

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Tuesday, March 29, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 36
Provincial Parks
Amendment Act, 1983**

MR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill No. 36, the Provincial Parks Amendment Act, 1983.

The purposes of this Bill are to provide for more effective administration and management of provincial parks and recreation areas, to allow the government to respond to private-sector initiatives in the provision of recreational opportunities in provincial parks or recreation areas, and to revise and update some of the terminology and provisions of the Act.

[Leave granted, Bill 36 read a first time]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the annual report of the pension benefits branch of the Department of Labour for 1981-82, as well as of the Alberta Human Rights Commission for the same period.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a reply to Question 121.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Legislature four copies of the report on Alberta public opinion towards the heritage fund, prepared by Thompson Lightstone and Company Limited.

MR. SPEAKER: I am tabling the report of the Legislature Library for 1982.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today to introduce to you and Members of the Legislative Assembly the Alberta Girls' Parliament. Along with their leaders Mrs. Doreen Walker, Mrs. Bunnie MacMillan, and Mrs. Susan Cressy, the 50 girls are seated in the members gallery.

Mr. Speaker, these girls will be opening their model

parliament tonight. Of course, they've come to view our proceedings today, hopefully in order to get some sort of model, if you will — a good model — so they will conduct their affairs accordingly. I ask the girls and their leaders to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 10 students and two teachers from the CEGEP at Jonquière, Québec. Monsieur le président, je veux dire une chaleureuse bienvenue à nos invités du CEGEP de Jonquière. Il y a des étudiants ici de Québec qui veulent apprendre un peu de la langue anglaise. Aussi c'est important d'avoir une compréhension de la diversité de notre pays.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we have these kinds of exchanges with students from Quebec and Alberta so that we appreciate the diversity of the country and appreciate one another. I'd like to ask them to rise now and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 10 young gentlemen aged 12 to 14 from the 59B Scout troop in Greenfield, situated in the Edmonton Whitemud constituency. They're accompanied by their leaders Mr. Orlan Webber and Mr. Gerry Coem, and one of the parents, Mr. Pat Baird. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd like them to stand and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a further introduction, if I may. I see a very distinguished visitor in the gallery who has joined the Alberta Girls' Parliament since I met with them earlier in the day. I understand Miss Helen Hunley is indeed one of their leaders. Would you rise, Helen, and receive the welcome.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a further introduction as well. I thought I'd separate this. There are two people from the Yellowhead federal constituency in the gallery, Mr. Speaker. With the Easter break, teachers are able to get out of their classrooms and enjoy the good city of Edmonton. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, Brian and Bernadette O'Kurley.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Hospital User Fees**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. It's with respect to the announcement made in the House last night by the minister. I refer the minister to page 42 of Canada's National-Provincial Health Program for the 1980's: A Commitment for Renewal, by the hon. Emmett M. Hall, special commissioner appointed by the Clark government. With respect to the question, Mr. Speaker, on page 42 of that report Mr. Hall makes the observation about user pay, a concept ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Let's get to the question.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: what assessment did this government make of the conclusions of the 1980 Hall Commission report, particu-

larly with respect to the observation concerning user pay, a concept which is contrary to the principle . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I want to clarify the question so the minister can observe whether or not the government took into account Mr. Justice Hall's view with respect to user pay. Last night the minister announced a program . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The question could be asked directly, without embellishments as to whether this contradicts that or whether this conditions that. In any event, I question whether it's within the minister's duties to review reports and express opinions on them in the House, even when a question is asked as to whether he has studied the report.

MR. NOTLEY: I'll put the question directly, but comment on the point of order again. The question I wanted to put to the minister — and I think there's nothing out of order, as I understand the rules — is whether or not the government took into account Mr. Justice Hall's 1980 report, particularly those observations that relate to user pay being inconsistent with the national medicare Act of 1967.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I think the hon. leader is equipped with a copy of *Beauchesne*, the same as other members. As the days go by, it's becoming more and more evident that the questions he is asking are overlain and sandwiched with debate and innuendoes of various kinds.

I respectfully suggest that he review the observations made in *Beauchesne*, particularly in the fifth edition, at pages 132 and 133. There he will see that many of the questions he has been asking are out of order because of a basic principle of fairness, which is that when there is going to be debate in the House, a member who wants to debate something gives notice beforehand, and then other members have an opportunity to get into it. As it is, we are doing all sorts of debating in the question period, and that is quite unfair to other members.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. With respect to the question, the question is whether or not the government took into account this particular document, a document prepared for the government of Canada, in deciding to introduce user fees. It was only out of fairness to the minister that I wanted to quote the particular citation from that report. The report deals with many aspects of it, but there is one particular aspect that I want to direct to the minister, and it's with respect to user fees.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I think the record will show pretty clearly that we never accepted in total Mr. Justice Emmett Hall's review of medicare. In fact, we questioned the appropriateness of the originator of the medicare program being the person asked to review it. It would have been better had an independent, third party reviewed it.

In any event, we made a submission to Mr. Justice Hall when he was gathering responses from the provinces. We don't accept in total his findings, and we have never said we did. We don't agree with the very minute study he refers to, carried out in a region of Ontario by two university professors, on which he bases a rather major

conclusion. There are a number of aspects that are opinions, and we simply don't agree with them.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In view of his statement that the government of Alberta did not think the Clark government should have chosen Mr. Justice Hall to review the medicare system since he made the recommendations it's based on, can the minister advise the House whether or not the government made representation to the Clark government with respect to the appointment?

MR. RUSSELL: As I recall, Mr. Speaker, the appointment was announced by the then federal Minister of National Health and Welfare, David Crombie, at a federal/provincial health ministers' meeting. I was representing Alberta at that time, and we said we would join in the review. In our remarks to Mr. Crombie, we said that we thought perhaps another person might have been selected, but the minister having made his selection, that we would participate, respond, and make our presentation. And we did. We've since disagreed with some of the findings of the report, and the portion that refers to a user-pay concept is one of the portions we don't agree with.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I quote from Hansard [Blues]. Last night the minister indicated: "Our health care system is universal, and it's on demand." Has the minister any studies to indicate why the increase in Canada, where the medicare system is "universal" and "on demand", has gone up by a lower rate than in the United States, where it is not universal and on demand?

MR. RUSSELL: I don't have such figures at hand, Mr. Speaker, but no doubt they do exist.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. With respect to the determination of the government's policy on user fees, what consideration was given to the anomaly that in the United States, where universality does not exist, the actual increase — by the minister's own speech last night — has been substantially higher than in Canada?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, that's the very point some people have difficulty understanding: what the real costs of health care are. I invite the hon. member to use his considerable research funds and dig out what health care insurance premiums are for American citizens, what it costs to stay one day in an American hospital, and why it's taking so much of their gross domestic product to support their health care system.

We've always been very consistent in saying that the medicare program and plan of hospitalization in place in Canada is probably one of the best in the world. It's suffering from a shortage of funds and, in our opinion, that problem is going to get worse. So we are trying to strengthen and preserve an excellent system of medicare by finding some additional sources of funding for it. It's completely opposite to the point of view the hon. leader is trying to present to the House.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. And I note that if there was ever a case of inciting debate, the minister's last answer did that.

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect to the hon. member, the incitement took place a stage or two before that.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have never quarrelled on a point of order with incitement on either side of the House. I do not think that is inconsistent with the best rules of parliamentary procedure.

I'd like to direct to the hon. minister: what assessment has been made of the experience in Saskatchewan, where both deterrent fees as well as user fees were implemented by the Liberal government of Saskatchewan between 1968 and 1971? In developing a user-fee policy, did this government review any of the studies which indicate that the people using hospitals shifted from lower-income to middle-income people?

MR. RUSSELL: In designing a system for Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we looked to our own caucus. We didn't look to former Liberal or NDP governments in other parts of the country. [interjections]

MR. NOTLEY: Three or four years from now, caucus members may wish they had, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister if he could advise the Assembly what the arrangement will be with respect to collection of these user fees? Is that going to be left totally up to the hospital boards? Will there be a suspension of benefits under provincial legislation? What happens to those people who don't in fact pay the user fees? We have many delinquent cases as far as premiums are concerned. What policy has the government developed with respect to that, or will that be shuffled off on the local boards?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, in talking about the user-fee program last night, the first point I made was that it is discretionary. It's the decision of the local board whether or not to have it, and they will administer it. I know the hon. leader has been a spokesman for local autonomy many times in this House, so he'll be very pleased to know that it's the responsibility of the hospital boards.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question with regard to that answer. Can the minister assure the Assembly that implementation of this user fee by a local hospital board will not allow the respective board to refuse service either because someone has not made payment or because they would demand an upfront sum of money prior to giving service? Can the minister assure us that service will not be refused at the local level?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes I can, Mr. Speaker. Further than that, there will have to be appeal systems at each hospital location to deal with situations whereby people claim they simply cannot pay these bills. That's really not so different from the system in effect now. We know that many people with expired health care cards who don't pay the admission fee or who don't pay other fees that may be levied, have never been refused medical or hospital service in this province. That situation will continue.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary with regard to the some 150,000 or 160,000 Albertans who have not paid their premiums. Did the minister consider that avenue as a revenue source, rather than moving to the user fee?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with two programs. On one hand, we have medical services,

which pays for the services that people get with respect to health care. On the other hand, we have our hospitalization program. Health care premiums contribute about one-third of the cost of health care services. They contribute not one penny towards the cost of hospitalization. So any increase in health care premiums is simply used to cover the expanding costs of health care services. The user fees are an attempt to get some additional discretionary funding for local boards to deal with their situations, in the event that they may be facing deficits in the future.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister outline government policy on the effect of these fees on the last-dollar funding for hospitals? What percentage of next year's hospital costs is the government willing to cover, and what amount will hospitals be asked to raise by regressive taxes such as user fees?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I thought I had made it very clear that it's our belief that as they enter the new fiscal year next month, the financial situation of hospital boards throughout Alberta will be very, very good. We have just put in excess of \$125 million into the hospital system, by way of special warrants. The latest advice I have is that there are very few boards which [will] be going into the new fiscal year in a deficit position. So the outlook is very good.

In addition to that, the budget my colleague the Provincial Treasurer has presented to the Legislature for approval has built in the effects of all those special warrants, which includes rising utility costs, all the arbitration and salary awards, expanding programs, et cetera. So we think they're pretty well covered for the next year. But in the event that they operate in some way which makes it appear that they will end up with a deficit, it has to be made very clear to them that we're not going to be able to pick up those deficits, as we always have in the past, and they may then cover them by using all or part of the discretionary hospital user fees that I outlined last night.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the last supplementary on this topic.

MR. MARTIN: Then surely the government has an estimate of how much money in total will be collected from user fees. They must have some projections. What are those projections?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to know the extent hospital boards will use these. If they all use them towards the maximum, there's a potential there of raising approximately 3 per cent of the total operating budget for the hospital system. But it's highly unlikely that that situation will occur.

Hon. members can do some of their own quick mental arithmetic. Last year, we had roughly 300,000 hospital admissions and stays. If you start prorating the numbers that would be attached to that kind of statistic, you can see the realm of figures we're talking about.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct the second question to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care too. It's with respect to the minister's announcement last night concerning the optional health care services

under the Blue Cross plan. The minister goes on to suggest that there may be room for other insurance coverage as well. I would like to ask the minister to advise the House what the government plan is with respect to the insurability, if you like, of user fees by the private sector, for those Albertans who are in a position to afford purchasing private insurance to cover their user fees?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we don't see any major change in the system as it now exists. It's our understanding that it's illegal and against the spirit of the federal legislation to allow an insurance plan to develop which would cover the *per diem* fee that would be related to that charge. However, Blue Cross and other private carriers now insure for preferred accommodation rates and other things such as ambulance charges, et cetera. So some charges are insurable by Blue Cross and/or other agencies, and some are not.

A new development which has just occurred is a "hospital bucks" program, developed by one of the major oil companies. That plan pays people a lump sum of money at such times as they are hospitalized. The money is not directed toward the payment of any bills, so presumably it skirts the federal legislation.

We believe that if hospital boards do go into this discretionary user-fee plan that I outlined last night, in all likelihood Blue Cross and others will develop optional packages subscribers could take if they wanted to, which would respond to various kinds of benefits.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. As I understand his answer, is the minister saying that Blue Cross and other private insurance companies will be encouraged by the government of Alberta to try to skirt the spirit of federal legislation and develop policies that respond? Or is the minister saying clearly that no possible package is available at the moment for Albertans to take out, from the private insurance sector or otherwise, to cover user fees?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I said neither of those things. I said that at the present time, the law is explicit. Some things are permitted, and some are not. We don't perceive any change in the law, but we do perceive Blue Cross and other insurance carriers now doing business in the province responding to these fees I mentioned, but only within the bounds of the law.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the last supplementary on this topic.

MR. NOTLEY: Then is the minister in a position to tell the Assembly whether or not it is the intention of the government of Alberta to maintain the basic program intact, or will there be any shift of services now covered by the basic program to optional programs?

MR. RUSSELL: We don't intend to shift anything, Mr. Speaker, except the administration of the non-group Blue Cross, which is now administered by the department to the Blue Cross board, and they've agreed to do this.

Young Offenders Legislation

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health is

with regard to the federal young offenders Act and its implementation by the province. Could the minister indicate whether his department will take that responsibility as of October 1, 1983?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I refer the question to the hon. Attorney General.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, three departments are interested in the enforcement of the provisions of the new young offenders Act when it is in force later this year. I speak on behalf of my colleagues, because the Attorney General certainly has a very considerable interest in the aspect of the prosecution side and carrying cases before the youth court.

As to other services that are provided normally, in the sense of counselling and probation-type services — supervision of young people who have been dealt with by the court— there will be some division between two departments, the Solicitor General and the Department of Social Services and Community Health. But by the phasing-in time of 1985, the workload would primarily be handled by the Solicitor General.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I'm not too sure where I should direct this at the present time. In this new Act, they talk about pre-trial diversion programs. I wonder if the minister has made opportunity for that type of program in Alberta. What plans are in place, and will they be an alternate to the court process as it's presently carried on?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the intention under the legislation is that that indeed be an alternate. My memory is that a couple of years ago, an experimental program was in place in Alberta and that it had the co-operation of the federal government of that time. From memory, I can't tell my hon. friend whether or not that project was completed and reports were produced.

The way pre-trial dispositions would be handled, though, is based on the fact that at some point a decision as to whether or not a charge is to be laid must be taken. If a charge is to be laid, then the alternative of a pre-trial disposition would not be used in that case. So looking at them a case at a time, it's the responsibility of the Crown counsel of the Attorney General's Department to decide whether a charge will be laid. If the decision is that given the philosophy of the new legislation that there should be alternatives, a charge would not be laid, then the diversion-type programs would be placed in the hands of an appropriate agency.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the Attorney General indicate whether private community agencies have been invited to submit proposals for operating community services with regard to this program?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, that would be contemplated. I can't answer fully as to the extent of submissions that may have been presented. No doubt other ministers would have received some of those, if in fact community groups have made these presentations at this point in time. We bear in mind that the Act is not yet in force, although there has been much public discussion of it. I would think that some interested groups would have been in touch with the Department of Social Services and Community Health. That would be a natural direction

for them to go. I think my colleague and I would both agree to seek that information and provide an answer as to the extent of private-sector volunteer presentations that have been made.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the Attorney General. The Act also allows for the establishment of youth justice committees by the Attorney General. Will the minister be implementing that type of committee to assist in the implementation of the Act?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, we have not concluded any final position on that sort of proposal.

I should point out that the uniqueness of the types of proposals being made in the federal legislation are really there in order to update the legislation in a very significant way. My view of it has been that with the new alternative ways of handling young offender situations that are certainly there, it will probably be a little while before all the proposals are worked out and adopted or not adopted. It will be an evolutionary type of system. It would have to be, or it would perhaps be a very static and stereotyped type of . . . [inaudible]

County of Minburn

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. It's with reference to a statement of claim between Dorcal Industries of Calgary and the Vegreville Seed Cleaning Plant Association. Mr. Minister, in August of 1982 the former Minister of Agriculture approved a seed cleaning plant for Vegreville and committed himself to 40 per cent, or \$400,000. The shareholders collected a likewise amount and, on two occasions, by resolution, the county of Minburn committed itself for the balance of \$200,000. Could the minister advise why, after spending almost half a million dollars on this plant, it is being stalled in this statement?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, there has been significant representation to me by the Member for Vegreville on this issue. He's correct. Everything was done by the former minister to accommodate the Vegreville seed plant association in construction of their plant. In fact, he made special considerations during program review periods, in order to accommodate them.

Under our present program, it's funded 40 per cent by government, 40 per cent by the seed plant association, and 20 per cent by the municipality. The county must pass a by-law in order to enter into an agreement with the department, and the county must put up the commitment of their 20 per cent of the funding dollars in order to allow the seed cleaning plant established.

I had the money in the 1982-83 budget. However, the plant didn't proceed because of not having the commitment of the county. Now that we're coming into a new fiscal year, I have budgeted for that amount for the plant, if they're able to work out the problems we have. I sent staff members out there, Mr. Speaker, in order to try and work out the problem with them. However, I would have to say that right now it's in the hands of the municipal council to resolve it.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, since the Municipal Government Act is administered by the minister. After the county made its commitment and reiterated that commitment by resolution — this seed cleaning plant

association is now in such a predicament, where they have no place to go. Could the minister advise whether they are in their bounds to make a commitment and then turn back after so much work has been done?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, much as I sympathize with the plight of the seed cleaning association and the circumstances in the county, we must recognize the fact that the Department of Municipal Affairs and the office that I hold is not a court of appeal for decisions of local government. Whether or not we like, agree, or disagree with the decisions of local government is irrelevant. As long as those decisions are made within the bounds of the Municipal Government Act, they are final and binding. No appeal from those decisions lies to my office.

I appreciate that the circumstances in the county of Minburn are somewhat delicate as a result of an inability, I assume, to have both ends of the county work together. Perhaps part of the problem in that county stems from the fact that the representation at the divisional levels aren't by population. In accordance with commitments made by my predecessor, I have reviewed the electoral boundaries within the county and put forward what I feel would be a fairer distribution of population for the seven seats. That information has been made available to the councillors of the county. They have requested a meeting with me to discuss the same, and arrangements have been made to meet with these seven councillors, including the reeve, early in the month of April.

MR. BATIUK: A further supplementary to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I served as a county councillor for a good number of years . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if the hon. member could come directly to the question. We're starting to run a little short of time.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Municipal Affairs advise whether he is satisfied that the county is operating and administering in good faith, as they take their oaths to do?

MR. SPEAKER: I'm very doubtful about the propriety of that question, because it involves an opinion by the minister as to whether someone is acting in good faith. It really isn't part of his official duties.

MR. BATIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have hoped that the minister wouldn't have given his opinion but a definite answer. But if this is the case, I'll try a supplementary to the Minister of Education. Could the minister advise whether he has had representations from the town of Vegreville to be excluded from the county of Minburn boundaries because of bad relations with the county?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Perhaps I should respond to the comment with respect to the question of opinion versus fact. The way in which I would respond to the hon. member is to indicate that no information has come my way, either through representations or through the normal investigations made by Department of Municipal Affairs staff, that would indicate that the county and the councillors of that county and the reeve are acting beyond or above the law of the province of Alberta.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, if I could make a brief response to the supplementary question. I can confirm for the hon. member that representatives of the town have indeed met with me and made the request that provision be included in the County Act to allow towns to withdraw from the county unit with which they relate only for educational or school purposes. One of the reasons proposed to me for requesting this provision was that the town council was not satisfied with the relationships it had with the county council and the county administration. But I can only relate what passed between the town council and me; I can't speak for the county council.

Workers' Compensation

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation. Can the minister indicate whether there's been a reduction in the merit rebates in some categories of workers' compensation assessment?

Where'd he go? Oh, he moved.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley: I'm still here where I was assigned to sit.

In my recent meeting with the board, the board has withdrawn any reductions in merit rebates for this year. The full merit rebate program will be in effect. For the year 1983, any employer in this province that would be entitled to a full merit rebate will gain that at the end of the year when the experience is shown. This was hoped to resolve some of the deficits in some of the classes, but I welcomed it. I'm confident that the employers of the province of Alberta and the industries will welcome the fact that the good employers that deserve the full merit rebate will get it during the year 1983.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does that apply to all industries? My second question is: will the minister be encouraging discussions between the Workers' Compensation Board and industry, with the view of making the program more cost effective and possibly resolving some of the concerns of employers regarding increases in this difficult time?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, to the first part: yes, this will apply to all classes. As it's set up, the merit rebate program is for all classes that participate in the program of merit rebate. Superassessment would be universal for the whole program. The ongoing discussions are there. My office and I have been meeting with many employer groups with regard to this cost.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to share with the members of the Assembly that there is an unbalanced position between the merit rebate and superassessment programs. The select committee in '79-80 touched on it. I am now in a better position to appreciate the unbalance. Hopefully, in co-operation with the board, we will have some attempts made to provide a better balance to those two programs. Even the 1981 report shows a fair amount of refund — something like \$60 million — through the merit rebate program, while the superassessment was only something like \$2.4 million. It's quite unbalanced.

Computer Science Education

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Education. I wonder if the minister could announce whether it's now possible to upgrade

business education equipment in the province. The teachers in the business education programs across the province requested more funding for equipment, like word processors.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, for some years, the government has had a program whereby they shared with local school jurisdictions the cost of equipment that was necessary for vocational education and industrial arts programs. These were things such as welders, electric saws: what we call shop equipment. There has not been a comparable program for business education programs, beauty culture programs, or other vocational preparation programs of that type.

As a result of developing new business education curricula, particularly computer science curricula, the government has under consideration the extension of the principle to other areas. At the same time, I have to remind the hon. member of the budgetary circumstances current with the government and the province, and can't make any commitment to him as to the outcome of these considerations.

MR. COOK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. We are now graduating students from our business education programs who have no background, and they're going out into office situations where they're not familiar with word processing equipment; they're familiar with manual typewriters and the like. Is it a priority to try to upgrade the business equipment in our vocational education program?

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is a priority. Unfortunately, it is not the only priority, in the Department of Education. While education is a priority of the government, unfortunately it cannot be considered the only priority of the government.

MR. HIEBERT: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Education. It's my understanding that the department initiated a survey as to the extent of minicomputers, word processors, and so on, being used in Alberta schools. Could the minister advise if this survey has been completed, and would the information be available to all members of the Assembly?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the last information I received was preliminary, just before the department expected to have finished the survey referred to. But the expectation of the department at that time was that completion of the survey would reveal approximately 4,000 to 4,500 microcomputers in use in Alberta schools as of this day.

MR. HIEBERT: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In embarking on the minicomputer program, the department assigned various personnel to manage the project and deal with in-service. I would like to know to what extent the schools have actually utilized this service. In other words, how effective has it been?

MR. KING: I think we can say that it has been very effective, Mr. Speaker. The staff assigned to this task in the department have been kept so busy that they argued the need for more colleagues to share the work with them. On that basis alone, I think we can say it has been well received. There's no question that they have been very occupied, travelling to jurisdictions around the province. I think it's fair to say that virtually every jurisdiction

in the province is aware of the impact microcomputers will have on the school and on our students. Virtually every jurisdiction is trying as best they can to respond to the need, given the current circumstances.

MR. HIEBERT: Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question, just so my understanding is correct. Did the minister indicate that business education programs are going to be considered on the same funding level as other trade programs that are offered by secondary schools?

MR. KING: We are hopeful that that will be the case, and we are trying to develop plans that would see that happen. But we're not yet in a position to say that it will happen.

Building Quality Restoration Program

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Minister of Education. Can we take from his remarks that the building quality restoration program, as it is currently in place, will be continuing?

MR. KING: The program was of a five-year term and is scheduled to conclude this year. At the present time, it is unknown whether any extension of it will be possible. In the department, the question is not only of the extension of the program but also whether we can reallocate the resources to the same end, but in a way that will see them more effectively distributed.

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister of Education.

MR. SPEAKER: Followed by a supplementary from the hon. Member for Cypress. I've recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, and we're running out of time.

MR. APPLEBY: When the minister stated that the program will end this year, did that mean the fiscal year or the calendar year?

MR. KING: Neither, Mr. Speaker: the school year. What other year is there? It's scheduled to terminate at the end of June.

Computer Science Education

(continued)

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister about his answer to the first question about the computer program. In smaller jurisdictions, it took longer to study whether they could make proper use of a computer and now are ready to go into computers. With the 5 per cent funding guideline on schools, is there going to be consideration for these smaller jurisdictions so that they can be part of the computer program?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the answer is that in a variety of ways, the department is giving priority to the needs of our students insofar as computer education is concerned. At a national conference last September, I think it is fair to say that Alberta was held up as being in the forefront among all Canadian jurisdictions on this question.

Economic circumstances have changed, and what we are trying to do is get maximum effect for the financial resources available to us. That dictates that we develop

programs differently this year than we would have done last year or the year before. But that doesn't change the priority that we attach to the task. If children don't shortly graduate from our schools with a knowledge of microcomputers, they will be unable to function in the world of work. We know that; we are attempting to attend to that task as best we can.

Hospital User Fees

(continued)

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct this question to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Last night, in supporting his decision to introduce hospital user fees, the minister said:

... more disturbing than the 30 per cent increase in costs was the 17 per cent increase in utilization.

I guess this just means that we're all seeing doctors, and if that is another developing trend, of course that adds to the problem. What consideration was given to reducing reliance on hospitals, and the tremendous capital costs entailed, and increasing reliance on community-based preventive health care?

MR. RUSSELL: That's a difficult question to answer, Mr. Speaker, because the questioner has mixed two programs. I was speaking of the medicare program and the 17 per cent increase in utilization of health care professionals, which is paid for by that program. The user-fee concept applies to hospitals.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. The minister pointed to the doubling of doctors' salaries in the past decade and suggested we were visiting doctors too often. In view of his comments, what studies has the department undertaken with regard to the potential for increasing the role of paramedics and nurses in the delivery of health care?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, if I understand the member correctly, he didn't understand the thrust of what I was trying to say last night, and that was the really exploding demand on all kinds of health care services and the ability of governments to respond to the rapidly escalating costs of those demands. I tried to illustrate that by using this Assembly as an example of our rights to demand services from health care professionals. So without that kind of clarification from the member, it's difficult for me to respond to that question.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the last supplementary.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, then, Mr. Speaker. I'll give you one example. It deals with seat belts.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Let's come directly to the question. These questions prefaced by quotations are much better put by coming directly to the topic. We're having too many quotations and too much background information under the guise of identifying the topic, whereas the question could be asked directly.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, a point of order. I'm trying to get to a point dealing with the hospital utilization that was given by the minister, and I'm asking about seat belt utilization. I can't possibly see how that would be out of order.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. member could be able to come directly to a question about seat belt utilization, would he please do so.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Has the minister taken a look at seat belt legislation in view of the Ontario experience, which shows there's a 15 per cent reduction in deaths, injuries, expenditures for physicians' fees, and also that cost of . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. That's precisely what I'm trying to point out to the hon. member. [interjections] What happens in Ontario, Timbuktu, or South Argentina really has nothing to do with asking the minister as to whether he has made any inquiries about seat belt legislation. There could be five dozen examples of what other jurisdictions have done about seat belt legislation. That has no bearing on whether or not the minister has made a study, if that's what the hon. member wants to find out. If the hon. member knows some statistics from Ontario that he would like to use in debate, he is entirely welcome to do so outside the question period.

MR. MARTIN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point I'm trying to make is that he was talking about rising health costs, which was relevant to what he did yesterday. We're pointing out that there is a study, and I'm sure the minister is aware of it, that he can knock down costs. I'm giving him that specific, and I'm asking him what he's doing about it.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I made the announcement and my opinions during the budget debate yesterday and then sat down. I didn't see the member rise to respond in the debate, despite the fact we invited him to.

But the answer to the previous convoluted question is yes. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The time for the question period has passed. I have been trying to recognize the hon. Minister of the Environment to deal further with a previous question period topic. I'd like to suggest to the hon. minister that unless the matter is very urgent, he might wish to deal with it tomorrow.

MR. BRADLEY: If I may, Mr. Speaker, I just wish to file with the Assembly a written response to a question asked on Tuesday by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: May the hon. Minister of Agriculture revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. FJORDBOTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been waiting a long time to introduce someone from my

constituency, particularly from this area of my constituency; they're from the Peigan Reserve. Maybe hon. members don't know it, but they gave me the name Running Crow. [laughter] I didn't realize they had such a great crystal ball until the day finally came.

In the public gallery, I'd like to introduce the president of the Black Spring Cattle Co. of the Peigan Band, Mr. Percy Smith, and directors Romeo Yellow Horn, Maurice Little Wolf, Melvin Provost, Willard Yellow Face, and Sam Good Rider. Would they please rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, in a continuing effort to shorten the Order Paper, I would like to deal with the subject of motions and questions. I move that questions 129 and 152 stand and retain their places on the Order Paper, and that the following motions stand and retain their places on the Order Paper: 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, 140, 141, 142, 145, 146, 148, 160, 162, 163, and 164.

[Motion carried]

131. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing an itemized statement of all costs incurred and paid or payable by the government or any of its departments or agencies associated with the Alsands project, formally terminated by its sponsors in 1982, including the costs of studies, reports, incentives, and preparatory and other infrastructural projects and considerations, but not limited to these.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Motion for a Return No. 131 be amended as follows: firstly, by adding the word "direct" in line one after the words "an itemized statement of all"; secondly, by deleting the word "incentives" in line four and replacing it with the word "grants"; thirdly, by deleting the last five words in the return, which are "but not limited to these"; and lastly, by replacing "an itemized" with "a categorized" in line one.

MR. SPEAKER: If hon. members are able to get their mental word processors working, work these changes into a text, and picture a continuous text with all these changes in it, perhaps we could come to the question.

[Motion as amended carried]

134. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) An itemized statement of the expenses incurred by or on behalf of the Minister of State for Economic Development — International Trade and payable by the government or any of its departments or agencies, arising from the minister's visits in an official capacity to points outside the province in each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, and 1982;
- (2) A list of those individuals who accompanied the minister on those visits and an itemized statement of the expenses incurred, in each case, by or on behalf of those individuals and payable by the government or any of its departments or agencies.

MR. SCHMID: Mr. Speaker, I move that Motion for a Return No. 134 on today's Order Paper be amended as follows: delete all the words after "the Province" in

subparagraph (1) and replace them with the words "for each time period not already tabled with the Assembly"; two, add the words "for each time period not already reported to the Assembly" at the end of subparagraph (2); and, third, replace the words "an itemized" in subparagraphs (1) and (2) with the words "a categorized".

[Motion as amended carried]

143. Mr. Notley moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) In each case, the number of acres of agricultural land owned in the province of Alberta by those corporations (as opposed to individual owners or partnerships) accounting for the 20 largest aggregate corporate agricultural land holdings in the province, and the name of the corporation in each case;
- (2) The total number of acres of land in the province of Alberta to which title is held
 - (a) by individuals and corporations resident outside the province of Alberta,
 - (b) by individuals and corporations resident outside Canada;
- (3) The number of acres of agricultural land in the province of Alberta to which title is held in the classifications described in paragraph (2), showing the 20 largest aggregate holdings and identifying the corporations and/or individuals holding the titles thereto.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, much study was given this proposed motion to see if there were some way it could be amended in order to provide some helpful information to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. It creates several very significant difficulties. In a brief way, one might simply sum it up by saying that it would be virtually impossible to comply with it.

It is most likely that in order to answer it, the motion would require a search of every title in Alberta registered at the Land Titles Office. If that were to be done, the information asked for would not really result. One of the reasons is that in asking for addresses, for example — which is what's involved in individuals and corporations resident outside Alberta or outside Canada — under the land titles system, there is a requirement that any title owner have an Alberta address. So any search would simply disclose an Alberta address.

How one would go behind that is a matter the motion doesn't raise and, in any event, would only be possible to undertake after searching hundreds of thousands of titles. The pursuit of that may yield no real information relative to what has been asked. Under the Agricultural and Recreational Land Ownership Act, there is certain information from 1975 until the present time. This information is published in the annual report of the Department of Energy and Natural Resources. The information obtained there is not based on residence but on citizenship.

In the result, Mr. Speaker, this is a motion that cannot be agreed to. Whether something anywhere close to it could be redrafted and put into a form that it might be possible to respond to, I leave to the hon. member who placed the motion and urge members to defeat the motion.

[Motion lost]

149. Mr. Martin moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing, in each case, where the government,

any of its departments or agencies, or the Crown in right of Alberta has leased office space, for any purpose, from a person who is not the government, a department or agency of the government, or acting on behalf of the Crown in right of Alberta, the terms of that lease including, but not limited to:

- (1) the square metreage of space covered by the lease,
 - (2) the term of the lease,
 - (3) the period of time during which the lease and its predecessor agreements have been in effect,
 - (4) the cost per square metre to the lessor as at March 1, 1983,
 - (5) the monthly charges to the lessor arising from the lease agreement as at March 1, 1983,
 - (6) the identity of the lessor,
 - (7) the identity of the lessee,
- and showing the purpose for which the space has been leased by the lessor.

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, with regard to Motion No. 149, I propose to amend it as follows. I would delete items 3, 4, and 5, and delete the final phrase, "and showing the purpose for which the space has been leased by the lessor".

The deletion of item 3 was discussed with the executive assistant to the Leader of the Official Opposition, who agreed that the information required did not justify the cost to complete it. With regard to items 4 and 5, and also the final phrase, Mr. Speaker, we really have no way of knowing information of this nature which is pertinent to the lessor.

[Motion as amended carried]

MR. HORSMAN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps it was because of the interesting voice vote that took place with respect to Motion for a Return No. 143, but it did not come to the attention of several members whether or not the Speaker had declared Motion 143 lost.

MR. SPEAKER: I thought I had declared that; that was my intention. I think that perhaps what I said was lost in the sound level that rose after hearing the lone voice.

159. On behalf of Dr. Buck, Mr. R. Speaker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) A detailed budget breakdown, including number of staff and the total cost of grant and advertising programs, for the Department of Agriculture food marketing branch for the 1981-82 and 1982-83 fiscal years.
- (2) The amount of money spent on matching contributions to the Alberta Food Processors Association (AFPA) "Better Buy Alberta" campaign.
- (3) The evidence the department used to conclude in its 1981-82 annual report that the AFPA advertising had a significant impact in increasing consumer purchases of Alberta food products.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move that Motion for a Return 159 be amended by striking out paragraph 3 thereof.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, in regard to that, I'd certainly like to know the reasons. What we are asking for is the evidence the department used to conclude that the advertising did have impact, the purpose of it, and the studies. That certainly should be relevant when we're

thinking in terms of budgeting and cost effectiveness. There should be no reason for the government just to spend the money and not determine what the output is. If you input — I forget the sum of money now — \$400,000, \$500,000, or \$600,000, we should have some assessment of whether it is really doing its job on the other end or whether it just bought some advertising and kept an advertising company in business. That's the reason for the question.

If there are no studies, I think the answer from the minister is, there are none. Why shouldn't we leave it there?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that part of the motion which I'm asking be amended and deleted, asks me to provide evidence; in other words, I'm asked to provide subjective evidence which led to a conclusion by department staff. This is really inappropriate for the Order Paper, as motions provide for statistical information, not opinions.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, so that comment is not precedent. I don't think that's an accurate statement. I'd appreciate your ruling on that. The questions or motions for returns we put on the Order Paper can either be for the opinion of the minister or the government with regard to a certain matter, or it can be statistical or hard, factual information as well. I'd appreciate that clarification.

MR. SPEAKER: As I understand it, questions which ask for opinions are not in order, whether they're oral or put on the Order Paper in writing. The questions, of course, are supposed to be intended to elicit facts. The opinions that may be based on those facts are to be drawn by whomever wants to draw them.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. That would be the question, whether we were asking for opinion. I'm not sure how this could be handled. But through the Chair to the minister: would the minister allow section 3 to stand if we said "the study the department", so it is an actual document we're looking for? That's what we are looking for.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: In that case, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the hon. member put in another motion for a return asking for the study, and I would be pleased to provide it at that time.

[Motion as amended carried]

166. On behalf of Dr. Buck, Mr. R. Speaker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) The number of private motor vehicles, including cars, trucks, trailers, mobile homes, and motorcycles, registered under the Motor Vehicles Administration Act in the province of Alberta as of March 1, 1983.
- (2) The number of registered owners of vehicles enumerated in (1) in the province of Alberta as of March 1, 1983.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move an amendment. I move that Motion for a Return No. 166 be amended as follows: that part I be struck out and the following be substituted in its place:

- (1) The number of passenger cars, motorcycles,

and trailers, registered under the Motor Vehicles Administration Act in the province of Alberta as of February 28, 1983.

and that part 2 be struck out.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the . . .

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I was going to say a few words on the motion. Part 2 is asking for the registered owners. At the present time, the capacity of the computer in the motor vehicles division is not programmed to produce this information. It would require an examination of each registration and a comparison of the names with various names that a registrant might use and a comparison with the address location.

I think hon. members will perhaps recall, if they applied for a tab this year for their motor vehicle, that they will have noticed there was a question on the application form to have the motor vehicle licence number of the applicant recorded on the form. When built into the new computer, which comes on stream in October, that will give us a capacity to pull that sort of information out. But at the present time, each registration would have to be physically examined to try to determine. Even then we might not be able to coincide descriptions that people use of their names, such as John Jones, J. Jones, J.B. Jones, J.V. Jones, and whether or not all these people are the same.

With regard to the first part of the question, the capacity would be to give information that is presently provided in the annual report of the department. It is broken out as passenger cars, motorcycles, and trailers. The explanation for the date is that we run these off as of the end of the month, not as of the first of the month.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak to the motion and why we asked for section 2.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. R. SPEAKER: With regard to Motion 166, we have had a number of people contact our office concerned about the number of licence letters they have received. For example, one family I know received nine brown envelopes in the mail the same day from the vehicle registration department of the government. I'm sure this has happened in multiple cases across the province. In that very instance, you talk about nine times 32 cents. That's \$2.70 plus a little more. Let's say that in Alberta we have 400,000 families that own one to five vehicles or whatever it is. We have an unnecessary, excessive cost there. What we wanted to look at was the number of vehicles actually in the province that receive licensing, along with the number of owners. I'm sure that ratio may be one to four, one to five, or whatever it is, and just the mailing cost is most likely five times what it should be in that department. If we're looking for cost cutting or saving some money in this government, that's the kind of little thing that can be done.

We want to suggest to the minister that when this new computer comes on stream, hopefully that kind of thing can be done, so that in 1984 when we receive our brown envelope, it has one name on the outside. If the person owns three, four, eight, or 12 vehicles, then the application form is inside the brown envelope, saving some

money for the government, unnecessary taxation sent to the federal government from our province. It's a little thing. But if we can cut back on all these little things in government, we wouldn't have to have a user fee in this province. We are just pulling up the loose ends in the government administration by this. Certainly I will accept that the minister is maybe unable to provide the material. We will raise the same question in 1984 — and I hope that material is available — to see that the minister has taken action.

MR. SPEAKER: I was under a misapprehension a moment ago that we were debating the motion. We are debating an amendment, and of course the mover of an amendment doesn't conclude debate. Consequently, the remarks by the hon. Member for Little Bow did not conclude this debate. If any other hon. members wish to add some observations to what has already been said, the floor is available.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, could I . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I didn't understand the hon. leader of the Independents asking any question that might be answered and, apart from that, the hon. minister has had his say.

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the motion and urge hon. members to support it. With regard to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. May I respectfully point out to the hon. minister that in moving an amendment, the mover is entitled to speak to both the main motion and the amendment. I assumed that the hon. minister had done that.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Speaker, I was only making my comments on the motion to amend.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister moved the amendment. I understand that a member who moves an amendment is entitled to speak to the main motion and the amendment at the same time. That concludes his opportunity to speak.

[Motion as amended carried]

head: **GOVERNMENT DESIGNATED BUSINESS**

[On motion, the Assembly resolved itself into Committee of the Whole]

head: **GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS**
(Committee of the Whole)

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the Committee of the Whole Assembly please come to order.

Bill 28

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1983

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions or comments regarding the sections of this Act?

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to offer some comments on Bill 28, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1983. I'd like to offer those observations with respect to the provisions within the Act for Hospitals and Medical Care: department support services, health care insurance, financial assistance . . .

MR. HORSMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, but I can't catch the words of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I would certainly not want the Acting Government House Leader to miss a word that I say, so I'll repeat myself and speak loudly and clearly. I would not want him to miss a single phrase.

I'm dealing with the provisions contained in this Act as it relates to Hospitals and Medical Care. I have no doubt that we are being asked to vote a considerable portion of funds to Hospitals and Medical Care to deal with a department which has made a proposition that I as a member of this House am frankly one hundred per cent opposed to, that is the concept of hospital user fees. Before we consider interim supply for the government of Alberta, we in this committee have to ask ourselves whether or not we are satisfied with the performance of a department which has introduced, through the minister last night, a proposal which in my view is absolutely shocking in its implications and consequences for the health system of this province. I'm sorry the minister isn't in his place, but I see he's coming now. So we'll have an opportunity to have the sort of initial debate, but I have no doubt that there will be opportunities to discuss this matter as the Legislature unfolds.

I want to make it very clear to the members of the committee, Mr. Chairman, that my colleague and I are totally opposed to the introduction of user fees in principle. I refer members to the Hall commission report of 1980, which was commissioned by the Conservative government of Joe Clark. In talking about hospital board charges, page 42 of the report refers to the charges as being an application of the user-pay concept. It says:

. . . [a] concept which is contrary to the principle and spirit of the *National Health Program* advocated by the *Royal Commission* in 1964 and legislated into being by the *Medical Care Act* of 1966.

I don't know what the impact of the user-fee concept will be, whether we're going to find that the federal government will attempt to cut off funds. But I say to the members of this committee that it is reckless and irresponsible, for the sake of some narrow interpretation of right-wing ideology, to flirt with the funding which is so necessary for the basic provision of health care in this province. The minister can say he's prepared to fight Ottawa. He can have all kinds of committee members banging their desks approving it. But I say to members of the committee that if the federal government finally has an interpretation that they're on strong legal grounds, the only option this government has is to totally withdraw from the medical care and hospitalization cost-sharing arrangements. What will happen to our deficit then? What will happen to the costs of providing basic hospital and medical care services in this province?

Mr. Chairman, it's interesting to hark back to the

minister's comments last night. He indicated that there was an increase in the cost of health care in this country: yes, from 5.6 per cent of the gross national product to 7.9 per cent today. But in the same period — and the minister makes this point — in the United States it rose from 5.3 per cent to 9.8 per cent. Notwithstanding the minister's answer in the question period today, the fact of the matter is that the Americans are spending a larger portion of their gross national product on health care without universality, without the right to health, than we in Canada do with those principles contained in the health care system for the country.

I simply say to the members of the government that before we get ourselves into a scheme which is going to seriously jeopardize the right to health, which despite what the minister says about the impact on low-income people ... I recall the question period today; I asked whether or not there had been study of the Saskatchewan experience. The minister said: no, we listen to the caucus in Alberta; we're not prepared to look at studies of an NDP or a Liberal government in Saskatchewan. I would say to that minister that before we start bringing in user fees, we'd better look at the experience in our neighboring province of Saskatchewan. Because the evidence would lead me to conclude — from the observations I've made and Mr. Justice Hall as well, I think — that it will affect the utilization rate, and it will decrease access to the system for low-income people.

Mr. Chairman, what we have here is a proposal that's going to shuffle off to local hospital boards the cost of administering this scheme: taking the flak, having to deal with the bad public relations that will inevitably occur, trying to chase down people who don't pay their user fees. In my view, it's just totally wrong. Before I vote for any department's support service budget which comes in with a proposal such as that, I would have to have a better explanation than I received last night.

What we are about to embark upon in this province, Mr. Chairman, is a proposal which is going to try to repeal much of the progress this country has made in the last number of years. When the St. Laurent government brought in the first cost-sharing arrangement in hospitalization in 1956, it was a landmark. Right across the country we were able to move toward providing the right to hospital access. That was a good move by a federal Liberal government, but it was a move that was followed up and strengthened by the Diefenbaker government that succeeded the Liberal government in 1957.

Mr. Chairman, the medicare system we have in place, that came as a consequence of the Hall commission report in 1964, supplements the initiatives that began more than 25 years ago. Before we turn our backs on the progress that's been made in this country toward, I think, a couple of pretty fundamental principles — one, universality; there's nothing wrong with universality. The principle of universality is a strong one and should be defended. Any move that throws roadblocks in the way of people having access to proper hospitalization, is inconsistent with the basic principle of the hospitalization cost-sharing arrangements of 1956, as well as the medicare plan of 1966.

I simply say to the members of this committee that my colleague and I would be totally remiss in our responsibilities if we did not take this first opportunity, on interim supply, to say to this government that the system we are embarking upon is wrong. It is wrong. It is inconsistent with the philosophy of modern health care that the benefits should be available to everyone, regardless of their

ability to pay. But in financing those systems, we all realize there's no free lunch; the minister is quoted as saying there's no free lunch in hospital and medical care. No one realizes that more than the people who promote medicare.

But the principle of the Hall report of 1964, which is as valid today as it was 18 or 19 years ago, is that people should pay for those benefits in relationship to their ability to pay; not a tax on the sick, but people should pay in relationship to their ability to pay. A user fee that provides the same maximum of \$300 for the wealthiest person in the province as it does for the average working person who's just above the subsidy level, is blatantly unfair. It violates the principle that this is the kind of system that should be financed from equitably derived sources of revenue, unless of course this government has decided they're going to borrow the Pocklington approach of a flat fee whether you're a multimillionaire or a person just above the poverty line.

Mr. Chairman, before this committee approves interim supply, I think it's time we asked ourselves whether this Legislative Assembly wants to take a giant step backward in 1983. It's fine taking risks, Mr. Minister, if we want to pioneer new social territory. But what kind of risk are we taking, including federal funding, to try to turn the clock back, to bring in a cumbersome, difficult to administer system that is going to place hospital boards in an extremely difficult, unenviable position?

Mr. Chairman, no one argues that there aren't ways in which we should be trying to save costs in our system. In question period, my colleague was attempting to raise a number of questions relating to ways in which we might cut down the costs for our health system. We're going to have to take a look at seat belt legislation, however unpopular that may be, because of the impact on the cost of our health system. We're going to have to look at another example, the whole business of home births. We'd save as much as \$75 million a year, if we look at the minister's utilization report. There are other areas in which we could and should be saving. As members of the Legislature we have an obligation to look at ways in which we can keep the costs down. But surely there are better alternatives than borrowing from a Charles Dickens scenario, trying to impose the 19th century on the 20th century.

Mr. Chairman, I would say to the members of this committee that we may find ourselves in confrontation with the federal government over this issue. There are many issues on which Albertans would rally behind this government: on resource ownership, no question about that. Some of us in the opposition know perfectly well how they would rally behind the government of Alberta on certain issues. But I say frankly to the minister and to every member on that front bench: if you think the people of Alberta will rally behind this government on this issue, think again.

AN HON. MEMBER: You bet they will.

MR. NOTLEY: Somebody says, you bet they will. That's like the captain of the *Titanic* steering right into the iceberg. If you want to get into a confrontation on this one, I say that you will find the people of Alberta will be saying: don't call us, Mr. Russell, we'll call you. You'll be waiting a long time for the call saying, we're going to support you on this one. [interjections] It may be one thing on oil, members of the committee. But if this government wants to get into a confrontation on some-

thing as basic as the health system of this province, if it wants to recklessly challenge federal/provincial arrangements, then I say — and some of the members back there can heckle; fair enough, go right ahead. Make sure you're names are on the record, though, so your constituents will know exactly where you stand on this issue.

I say to the members of the committee that what we heard last night was a proposal which is wrong and, as far as my colleague and I are concerned, we want to make it absolutely clear that we will take every opportunity in this committee and in this Assembly to oppose what we consider to be a proposal that will set the clock back. For people who have worked, including many members on the government side, to improve the system of health over the years, I think that last night was a very sad, sorry day in the legislative history of our province.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, before we rush to the conclusion, I thought possibly the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care may have had some remarks. I'd like to comment with regard to this specific issue that's under discussion, rather than the total general budget. I want to save those remarks for study of the estimates.

I think we have to ask ourselves, first of all, why we are at the stage we are, why the decision had to occur as it did last evening. Why did the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care have to make that decision at this point in time? It didn't start just last night; it didn't start with the 1983-84 budget. We have been led to this position by the type of spending and the attitude created by the government over the last four to five years.

Three or four years ago, the present Provincial Treasurer talked about setting up priorities, establishing some restraint in government, showing some direction, and making some of the difficult decisions. It never happened. Every area of the government continued to expand. The psychology created in Alberta was that the boom will last and last, that we are part of it and we've created an economic environment in this province, in terms of diversification, industry, and all kinds of growth, that will feed revenue into that kind of a system. Well, we're reaching the point now and living with that kind of psychology.

The Lougheed government did not plan for what is happening today. They did not make an attempt to even predict that a user fee was going to be one of the consequences and whether that was the priority they wished to establish last evening. But the Lougheed government did establish that policy as a priority. That's what disappoints me. Under certain circumstances, as a last resort and something that must be used in hospital financing, a user fee is an option that I would support. But what concerns me is the kind of thinking that goes on with regard to this government. We look at a deficit: \$3 billion shored up by \$2 billion of the heritage fund. We should have thought about where we were going two or three years ago in terms of budgetary spending, priorities, and direction. But we didn't. We had a good time, and now we're living with the consequences. Even in the present budget, in this interim supply, did this government have the courage to make some decisions in terms of their principles and priorities? I don't think they did.

Let's look at the whole area of expenditures in housing, just as an example; there are others. In that department, we have 895 civil servants hired in the last few years. We spend over \$1 billion in terms of housing. We have a condition at the present time in Alberta where interest rates are down, mortgages can be bought down to 7 per cent. In various areas, we have a surplus of housing.

There isn't a crisis out there like there was in the boom time. Population growth in Alberta has slowed. There was an area the government could have examined, turned over, and said, the private sector can look after this. Eight hundred and ninety-five jobs could have been transferred to some other area, or you could make a policy decision that that is not a priority area in government; priority areas are food, clothing, shelter, and health care for Albertans. That could have been a basic premise: health care and hospitalization. We could have diverted the funds into that area, if necessary.

The minister has indicated that hopefully it will not be necessary to implement the user fee in the coming year. I hope not, because it creates more kinds of complications. That could have been the support funding that we could have used. But did this government make those kinds of decisions? No they didn't. If the ministers — and there are some 30 ministers in this government, the highest number of ministers per capita of any government in Canada, the highest paid number of ministers of any government in Canada, supporting people in the back benches who are also receiving incomes and have various benefits that other MLAs in Canada don't have, each worrying about their own separate empire. There is vertical thinking going on in this government. No one is able to look at what the other minister is doing and say: how can we better spend the money we have; how can we better establish priorities? That question is never asked in this government.

In 1970 and '71 the leader of the party in this House, Mr. Lougheed, and his Conservatives said that the most important word to us is priorities; we're going to set them when we establish this government. I want to say this to the Legislature at this time. I was going to use this in my budget debate but, under the circumstances, I haven't. Under one of the estimate studies, I intend to introduce some information to show what this government has done in establishing priorities, how we've had runaway government, vertical thinking, lack of priorities, and lack of direction. It's why we're in the financial bind we're in at the present time.

Now what does this financial bind do because we're unable to transfer, co-ordinate, or interrelate responsibility in this government? It transfers responsibility back to local boards. Last night, hospital boards were blessed with a policy that said: look, if you can't stay within the current budget, with a 5 per cent increase next year, then go to the people who use the service and get your extra funds. In the political process, in a non-partisan way, who will get blamed for the user-pay concept? The hospital boards that live in the local community. This government feels that it will be able to avoid that kind of political attack. I don't think people are that short-sighted. But that's the kind of thing that's going on at the present time, because this government cannot come to grips with its priorities and responsibilities. It's going to be faced that way.

Hospital boards will be the bad guys after October — whatever that date is in October when this user-fee concept is implemented. They will be on the black list in the local communities. I can see a number of people viciously coming back to me and saying: I didn't want to pay that user fee; the government has all these billions of dollars; there are a few dollars left in the heritage fund; what's wrong? Well, it isn't just a crisis at the hospital level; it's a crisis within the total budgeting objectives of this government. I think that's where the responsibility must lie.

We look at municipal governments on the very same principle. The municipal governments across this province are going to face an unbelievable situation. We are forcing them to increase property taxes significantly if they wish to give some municipal services. I predict that property taxes will go up 30 to 40 per cent in the coming year because of the pressure we've put on, the 5 per cent limit on school grants. The implementation of the policy by the Minister of Municipal Affairs a couple of days ago, with regard to the interest-shielding policy, is going to create greater impact on municipal governments. But who's going to get blamed for that 30 or 40 per cent increase? Local governments again, poor municipal councillors who are facing an election this fall. We don't have to fend for them or protect them in the political process, but they'll be out on the front line defending policies that were caused by this administration and not by their own doing. They are not the culprits in this whole process.

Well, that's hospital boards and municipal boards. What about school boards? They're facing exactly the same problem. They will have to requisition either the counties or the municipal governments for more moneys, that in turn will have to get it from property tax, as I indicated earlier. So people are going to be mad at the school boards. We're going to create problems between school boards and counties and municipalities because of that requisition. Sure, it's nice to sit back and say, we're the great guys. But at the local level of government, we have created some very difficult situations. I think that is unfair. If we do it here in this Legislature, we should take the responsibility. But that's not the kind of thinking that's going on.

So I make the point at this time that better setting of priorities, better establishing of what we want to do and what we don't want to do, could have prevented that announcement last evening in this Legislature. Better working relationships with local governments would have done the same thing — not just this year when we're in a crisis, but over the last two, three, four, or five years — and led them to a point where they would have to take the responsibility. But all of a sudden we've said: look, the bag of money is dry; now you're in trouble at the local level, and we're going to place all the responsibility on you. That's not fair. I think there were things the government could have done without coming to the conclusion we had to last night. It wasn't done, and I feel it was incumbent upon me to stand in my place to put the argument before the Legislature and place my position clearly before this Assembly.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, I wasn't going to rise; but I've got a rise.

I've stated this previously. Certainly nobody likes to do some of the things that are necessary in this world. It's not so difficult to give permissive legislation, but it's easy to talk against everything. People stand and talk negatively about every policy or everything somebody tries to do. Of course, they never make a mistake because they never do a darned thing.

Where's the positive input? What changes would they make to stop escalating deficits? To suggest the municipalities, the school boards, and the hospital boards possibly have irresponsible people running their particular venues is not only irresponsible but ludicrous. Let's give some people a little credit. They have credible people running their particular venues, and I think we should offer them that opportunity to continue.

Fancy our right-wing, free enterpriser suggesting more

social programs and expense and expansion. Boy, that's really terrific. I leave that to the socialists. What are his suggested priorities? There were none forthcoming. I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that before some of our hon. members in the opposition jump up and down, why don't they come forward and suggest some priorities, make some positive input to the debate, rather than jumping down on everybody all the time? Because I guess two of us can play that game.

I think some positive information and input was given by the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care last night. It is permissive, and certainly it will make our hospital people operate as efficiently as they possibly can and maybe more efficiently. I urge this Legislature to pass the item that is before us.

It's very interesting to listen to budget debates after the budget has been closed. Boy oh boy, it's amazing to me that people can't sit in their chairs and do their budget debate when the budget's before us. However, we'll all get some opportunities to debate when we have the estimates before us.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions or comments?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. HYNDMAN: I move that the Bill be reported, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion carried]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole Assembly has had under consideration and reports Bill No. 28.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: **GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS** (Third Reading)

[It was moved by the members indicated that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

No.	Title	Moved by
24	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Supplementary Act, 1983	Hyndman
25	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Capital Projects Division) Act, 1983	Hyndman

No.	Title	Moved by
10	Rural Electrification Revolving Fund Amendment Act, 1983	Bogle

head: **GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

12. Moved by Mr. Crawford:

Be it resolved that the Select Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing take under consideration the question of allocation of office space to opposition members and report its recommendations to the Assembly on Wednesday, March 30, 1983, and that a motion for concurrence in the report may be made at any time thereafter, without notice.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few remarks with regard to this motion. The intent of the motion is to allocate space to opposition members. I think that's an excellent objective in itself. We feel that historically the office allocation in this building has been very haphazard, and we're not always clear as to who makes the decision with regard to allocation of space.

I think that referring it to the committee on privileges and elections, which is an ultimate authority in this Assembly, is certainly commendable and acceptable. In reviewing this resolution, we feel it is rather narrow in that sense and that it should go beyond just the opposition members when we make this decision. It is the opening of a new session. As members, we will be housed in this building for the next three to four years and will require adequate working conditions, adequate space for not only ourselves but our supporting staff. I think the best decision should be made at this time so we are not trying to wiggle space here and there, as either opposition or government members, and possibly living in an unhappy environment.

In light of that, I'd like to move an amendment to the motion so the motion and the responsibility of the committee can be broadened. I would like to move that: "The motion is hereby amended by deleting 'Opposition members' and adding 'all members'". Mr. Speaker, I have copies of that amendment for members of the Legislature.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, if the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Little Bow has any merit, it surely is its brevity. It's nice to be able to look at a motion and know exactly what change is proposed when the hon. member suggests it. However, I don't think it would be appropriate to try to deal with that matter in the context of the motion which is before the Assembly at the present time, and I would ask hon. members not to support the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give some reasons for putting it that way. The issue in Motion No. 12 is narrow, as the hon. Member for Little Bow has said, but it is meant to deal with that precise and narrow issue. That is why it is narrow. If it were thought useful for the privileges and elections committee to discuss the much larger issue — which to my recollection has never been discussed over the years in the Assembly or in committee in that form — then that would certainly require a very considerable commitment of time and effort by the committee.

I agree with the hon. member that at one point or another there may be some uncertainty with respect to the way in which office space is allocated. There's a reason for that, and that is that the role of the building, the size of staff of both government and opposition

members, has changed over the years. I well remember coming to this building as a young lawyer for all sorts of purposes, like searching company titles, looking in the Attorney General's library, and things like that. The building has long since ceased to be used in that way. The effort — and I think it was an important policy decision, made when the government of which I am a member came to office in 1971 — was that elected members should be in the building and that some other types of services that were already here at the time should not. But we had no guidelines to follow; no guidance, no parameters, had existed under our predecessors. So at that point, the matter was perhaps found to be one that simply had to be dealt with in the most practical way.

I suggest to hon. members that that has been done and that's been a consistent position for over more than a decade. I don't think I would be in a position to want to debate with the hon. leader today whether or not the committee on privileges and elections should, for example, be reviewing the office allocations for ministers. That was not done when the hon. member was a minister and has not been done in the last decade. I doubt if it was ever done before, but the amendment would bring that within its scope.

Although I believe I'm sensitive to the concerns the hon. member has raised, I don't think the issue should be taken more broadly than what is proposed in the motion as it stands. Therefore the amendment should be defeated.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try to make a few comments. One of my patients told me that every dentist should have a root canal and a couple of fillings done once a year, so I'm quite frozen. I haven't been drinking; I'm just frozen.

In supporting the amendment, I'd like to say that in the many years I've been in the Assembly, there have been no parameters, no guidelines, as to who is responsible for space in the building, as the hon. Government House Leader said. At one time we thought it was the Speaker, and then we found that it was not. Then we thought it was Executive Council, and we found that it was not. I believe my colleague has added the amendment so all members on both sides of the House, if they feel they have a grievance, at least have someone to turn to.

I've always felt that the Assembly or this building should be where the members are all housed. I don't see the former party Whip in her place, but I know the Member for Three Hills worked very diligently to try to get the members into the Ag. Building. I don't know if that is a good move or a bad move. If I came to the Legislature as a constituent, I would sort of expect that my member would be in this building.

I don't know if there's space available for all members, but I think we should set up some kind of mechanism — that this committee look at all the space in the building, tour the building, so the committee knows what space is available, what can be used, and there will be someone the members can go to. This committee is non-partisan, because it's a committee of the House. It has members from both sides of the House. I think that's probably a better mechanism than having to blame the Speaker or go running to the Government House Leader, Executive Council, or someone. We would at least know as members where we go.

So I'm sure broadening the motion to talk about all members is really what the hon. Member for Little Bow meant. That's what his intent was. Also, Mr. Speaker,

surely one of these years Albertans in their wisdom are going to have a more evenly divided House.

AN HON. MEMBER: We'll have to build an annex.

DR. BUCK: Talking about building annexes, surely some government is going to have the backbone to say: we have sufficient members in this Assembly. But politicians being politicians, they always take the path of least resistance. They just add a few more seats. One of our buddies may lose a seat through redistribution, so the politicians take the path of least resistance and just add some more. But I think the motion as amended would set up a mechanism so that all members on both sides of the House would have a reference committee. They could take their concerns to that committee, and it would be thrashed out there.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I would like to see the government give some consideration to the motion. The Government House Leader gave it all of five seconds. He had already decided he was going to turn the amendment down. But as a member of the Members' Services Committee, I think this committee, if it's the one we're going to direct these problems to, should have that broad reference so that if a member on the government side or a member on the opposition side, or groups of members, feel they need more space, less space, or room for whatever they think they may need, they should be able to go to the committee on privileges and elections. I would just say in all sincerity to the Government House Leader that I think he should give it more thought than five seconds, because I think the amendment has merit.

[Motion on amendment lost]

[Motion carried]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move we call it 4:54.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, if I might explain my motion, there's one hour designated for government business, and although I could call some second readings, I didn't intend to call any more this afternoon because of the excellent progress on legislation in the last several days. I believe the one hour would be up at 4:54.

MR. SPEAKER: Does that undo the motion we just passed?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, do you want a ruling? [laughter] I was looking to you.

The motion we just passed was the one referring simply to the committee, and I don't think anything happens to that as a result of concluding the hour just a few minutes ahead of what was allowed.

MR. SPEAKER: I interpret the hon. Government House Leader's intention that we go on to the next order of business.

head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

204. Moved by Mr. Kowalski:

Be it resolved that the Assembly express its concern over

current employment levels in Alberta and, further, that the Department of Manpower be commended for its innovative and speedy action in implementing substantial job-creation programs to assist thousands of Alberta citizens.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, last year Canada's economic performance was the worst of the seven largest western industrialized countries, and real gross national expenditure declined by some 4.8 per cent. By the end of 1982, our economic activity in Canada had fallen for six consecutive quarters, the worst performance since quarterly data was first collected in 1947.

Alberta's not an isolated island unto itself, Mr. Speaker. In 1982 we were hit simultaneously by the full after-shock of Ottawa's energy program, record high interest rates, a Canadian and world recession, a falling energy demand, and softening oil prices. As a result, our reputation as the fastest growing province in Canada was tarnished in 1982 by a significant downturn in economic activity. Our gross domestic product in constant prices declined by 3.6 per cent in 1982, and unemployment more than doubled. The growth rate of provincial personal income was slower for 1982 than in any year since 1971.

It's in that context, Mr. Speaker, that I've placed this motion on the Order Paper today. It's my intention to raise a number of points and, by doing so, encourage all members to get involved in a discussion on current employment levels; secondly, to encourage all members to look at the creation of the new Department of Manpower, and to both look at and evaluate the positive new programs implemented by the department; thirdly, to encourage all of us to look at the many facets of our provincial commitment to get Alberta moving again through the Alberta economic resurgence plan; and finally, to look at a number of alternatives for improving the current employment/unemployment situation in Alberta through both public-sector and private-sector initiatives.

From an historical perspective, the time frame 1971 to 1981 — a decade of 10 years — saw concerns with the employment level in Alberta typically reviewed by a situation of not enough manpower and shortages of perceived manpower in skilled areas. Over the past decade, we didn't really look at the whole issue of high unemployment. Most economists and most parliamentarians generally view an unemployment rate of 4 per cent or less as full employment.

At the very outset of this debate, it's important, Mr. Speaker, to look at what happened in the decade since 1971. There are a number of conclusions. All members will agree that if we look back in an historical overview, the decade of the 1970s was rather unique in Canadian history and rather unique in the history of Alberta. I think a number of these conclusions are important at the outset of this debate.

Firstly, no one can deny that Alberta's economy experienced very, very rapid growth in the decade since 1971, and that expansion was particularly noticeable since 1973 when our economy began to recover from the 1971 recession. In 1973, the early part of the 1970s, the massive Syncrude project was started, the Arab oil embargo resulted in a dramatic increase in the price of energy.

But be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, recent events would strongly suggest that the Alberta economy is not immune to economic downturn in other parts of the world and, particularly, in Canada. By 1982 the economic slowdown resulted in an overall employment drop in our

province, certainly from the levels experienced in 1981 and before. While our natural population continues to grow, there has been a steep decline in the amount of net immigration in the province of Alberta.

A second conclusion one could draw from an overview of what happened in the decade of the 1970s is that without any doubt the rapid growth of our economy resulted in very significant employment growth in the province of Alberta. In the time frame 1972 to 1982, total employment in our province increased by an average annual rate of some 4.8 per cent, a rate approximately double the Canadian average. A large portion of this employment growth was filled by people moving to Alberta from other provinces and even from outside Canada. If you look specifically at the figures for the time frame 1971 to 1974, we experienced an average annual net migration of some 12,750 people. That figure quadrupled if you look at the figures from 1975 to 1982, as an average annual net migration to our province reached some 48,375 citizens.

A third major conclusion, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the decade we've just come out of, industries in our province — particularly those in forestry, mining, quarries, oil and gas wells — had the highest growth rate of all industries, with an average annual increase in employment of some 9.9 per cent. Agriculture was the only industry that experienced a decline in employment. The transportation and manufacturing sectors grew, but did not grow very large.

The fourth major conclusion is that we experienced above-average growth in a number of other sectors in our province, particularly the managerial and professional classes, construction, and transportation occupations.

It's also very important, Mr. Speaker, that we take a look at the composition of employment in our province, and take a look at how it compares to the rest of Canada. In 1982 a much larger percentage of Alberta's employed was working in agriculture, and primary and construction industries, as compared to those same sectors in other provinces of Canada. On the other hand, when you look at manufacturing, where some 18.2 per cent of the Canadian population was employed, in Alberta we had only 8.4 per cent of our citizens employed in that sector.

Another interesting thing when you look at the decade of the 1970s and bring it up to 1981 and 1982 is a very important figure called the labor force participation rate. In 1982 our participation rate in Alberta was 70.8 per cent, the highest in Canada. Despite dramatic growth in the female participation rate in recent years, the male participation rate is still considerably higher. In 1982, 83.4 per cent of the males in this province were employed as compared to 58.2 per cent of the ladies. While average employment in Alberta in 1982 totalled 1,080,000 and unemployment averaged some 88,000 citizens, the unemployment rate for most of 1982 averaged about 7.5 per cent.

Another conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that I think is important to put in the record at the outset of this debate is a look at how Alberta's gross domestic product changed from 1971 to 1981. By 1981 our gross domestic product reached some \$47.4 billion. In the time frame, the 10 years from 1972 to 1982, our gross domestic product in current dollars increased by an average annual percentage of some 19.8 per cent. As a percentage of Canada's gross domestic product, our GDP increased from 8 per cent in 1970 to some 13.8 per cent in 1981.

In reality, Mr. Speaker, our per capita GDP was more than 50 per cent higher than that experienced by the

other citizens in our country. It's also very important when looking at that record, that historic decade, that total labor income in the province increased by an average annual percentage of 17 per cent from 1972 to 1982.

I think those conclusions from the historic record are important because, when we hit 1982, we experienced a very negative situation both within the country of Canada and within the province of Alberta. Both economies, national and provincial, were hard hit. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the figures for labor force employment in February 1983, the statistics, while just numbers unto themselves, when put in the context of employment within both Canada and Alberta, tell a story of major concern to all members in this Assembly.

By January of this year, our population rose to some 2.35 million people. And in February of 1983, in our labor force of 1,170,000 people we had some 135,000 people who were unemployed. We also had some 1,035,000 people who were gainfully employed. With an unemployment rate of 11.6 per cent, we had a participation rate in the labor force of 69.9 per cent.

However, those figures in themselves don't really tell the whole story, Mr. Speaker. I think it's also important that all members appreciate how the labor force in this province is divided into various sectors, depending of course on the type of vocation the individual man or woman might be involved in. I think it's important that we do take a look at the figures of these various sectors to see how they rank compared to other sectors. Agriculture by far — extremely important — suffered very, very little unemployment in this province. In fact the February 1983 figures indicate that of the 73,000 people involved in the labor force in the agricultural sector, 95.9 per cent were employed, with an unemployment rate in that sector of 4.1 per cent.

Other primary industries; with a labor force of 77,000, the employment rate was 87 per cent, the unemployment rate 13 per cent. Manufacturing: with some 86,000 Albertans involved in that sector, the employment rate was 83.7 per cent. Construction: 106,000 Albertans involved in that sector, with an employment rate of 71.7 per cent and an unemployment rate of 28.3 per cent, by far the largest single sector in our province suffering unemployment. The sector that includes people involved with both transport and utilities vocations had a participation rate in the employment field of 91.6 per cent.

The trades: 215,000 Albertans involved in that particular sector had an employment rate of 90.2 per cent. Those individual Albertans involved in both finance and real estate: 66,000 of them had a participation rate in the employment sector of some 93.9 per cent. In the service industries in our province: some 368,000 people, 89.7 per cent of them, were employed. Those involved in public administration: some 81,000 had an employment rate of 93.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we're now in the dying days of March 1983. I'm not sure that two years ago any individual Albertan who might have suggested they do a prognostication based on a crystal ball, and all the data and figures that were available at that time, could have looked to the spring of 1983 and said that Albertans would be experiencing the kind of employment/unemployment situation I've just read into the record.

However, a year ago we were in a much better situation to take a look at what the situation might be in 1983. I think it's fair to say in retrospect, Mr. Speaker, that it was about a year ago that members in this Assembly

began to see the signs and in fact began to take a very, very serious debate approach to what was happening. In fact we did begin a series of new steps and new directions to combat this growing reality of what was happening in our Alberta, this growing reality of employment and unemployment.

None of us who were here in the spring of 1983, or those of us who are here now, are really so naive as to believe that government can eliminate all the problems in the labor market. However, I think it's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that what we believed a year ago, and what most of us believe today, is that government can attempt to influence this labor market situation and maintain it as best it can in a basic balanced state for long-term growth in this province.

I think it's extremely important, when we see some of the major objectives we had through 1982 and how we reacted to them so as to set a positive environment for 1983, just to spend a minute or two looking at them. I recall that in the Spring of 1982 one of the major concerns in the minds of many Albertans was with respect to a favorable and stable political and economic climate in this province. Those members who were in this Assembly in the Spring of 1982 can remember many debates with respect to various political and economic alternatives. There was some element of uncertainty.

Perhaps in the minds of some, the uncertainty was a greater element than it was in the minds of others. But in essence we had to work very hard with respect to that particular situation, and we resolved it in November 2, 1982, when the mandate of the people of the province was given to us. In my view, we now have a very favorable political environment for many of the things that have to happen if we want to get Alberta working again and if we want to start looking towards the future.

Of course the most important decision that was reached in November 2, 1982, was the returning of a government that was committed and believed in the concept of free enterprise, and a government that believed that it's the private sector that must take the initiative, it's the private sector that must fill the gap, and it's the private sector that must lead us out of the economic situation we are currently in.

The second thing we worked very hard at through 1982 was the whole question of job opportunities in this province. The identification of those job opportunities — all of us did it in a variety of different ways, some in head-to-head discussions with our constituents, some in debates in this Assembly, and some of course in committee meetings. In essence what we had to do was create an environment that will allow the maximum access of our constituents, the maximum access of fellow Albertans to the work opportunities that did exist, do exist, and will exist in future years in this province.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we had to start identifying some of the problems involved in the labor market. We had to bring those problems into the open for a public debate. Of course some of those items will be dealt with during this spring session of the Assembly. But most of all, we began a very specific plan of action a year ago in the spring of 1982. It was known as the Alberta economic resurgence plan. In essence, it saw this government move in a series of new directions as early as last April, 1982.

The first major commitment we made as a government was to the very key industry in this province, the oil and gas industry. We announced a \$5.4 billion program of assistance over a five-year program. That was really the first basic step of the Alberta economic resurgence pro-

gram. We followed up later in 1982 with an acceleration program of encouragements through incentive grants to that same sector, the wells servicing and developing drilling sector, both part of the oil and gas industry. We committed some \$250 million. We announced the basic program in the spring of 1982, followed up in August of 1982, and continued it through the end of 1982.

A third major item that we recognized was extremely important, not only to the short-term economic viability of our province but to the long-term economic viability of our province. That was really the whole question of marketing of some base industries and base resources in this province, particularly natural gas. All members will recall an announcement made last September 24 by our Premier, which basically indicated there was going to be a joint Alberta/industry marketing strategy that would look at the United States in an attempt to find more markets that would be of a long-term nature. Considerable work has been done through the fall and winter of 1982 and the spring of 1983 in bringing that matter to the attention of the National Energy Board in Ottawa, and in fact there are some positive signs in that regard.

[Mr. Anderson in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, part of the Alberta resurgence program also took a look at the whole question of enhanced oil recovery projects. Last October a major commitment was made that in the short term, the medium term, we'll provide some significant stimulation for jobs in both the northeastern and the northwestern part of the province. As the representative for the constituency of Barrhead, that has within it the Swan Hills oil fields, that particular announcement was a major positive stimulation for thought and carried many of my constituents through the dark days of the winter we've just come out of.

Part of the economic resurgence plan also saw us take a look at net farm income, and we did it in a very, very major way with the farm fuel allowance and some very significant additional grant dollars provided to our agricultural producers. In addition to that, we followed it up in October 1982 with a primary agricultural producers incentive program for natural gas. On September 7 our Premier got on province-wide television and said that what we needed in Alberta was some stability in the market place, some security for those individuals who own homes, who are involved in small business, both agricultural and non-agricultural, and we came forward with our various interest-shielding programs.

We didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. We carried forward in the fall of 1982 with a major program to offset unemployment in the construction industry, particularly in transportation, and of course that was the winter works program. We continued even further with major new programs. We announced that we were going to be moving towards two new kinds of venture capital corporations, one for the private sector and the other a special entity for our native businessmen.

The whole gist behind all these programs essentially was to promote the free-enterprise ideology and free-enterprise environment in this province that would encourage risk-takers to get involved to create new jobs and further opportunity for this province. Our whole strategy, Mr. Speaker, was based on the fact that we could have long-term diversification based on freedom in the market place.

At the conclusion of the November 2 election, the Premier had to make some choices. He made some

choices several days thereafter, when on November 19, 1982, he appointed the new Alberta cabinet. One of the appointments on that day was the appointment of the Member for Bonnyville to the newly created Department of Manpower. The priority attention provided by our government to this whole question of employment/unemployment could not have been more positively approached than with the creation of a new Department of Manpower in this province.

That department will provide us with a mechanism to go even further than we already had gone to that point in time. I think it's extremely important that all members recognize that when the throne speech was read several weeks ago, there were three priorities listed. One of those priorities was in fact the creation of the Department of Manpower and very accentuated attention to this whole question of employment/unemployment in our province.

I think it's very significant as well, Mr. Speaker, that in the first session of the 20th Legislature Bill No. 1, the Department of Manpower Act, was introduced by no less a person than the Premier himself. That's where the priorities are.

Mr. Speaker, some members might suggest that in addition to the economic resurgence program and the concerns we have with respect to political and economic stability in this province, we really didn't begin looking at the whole question of manpower until after the creation of the Department of Manpower. I think in reality, however, some very, very significant initiatives had already been established in 1982, will be continued now, and will be amplified.

I think it's important that we take a look at some of those programs. I'm going to do it very quickly. Some programs provide more employment opportunities than other programs, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are of no lesser significance or benefit than other programs. We have such diversified programs currently involved with job creation in this particular province that, for the most part, it will perhaps surprise a number of members to see exactly how diverse we really are. I want to list some of them and comment briefly on how many participants there are and what kind of dollar figures there are.

We have programs as varied as the internship program, which is for graduate students looking at education in the province. We have the priority employment program, that in essence will look at and assist some 10,000 Albertans. Some \$27 million is involved in that. We have the Alberta Opportunity Corps program, which basically looks at northern communities and provides an opportunity for a number of northern individuals to be involved, some 700 in fact. The summer temporary employment program, which is very important in the current fiscal year, really assisted some 5,000 Albertans in that regard.

We have the employment skills program, which looks at assisting those people on social assistance by providing them with an opportunity to do other things. The special placement program looks at and assists the disabled and the disadvantaged citizens of the province of Alberta. Even this Assembly that we're all members of today finds itself adding to the solution of the problem, and we have the Alberta legislative internship program. The transportation winter works program, that I talked about a few minutes ago, directly assisted some 4,000 truckers at a total capital cost of some \$48 million.

In Edmonton we have the YMCA employment program, which is attempting to assist some 70 people in the age group of 16 to 35 years of age who are mentally

disadvantaged. For those individuals who are over the age of 45 and are having difficulty finding employment, in the city of Lethbridge we have the Access 45 program; in Calgary, the Opportunity 45 program; in Edmonton, the over 45 program. Native Outreach is another program, in which we are looking at hiring upwards of some 500 native people.

The Distinctive Employment Counselling Services of Alberta, jointly funded and operated between our Department of Manpower and the Canada Employment and Immigration [Department], will be assisting some 1,000 people in terms of the counselling aspect. We have the employment opportunities program. We have the hire-a-student program, which is extremely important. The forestry employment bridging program was of considerable benefit to many of us who represent rural constituencies. Our department has been involved in the work sharing program in consultation with the federal government.

The new employment expansion and development program which was announced in February of this year — just in the last several days, our Minister of Manpower, Mr. Isley, along with the federal Minister of Employment and Immigration, Mr. Axworthy, announced that the first allocation of dollars under that program will be made in the province of Alberta: the local employment assistance program; the new technology employment program; the summer Canada youth employment program; the Canada community service projects; the Canada community development projects; the industrial research assistance program; and the program for the employment of the disadvantaged.

Mr. Speaker, the gist of all this, in a very, very brief way, is that there are some 27 programs already in existence in the province. Some 65,000 Albertans will receive some positive assistance from them at a cost of some \$137 million. Mr. Speaker, it is also extremely important that all members do not forget the capital commitment included in the 1983 provincial budget. Some 19 billion capital dollars have been set aside for major construction and development projects in Alberta in 1983-84.

Mr. Speaker, we have a new deal in place now in this province called the Alberta economic resurgence program. It comes about because of a positive political and economic climate. I might point out that this government has committed itself to the new deal, the Alberta economic resurgence program, without any increases in personal income taxes, without any increases in corporate income taxes, staying away from any gasoline tax for our citizens, and staying away from any move towards a sales tax. There can be no more positive incentive provided to the private sector than an economic environment in which they are the managers of their own dollars and the determiners of their own destiny.

When latent consumerism wakes up to the thousands of good bargains now available in this province, I think we'll have a new stimulus that will really start to roll. As we close the year of 1983, many of the negatives consistently perpetuated by those who follow a doom-and-gloom philosophy and those who say, don't get up because the sun won't rise tomorrow — if we could ever put asunder those negative thinkers, those who see nothing good about the sun rising and see no opportunity over the next hill or no opportunity in the day after tomorrow, and if we can have people who are positive and who believe in the future, then I think, Mr. Speaker, the opportunities that do exist today, in a very latent way, will become even more accentuated and in fact we will

return to where we were several years ago.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to invite all members to participate in this debate, to participate in a renaissance of thoughts with respect to this troubling subject that is before us all, and conclude by saying that all of us have to "do our own thing", to quote the vernacular. We have a very positive economic situation. We've just come through a very difficult year. But things will not get worse, Mr. Speaker; things will get better. Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: I will be brief. I don't think it will . . . [applause] Thank you very much; I appreciate that. That's the first time you've thumped for me.

I was surprised by the motion, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the first part of it, that "the Assembly express its concern over current employment levels in Alberta", but after that I tend to disagree. It's an amazing sort of motion when we're congratulating a government department, Mr. Speaker, and the rate of unemployment in the province at this moment is 12 per cent and rising. Since the Department of Manpower was formed, we have gone from an unemployment rate of 71,000 to 136,000. The point I'm trying to make here is that there are also the hidden unemployed. It is estimated that across Canada there are hidden unemployed of perhaps another 6 per cent, which could leave our unemployment in Alberta up around the 16 or 17 per cent level right now.

Of course the tragedy to all groups on unemployment — I've gone through this before, but I'll just refer to one group of people, the young people from the ages of 18 to 25. It's estimated that the unemployed among this group would be up somewhere towards 30 to 35 per cent. The point I make, Mr. Speaker, is that no matter how much the government wants to congratulate itself, this can become a very stiff social penalty we pay for having a group of young people unemployed for any length of time at all.

If the Department of Manpower and the government want to congratulate themselves for an unemployment rate that since the election has gone from 71,000 to 136,000, that's fine. They can congratulate themselves in the House here. But the fact is that it's not fooling the people of Alberta. I think it's clear — and we've said this before, so I won't belabor the point — that it is a mark of the government that they have failed totally in diversifying the economy. That's one of the reasons we're facing problems now, Mr. Speaker. I really do not understand a Conservative government that is willing to increase the budget \$200 million for welfare but is not prepared to move directly into job creation. We've talked, of course, that now is the time to get on with public works. It's the cheapest time to do it; it's a good bargain now, and it puts people back to work. I really do not understand why the government is willing, as I said, to give money away for welfare handouts and not give money for job creation.

Since it was formed, Manpower has announced a number of programs, and I will give them support any time they put one person back to work. I compliment them. But since the Department of Manpower was formed, we have gone from 71,000 to 136,000. Overall, it has failed in this time. The point that should also be made is that a lot of the money that has been given for job creation through the Ministry of Manpower has been federal government money. As much as we do not like the federal government and we want to fight them over all sorts of things — the latest being user fees — a large amount of this money has come from the federal government. That has nothing to do with the Minister of

Manpower here. That would be true of any government across Canada.

Another point I would make is that if you look at the budget, they have created some new jobs. Very interesting — they have created some new jobs. We have a 40 per cent increase in the support staff for the Department of Manpower, but we're decreasing the programs. Does that make any sense at all? Maybe it does to this government. I do not know. An increase in the support staff and a decrease in the programs: what kind of money management is that?

In conclusion, I know that we're not going to vote on it, and I know we'll get many times to debate this in estimates with the hon. Member for Barrhead. I'm sure other people want to speak to it. I would just conclude in saying that I agree with the first part of it:

Be it resolved that the Assembly express its concern over current employment levels in Alberta . . .

If we'd left it like that, I would have been thumping along with the rest of you. But then we say:

. . . that the Department of Manpower be commended for its innovative and speedy action in implementing substantial job-creation programs to assist thousands of Alberta citizens.

When our unemployment rate is 12 per cent, the motion is almost laughable. So I would not support the motion if it would come to a vote. I know it's not going to, because there'll be another hon. member jumping up and down and telling us how wonderful it is here in Alberta and how great the Department of Manpower is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HIEBERT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter the debate on Motion 204 after that lament. I think that sometimes the hon. members to my right in the House — but to my far left philosophically — look upon job creation very similar to your situation, Mr. Acting Speaker, in that it looks like you have a new job, and it's always nice to get two people doing the same job. That's the type of job creation they usually consider advocating.

I would also like to remind the Member for Edmonton Norwood and his colleague about that 18 to 25 group, because I can recall a very similar situation in Saskatchewan about 25 years ago. This is where the cradle of socialism occurred — medicare, whatever. We all recall that Alberta has had a tremendous in-migration rate. If we look in 1979, 60,000 jobs were created in this province alone. We had massive in-migration from Canada.

But I can recall back in Saskatchewan where we had a lot of people coming out of university and the training institutions. They were looking for jobs, and the situation was very similar to what you find today under present economic circumstances. Due to the policies of that particular government, many of them had to look outside the boundaries of that province. Where did they migrate? Many went to central Canada, but most of them came to Edmonton, Calgary, and other parts of this province.

I would like to remind the member — as he admonishes this particular government in what it's trying to do and, in turn, tries to extol what his brethren had done before in Saskatchewan — that many of those people came here because of the opportunity, the economic outlook, and the policies of the government of the day. Therefore, for the hon. member to be admonishing what's happening in terms of the efforts of this government and the Minister of Manpower, I think, begs the question.

Certainly we've had a history of bust and boom throughout this country. There are many concerns asso-

ciated with the unemployment levels that we have today. Certainly the problem is not a new one. It's been with us in terms of cycles in this particular country. If you look at the last decade, we've had phenomenal growth in this province. The concern in the last 10 to 15 years has always been one of perceived shortages and a mismatch with regard to the kinds of skills that were required by business and industry and the type of training our young people had. We had full employment in this province.

In '79 alone, the employment growth was 6.5 per cent, whereas in Canada it was 3.9 per cent. I recognize that those jobs were primarily in the construction sector and the petroleum industry. With the changes that have occurred in the last few years with the economic recession, certainly many of these opportunities have evaporated.

But I think we should all recall what happened historically when we had full employment. We had a lot of people who were here to make a quick buck and a lot of people moving from job to job. I wonder sometimes about the quality of service that was received for the performance and the salaries people were getting in the last decade. We had people getting into business who probably had no background in business. A lot of this led to some of the things that have occurred with regard to bankruptcies.

As soon as there was an economic downturn, these people were ill-prepared for facing some of the business decisions that had to be made. All we have to do is look at the overbuilding of the commercial space in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. You can see that certainly some of the decisions that were made by the business people were built on that escalation rate that things were always going to be moving upward and forward. Never once did they take into consideration the backside of the economy and what could happen.

So if we look at the situation today, I think it's one that's not solely located in Alberta. It's nationwide and worldwide. There are a lot of causes for it. There's no point in trying to put the blame on any one group or party. The fact is that it's here. I know that the two major cities in Alberta certainly have felt the impact. But when we look at our particular employment rates throughout the province, we are still favorable to other parts of Canada.

As I see the time moving along, I would like to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the opportunities this province has afforded other Canadians should never be forgotten. I realize that the people who are here now have to make

some economic adjustments. We are in a period of restructuring the economy, not only in Alberta but in Canada. Some of our life styles and expectations are certainly going to have to change. I think all members are aware of the constituents who have been affected by unemployment. I also realize that there's probably a hidden unemployment rate, as the member suggested. Some people may in fact not be looking for jobs; they may not be actively seeking work, because they may feel there's little purpose in it.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

However, there are signals, Mr. Speaker, that there is a recovery occurring. But that recovery will never match what we had in the '79-80 period. It's going to be slow and gradual. Hopefully, it will be more enduring in the long run. I recognize that some people will be anxious about what is happening in the job market. None the less, the employment situation will probably catch up. As to what's going to happen with our economy, it's slowly starting to turn around.

I think the first measure will be in the area of productivity. Surely the employment opportunities will follow subsequent to that. There are many critical factors involved. If interest rates stay low, if there's an upswing in the conventional oil and gas industry and the natural gas markets, and if the situation with OPEC settles, I am sure that confidence will again be restored in Alberta. Along with the marketing and processing of agricultural products, I am sure that we can see a very bright future for Alberta. I know that the people of this province have the spirit and the will to make it work.

In light of the time, Mr. Speaker, I would beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is not proposed that the Assembly sit this evening.

[At 5:28 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

