing? How far do we go there? Will they become involved in this? Road construction through some of the areas -- that's got to be considered. What about our timber operations, coal mining, flood control, water run-off, and so on? All these things have to be initiated from some department, and in my mind it's best done by the minister.

Mr. Speaker, if we had the kind of Authority we might envision it would be -- let's go back to the early part of the century when this country was first developed. Some of our environmentalists today say we shouldn't cut one tree, we shouldn't do a thing. You know, if that existed in, say, 1900, Alberta wouldn't have developed at all. Homesteaders wouldn't have been able . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. member, and in fairness to other members who may be prepared to speak about the substance of the motion, it would seem that the motion should not occasion a debate on environmental or ecological matters in general. The narrow point of the debate is whether the powers of this board should be altered in the way suggested by the motion, and I would suggest that we should stay on that point.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's just the point I'm getting to. If we had this Authority going in the direction that the hon. member who initiated the resolution -- I just want to lead up to what the problems could be, and if it's not within the realm of the resolution, I'll try to get closer back to what I really want to say.

[interjections]
You'll get your turn.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make that clear, that if we don't have responsible people in the Authority and we don't have anybody guiding them, where will they get to? In what direction will they go? That's the thing that bothers me. I would like to suggest that we leave it the way it is, that if we have other concerns we can get local people involved, set up an advisory council after hearings to let the local people have some input. After all, they live there. They have their families there. They have an interest in the area. They've been there for many generations. This advisory council could then report to the minister, who in turn would report to this House.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I'd like to suggest that we give no time now for this kind of legislation, because if we expect our people to support us in a period of restraint, we must allow this government to have the necessary powers for the minister to show leadership and perform his duties well within the guidelines set out by this administration.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words on the resolution, and I want to start out by saying that I do not support the resolution. I want to give the reasons why I cannot support the change suggested -- namely, to go back to the original words in the act.

In my view, the suggestions in item (1) are contrary to responsible government. My idea of responsible government is that the minister must be held responsible for the actions of those in his department. When I look at the resolution sponsored by the leader of the hon. member's party, I read on page 8, No. 9, Section (3): "Ministers of Government are accountable". Now we're asked in the Legislature to assert our support that "Ministers of Government are accountable for all activities which take place within their departments apart from minor administrative matters."

My view of responsible government is that the minister takes responsibility and is accountable for all matters within that department, including "minor administrative matters". If the minister is not responsible, it is certainly not responsible government, because there's no way in which the general public can deal with a board. A board is appointed. They can stay there forever. As far as the general public is concerned, they must either resign on their own, or be discharged by whoever appointed them.

To ask that the minister not be held responsible for the actions of a board which he administers is a long, long way from my idea of responsible government. As a matter of fact, I think the more we do that is going to be the defeat of responsible government. I know there are some nice things about having a board which can take the brunt and the responsibilities, and the minister can simply say, well, go to the board. Or even having a board responsible to the Lieutenant Governor in Council -- the Lieutenant Governor in Council is an abstract body to many people on the street. Many don't even realize it is the cabinet or the government of the province. I think a minister is responsible to the Premier who appoints him, to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and together they're responsible to the Legislature, to the people of the province.

My whole study of responsible government places the responsibility that way. I always shudder when we get to a point where we're asking that the minister not be held responsible, that the minister is expected to appoint a board, then they go on their own happy way and do what they like, even though what they like might be good. Or it might be bad, or it might be indifferent, but the resolution is asking that they do what they like, without reference to the minister, and make a report afterwards to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. That's not responsible government. Not at all. If that is what was intended in the original act, that the board should do what it likes, it is a long way from my idea of responsible government.

I have every confidence in the board as set up. I have every confidence in the

chairman and in the members. I think the chairman is an outstanding man. But, by the same token, I think he should be under the direction of a minister who must account to the people. A board doesn't have to account for its actions to the people.

So what we're saying, is if a board is not responsible to a minister, to whom is the board going to be accountable? There's just no way it can account to the general public, and no way in which the general public can deal with it, except in an innocuous way of sending letters to a newspaper or that type of thing. The minister must take responsibility for the actions of this board.

We had a very definite example of that the other day when the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury asked a question of the hon. Minister of Environment. As a matter of fact, I had the question down. I was asking it in a different manner, but it was about the same thing: the hearings on the Red Deer River. If the board had, of its own volition, decided to hold these hearings on the Red Deer River, as mentioned by the member who just spoke, in what way could we expect an answer from the minister who may not even have been aware that such hearings were being held?

I think the fact that the minister arranged for the hearings -- directed the board to hold the hearings -- was an excellent thing. It gave the people an opportunity to express their views. As I said to the people in Drumheller when I appeared before that board, we're not here to start a fight with the people in the Innisfail area. Not at all. They have the same right as we have to express their views. They see it from their point of view. We see it from our point of view.

It makes me think of a leader in the Air Force when I was taking a course in navigation prior to navigating. He was pointing out it's very important that the navigator have a good point of view when he's navigating. He used as an illustration a couple of chaps who were out viewing a body. One of them said, "from my point of view this man died from a shotgun wound." The other fellow said, "from my point of view this man was a woman." Entirely different points of view when being looked at from a different angle.

The instructor in the Air Force used that to make a very important point to those of us who were endeavoring to learn the art of navigation so that, when we got up in the air in a blitz or were in a dogfight with enemy planes, we were using a proper point of view and making sure we were looking at it from the angle of everybody in that plane, not only from the angle of the navigator.

The point of view is important. But the point of view, in my view, is that it should be looked at by the minister. The minister had directed this board to carry out these studies. As I said to the people in Drumheller, we don't want to start a fight with the people of the Innisfail area. They see this dam on the Red Deer River from their point of view, and it

appears their point of view wasn't favorable. We, in the Drumheller area, saw it from our point of view, and it was very, very, very, very favorable, because it will mean that scores of our people will not be subjected to flood, and cost, and expense, and turmoil, and worry, and even sickness and death every spring.

When the thing is all done, this board reports, with or without a recommendation, to the minister who directed the study. Then reports, with or without a recommendation, to the final decision is going to be made by the minister and the Executive Council -- and properly so. If that decision is good, they will get the glory. If it is bad, they will have to take the lumps. Or maybe there will be a little bit of both. But the point I'm trying to make is that the minister is going to be held responsible -- and properly so.

I think it would be a very bad mistake indeed -- and every time this has been done I think it has proved to be a mistake -- when we get a board at arm's length which is not accountable through a minister to the Legislature.

So I cannot favor the change suggested. If the board has ideas of studies and investigations into environmental matters which have not come to the attention of the minister, the board has a responsibility to bring those to his attention. If there's something it wants to do in the interest of conservation, it has every right -- not only a right but a responsibility -- to bring that to the attention of the minister who will then decide, in the public interest, whether he should direct that that study or investigation be carried out. Because he -- and not the board -- will have to answer to the public for that investigation or study.

I believe today it's important to look at environmental effects on everything, but I don't go along with having the extreme ideas of environmental control forced upon the people. As was just mentioned, this could mean that we would not have a coal mine in the province. If the government feels that we should not have a coal mine in the province, then that decision can be made by the government. But if that decision was made I certainly couldn't support it. I think there's a proper place for coal mines. But if environmental damage is being done through coal mines, there's nothing today to stop the minister from saying to this board, carry out an investigation and report back so we can have all the facts. I think that's what we want in the final analysis.

In my view there are two things involved. One is getting the facts in regard to environmental effects. That can be done through either the initiative of the board by going to the minister, the initiative of the people by going to the minister, the initiative of the MLA or the Legislature by going to the minister, or the initiative of the minister himself or the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Secondly, after that is done, in my view the minister should be held responsible and accountable to the Legislature and

to the people. Consequently, I cannot support the resolution.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I very much welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. Before I get into the points I'd like to make, I'd like to offer some general background information for the assistance of the members, with respect to the make-up and, as I see it, the duties and responsibilities of the Environment Conservation Authority, and a couple of comments on the way it works.

Presently, the Authority has an authorized staff of 20; 19 of those positions are filled to date, and that includes the 3 Authority members. So we're looking at 3 members plus a support staff of 16 persons. As some members may be aware, there's a fourth Authority member commencing work as of January 1, 1976 -- Mrs. Margaret Noble. She'll bring a woman's viewpoint as well as other skills and abilities to the Environment Conservation Authority.

I was rather puzzled by the remarks of the mover of the motion, because on two occasions he used the word "ombudsman" in referring to the role of the Environment Conservation Authority. Nowhere in the act, Mr. Speaker, is that kind of role contemplated. We have an Alberta ombudsman who is qualified to deal with matters relating to environmental concerns, if that is necessary. But the act is quite specific with respect to the kinds of things the Authority is supposed to hear.

As for holding hearings, they're able to hold three kinds. The first one would be on the general topic, that is, a topic that might be of wide interest to all citizens of Alberta. The second one would be on a specific issue. We just had a good example of that kind of hearing being finished with respect to a proposed dam on the Red Deer River. That's a very specific issue. The third kind of hearing they're authorized to deal with is an appeal with respect to stop orders issued by the Minister of Environment under The Clean Air Act, The Clean Water Act, or The Department of the Environment Act. They do act as an appeal board in those specific cases.

I'm quite pleased with the procedure and pattern of activity the Authority has developed over the past few years, Mr. Speaker. I think the old government which first conceived the idea of the Authority, and the present government which has improved it and got it really going, can both take credit in the fact that this is a model for this kind of organization, certainly in Canada.

Just as a matter of interest, I've recently been reviewing the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, 1975 just passed at their most recent session. To my way of thinking, it comes nowhere near to being as satisfactory as our legislation. If hon. members across the way think the minister here has authority to control hearings, they ought to read this act which was passed by some pretty interesting members in Ontario.

Getting back to the process of how

hearings are held: first of all, when it's decided a hearing is required on a specific issue, the staff is assigned and the information is prepared. That in itself is quite a procedure. Some hon. members will be aware of the eight volumes of highly sophisticated data and information prepared for citizens with respect to the Red Deer River hearings. Once that information is assembled and printed, it is made available to the public. Very recently the Authority has been using the technique of setting up what they call information centres to advertise where the information is available. In some cases pre-public-hearing meetings are held by way of orientation meetings in order to explain to citizens who are interested and affected what the hearings are all about, what the information that's been prepared means, and where they can get assistance in interpreting that information. You then go through the process of the hearings themselves.

I think the Authority has a good record of trying to involve the private, or average, citizen in all respects. Certainly, anyone who's interested in appearing at hearings has been able to do so. There's no extra attention paid to the professional adviser who comes in on a high-fee basis. I think it's commendable the way the Authority has gone out of its way to hear the average citizen on the street, really just speaking on behalf of his community.

The proceedings of the hearings are always taped. They are then transcribed and submitted to the government. The summary report is written. Later, of course, a final report with the recommendations of the Authority is submitted to the government. At that point it's treated like any other board or major authority submitting recommendations. It comes back to what the hon. Member for Drumheller was saying: at that level the elected responsibility has to phase into the procedure, and the cabinet and sometimes the government has the responsibility of assessing the recommendations contained therein and acting on them.

It's very interesting, because of the nature of the subject we're dealing with, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes the government is considering recommendations of its own appointed Authority with respect to projects of which it is a proponent. The last two hearings are good examples of this. If I can use the Paddle River hearings and the Red Deer River hearings, both of these schemes or plans for the changing of the environment -- the control of water resources -- were proposals put forward by government. The appointed Authority was then asked to hold hearings and in turn feed back its recommendations. I think that's rather interesting when the proponent, which is government itself, is really put on trial by the public -- if I can use that terminology.

If the members will bear in mind the make-up and the support staff of the Authority and the procedures used, I think it's interesting now to look at what is presently on the Authority's platter.

In January of 1976, it is going to be

holding hearings in the northwest region of the province, in the Peace River area, on the matter of erosion. Preparation work for that, of course, is well under way. A final decision is still to be made on the matter of public hearings on pipelines that come into Alberta from Arctic points of commencement. In that case, I should say we have kept a watching brief on the Berger Commission hearings. As a result of the way those proceed, we'll be able to tell whether it may be necessary to bring those kinds of hearings into Alberta.

Another major hearing, of the kind that is of interest to the broad society of Alberta, is the hearing on the urban environment and industrial development. Because of its very major scope, that has entailed a lot of work, a lot of preparation, a lot of meetings with municipal governments and regional planning commissions. In 1976, we're planning some regional conventions to deal with the matter, to finalize the terms of reference, so when the hearings themselves commence at a later date, the municipal governments and regional planning commissions will be well prepared for them, and will have agreed to the terms of reference.

Another one under consideration, on which no final decision has been made -- but I'm discussing this with Dr. Trost, the chairman of the Authority -- is the matter of forest utilization and its impact on the environment.

The last one definitely scheduled for the coming months is the matter of ground water management. I think that one also will be of broad interest to the province as a whole. The research work and consulting services for that are well under way. Of course, we have to consider the two specific recommendations for additional hearings with respect to the oil sands and future major industrial projects, mentioned by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

I think it's important for members to recognize the very delicate three-way balance that exists between the ERCB, the Environment Conservation Authority, and the line department of government involved, the Department of Environment. I should say that we've had this under review because of the increasing interest of the general public in environmental matters. I know that what traditionally has been the role, for instance, of the ERCB in commenting on environmental concerns perhaps won't be the pattern we will follow in the years ahead.

When we look at the matter of hearings, as I see it, what has been suggested through our public advisory committee or by members in the House is that we have three choices in front of us. We could have hearings on public demand; we could have hearings at the choice of the Authority itself; or we could have hearings by the Authority in consultation with the minister. We have chosen the third one, I think for very obvious reasons.

It's important that these hearings are held in concert and scheduled with major developments happening within the province. As the hon. Member for Drumheller pointed out so very well, it's no use us thinking

of building a dam on the Red Deer River if the Authority is tied up for another two or three years with hearings it has predetermined it should hold on its own.

I think it's important that these hearings are held at the right time, for two reasons, Mr. Speaker. Number one, it's very important, as Alberta goes into the very dynamic seventies and eighties with our petrochemical developments, our dispersal of industry throughout the province, and the growth this province is going to see, that the information we have available is given to the public. This is what the ECA does. It's also equally important that the public is given the opportunity to assess that information and respond to the government, so public opinion and public reaction can be part of the decision-making process.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I think I would want to urge hon. members to defeat this resolution. I suggest the present system is working very well. We think we are going to be able to have more hearings and more involvement by the addition of the fourth member to the Authority. It's possible that some of the smaller hearings can be held simultaneously with two members on each of two subcommittees of the Authority. We're looking at those kinds of possibilities for expanding the role of the Authority. But I think it is very important, because of the way Alberta is growing and the role of responsible government, that we leave the act as it is.

MR. POSTER: Mr. Speaker, there was some communication from members of the opposition to the Government House Leader to the effect that there may be some extension of the time of the House to deal with this motion this afternoon. In view of the fact that the time has now passed, I wonder if the House might agree to allow the Member for Spirit River-Fairview to speak for a few minutes on this motion and to adjourn debate, and subsequent to his remarks, to return to the Order Paper and deal with the private bill.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. NOTLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to make a few comments on the resolution before us today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment briefly first of all on two arguments we've heard this afternoon. While I don't agree with either, I have to admit there is at least some justice in the argument.

The first was raised by the hon. Member for Drumheller, who suggested that in order for the system of responsible government to operate properly it was necessary for the ECA to make its decisions not on its own but rather in concert with the Minister of Environment. Therefore, the Minister of Environment would be responsible and accountable to the Legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, by and large, I accept the concept of accountability. Certainly, there's no question about many of the boards and commissions that operate in

the Province of Alberta that there should be accountability in the Legislature. The other day I had no difficulty at all in accepting the principle that the decisions of the Local Authorities Board should be subject to final approval, where a recommendation was made to cabinet or to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

But Mr. Speaker, it seems to me there is a difference between a board which, in fact, is making decisions and is semi-administrative in nature on one hand, and an agency which is largely set up as a watchdog on the other. It's my recollection that when the ECA was first established in this province -- I believe the year was 1971 -- the then Minister of the Environment in effect referred to the ECA as an environmental ombudsman. I think there is an important distinction here. Where you have an agency set up in a watchdog category, it seems to me there is some argument that it needs at least some independence to fulfil its functions legitimately.

Mr. Speaker, while I understand the reasoning behind the hon. Member for Drumheller, I would argue that the distinction between other boards and commissions and the concept of the ECA, as I originally understand it, is such that the arguments for the motion as presented by the Member for Little Bow are reasonable. The objection that this is somehow an interference with responsible government is not really valid as it relates to the ECA.

I had a little difficulty following the argument of the hon. Minister of Environment as he outlined the various options for the ECA, suggesting that one could be as a result of public demand, the second, the Environment Conservation Authority making decisions itself, and the third, decisions being made in conjunction with the minister. If I quote him correctly, my understanding is that one of the arguments for the decisions being made in concert with the minister is that it would facilitate scheduling of hearings.

Mr. Speaker, with great respect, I find that a little hard to accept, because the officials, especially the members of the ECA who have been conducting the affairs of that agency for the last four or five years, are as cognizant as anybody else of the basic moves and developments in this province. I just find it a little hard to understand why they need the consultation of the minister in order to know that if there's going to be a development in Dodds-Round Hill, the oil sands, the Dunvegan dam, or whatever the case may be, these are major issues and, as such, there should be hearings.

The question that perhaps when a dam is being proposed, the ECA may be busy in another area -- perhaps that may be so, Mr. Speaker, but that seems to be not an argument against the autonomy of the ECA to decide what hearings to hold, but rather a question of whether we should expand the number of people in the ECA and employed by it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal more specifically with some of the reasons I

support the principle that there should be autonomy for the ECA in terms of deciding what areas should be examined.

We've had from the ECA, I believe -- and I concur in the comments made not only by the mover of the resolution, but by several other speakers -- pretty sound leadership in this question of environmental protection. I wish to go on record as applauding the work of the Environment Conservation Authority in this province.

Having said that, though, Mr. Speaker, there are some rather glaring areas where there hasn't been activity by the ECA. It would appear, Mr. Speaker, the reason that is the case is because the minister in his wisdom has not decided, in consultation with the ECA, to hold hearings. I cite the following recommendation on page 37 of the Review of Interaction between Migratory Birds and Athabasca Oil Sands Tailings Ponds:

That the Environment Conservation Authority be requested by government to prepare for and hold comprehensive public hearings at an appropriate time on all environmental aspects of the development of the Oil Sands.

Mr. Speaker, I simply suggest to the members of this Legislature that when you consider a development as vast as the Syncrude project, especially with its implications for ecology and the environment, or even for that matter the continued operation of Great Canadian Oil Sands, the need for a public hearing is pretty vital. But moreover, I would go one step beyond that, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the Environment Conservation Authority should in fact hold public hearings as a matter of course when major developments are considered.

Mr. Speaker, the current debate over the so-called STOP disclosures and the emission of SO₂ in the atmosphere in the Fort McMurray area confirms, in my view, the wisdom of the Environment Conservation Authority in calling for full-scale public hearings. I would hope the government would take it upon itself to announce very soon that there will be hearings by the ECA. I believe the ECA is the only body in the province which is going to be able to convince the people of Alberta that environmental concerns that have been raised by the organization called STOP, by the consultant who prepared a paper for the official opposition, by many others, are going to be adequately examined.

Mr. Speaker, I recall raising a question in this Legislature in April 1974 concerning the report of the Conservation and Utilization Committee on the oil sands. This report had been tabled in the Legislature a few days previously. The appendices of the report were recently released by STOP, and the minister indicated at that time that they didn't really add that much to the initial report. I would argue with him that in fact the appendices did underline many of the concerns of the scientists who did the research, and perhaps made their concern more dramatic. Mr. Speaker, I raise this issue because if one

reads the report which was tabled in the House, that report in itself is sufficiently disturbing -- that there should be independent hearings by the Environment Conservation Authority.

I just want to quote very briefly from pages 4 and 5 of the report, Mr. Speaker. This deals with the emission of SO₂ and other pollutants, and with the topography, the river valley, and the climate of the region. I would just quote:

However, if the levels of SO₂ and other pollutants in the area are high then the fogs will be "dirty". Water fog and SO₂ combine to produce droplets composed of dilute solutions of sulphuric acid. These could present a severe health hazard (as in the great London smog of 1952) and cause damage to property and vegetation in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just run over that again: "... present a severe health hazard (as in the great London smog of 1952)".

Mr. Speaker, so much of the concern dramatized by the information released by STOP in October of this year was actually contained in the initial report which was tabled in this legislature. I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances of this information being tabled in the House, that the government would have taken the initiative itself and asked the Environment Conservation Authority to do an in-depth analysis of the environmental problems caused by SO₂ emissions. Mr. Speaker, more than a year and a half slipped by before the issue surfaced again as a matter of concern. Again, in listening to the minister speak this afternoon, I did not hear, as I would have thought we would hear, at least some commitment from the government as to how it's going to deal with this problem.

Mr. Speaker, during the fall session questions were put to the minister about the emission of 287 long tons of SO₂ every day. In response, the minister indicated that Syncrude is using the best technology available when the designs were developed. But what I think Albertans would like to know, Mr. Speaker, is whether the government, its agencies or, for that matter, Syncrude, since the tabling of this report in April 1974 -- whether discussions have been held between the appropriate authorities to analyse the cost of installing in Syncrude the best possible emission control features. It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the best possible emission control features now would reduce the emission of sulphur from 287 long tons to approximately 40 long tons.

DR. BACKUS: On a point of order. If the hon. Member for Whitecourt was spoken to for discussing environmental matters rather than the subject [inaudible], I raise the question of whether hearing all about the long tons of sulphur and so on is relevant to the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: I would have to agree with the hon. Member for Grande Prairie that perhaps we're skirting the limits of relevance, although as I understand the argument of the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, he is giving an example of what might occur in the event a hearing were not held, and also an example of a situation in which a hearing was recommended. To that extent, I would have to say his remarks are relevant to the resolution.

MR. NOTLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That was exactly the point I was attempting to make. With the indulgence of the Member for Grande Prairie, I will proceed to make it.

The basic argument was and is that this kind of information was tabled in the Legislature in April 1974. The resolution we are debating is whether the Environment Conservation Authority should have the power to undertake major public hearings on its own volition. We already have their recommendation, in the report filed the other day, that they would like to see a major study on the oil sands.

The point I'm making and the reason I raise this question is that even though this report on sulphur emission was tabled in the House in April 1974, the minister did not take it upon himself to use the power we gave him in 1972 by the amendments, which are specifically being discussed in the resolution, to call upon the ECA to conduct full-scale hearings on the oil sands. Mr. Speaker, that's the concern I expressed, and it seems to me that relates directly to the resolution we have before us.

Mr. Speaker, there are many areas I could cite in order to further demonstrate the need for some latitude on the part of the Environment Conservation Authority. Even the fact that the Government of Alberta is now involved in Syncrude to the extent that public money is being invested in that project, in many ways, Mr. Speaker, makes it more difficult for the public to have confidence in the government itself properly acting as a watchdog. Why? Because the more concern there is about the environment, the more money has to be directed toward environmental controls. The more money directed toward environmental controls, in all likelihood, the larger the public investment. So in many ways, Mr. Speaker, the announcement last February of both the federal and provincial government participating in the Syncrude project develops, if you like, a very real conflict of interest which, in my judgment, can only be resolved if you have an agency with a reputation for fair-mindedness, impartiality, and toughness, which the ECA presently has.

In response to one of the comments raised -- I forget whether it was by the minister or the Member for Drumheller -- I suggest the responsibility and accountability of the ECA should be to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. I think that is clearly who it is responsible

to, not necessarily to the cabinet as such but to the entire Legislature. It is an ombudsman, a watchdog, and I see its accountability right here. In this case the buck doesn't just stop with the cabinet. It stops with all 75 members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we could look at some of the other developments on the horizon. For example, what are we going to do with the Dodds-Round Hill project? Is this going to be a situation where the only hearings conducted are by the ERCB? If it is, that will indeed be unfortunate, because the ECA has the authority to take in the broad scope of problems which are necessary if the public interests of the people, especially those living in the area, are to be protected before a major decision is made. I would certainly call upon the government to state clearly that they are going to ask the ECA to conduct hearings before Dodds-Round Hill is considered one way or the other.

I can think of another example in the Peace River country. There is now a preliminary investigation as to whether a dam is feasible at Dunvegan. Now I'm the first to say, Mr. Speaker, that we wouldn't want to see an ECA hearing on the Dunvegan dam until such time as we find out whether it's feasible. If it's not feasible from an engineering point of view, obviously there's no point in wasting public money on a hearing.

But, Mr. Speaker, if and when the government receives information that it is feasible to proceed with a dam at Dunvegan, as a representative of one of the Peace ridings, I would say it would be in the public interest if the ECA were then able to hold hearings so the people of the area would have a vehicle which is respected, to which they can make their views known and present their arguments on the dam, either pro or con. I say that as a person who has argued in this Legislature on many occasions for the study, which is now taking place, on the Dunvegan dam. So I see a number of important areas in the province, Mr. Speaker.

When he introduced the resolution, the hon. member talked about the petrochemical industry in the city of Red Deer. At the present time we do have hearings, but I'm not so sure the government hasn't already made up its mind on the dam. I hope not, but I'm a little puzzled as to whether they will be able to obtain the water necessary for the Alberta Gas Ethylene project, as well as the additional development in the Red Deer area, unless the dam proceeds.

Might I just say, Mr. Speaker, that I was rather interested when I attended a seminar at the Red Deer Lindsay-Thurber Composite High School. There were about 180 students in social studies classes attending this particular seminar. I put to them what their attitudes on the dam were and whether they agreed with it. As a matter of fact, I hadn't spoken one way or the other on the matter. I was rather astonished that 160 opposed the dam, about 12 favored it, and 8 were undecided. I just . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is now getting away from the point to where he is starting to take a poll on an environmental topic rather than dealing with the functions of this board.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly admit that was an aside and really wasn't meant to be a basic part of the argument. But I thought it was sort of interesting in passing, because here was a group of students and a sort of mini-Gallup poll was taken.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I believe the arguments which can be presented to this House for some degree of flexibility by the Environment Conservation Authority in holding hearings are valid ones. We have an authority which is not only recognized by the people of Alberta but is respected, for that matter, throughout Canada. I personally think we would be well advised to repeal the legislation passed in this House in 1972, to follow the recommendations of the hon. Member for Little Bow, and to give the Environment Conservation Authority the latitude it requires in order to be what it was set out to be in the first place, an environmental ombudsman. In my judgment, Mr. Speaker, this resolution merits support.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the motion before us . . .

MR. SPEAKER: My understanding of the agreement between the two sides of the House was that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview would conclude the debate. We have now intruded to some extent on the Thursday hour for debating private members' public bills. If the understanding of the Assembly is unanimously otherwise, of course the hon. Member for Drayton Valley might wish to continue.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, if I might speak on a point of order. If the hon. Member for Drayton Valley wishes to speak, I suppose since I've had the opportunity to speak past the normal adjournment time and my bills are coming up, I certainly would have no objection if he wishes to speak for a few minutes.

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. I believe the understanding before the House was that the Member for Spirit River-Fairview would be allowed to speak and then adjourn debate. I know that's what I voted for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: We would then have to pass on to the next order of business, unless there is unanimous consent otherwise, since it is in the Standing Orders.

MR. ZANDER: Mr. Speaker, I agree with your ruling, then, that I would have the opportunity to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Member for Drayton Valley adjourn the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Bill 204
The Alberta Social and
Economic Planning Act

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, I had hoped we would have a little more time to discuss Bill 204. I hope the Member for Spirit River-Fairview is appreciative of the generosity, I would say, of this House in permitting him to speak and not permitting some of our other members to follow through on that resolution. It just so happens, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 204 was a bill presented last spring by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview, entitled The Alberta Social and Economic Planning Act.

Basically, Mr. Speaker, to bring the members of the Assembly up to date with the intent of the act, it is really designed to set up the kind of machinery which would be used to handle the heritage trust fund. I think several members spoke on the act this spring and entertained their views about some of the problem areas of the bill. I will try then not to cover the same problem areas.

But in reviewing the bill, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to some sections or subsections that I have a problem determining as to the intent. For example, Section 3(4) says:

The Provincial Treasurer [will] make a report to the . . . Assembly within thirty days of the end of each calendar quarter, or at the earliest practical date thereafter on which the Assembly is sitting, on the results of the financial operation of Government over such calendar quarter.

That section, Mr. Speaker, gives me some trouble, because it says two things: one, that they could meet at the end of the quarter, or defer decision on a major fund until the sitting following that quarter. That could be as much as three to six months later. When one realizes the potential heritage trust fund has something in the area of a billion dollars -- which is almost incomprehensible to anyone in this House, in fact in the province, it's such a vast sum -- I would think that that section would have to be clarified to some degree before it would really be meaningful.

Section 3(2)(3) is rather vague. It reminds me of the sort of clause the Premier of British Columbia might like to have included in legislation. It's a general clause, and perhaps I might quote the wording in it for the understanding of the members.

AN HON. MEMBER: The former premier.

MR. COOKSON: It could very well be the former premier, and time will tell, Mr. Speaker.

The report of the . . . Treasurer shall contain . . . an identification of all public funds, however held, which are surplus to those required for the operation of Government or to meet the Government's financial commitments during the ensuing months, having regard to projected revenues during the ensuing months.

That's the second subsection. And the other:

On the basis of the information . . . in his report, the . . . Treasurer shall recommend to the Assembly what amount is surplus to the requirements of Government and may prudently be transferred to the Heritage Trust Fund.

Now that's essentially the sort of situation that the Government of British Columbia, the NDP government, found itself in, following the defeat of the Social Credit government. It had built up a substantial reserve of funds, something similar to the heritage trust fund as we are designing it, and our friend, Mr. Barrett, managed to get his fingers on this, and depleted the reserve. Then, as I understand it, he had to proceed to borrow \$100 million from the Arab OPEC countries in order to finance his operations.

This kind of vague setting would likely make it possible for any government, even a Progressive Conservative government, to weasel its way around some kind of act which, in order to change, must come back into the Legislature. I would hate to think that we will make our legislation so vague that we can tap this fund willy-nilly, depending on the whims of the political atmosphere throughout the province. So that particular section needs some tightening up.

In Section 5, the Member for Spirit River-Fairview has further problems in that he says as follows:

The . . . Governor in Council shall appoint a Social and Economic Planning Council, the general object of which is to recommend to the . . . Assembly social and economic goals and beneficial projects . . .

Then I go back to the definition of a beneficial project. It says in fact that it is:

work or undertaking which promotes or enhances the long-term social and economic well-being of present and future Albertans;

. . . What he's really saying is that the [council] is to recommend to the Assembly social and economic goals and social and economic goals. It's a small thing, but I really don't know what the intent was to include that term "beneficial projects".

That particular section then goes on: ". . . and to manage the administration of the fund . . ." that is, to set up this social and economic planning council, ". . . in accordance with the directions of the Legislative Assembly."

Now, Mr. Speaker, can we stand here and imagine that we are going to give to -- and I'll come to this later -- four men and four women the total authority to manage the administration of this fund: \$1 billion-plus at this time, \$2 billion later on, \$3 billion, et cetera, et cetera. It seems incomprehensible that we could even consider giving that much authority to eight people, regardless of their sex, even in Women's Year.

Section 6(2) says that: "The Council shall consist of eight (8) persons of which four shall be women . . ." Now it doesn't say anything about the other four. I presume that the Member for Spirit River-Fairview is implying that the other four shall be men. I really don't know why this is put in here. I suppose it's designed to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. It does seem that we are now getting into a committee stage on details of the bill. Perhaps the hon. member would like to return to the principle of the bill which seems to be plain and fairly simple.

MR. COOKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the same problem as the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. He has difficulty with the principle of the bill. I will try to direct my remarks to the actual principle of the bill, but in doing that I had to draw attention, Mr. Speaker, to some of the weaknesses. This particular section really isn't necessary. It spells out that a member has to be a part of industry and commerce, or an educator, and so on. It would create some real problems, because when I started looking around the Assembly there were a number who weren't included in this listing.

The bill has some basic weaknesses. The principle seems to be covered in Section 11: the council, through deliberations, would deal with the social and economic goals of the province.

I have real trouble, Mr. Speaker, with the term "social". I tried to check it out. I suppose it means services which are designed to help people. In that respect I think the principle has some merit, because we do have to provide services for people. But I would like to think, Mr. Speaker, that services to people are actually paid for from taxes directed toward people. In other words, at the present time the budget of the Province of Alberta is somewhere in the area of \$2.3 billion a year. Almost 40 or perhaps 50 per cent of that money comes from depletable resources. When those resources are gone, they will be gone forever.

If we start including under the principle the word "social", and start tapping our depleting resources for this kind of purpose, it isn't going to be very long down the road until our depletable

resources are gone, eaten up by social services. I'm talking about education, which is important, hospital costs, extremely important, municipal services, and so on. These are services to people, and they're important. But I think we should understand the principle that most of those services should basically be served by taxing people. The other funds derived from depleting resources and so on should be used for other purposes.

To expand on that, perhaps I can outline a few thoughts that I had with regard to the heritage trust fund. I think the Member for Calgary Buffalo referred to the last part, and that is general terminology again, which does in a sense deal with the principle. It says,

. . . goals for the ownership structure of the economy and for re-distribution of wealth, goals for regional planning within Alberta, environmental standards and the character of our cities.

It sounds like something again out of Marxist philosophy, and can readily be attributed to an academic socialist. In that respect, I pay a compliment to the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. He's at least fairly consistent in this respect.

To say a word or two and follow through a little bit on the heritage trust fund -- it's rather timely, because we have tabled the potential trust fund act in the Legislature, and this is Bill 74. In a sense, it does deal with the principle that I suppose the Member for Spirit River-Fairview was trying to express in his delivery. The heritage trust fund spells out the amount that should go into such a fund. I think this is important. I think as soon as we start deviating from this kind of principle, per cent or whatever, it should come into the Legislature and be debated.

Mr. Speaker, it's so easy for any government -- and I consider our own just as guilty -- to tap sources of funding, particularly during election years. I think this fund has to be over and above that sort of philosophy. The way to do it is to pass legislation in the Assembly which makes it impossible to deviate from that kind of philosophy without bringing it back into the Legislature and properly debating it.

There were sections in The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act with which I'm not in total agreement. I know we will have a chance, Mr. Speaker, to debate this at a later date. I think it's timely that the government has brought in the basic philosophy behind the act in conjunction with The Alberta Social and Economic Planning Act which was brought in last spring, in order to clarify some of the direction indicated in the bill of the Member for Spirit River-Fairview.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with the following things which have not been spelled out clearly in Bill 204, The Alberta Social and Economic Planning Act. I'm sorry the Member for Spirit River-Fairview has not been able to do this, because I think it's incumbent and vitally

important that the Assembly set some kind of guidelines, regulations if you wish, that can be passed in this Legislature that clearly spell out priorities in terms of spending these vast sums of money.

In this respect, I'm not necessarily talking about social programs which tend to have no return, tend to escalate, and to take a good portion of the total budget of this province at the present time. Those kinds of expenditures have to be supported by people. If they can't be supported by people, I don't know whether we really need them.

This is a problem the British Columbia government ran into with its new cabinet. It had a large number of incompetent people in the front and back rows who didn't know how to handle money. The result is that they had a vast deficit before long. I see the Speaker frowning again -- I'll try to stick to the recommendations, Mr. Speaker. I have to get that in once in a while.

As I spell them out, one of the recommendations in using this kind of money is that wherever the fund is spent, no matter how it's spent, it should not overlap with other kinds of expenditure in the province. Basically what I'm saying is, we have formulas, Mr. Speaker, for expenditure in the areas of hospitals, schools, and recreation. The formulas administer funds throughout the province, I think in an equitable manner, in that they are basically based on the population, on a per capita. We have to be careful that we don't start interfering with that normal flow of funds throughout the province. We have to ask ourselves, what is the money going to be used for? If we can't answer the question, it's to be used for a special purpose over and above the funding, I don't think it falls in the category of what we want to use the funds for.

I would also like to say that we have to satisfy ourselves that the fund is to be used for the welfare of the whole province. In this respect, Mr. Speaker, I have again to get a little political and suggest to you that the Government of Alberta, the Progressive Conservative government, was responsible for the program of decentralization that has made all Albertans feel a part of the Province of Alberta. We talk about decentralization. It has to answer this question: is it something that can be used for all the people of Alberta?

Again to refer to the basic principle of the bill, Mr. Speaker, which I know I have to do continually: the principle is to bring back this fund, as the Member for Spirit River-Fairview suggested, and get it passed or rejected, whatever, in this Legislature. In order to do that, we have to have some priorities, don't we? We have to know how we're going to spend this fund. I'm simply giving some direction in this regard.

We have to encourage private enterprise. Any time we start pouring funds into this province and we can't say to ourselves, we're encouraging private enterprise, that cuts square across the philosophy of this government. That has to be answered. Whenever we get a massive fund

that's going to be directed into whatever -- and that cuts a bit into the social programs of the province, which I'm sorry to say, in some regards, but it has to be said -- in order for this government, this province, to grow in a healthy manner, we're going to have to answer the question: is the fund going to help private enterprise? It has to deal with basic needs, Mr. Speaker, of the people of Alberta. When I say basic needs, I'm talking about the very things that make it successful to operate in a private-enterprise province.

I was rather amused in the last week or two. I think the Member for Edmonton Kingsway was putting forth quite a bit of heat with regard to putting a roof on some stadium in the city, when we have, Mr. Speaker, 400 communities in the Province of Alberta that don't have water and sewer. Now think about that. Four hundred communities in the province that don't even have the basic necessities of proper sanitary facilities. And we're talking about putting a roof on a stadium that's going to cost some \$40 to \$50 million? Well, the city fathers got wise to that, thankfully. They've rejected that concept. But I don't blame the Member for Edmonton Kingsway for trying, because . . .

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, if I may. The hon. member should understand clearly my point that I was going to make . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. Perhaps the debate between the two hon. members might be chaired by someone else.

[laughter]

DR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's very important for clarification. It's only for the foundation on the stadium and not the whole stadium.

MR. SPEAKER: I think we should put a roof on this and just get back to the . . . [inaudible]

MR. COOKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude, because I'd like to hear some other debate on this particular bill. I think it's important, when recommendations come into this Assembly, that one of the other guidelines is that we move into the undeveloped parts of the province. I'm going to give a plug for the Minister of Transportation, because he's responsible for getting some transportation into that north country and developing those resources.

I'm a little off the principle again, Mr. Speaker, but I'll conclude by saying, whatever is done, whatever recommendations come in for the use of this fund, that we answer this principle: we must take all the raw materials manufactured in the province and convert them to the secondary and third stages, or whatever. This is going to help the whole province.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, Bill 204 has some merit. It has too many problems. I reject it. But I would like to welcome debate on the potential future of the heritage trust fund.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, in speaking to Bill 204, The Alberta Social and Economic Planning Act, first of all, I note the hon. member who sponsored the bill indicated that one of the main principles was the idea of a council. It is to that principle I'd like to address the first portion of my comments.

I think the idea of a council can be very effective in the right circumstances. But I'm not convinced the proposition advanced here is the proper circumstance. We've listened this afternoon to an earlier debate on the Environment Conservation Authority which, as I read it, is a council of sorts, different in intent from this one. Part of the debate this afternoon was about whether the authority would be self-directed or responsible to the Assembly. It seems to me the very same principle is involved in this bill. Mr. Speaker, I should say I have a feeling about this council which I had about the Environment Conservation Authority.

Since I had been unsure whether the opportunity would afford itself for me to speak on the other matter this afternoon, perhaps I could indicate here one concern I have about these independent councils. The concern really is, how much they can direct themselves, to whom they are responsible, and how rapidly they grow. To use as an illustration the Environment Conservation Authority, which we discussed, that Authority started out with funding from this Legislature of a quarter of a million dollars about three years ago, and the budget this year is \$732,000. And yet, just a couple of days ago, we had a very lengthy discussion in the Chamber about the growth of government and the need for expenditures in certain areas.

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned when we see suggestions of more councils, unless we have quite a clear idea of what size and how far they're going to develop. I think this council has a different role than the Environment Conservation Authority in the sense that the one authority deals with what I would presume, in part of its activity, to be hard fact, scientific fact.

The council proposed here would deal with social and economic issues. Mr. Speaker, I would think this council, if it began to hold public hearings, would be like a pot of sugar before flies. I think it would just attract all the social mobilizers, all the academics who have a particular view of the nature and structure of society which -- fair enough, they're entitled to their view. But I'm not sure they're entitled to have a forum in which to express their view all over the province, paid for by the government and the citizens of the province. That's what I see would become of this particular council if it began holding public hearings.

We well know that social issues and many economic issues are determined on the basis of subjective value judgments, and each one of us has different value judgments. Every time we get ourselves involved in public hearings and the recommendations come to this chamber, one of the questions I ask myself is, who appeared

before the public hearing? A group of people who are representative of the public at large? A group of people representative of a very narrow area? A group of people with a special interest who had the time to squeak, hopefully to get the grease? Just what is the summary of a public hearing? What value is it? I think it's a question that we have to address ourselves to very, very closely, because at times in this House we have to decide whether the wishes of a small group of our society should be regarded sufficiently to prevent or block what may be deemed to be to the greater good of society. It's bound to happen.

The illustration of Dodds-Round Hill, which isn't nearly as difficult as an expenditure in education or an expenditure in health matters, is much simpler because you can put dollar figures on the Dodds-Round Hill agricultural value, if you wish. You may not be able to put it in terms of the value of the family friends that various farmers living there have acquired over time, but you certainly can in terms of the productivity and value to society. That's a simple matter compared to research and education.

I mention research and education because I hearken back to a body which did exist in this province, which dealt with social and economic planning to a degree -- it was becoming more involved in economic planning. The Alberta Human Resources Research Council got into this area, and I remember reports it produced. It had a vision of the future of Alberta. I wasn't ever sure whether it was recommending it as a future for Alberta. Certainly the Social Credit party wasn't too enthused about the future that it . . .

MR. CLARK: Some aspects of it anyway.

MR. YOUNG: That's right.

While it seemed to be accurate in its projection of the one future, it certainly wasn't accurate in its projection of the future of rural Alberta . . .

MR. CLARK: They were working on a rollback.

MR. YOUNG: . . . because when a different group of persons became the government, with a broader and clearer vision of what could become of the Province of Alberta and our rural towns, villages, and farms, we were able to change completely the future which had been forecast in that particular report.

Mr. Speaker, returning then to the very first principle of a council which would go around and try to collect opinion, I have some very, very grave doubts. I see it as an acorn which would grow into a monstrosity and not be of very great value.

On the same point, I'd like to ask what members of the Legislature are elected for, if it isn't to do the very things that I presume to be the responsibility of this council? Isn't this body the group of persons with the ultimate responsibility to lead in terms of the economic and social development of the province? Isn't this the place where decisions should be made

with respect to how much should be spent in education as opposed to how much should be spent on health and social development, or on highways?

It seems to me that we'll have a system of two governments, in fact. If we have a body here which can bring in all kinds of recommendations -- recommendations, let's face it, that have had the assistance of all kinds of social mobilizers behind them to be sure that all of the various little interest groups have been able to advance their causes as best they may -- I think that we just wind up with a very confusing argument in terms of the general public of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I could summarize my feeling toward the principle number one -- apart from saying that I don't like it and I don't think it will work -- by saying that all I can see it would do would be to produce some kind of quantitative measure of noise, in terms of how many people favor a specific interest. Mr. Speaker, I think that it might even be misleading, in the sense that it may lead people to have a mistaken notion of the importance of a particular area of interest to them, because I have a feeling that hearings of that nature would take place in a context which would lose sight of the larger social and economic interests of society. In other words, it would lose perspective.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the trust fund itself, I'm confused, and therefore I suppose opposed to the proposition here. But I've always regarded a trust fund as being something which, once established, stays there until those persons who establish it collect or remove from it. It's something which is maintained for the future. Now, as I see the suggestion here, and admittedly it may be implied or interpreted from what I read from the hon. member's remarks on the way the bill is worded, the proposition is to pay for operating expenses out of the trust fund. I regard that with a great deal of

difficulty.

We're really talking about revenues which flow from depleting natural resources. In connection with the gaining of those revenues, there is no question that our society will have extra expense which wouldn't have accrued if the oil and the gas had not been available to us. We have to build more roads, more schools, and more hospitals, and we'll likely have more social problems as a consequence of that opportunity. But, Mr. Speaker, that's a far cry from just simply saying that as long as we need, by some criteria -- perhaps I should express it, as long as we are able to expend in the educational system.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, my watch is slower than your watch. I would adjourn debate.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, for tomorrow we first would see Bills 57 and 61 moving back briefly into committee for some amendments, proceeding to second reading of Bill No. 80, The Temporary Rent Regulation Measures Act; and if there is time, continuation of second reading of Bill No. 58, The Motor Vehicle Administration Act, in respect of which the Member for Drumheller adjourned debate.

I move the Assembly do now adjourn until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

[The House rose at 5:30 p.m.]

