

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, October 20, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, may I draw your attention to your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Present in your gallery this afternoon is Mr. William Rothernell, a Canadian from Stratford, Ontario, who fought in the air defence of Malta during World War II. Mr. Rothernell served 129 missions. He has flown Hampdens, Wellingtons, Lancasters, and Mosquito bombers. For his distinguished service, he was created a member of the ancient order of the Knights of Malta.

Accompanying Mr. Rothernell is his wife Eileen, a daughter of the late Senator Doone of the Parliament of Canada. They are visiting the Clerk Assistant of the Assembly and are accompanied by their daughter Mrs. Peggy Davidson, a member of the Clerk's staff. I would ask that Mr. and Mrs. Rothernell rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the annual report of the Alberta Opportunity Company for the year ended March 31, 1983. I should point out that this report has already been distributed to Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a response to Order for a Return No. 131 of 1983, with regard to the Alsands project.

MRS. LeMESSURIER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table with the Legislative Assembly the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts fifth annual report, for the year 1982-83. I believe these have been circulated to all MLAs.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 1982-83 annual report of the Alberta Art Foundation.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm filing a discussion paper on possible legislation or disclosure requirements for unregulated deposit-taking activities in Alberta. This paper will be made available to all interested Albertans.

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table with the Assembly copies of the 65th annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board, for the year ended December 31, 1982, as required by statute. This report was distributed to Members of the Legislative Assembly by memorandum on September 6, 1983.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. PAHL: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of this Assembly, 67 grade 6 students from Kameyosek community school, located in the constituency of Edmonton Mill Woods. They're accompanied

by their principal Mr. Ron Hodges, grade 6 teachers Mr. Phil Booth and Mr. Dash Shoenbottom, and Mrs. Phyllis Reynar, who is also an extra teacher with the group.

I have mentioned to hon. members before that in Cree, Kameyosek means "beautiful place". I have often visited the Kameyosek elementary school and, with its rich diversity of talented children representing many ethnic groups of our community, it is indeed a beautiful place. I would like the residents of that beautiful place to rise in the members gallery and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 48 grades 5 and 6 students from the Baturyn elementary school in the constituency of Edmonton Calder. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Bojecko, Mr. MacEachern, and Mrs. Cypher. They are seated in both galleries, and I would like them to stand and receive the usual warm welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, and through you, 55 students from the Elementary B school in Drayton Valley. I think it's the first time I've had an opportunity to introduce classes from Drayton Valley. Along with these students are teachers Roger Smeland and Paul Vickers and parents Mrs. Cartwright and Mrs. Gilbertson. They are in the public gallery. Would they please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Crowsnest Pass Freight Rates

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Premier. It's with respect to Bill C-155, now before the House of Commons. Could the Premier outline to the Assembly the position of the government of Alberta with respect to the option being advanced by the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, that there should be a three-year moratorium on any changes in the Crow rate as it applies to grain farmers?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I would refer the question to the Minister of Agriculture.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, we understand the Official Opposition's position, in that the three-year delay would have a much greater recognition of the producers' ability to pay. However, our concern at this point really isn't with the Official Opposition's position but with Bill C-155 itself. We have been concerned for some time and made a presentation to the House of Commons Committee on Transport, a copy of which I filed with the Assembly yesterday.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I don't think I heard him answer the question. The question was, what is the position of the government of Alberta with respect to the option of a three-year delay? Would the government of Alberta recommend that option to the government of Canada?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, we really don't feel that whether there's a delay or not is the issue. We feel that the issue is the Bill itself, that the proper amendments are made to that Bill, and that the amendments have within them a recog-

tion of the producers' ability to pay. That has been our position all the way along, and that will continue to be our position.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. Does the government of Alberta share the position of the Saskatchewan government as announced the other day by Mr. Bernston, I believe, the Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan, opposing the use of time allocation by the present administration in the House of Commons?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: We have stated no position on the time allocation, nor would we. That issue is before the House of Commons now and will be dealt with accordingly.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. Bearing in mind the minister's answer about changes the government would like to see in the Crow Bill, could the minister outline to the Assembly why it would not be the position of the government of Alberta to join with Saskatchewan in asking for sufficient time to debate the Bill, including all the amendments proposed, in the House?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, we have stated for some time that on an issue that's so vital not only to agriculture but to all industries in western Canada, we favor adequate time being given to that debate to make sure the amendments, including the amendments we presented to the House of Commons committee, are fully debated.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Given the minister's answer, will it be the intention of the department to make representation to the Government House Leader in Ottawa, to urge that proper consideration of all the amendments be given and that any effort to use closure would meet with the opposition of the government of Alberta?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague the Minister of Agriculture has adequately expressed our concerns relative to the proper time being given to this most important matter affecting Albertans and all Canadians, when it comes to transportation matters. As to whether or not any official representation need be made, we will take that matter under consideration. But it sounds like not a bad suggestion from the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. NOTLEY: If you'd take more of my suggestions, Mr. Minister . . . However, I would urge . . . Well, we'll set that aside. There'll be an opportunity in a few hours, Mr. Speaker, for me to urge different things.

I would ask the Minister of Agriculture what representation has been made subsequent to the final stage of debate being started in the House of Commons. What consultation has taken place between the government of Alberta, the opposition caucuses, and the government of Canada re the concerns the minister just alluded to?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, we made a very, very comprehensive presentation to the House of Commons committee, which included members from all sides of the House of Commons. So they are fully aware of our presentation. We took that presentation seriously and in the context it was given, that it would be reviewed. That is taking place. Further than that, we've had no formal discussions with the federal government on the issue since that time.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary question on this, on my part at least, to the hon. Minister of Agriculture or the hon. Premier. Has there been any effort to seek a meeting with the new federal Leader of the Opposition with respect to the position of the Official Opposition caucus on a three-year delay in the imposition of higher rates for grain farmers and the position of that caucus in the House of Commons on that matter, and would the government indicate where it would stand were such a meeting to occur?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge we have not asked for a meeting. However, as I stated earlier, our concern is not with the position of the federal opposition but with the Bill itself.

Kananaskis Park Expenditures

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Recreation and Parks, I'd like to direct this question to the hon. Premier. Could the Premier advise what kind of cost/benefit analysis was undertaken by the government to determine the relative merits of using imported white silica sand for the Kananaskis golf course, at \$41.72 a ton, compared to local garden variety sand, at \$10.88 a ton, in this time of restraint?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'll take it as notice so that the minister can give a detailed answer. But as I mentioned yesterday, I think it's quite clear that the citizens who have seen that course, seen that area, believe very much that it's a first-class operation and very well received by the citizens. [applause]

MR. NOTLEY: Relatively weak applause on that one, Mr. Premier. But I'd like to ask a supplementary question and try to elicit from the Premier whether any guidelines have been directed to project managers with respect to the purchase of optional equipment or supplies in this time of trying to make our dollars stretch as far as possible.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I don't think we could answer that in a general way. The most important development has been communication to the departments to try to be involved as much as possible in smaller projects and smaller orders, to give an advantage to suppliers and contractors here in the province of Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier advise what cost/benefit analysis was undertaken in determining the relative merits of constructing cedar-clad toilet buildings, at a cost of \$1.9 million? That's almost \$10,000 a toilet.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I don't know to what project the hon. member is referring. Perhaps he could identify the project.

DR. BUCK: It's your pet, Kananaskis.

MR. MARTIN: It's Kananaskis; it's a supplementary question.

MR. LOUGHEED: I'd be happy to have the Minister of Recreation and Parks inquire into the matter and respond.

Health Care Insurance — Improper Billing

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Attorney General. Is the Attorney General prepared to initiate legal action against Dr. Andrew Goldstein, who the College of Physicians and Surgeons has found to have billed health

care on several occasions for services he did not render to patients?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, except in the most extraordinary of circumstances, I don't think the hon. member and I should be discussing individual citizens in respect of the possibility of a potential prosecution. I'm fully aware, as are other hon. members, of the amount of publicity given in respect of what I believe the hon. member is correct in saying is a recent report by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I certainly recognize the importance of any such report, but I'm not in a position today to respond in any detail or any specifics to the hon. member's question.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Attorney General employ the full strength of the law to recover moneys improperly obtained by Dr. Goldstein or any other physician reported by the College of Physicians and Surgeons to have done the same?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is raising a question of similar character to the previous one. In effect, however difficult it is to direct our attention to these things in certain circumstances, I think it's well to remember that we're speaking of reports; indeed, probably media reports of a report. That is quite a different matter than evidence, and quite a different process is involved in the hon. member and I exchanging a few comments on it today than in assessing evidence and determining whether or not there were proceedings that should be taken.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. What plans does the minister have in place to check how widespread this fraudulent practice is among doctors? Is it widespread, or does the minister have any idea?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I am unable to know whether it's widespread or not. I doubt very much that it is. The claim cards, billing profiles, and styles of professional practice are regularly reviewed, either at random or by groups, both within the department, vis-a-vis billing practices, and by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, on a professional profile practice. The case that was referred to earlier in the question period came about as a result of the college undertaking a professional practice profile review of the top 20 billers in the province.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the College of Physicians and Surgeons says there are roughly five suspensions a year for improper billing practices, what measures has the minister taken to recover these moneys obtained by physicians over the past 14 years?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I would have to take that question as notice and check the files to go back that far.

Since my time as minister, I do recall at least one case that involved a fairly lengthy legal action for the retrieval of moneys that were obtained that way. I think it's fair to say that the profession itself, which involves over 3,000 doctors who do bill the plan, are just as anxious as the rest of us in the province to see that all of their members bill properly.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary on this point.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that we are collecting from the other end, I would hope the minister would look ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. MARTIN: Has the minister any plans which will act as a forceful deterrent to improper billing by doctors? Aside from the issuing of statements that people have to look at, is there another deterrent that the minister is looking at?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I think the deterrent of losing one's licence to practise within the province is quite strong. The claims as put in are by statutory declaration and, as I mentioned, from time to time there is legal action that follows. The doctors are aware that the scanning and assessment of claims is being improved on an ongoing basis. In addition to that, there are the two kinds of random and planned reviews that are continually going on, both by the college and by officials of the department. In addition to that, of course, citizens receive statements of services provided by doctors, and in many cases they come forward if they believe those statements are incorrect.

Oil and Gas Activity

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Premier and refers to the speech in the Assembly on Wednesday, October 19. Is it the position of the Alberta government to plan for increased oil and gas activity in this province?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, it certainly is our intention, if the hon. member is referring to my observations with regard to the shift from the frontier regions to the western Canadian area, including oil sands and heavy oil. But perhaps the hon. member could clarify to which particular area the question was being directed.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. Yes, I was referring to the fact in your speech that hopefully there would be a shift in activity from the frontier lands to Alberta.

MR. LOUGHEED: The issue is one that's going on now, if you like, in the boardrooms and by the decision-makers, as to whether or not the activity will continue to shift away from western Canada to the frontier areas. When I refer to frontier, Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to both the Beaufort area in the High Arctic, as well as off the Atlantic coast.

The factors that are involved are these: number one, geological data, in terms of what has been observed in terms of recent exploration activity; number two, some concern with regard to federal government adjustment, having regard to their large budget and being able to meet their very, very large commitments with regard to financing exploration in that area; thirdly, an assessment of development costs in all the frontier areas; fourthly, the market for heavy oil that I have mentioned; and fifthly, I think very clearly the technological efforts by the industry located here in Alberta, to work on smaller heavy oil and oil sands projects.

MRS. EMBURY: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. EMBURY: Are there specific actions the government can initiate to accelerate activity in our oil and gas industry?

MR. LOUGHEED: Well, Mr. Speaker, I suppose there are two. Number one would be to communicate more significantly to all Canadians the high cost that the taxpayer of Canada is paying for exploration and development in the frontier areas as compared to western Canada, having regard to the prospects there, to make sure that the citizens of all of Canada are aware of what the taxpayer expense is, some 80 per cent up of the cost of wells, some of which will cost over \$300 million, I'm told, for an individual well in the frontier area; then, of course, continuing encouragement such as the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources is involved in, in the projects that are here and being considered in Alberta.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, one last supplementary question.

MR. SPEAKER: We're in a topic that is really of very, very large scope, possibly requiring quite lengthy answers. I had indicated that the last question might be the last supplementary. I have a long list. I wonder if the hon. member would mind waiting to see how we make out for time before coming back to the topic.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member. That can be her question in caucus next month.

A supplementary question to the Premier. In his speech yesterday, he indicated that the oil industry was being taxed on an accrual or gross basis rather than a net basis. Can the Premier indicate to the Assembly if he's had any discussion with the heir apparent, the Prime Minister to be, Mr. Mulroney? It's quite obvious that we're going to have a new government in 18 months. Has the topic of the different rate of taxation on the different basis been discussed?

MR. LOUGHEED: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it has.

MR. NOTLEY: You discuss oil but not the Crow.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the Premier indicate to the Assembly if there's been a commitment by Mr. Mulroney that he will make those appropriate changes if he forms the next government?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think one has to check the specific public record of the federal Leader of the Opposition. My understanding — and I don't have the precise words — is that the federal Leader's comments on energy have been to the effect that there would be major changes in the national energy program which would be positive and encouraging to the private sector.

Livestock Industry Stabilization

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. Could the minister inform the House whether or not there's been any progress in negotiations with the other provinces and the federal government relative to a red meat price assurance or stabilization program?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I think there has been relatively good progress between the five participating governments, being the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the federal government. Those

discussions have been going on at the officials level, and I understand that they have a final report that will, I think, be ready sometime around the end of October.

Personal Income Tax Increase

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is with regards to the 13 per cent increase in personal income tax. I'd first of all direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture. In terms of agriculture, what study or studies were used to determine the impact of that 13 per cent personal income tax?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, whatever studies may or may not have been used should be answered by the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business. The very same question: in terms of small business, what study or studies were used to determine the impact of the 13 per cent increase in personal income tax?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to direct that to my colleague the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Minister of Economic Development is worded the very same way. In terms of economic development in the province of Alberta, what study or studies were used to determine the impact of the 13 per cent increase in personal income tax?

MR. PLANCHE: Mr. Speaker, there's general agreement in the business community that a balanced budget is a great economic incentive. In view of the fact that we are in a commodity selling market and the demand for commodities is down, as is the price, it's imperative that the budget is balanced one way or another, and that's ...

MR. SPEAKER: It seems to me that the minister is perhaps answering something that wasn't asked.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Education. In terms of education, what study or studies were used to determine the impact of the 13 per cent increase in personal income tax in Alberta?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I begin by observing that the hon. member has asked me the question, not the Provincial Treasurer. Having made that observation for the record, I will say that there is a good deal of publicly available information about the state of education in this province and about the general economic condition of the province. Therefore, of course, there is a good deal of information about the relationship that exists between the general economic condition of the province and education in the province. It is quite clear ...

MR. SPEAKER: The question related to studies. I am unable to relate the answer to the question. Perhaps other members might be more successful.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, having made my preamble, I will come directly to a response to the question. Study of information that is publicly available would reveal that in many sectors of the economy, unemployment is rising.

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect, the hon. minister is not really dealing with what was studied; he's giving an opinion about what might be studied.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, if I could, then, to be very clear. In the course of making decisions about education in the province and in the course of giving advice to the Provincial Treasurer, the Department of Education considers and studies the economic circumstances in the province within which we provide education. In the course of that, we certainly studied increasing unemployment. We certainly studied the fact that unlike teachers, many of the people in this province are experiencing wage cutbacks or reductions in their hours ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I don't know whether the hon. member has run out of ministers.

MR. R. SPEAKER: No, I haven't.

DR. BUCK: There are 30 of them. They only need 15.

MR. SPEAKER: I think he has visited four by now. In view of the limited time and the number of members who still want to ask questions, I wonder if he could confine himself to one further minister.

MR. NOTLEY: If the minister could confine himself to yes or no.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Allowing only one more, Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary question to the Minister of Housing. I ask the same question: in terms of housing development, construction workers, and laborers in this province, what study or studies were used to determine the impact of the 13 per cent increase in personal income tax to Albertans?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Housing does a considerable assessment of the housing situation in the province, in terms of supply, affordability, vacancy rates, and percentage of income devoted to housing in Alberta as compared to other provinces.

Export Trade Opportunities

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In terms of international marketing and trade policy, could the Premier briefly explain the government's economic strategy that might involve an export consortium type of approach?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, when we refer to export consortium — and I know some people have difficulty with the word "cartel"; I don't, but some do — what is involved, what we're proposing, and what the federal trade paper has positively responded to is that in terms of the business that companies do offshore, they are not subject to the restrictions in terms of anti-combines or anti-competition legislation of the federal government. They don't have to look over their shoulders for anti-combines investigators. They can make a consortium or cartel arrangement, joined together in terms of pricing and otherwise into the export trade market. That's the concept we've been promoting for a number of years and, generally speaking, that's the concept accepted in the federal trade paper.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary. In the Premier's speech to the Pacific basin economic [conference], he mentioned a Canadian strategy for selling technology which would allow involvement of small and intermediate companies. Has the Alberta government developed a strategy in that area?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, not as yet. We are in the process of working together, specifically in the oil and gas

field, with those companies that are interested in joining us in a seminar on that, which we intend to hold. We have some concern that the present way in which we're going about selling our oil and gas technology, particularly into countries like China, is inadequate.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary.

MRS. CRIPPS: Could the Premier identify the possible steps the government is considering to overcome trade barriers posed by the central Canadian protectionist policy?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to answer that, except perhaps by way of examples. I suppose two that we've been involved with are textiles, with regard to our trade with China, and automobiles, in our trade with Japan. In both cases we have been urging the federal government to be very, very careful as to how they handle it, in terms of not having a backlash or negative impact upon the resource-producing areas here in western Canada. I gave some communication to the federal government with regard to both matters, and we will have to watch developments. I know the Minister of Economic Development is right on top of that particular matter.

Education Financing

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Education. Could the minister advise whether he has distributed the report of the task force on education financing to the jurisdictions in the province? If not, is it his intention to do so?

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Copies of the task force report were sent to the chairmen of every board and the superintendent and the secretary-treasurer of every jurisdiction. The department reports that we are beginning to receive some responses from jurisdictions and from other interested members of the public.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister advise whether those responses are positive? If so, is it the minister's intention to implement those recommendations?

MR. KING: I don't think there is any response which is unreservedly positive but, by and large, the tone of the responses is positive. To this point in time, the people who are responding are in support of the recommendations. That being the case, it bears saying that at the present time local school boards in the province have an unrestricted right to set whatever budget they choose for their own operations. That budget can be of any size and is not in any way controlled by the provincial government. Nevertheless the task force recommended that the province should pay 85 per cent of that budget and, at the same time, said that the provincial government should exert no control whatsoever over the size of the budget. In my view, that would be a completely unacceptable proposition for the government. If the government is going to pay the overwhelming proportion of the budget and if it is suggested that that proportion should be fixed, then the government would want to intrude on historic understandings of local autonomy. I don't believe that would be the position adopted by this government.

Social Allowance Shelter Ceilings

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health has to do with the rental allowance cutback for people who require government assistance. I believe the minister has said publicly that the reason this happened is that the rental rate had gone down in the province. Can the minister indicate if this was the basis the government used to lower the shelter allowance?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to respond to that. When we made the adjustments to the social allowance package, the shelter component was only one of many. Overall, the intention was to have the changes reflect the economic climate we are in. The basis for changing the shelter ceilings was primarily because of the increasing vacancy rates and the expected increasing vacancy rates across the province. This has come about; vacancy rates have increased in most parts of the province. In addition, there are many places where rents have also come down. But to answer the question specifically, the basis for making the changes in the first place was primarily related to vacancy rates.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the minister indicate specifically . . . When the shelter allowance was reduced by as much as between 10 and 22 per cent, is the minister indicating to this Assembly and the people of this province that the rental rates have come down that much? Have they followed the vacancy rate down that much?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, in terms of rental rates coming down, I may ask the Minister of Housing to indicate what information he might have in that regard. However, the information I have is that in many places, the landlords decreased their rents for the social allowance recipients that were in their apartments or homes. In Calgary the rental rate decrease has been as much as 10 per cent. The decrease has not been that much in Edmonton. However, the significant point is that vacancy rates have increased significantly. So if a social allowance recipient has been in accommodation where they were paying above the ceilings, there is adequate availability of housing or apartments for them to move to or to make other adjustments.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. There seems to be something the matter with the minister's mathematics. The average I've been able to obtain is . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we could come directly to another question.

DR. BUCK: . . . that there is a large shortfall between what the government allows and what the average rental rate is. Can the minister indicate if he is aware of that fact?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously didn't listen to what I said originally, in terms of the fact that the basis for making the decision about lowering the shelter rates was to reflect the economic times we're in and the availability of rental accommodation in this province. So in terms of his trying to tie it to the rental rates, it is inaccurate.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps we could come back to this topic.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, do I or do I not have one?

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. member could . . .

DR. BUCK: You all saw what happened in Ottawa yesterday.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, I don't think that's terribly contagious. We might make an exception and perhaps the hon. member can be dealt with briefly, because I still have some further names.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, we still have 20 minutes. Can the minister indicate if he has given any consideration to increasing the allowance for single people, because it seems that the critical area is persons that are by themselves. Has the minister given any consideration to that plus the differential for people who are in high-cost areas? Those two factors are critical: the single person and the high-cost areas.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, since the social allowance changes came into place on July 1, together with a 5 per cent increase in food allowances and an increase in the amount a social allowance recipient can earn before social allowance payments are reduced, we have monitored very closely the situation across the province.

The main concerns arose from Edmonton, in particular the Boyle Street area. I went into that area and talked to the social agencies that are involved in assisting government to accommodate the concerns of these people. The general views I received from these agencies were that the individual problems they had expected originally really didn't develop to the extent that they thought they would. So in terms of the policies we put into place, we feel they have worked out very well.

In terms of dealing with individual cases, however, the regional directors across the province have been monitoring the situation together with social workers and have made a number of exceptions. In addition, some social allowance recipients have appealed their cases to the appeal boards, and I can certainly make available to the member the information on the results of that. But the situation we're in right now is simply that the department and the community agencies are working together to deal with any individual problems as they arise.

Human Rights

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour, responsible for the Alberta Human Rights Commission. I wonder if the minister has had an opportunity to determine whether or not a complaint or complaints have been lodged with him with respect to the matter of Calgary taxi companies not hiring Canadians of East Indian origin.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to follow up on the question taken as notice yesterday from the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo. First of all, I would indicate that the commission has not received any formal complaint by any person alleging a failure to employ because of discrimination against an applicant of East Indian origin, as far as taxi companies are concerned.

I take the opportunity at this time to indicate that the commission has a duty and a responsibility to respond to complaints alleging discrimination in employment, so I can respond unequivocally on that point. The commission also has a responsibility to promote tolerance and understanding and has embarked upon a special program, with the slogan "Alberta is for all of us". That surely applies in this situation.

Another aspect I checked, Mr. Speaker, is whether the commission, in the meetings it holds periodically with different persons representative of the interests of different groups, may have come across information indicating a problem. Based on the checking we were able to do, no such information appears to have come to our attention.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to express a concern or an uneasiness on my part, and it is that the fundamental focus for all of us should be that there is adequate and equal employment opportunity open to all qualified persons, without regard to origin, race, or color. My uneasiness is that we may have situations where no such applicants appear, and I want to reflect that in the Assembly.

MR. LEE: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LEE: This will be my first supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I realize that, but we've gone into the topic at some length. We have about seven minutes or less left, and there are a number of members who haven't had a chance to ask any questions at all.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question would be for the Minister of Labour. In view of the apparent significance of the possibility that this could involve in excess of 300 taxis and an apparent coincidence that perhaps no Canadians of East Indian ...

MR. SPEAKER: Could the hon. member come directly to the question.

MR. LEE: Could the minister request the Human Rights Commission to look into this matter, in terms of developing further understanding and tolerance in terms of hiring Canadians of East Indian origin?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to forward the concern to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. However, I want to emphasize again that the commission has had meetings with representatives of a variety of groups in Calgary and with the business community, and has underlined the fundamental concerns that employment opportunities be open to all who are qualified. I also want to reiterate my uneasiness with the possibility that we may be unfairly reflecting upon persons who have in fact not ever received applications for employment of the type that are being ...

Alberta Economic Forecasts

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Premier, and I'll ask it as quickly as I can and promise not to bother anyone else with it but him. Mr. Premier, our government's assessment and forecast of the Alberta economy are much more optimistic than the latest forecast from the Conference Board of Canada. I wonder if the Premier could reconcile for members of the Assembly the government's current assessment as compared to that of the Conference Board. There appears to be a distinction.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think the distinction probably is the way in which the Conference Board goes about making its assessment. They do it entirely on the basis of change; that is, the percentage of change from a particular peak

or otherwise. On our part, we emphasize the basic strength of our primary industries; the quality, if you like, of the situation with regard to the major indicators and the strength of those major indicators, and compare them on a per capita basis generally across the board with the rest of Canada. On that score, I reached the conclusions in my remarks yesterday.

Pacific Rim Trade Opportunities

MR. MUSGROVE: My question is also to the Premier. Could the Premier briefly outline the export strategy developed by the government, as it relates to his recent trip to the Pacific Rim?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I really can't get into that at length in question period, and I'll try to find another opportunity. What I mentioned yesterday — and I will do this; I'm not able to do it yet — is that I'll table or file with the Legislature the proposals I made to the Pacific Rim Opportunities Conference on October 7, outlining a number of suggestions and a number of follow-ups, some of which have already been raised in this question period. I think that's the only way I can handle it, except perhaps to say that it is an area which we hope hon. members will discuss with their constituents and let us have the input.

MR. MUSGROVE: One supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Related to the Premier's speech yesterday, do we understand that the government is changing its position and now welcoming foreign investment?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to some news reports with regard to that issue of foreign investment, it didn't come about in my remarks yesterday; it came out of my remarks on October 7, which I just referred to, when I spoke to the Pacific Rim Opportunities Conference.

Yes, I would like to clarify that, Mr. Speaker. One of my suggestions is that in the area of export trade, in terms of the Alberta government working with companies not controlled by Canadians or Albertans, we should only be prepared to work with those that are prepared to assure that some element of the benefits of the export trade strategy that we're developing would flow back to Alberta and to Canada. I know that is a fairly dramatic position, but it should not be construed as a departure from our welcoming foreign investment to come here to the province of Alberta and engage in economic activity domestically, within Alberta.

Bus and Truck Regulations

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Minister of Transportation explain the intent of the busing deregulation proposal? Perhaps he could advise if this proposal is going to result in a loss of jobs for bus drivers in the province of Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER: I have some misgiving about the question. It seems to me that it's a matter that may or may not come up for debate later on, and that the answer would possibly have to be very extensive. I'd have to leave it to the hon. minister to decide whether he can fit it into the question period, which has just about run out of time.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'll try to be brief. The hon. member raised the question with respect to the initiative that was taken and that was first announced in the Speech from the Throne in this Legislature last spring, to review the regulations with respect to the bus and trucking industry. We're in the

process of doing that now, and no decisions have been taken. The people in the industry and the interested public that the industry serves have been invited to write directly to me with their views on two specific proposals which have been made but not yet acted upon. It's my view that we would not do anything that would result in the loss of jobs directly to those who are in the industry. However, I'd be pleased to elaborate on that in the course of debate during the fall session.

MR. SPEAKER: I regret that we weren't able to reach all the members today; the time for the question period has expired. I hope that there may be an opportunity to recognize them tomorrow.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

214. Moved by Mr. Musgrove:

Be it resolved that the Assembly urge the government to authorize the option of personalized licence plates with a combination of numbers or letters deemed acceptable by the Solicitor General.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to move Motion 214. At one time the sale of licence plates was a major source of revenue for the government of Alberta. I recall that when I first owned a vehicle back in the '40s, it cost me \$20 for a licence plate. Now the cost is very little more, although the cost of the vehicle that you put the licence on has gone up perhaps tenfold.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member is entitled to be heard.

MR. MUSGROVE: The purpose of a licence is to identify one vehicle from another. As the situation is now, when you order a licence, someone else picks out the numbers and letters that are to be your licence. With the option of having personalized licence plates, it would be possible to have a licence that would carry on for many years. You could probably keep it for a lifetime. Just think how simple it would be when the attendant at the filling station is filling out your credit card and asks what your licence is. You could say it was JOE or JACK or BILL or something; it would be no problem trying to remember what your licence is.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

As it is in Alberta, it's not possible to choose those numbers, although all of the other provinces do have personalized licence plates. To date the only licence plates in Alberta that are personalized are for the Lieutenant-Governor's car and for one former minister of highways, who received a set of plates that were marked COWBOY, authorized by the Solicitor General. Ham radio operators have the letters VE with some numbers on their plates to identify their vehicles, since they customarily provide some emergency services and communications.

In the past, personalized licence plates could have caused some administration problems, but I understand that the new computer record-keeping system has now solved that problem. Obviously there are higher costs in manufacturing the plates, yet the plates may be used to generate additional revenue. There are approximately 1.2 million passenger cars registered in the

province of Alberta. If the sale of personalized plates were limited to only this type of vehicle, and conservatively estimating that only 2 per cent of those vehicle [owners] would want to purchase the plates, it would mean 24,000 vehicles would have personalized plates. If the plates were sold for \$50 over and above the normal registration fee, it would result in an additional \$1.2 million in revenue. If \$10 were charged as an annual rental fee, it would result in \$240,000 a year for every year thereafter.

Suggestions regarding where this additional revenue could be used have filtered into the Solicitor General's office for some years. For example, the Glenbow Museum formed a committee that was willing to take on the additional administrative work in issuing the plates, in exchange for the additional revenue. More recently, a suggestion has been made that the Winter Olympics at Calgary and Banff might be assisted by the revenue from personalized licence plates.

Suggestions have also been made that the funds could be used for driver education or some safety-related program for the Department of Transportation. Alternatively, probably the best suggestion at this time would be that the extra revenue could go into the provincial Treasury.

As to the acceptability of a combination of letters and numbers on personalized plates, the province of British Columbia, with some assistance from the state of California, has developed a list of unacceptable combinations. We have a copy of that list. I'm not in total agreement, though, with some that are objectionable in California and British Columbia. For instance, California has said that the word "hooker" was considered unacceptable. But in B.C. it was issued as the surname of a family and considered acceptable and reasonable.

In California in 1970, the revenue from personalized plates was directed to the environmental protection program fund. At that time, the cost of the plate was \$25 to \$35, with an additional \$10 renewal fee.

In British Columbia the personalized plates have been available for about four years. They are available for all passenger vehicles and for commercial vehicles below a certain minimum weight. About 16,000 plates have been issued over a five-year period, at a cost of \$75. About 2 per cent of all the eligible vehicles in British Columbia have personalized plates.

In Saskatchewan personalized plates only became available March 1, 1983. They are sold at a one-time cost of \$75, plus the regular registration renewal fee per year. In Saskatchewan insurance is included as part of their annual fee. The revenue is used by the government to offset the costs of registrations on all other vehicles. On April 1, 1983, only one month after the introduction, 1,500 applications had been received. It is expected that they will get approximately 7,000 applications a year. It is also expected that 1.5 per cent of all eligible vehicles in Saskatchewan will apply for personalized plates.

In Manitoba personalized plates are issued for passenger cars only. There is a one-time fee of \$50, plus annual registration costs. In December 1982 there were 3,200 personalized plates issued, with an additional 1,700 applications on hand, generating a total revenue of \$245,000. Mr. Speaker, I've been told that Alberta is the only province in Canada that doesn't have personalized licence plates.

One issue that keeps coming up for debate is how to handle a transfer between owners. I can only relate that to a similarity to people in the livestock business who have a registered brand. In the case of a registered brand, you're only allowed three combinations of a letter, but you do have different locations you can put it on. The difference in the licence plate is that it has to be registered to a vehicle; otherwise the similarity would be there. When you get a brand, it's yours as long as you want

to keep it. If you don't have any cows, you can still have a registered brand. Or if you have an enormous herd, it's the same thing. If you decide you don't want the brand any more, you can write in and cancel it, you can let it run out through non-renewal and it will cancel itself, or you can give it to a friend or to one of your family or even leave it to somebody in your will. In some cases, people sell their entire herd of cattle and sell their brand with it. This could be related because in some cases there are people who have personalized cars, and the personalized licence plate will be more related to the car than to the individual. In those cases it would be quite acceptable to sell the car with the licence attached, as part of the sale.

Of course there are people who do have personalized cars, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, sometime last spring I had the opportunity — or maybe we should say the experience — of riding to the airport with one of our members. After going through that experience, it would be my opinion that his licence plate should be BEWARE. Another member of our House has suggested that if this motion passes, his will be one of the first applications for personalized licence plates, and it will read BOOMER. In our business, we call our company One Tree Ranching Co., so I believe I will have ONE TREE on my licence plates.

Mr. Speaker, through the introduction of the Bill, there is some revenue available either to the government or to some other organization that would handle the administration and probably use the money for charitable reasons. We now have the mechanism to handle the administration. Particularly now that our renewal program has been staggered over 12 months of the year, the administration will certainly be reduced.

We have a lot of interest in personalized licence plates, so I beg the support of the Legislature for this motion.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of Motion 214 today. Personalized licence plates are not a new idea by any means. Many states in the United States have them, and many provinces in Canada have them. I believe B.C. does, as the speaker before me stated. But then B.C. has always been a trendsetter, if you look at the results of the last year.

Why not have personalized licence plates in Alberta? It certainly would not cause any harm; I don't see any harm to anyone from them. I suppose the critics of the idea would argue that X number of people would have to take out these plates before the extra cost involved in producing them could be recovered by the Solicitor General's Department. I don't think there would be any trouble getting enough people to buy personalized licence plates. In fact, I think the department would make money. You could charge a little more for them and recover your extra costs. I think other jurisdictions offering them charge extra for them.

These sorts of things have a lot of appeal, and they play on the egos of people. People like to be recognized, and I don't know of any better way than through their licence plates. I can remember back to my navy days. To impress their girlfriends, several of my shipmates had their girlfriends' names tattooed on their arms. I don't think any one of them ended up marrying a girl of that same name, and I'll bet you they didn't buy it — that it was his mother's name on his arm. Wouldn't it have been a lot better if they had had the opportunity to buy licence plates? Then they just could have changed licence plates with girlfriends. With today's turnover in husbands and wives, I can visualize the booming repeat business by the public in the name of the girlfriend/boyfriend sector; it's growing.

For those of us who are a little older and hopefully a little more settled now, personalized licence plates would help us

find our cars in these crowded parking lots. Haven't you ever tried to unlock the door of a car identical to yours in the parking lot? I can remember that a few years ago the thing to do was put an orange ball, or one of those tiger tails some oil company gave you, on the antenna so you could find your car in the parking lot. But then everybody did it, and there was no benefit. Just think what personalized licence plates would do. They're unique; you could identify your car right away with no problem. A further benefit, Mr. Speaker, is that personalized licence plates would let us know, when we see people driving up, just who is driving-up to our place.

Even political people can benefit from them. Some may want to put on PC FOR PROGRESS, while others probably would want to put 1-RED and 2-RED. Seriously though, Mr. Speaker, personalized licence plates would be fun. As one member suggested, some political people might like LEFT WING. I wouldn't mind RIGHT WING. As I said, personalized licence plates would be fun.

As I said before, and I underline it, it would cause no harm and, probably for a small extra charge, would allow people to express themselves. At the same time, the Solicitor General's Department would make a few dollars. It's a good idea; the time has come. I don't think we should be the last in Canada to do this. We should get up with the rest of them and let our citizens have the benefit that other provinces have, to express their personal little likes and dislikes. So I think we should move on it.

In concluding, I think that if the hon. Member for Bow Valley succeeds in getting his motion approved, he should probably put the wording MOTION-214 on his plates. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my support of this motion.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to participate in debate on Motion 214 and support the motion as presented. Many of the ideas for this motion have been presented and certainly indicate that there is a lot of merit in introducing personalized licence plates.

I would like to reiterate two important points that I would use to support this motion. The first one is revenue. Obviously personalized licence plates could bring in a substantial amount of additional revenue to the provincial government if those people who wish personalized licence plates would be willing to pay those additional premiums. In a time when our government is always looking to additional ways to raise revenue, this would be a very simple and expedient one, really, without any undue costs or efforts.

The second reason I could foresee individualized or personalized licence plates being useful is that individuals choosing them would do so for particular reasons. The example from the United States usually indicates that the person characterizes the licence plates with his own personality or somehow identifies it with himself. Sometimes it would be easier to remember a name like COWBOY than trying to remember XKR-249, or whatever it is. For safety reasons, if a person saw a car leaving the scene of an accident or speeding, or wanted to report it in any way, or remember a licence plate, I think it would be a lot easier to just read the letters on a licence plate. I think that would be more expedient.

Mr. Speaker, those are the two best reasons I could think of to pass this motion and introduce personalized licence plates. It's an idea well overdue. As mentioned earlier, it's been introduced in many other provinces and, as well, would add a unique character to those licence plates. I'm sure members of the opposition would quickly snap up certain licence tags with names on them like TURKEY, GO LEFT, or YAHOO. They

would certainly give them the individual character they so rightly deserve.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, I also would like to speak on Motion 214. I think M.L.A. Tom Musgrove has come up with a really good idea. The only purpose for licence plates is to identify our vehicles. In years gone by, before the age of computers, of course you had to run them all in a series of numbers with a certain sequence, because otherwise they had no way of keeping track. I guess to manually bookkeep and keep track of any different arrangement than running them off in a lock step of numbers like 1, 2, 3, 4, and carrying on, would have been a very expensive thing. But with the day of the computer, you can now turn around and have your own personal identity.

Albertans are individuals and like to be individuals. If it's going to produce revenue, and if they want a distinctive licence plate, why not? Personalized licence plates will definitely create a sense of identity for the driver and the owner of a vehicle and, with their identity on their automobile, perhaps our drivers will be a little more courteous, which would be a good trend on our highways.

I do know that you can purchase your licence plate from Antique Automobiles. You can bring in any old licence plate, and you'll keep that same plate on your automobile for quite a number of years, which is a very sensible thing because of course you learn to identify your own licence plate; you know your own numbers. I think most antique car owners would be very happy to have the chance to put the year of the automobile itself on their antique cars, and there are thousands of antique automobiles in this province. If you have a 1939 Packard you could have 1939 and perhaps your initials on it.

If it is the case that we will make some revenue and make some Albertans happy — I know all the antique car buffs would be quite happy — and it would create a little more sense of identity for our drivers and make them a little more courteous, I hope we all get out and support this motion and put this through in this session.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to stand and support Motion No. 214. But I'd like to support this motion with some reservations, and I'd like to point out what they are. First of all, the hon. Member for Bow Valley has indicated in the motion the words "urge the government". I'd like to come back to that a little later. But I also thank him for his support in endorsing the motion. I'd also like to like to pay special attention and mention to the hon. Member for Clover Bar. He raised the particular instance as well some years ago, in May 1976, in his question to the Solicitor General, the hon. Roy Farran at the time. So I think it should be noted that it has been around for some time, and only now, with the Member for Bow Valley bringing it to the surface, are we once again looking at it.

When I say "with reservation", Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay particular mention, as others have, that it should be on a user-pay basis. In no way should this government subsidize the pleasures of others. In particular, those who wish to have a personally endorsed plate should have to pay whatever the cost would be. I point that out significantly because I relate to an instance in the city of Fort McMurray some time ago, when it was still a town, where the issuing of a snowmobile licence cost \$10, but we were advised that to issue that permit or licence cost somewhere around \$15. So who was paying for whose licence? I certainly was a snowmobile user and supporter and encouraged the fee, but not at the cost of the general public. So I think serious consideration and review should be made to see that there is no extra cost to the individual.

As indicated by various members, it certainly would be an increased revenue source. In particular, reference was made to some 1.2 million passenger cars in Alberta and, if users purchased approximately 2 per cent, there would be, as indicated, some 24,000 vehicles. At \$50 additional revenue, that would bring in approximately \$1.2 million. My suggestion would be, Mr. Speaker and other members, that it not be the government — and I say "not" the government — that would administer or look after this particular type of service. All of a sudden I hear some quiet and hush hush, and I don't know why. I just believe that maybe the area of private enterprise should be explored, or a private operation taking this on as fund raising and even considering it as a revenue source. Consideration could be given to putting the money back into the municipality on a fee basis. I realize that where there are some areas of larger representation in the urban communities, maybe some equitable split or arrangement could be made;

There certainly would be some benefits and ease of identification, as has been pointed out. I hope one individual isn't aware of what I'm saying today, but I know of one individual, Mr. Speaker, who would certainly welcome the opportunity to legalize personal identification plates. He's been using personalized plates on the front of his vehicle in one small community in Alberta for two years. I don't know how he gets away with it, yet he does. I'm always amazed when I drive into that small community and see that vehicle. So for his sake, I hope this might someday be a reality. Wherever he is, please use caution.

I would certainly indicate that I've had many constituency requests for this particular approval and endorsement. As noted by others, support comes from many people, in particular the Alberta Motor Association; I believe they're pretty knowledgeable about what's happening within the industry as well. All other western provinces use the plates today and, as was pointed out, B.C. has used the plates for some four years. That's beyond a trial period, Mr. Speaker; I think they've proven that it is working. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba — Manitoba in particular — they have only about .5 per cent of the passenger vehicles using them. I'd say that there are some areas of concern there, Mr. Speaker. In particular, I would say that the restrictions are too severe. Reviewing their legislation, I see that

Personalized licence plates cannot be displayed on [cars registered]

- to the Government of Canada
- to the Government of Manitoba
- to any municipality . . .
- as a Remote Area Vehicle
- as a delivery car
- as an antique car

It goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. But I would say we should be more liberal. [interjections] I should change that word, shouldn't I? We should be more generous in the use of applications in particular, and perhaps review the many variations, combinations, and users that would possibly benefit. I would suggest fleet users, rental agencies, and such suggestions as were indicated by the Olympic committee, allow the use of this for a revenue source as well as for ease of identification.

I heard the reference earlier to the word "Boomer" as an individual who might possibly be contemplating such a thing. I said: well, this depends on the number of symbols or letters that might be used. If we were to have an approval of only five, that would sure take the boom out of Boomer. How would it be pronounced then? I'm not sure. But I would suggest that six should be approved. As the present series indicates, we have three letters and three numbers. In my view, any derivative thereof should be approved and would be acceptable.

The California state lists many, many exceptions, and it has seven pages of examples that are what they call an unacceptable list. I certainly wouldn't want to go through them. It's very interesting because there are some words that I never even knew existed, either in the English language or in any connotation.

When I first rose, Mr. Speaker, I pointed out the word "urge". I'd like to change the word "urge". I certainly wouldn't suggest that we have any amendments. But if the hon. member would note that he says, "that the Assembly urge the government to authorize the option of personalized licence plates", and it goes on and on. I'd suggest: delete "urge the government". It should read: that the Assembly authorize the option of personalized licence plates. But I would urge all hon. members to pass Motion No. 214. Let's get on with it, and hopefully we can see this become a reality in the year 1984.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to say the few words in regard to the motion.

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to add my support to this motion. I believe it's an item whose time has come. I believe that we can have an awful lot of good publicity out of a motion like this. There's a number of people that would like to have their farm, business, personal name, or some greeting, put on their licence plate. I would like to bring to members' attention that I've been asked on many occasions if this could not be done. I would like to support the Member for Bow Valley on his motion.

Thank you.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, the subject before us is somewhat narrow, and of course much of the information and the discussion here today is somewhat repetitive. I think one of the words we should consider in dealing with this issue of personalized licence plates is the word "consumerism". In the private sector, if there is a demand for a product, there is usually an entrepreneur in the private sector who will produce that product, market it, and possibly — and in most cases, probably — become very successful with it. The same holds true with examining the issue of personalized licence plates. As many other jurisdictions have found, people do have some desire to have a personalized plate. As we note in some of these jurisdictions, the number of people who actually pursue the idea of a personalized plate is very low percentage-wise; it's somewhere in the area of 2 to 2.5 per cent. But maybe the marketing job of this product is not done in a very good manner. Certainly, hoping that we might do something positive with this motion, we might also examine the area of consumerism and marketing of a product of this nature.

It's interesting to note that the AMA supports the issue of a personalized plate. And of course, they're an organization, as everyone knows, that is oriented towards the driver of the province and the country. The members that participate on those boards certainly do have input from many people that drive vehicles, passenger vehicles or otherwise.

I guess another question we should ask is: should the citizens of Alberta have the option to purchase personalized plates? Should they be given the same option of a service offered them by a government as a service offered by an entrepreneur or a private industry? And I say yes; let's market it.

The question of administrative difficulties comes to the foreground, and I ask how would these administrative difficulties be dealt with, or are there, in fact, administrative difficulties? Would these administrative difficulties — and I say that in parentheses — in fact be difficult, and would that be an ongoing difficulty, considering that there's a one-time start up of a program? The question also might be asked: in the time of

decreasing need for new plates or new products, for the growth in our province for additional vehicles, there may be people in the administrative wing of the department of motor vehicles that don't have much to do. That might not be a fact at this point in time, but it's something that needs to be examined. Possibly they need something additional to do to justify their being in their positions at that function. In other words, let's have an examination of the bureaucracy. If such is the fact, that an additional product of this nature will assist them in continuing in the employ, it might be of some assistance of that nature.

MR. HYLAND: I'm glad to see you're back in step.

MR. NELSON: I'm being heckled, Mr. Speaker.

It should also be noted that there are sectors within the community that do receive special consideration, with the issuance of special licence plates. Of course, these are ham operators, consular vehicles, and others, including the Lieutenant-Governor.

There has been mention of the cost of doing business and, like any other consumer activity, there should be no cost to the taxpayer. If the consumer desires another product, certainly we should provide it, but the user should pay. And possibly a nice tidy little profit should be made for the manufacturer of that product. Certainly in times of restraint and difficulty in raising money, a million dollars may not seem a great deal considering our large budget. However, I'm sure that every little bit in the pot would help. If we didn't want to place that money in the general revenues of the province, certainly there are other areas that have need for it, including community facilities, recreation and parks, the Olympic games in 1988, and other activities, possibly even including the performing arts in the province.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is a determination of whether this would be a one-time cost for the user or whether an additional cost would be made for subsequent issue of the annual overlays that would be placed on these plates, which would mean an ongoing profit to the government or to an agency of the government. These are determinations in policies and regulations that would possibly be developed subsequent to passage of a motion of this nature. Interestingly, some jurisdictions have done this for years; even in Canada, Ontario has done it for over ten years.

There is also a question, Mr. Speaker, of name recognition on a licence plate. I'm sure that politicians always like to have their names recognized. They would probably be some of the first people that might jump in and see that they have a licence plate with their number on, so that all their constituents would know who they are and where they're coming from, or when they're coming from.

The other question I have is, have the police been given consideration in developing a motion of this nature? Have they been asked: would it be easier to identify a vehicle that has a numeric or a letter identification rather than both? I tend to think that having four, five, or six letters, or a similar number of numbers, on a vehicle would certainly be easier than three of each.

Of course, you might even suggest that rather than just an individual name recognition, there might be an area of community recognition. In identifying a community, of course, those who are proud of a community — in particular smaller communities where people may have a closer liaison with each other — may wish to put a community identification on each of the vehicles to identify where they're from.

Mr. Speaker, I've actually run out of things to say, which really makes things happy. As I indicated when I first stood

up, the subject is fairly narrow, unless I go into a Ken Kowalski and start naming all the people in my constituency, with the type of licence plates they might be able to put on their cars. It would take a considerable length of time, as I have about 80,000 constituents. I'm sure that if Mr. Kowalski were here, he would be happy to oblige by adding his little bit in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Assembly to support this notion of having individual plates made available to the consumers of Alberta — the consumers being our taxpayers — and as such, provide additional revenue in those areas of our operation that may be of some significant value either to the government or to some private organization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, being the eighth speaker in line talking on personalized licence plates, I feel that, as many have said, it's a narrow field. I feel much like the story I heard some time ago about the old bachelor who got married to the pregnant lady who had 12 children. Somebody said something to him in the local pub one day, and he said, well there isn't much left to do, is there?

Mr. Speaker, we've heard from other members that the AMA has supported this proposal for personalized licence plates, and we've heard ... [interjection] I think I'm getting back some of the comments I exchanged with my seatmate a couple of minutes ago.

We've heard an outline of what various provinces have done, how they operate their personalized licence system, and how it is done in some of the U.S. states. It may seem like a subject that doesn't affect a lot of people, but I believe that there are people out there who would very much like to have a special, personalized licence plate for themselves. I know farmers and ranchers who have brands that have been in their families for many, many years and would like to have them on the licence plate of their vehicles. There are all sorts of combinations like that that I believe people would like to see.

When I was in England, I remember talking to some of my relations and my uncle told me a story about when the Beatles became very popular. I understand that in England when you get a car, you get a licence issued, it stays with it, and you can't have personalized licence plates. Once the group got very famous, one of them thought they should have that name on their vehicle. They had to go to the registry and find out who had it. They proceeded to pay the person a very large amount of money so that they could obtain the registration with BEATLES on it. So there are people who will wish to have personalized plates.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it would be very repetitive to repeat all the information that has been put forward relating to the other provinces, and I would just like to ask the members to support the motion of the hon. Member for Bow Valley.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to speak to Motion 214 presented by the hon. Member for Bow Valley and to indicate my support for the motion. It's a motion that I have discussed with the hon. Solicitor General on many occasions, from a tourist point of view, from a personal point of view, and from the fact that, for a number of years, we've already had something similar to that; ham operators within the province can have their own licence numbers, something like VE9-63A or whatever it may be.

I recall a very close friend of ours, a former Minister of Highways and Transport, the late hon. Clarence Copithorne, indicating strong support for the concept. He had a desire and a wish to have a licence plate that would have on it, COWBOY.

That wasn't just for him but would have represented the ranchers and the cowboys of the early days, and the work and the contribution they had made to the province of Alberta.

Obviously from my own point, I've got a nickname with six letters, which has been mentioned on a number of occasions here this afternoon, that I would like to see on a licence plate and that I would be prepared to pay for. But it has advantages and disadvantages. I recall when I was presented with a black and white grille cover with the nickname "Boomer" across it. The hon. member from Calgary was talking about whether the police had been talked to about whether they would recognize that. They recognized the front of the car with "Boomer" on it on quite a number of occasions. It provides an opportunity to start out the conversation not by, "May I see your driver's licence and your registration", but "Boomer, may I see your driver's licence and registration".

I guess what I'm trying to say in the few moments that I would like to speak to this motion is that, from a tourism point of view, it offers the opportunity for imagination and innovation, and for those who wish and would be prepared to support purchasing personalized licence plates, the opportunity to sell whatever it is they may wish to in fact promote. So I wrote down a couple of suggestions. You might have BOOMER. You might have WOO-MLA. You might have a series of MLA plates, which would be MLA-1, MLA-2, MLA-3. We could have a draw; MLA-1 would go to the Premier, and the rest of us would take our chances between two and 79. Or you might have WOO-2. I only use the hon. Member for Edmonton Sherwood Park's name because it is three letters and you can add a number of others that would fit quite comfortably with that. You could have ADAIR-1. That's "1", not "WON"; I've done that on a number of occasions.

There are a number of things that you could use from an imaginative point of view, and it certainly leaves the possible opportunity to raise funds by choice. As a result, Mr. Speaker, I very strongly support Motion 214 and would urge you to support it and pass it.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I too rise to speak to Motion 214 in this most exciting debate on personalizing licence plates. I listened with great interest to the Member for Bow Valley proposing it. Frankly, I haven't heard much yet that would be against it. I don't think we've had the assurance that in this time of restraint motorists would be prepared to pay; I would 'guesstimate', \$100 to \$150 for that privilege. I suspect we probably pay \$40 for a set of plates now, and then we charge \$30; it seems to be consistent with certain departments of government to charge less than the actual cost.

I guess there would be a reluctance, Mr. Speaker, to control them with regard to so-called four-letter words. As a person with both names of four letters, I can see where there could be some difficulty in a province that so strongly supports the multicultural concept, where those who speak the English language have no difficulty with certain words. But where do you draw the line? I can see the Member for Edmonton Beverly having a Ukrainian word; the Member for Calgary Buffalo with an East Indian name on there. I can see where we could get into all kinds of difficulties.

One area that attracts me is that it has been said that most of the American states now have personalized licence plates. One thing we don't have, and I think there is a great need for, is a licence plate with a symbol of the handicapped. It seems to me we've had Bills and certainly resolutions before this House to provide mandatory stalls for handicapped people in municipalities. Most commercial enterprises have co-operated by having several stalls for the handicapped, and they are

marked. But there is no way at the moment, to my knowledge, of identifying the automobile. When I look at certain American states — certainly Arizona and others — those who are certified as handicapped can have the plate marked, generally in the form of a wheel-chair emblem on the licence plate. That's a personalized licence plate whereby they can park in these restricted areas. I hope our Solicitor General would be prepared to consider that type of thing. I understand that he's had discussions with the disabled groups in the province of Alberta and is allowing them to provide stickers to go in cars. I know his reluctance to put the handicap sign on the plate is really to protect the owner, the motorist; in that they would be vulnerable to attack by certain people — at least this is his explanation to me — who would trail automobiles that had a handicap sign. Frankly, I don't buy that as an argument. I think with the number of handicapped that we have in this province — not just physically handicapped, but I suspect that there are many with different handicaps who are driving our motorways — perhaps we could give consideration to having the plates marked that way.

Mr. Speaker, another way is that perhaps consideration could be given ... Last year we convicted about 30,000 people for drunken driving in this province. It would be pretty simple I guess ... [interjection] I wouldn't say I wouldn't; I'm just considering it. How easy it would be for our law enforcement people if the addresses were on the licence plate. My father-in-law in Winnipeg has had his street number on his licence plate for some 30 years. Whether or not he has difficulty with a failing memory, I don't know, but it has been very important to him to have his house number on his licence plate. Maybe that's a commendable goal, whereby if people were allowed to personalize their plates, they could have their street number, house number, or both put on their plate. In Edmonton it's probably a problem, unless you have 18 digits. But in most parts of normal Alberta, I think it could be accomplished.

With regard to the question of drunken drivers, it may sound facetious but just think how easy it would be to get some people home. There they are in their automobile, their address is right on the plate, and you could simply hook it onto a tow truck and tow that car home. The difficulty might well be if it's someone else's car. It might be a little embarrassing.

I heard a comment behind me that we could also personalize the plate by having the address of the liquor store on it. I'm not so sure that's a very positive thought.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lot of merit in the proposal by the Member for Bow Valley. I think of rural Alberta — and I can see it now — people will put the land description on it. Heaven knows it would have to be explained, because most of us city people don't understand those land descriptions in the first place, unless we're on a planning commission. The way they're going, we're not going to understand it very long anyway.

In summary, I find very little to argue against the motion. But based on principle — I've heard everybody else speak in favor of it — after due consideration, I think I'll oppose it. Thank you.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some remarks in relation to this motion put forward by the hon. member. In Alberta I think we all pride ourselves on our individuality, our initiative, and the fact that we live in a society that recognizes people as individuals rather than the mass. Certainly on occasions there is a place for consideration of ideas such as that put forward by the hon. member.

Rather like the hon. Member for Lethbridge West, though, I would like to put forward some cautions to the members

before this matter comes to a decision, cautions which are based on some experiences that I have had over the years. When I first came to Alberta in 1955, the province still had the concept of group licences. The one that was best known was the so-called MD licence plate. Physicians in the province were issued licence plates that began with the two letters "MD". Mind you, in my own case that would not be suitable because my degree from Britain is a Bachelor of Medicine, a Bachelor of Surgery; so that becomes MB, BCh. That got a bit too long for the licence plate.

There was a difficulty that came from this; that was in the event that there were all-too-frequent highway accidents. There was one much criticized occasion when the wife of the then head of orthopedic surgery at the University hospital was going to the lake and came across an accident at that infamous old Nisku corner. Not even being a nurse herself, the lady just slowed down for the accident and drove by. Consequently, there was a lot of criticism until it was made amply obvious in the *Edmonton Journal* of the time that indeed the doctor concerned had not been in the car and that it was his wife driving it. But the debate that was engendered by the incident, and the criticism of the allegedly unfeeling physician going by the accident at Nisku, indicates that having your name or ready identification on your licence plate is not always a straightforward matter and not always to the benefit of either yourself or society.

I can well see that initially there would be many doctors of the younger generation, not being aware of that particular occasion — and there were others — who would very quickly apply for DOC-1, DOC-192, or DOC-199. Then their own wives or families would be put in the same situation.

One can see the same situation with lawyers, who would be encouraged to go by the motor vehicle accidents, because some of them have, unjustifiably, the reputation of being ambulance chasers, and people would be very keen to see the lawyer keep on going by the accident, in reverse to the physician situation.

Another concern that I have is that in a very multicultural society such as Alberta's, we have people who speak I don't know how many languages living in this province. There are enough examples, even in the languages of Europe, where words in one language mean very different things from what they mean in other languages. With the availability of only six letters or digits, there's a limited use of words; there's a tendency to use abbreviations. But where as German has very few words that are less than six letters, the oriental languages have many words that have only three or four. It's quite conceivable that somebody would put a particular sequence of letters on a licence plate in complete ignorance of the fact that they may be extremely insulting to some other racial group in their own language. Consequently, the introduction of this is going to be fraught with a considerable need for regulation. In the issuing of these personalized plates, the motor vehicle licensing bureau will have to be very careful that they do not put forward to people, plates that are in actual fact not suitable to be out on the public highway.

One can be flippant about the whole episode of course. Some of us have reputations as drivers which might be more applicable to people flying airplanes with wings. The temptation, of course, is to get a licence plate that indicates one's personal characteristics or preferences in obeying or not obeying the speed limits. But again that could get one in considerable trouble with the RCMP, because it would be rather like waving a red rag at a bull. Those of us who have those propensities don't need any further involvement with the RCMP than we attract in any event.

I'd also like to address the item about the handicapped plate that was brought up by the member from Lethbridge. I have

an instance that I was involved with. I was going out east of Hinton in a blizzard to a fatal accident, and the weather conditions were such that I didn't want to drive my car with only the four-way flashers on. I waited at home until the RCMP could come and pick me up with their car. While we were at the scene of the fatality, a van went by us, heading west past Hinton. At the time I didn't realize that the van was driven by a disabled person because, of course, there was no way of knowing from the licence plate.

The RCMP had stayed at the scene of the accident to finish their measurements, and I went back into town with the district highway foreman, Larry Mellersh, in his truck with a yellow flashing light on the top. Larry, who's now retired, was an extremely careful driver, and we almost ran into the back of this vehicle at the side of the highway. It was the van that I had noticed go by the scene of the accident in the snow. He had come to a stop and had attempted to attract people's attention. One person had stopped and had then carried on. The gentleman was a quadriplegic, driving a very customized vehicle, which resulted in the fact that he could not get out of the vehicle when it stalled. He couldn't get into the safety of the ditch, and he was stranded on the highway in a vehicle that was liable to be hit by the first thing that came along. Had he had some identification on the vehicle that would indicate that he was in fact disabled and completely stuck where he was, it's quite likely that some of those people who drove by, or the person who indeed stopped, would have paid much more attention.

Another group that might well justify special identification, in spite of the dangers of it, are those drivers who have very defective hearing and who sometimes in dense traffic get confused about people hooting horns and things like that at them when they stop. We know that some drivers are impatient and will apply vigorous pressure to the horn, and that can result in a deaf person not getting adequate orientation to the noises they are trying to listen to. Again, identification of the deaf driver might well be justified.

What I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that in the enthusiasm to address our individuality and the individuality of Albertans, we should not forget that in that enthusiasm, we may be impinging upon the rights of others to not be looking at unpleasant or possibly racist wording. I think we should also give consideration to the groups who might benefit from special identification on their licence plates and, perhaps, incorporate that into the concept of individual licence plates.

Thank you.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise briefly to participate in this debate and to congratulate the hon. Member for Bow Valley for bringing this motion to the Assembly. Often, many of us feel that we have to bring to this Assembly momentous motions that change the nature of Confederation, the finances of the province, or how people operate in a macro sense. But really it's the smaller things that add to the individual life styles of Albertans and indeed to cost savings, which in this time of economic restraint we need to look at in a serious way whenever at all possible.

I think this is just that type of motion that adds individual possibilities for people in the province, also some potential for revenue to the province of Alberta, and that we should consider seriously. I believe that in the debate this afternoon there have been adequately presented to members of the Assembly a variety of possible caveats on this particular approach: those involved with finances and with the need for developing some

sort of code that would ensure that anything on licence plates did not offend Albertans, or particular groups in Alberta, or, of course, that they were not duplicated so that you couldn't, through the police officers of the province, identify one vehicle over another. Indeed, the excellent points made by the hon. Member for Edson, and before him, with respect to the handicapped, are important to consider in this debate. If the government moves on this legislation, or legislation that would encompass this concept, I think that we should indeed consider that kind of approach, evaluating the effects of what that would be on the handicapped community.

When I initially took a look at the motion, I was concerned at the possible cost implications, but it becomes evident quite quickly that there are a good number of Albertans who would well be willing to pay an additional cost for this kind of identification, providing some profit out of the program.

I suppose we could take identification to the absurd, if we wanted to color the licence plates as well. The hon. members ironically to my right, might wish pink plates, and we may wish blue plates, but I doubt very much that this would be carried that far.

MR. NOTLEY: The green and the orange, Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: Green and orange? Maybe that's the member to the far right; I'm not sure what the colors are at this point in time. I guess the other thing one could do is vary the size of plates so that a fellow with a pizza shop indeed had one that was that way.

In any case, after looking at the positives and negatives, I feel that the motion deserves the support of the Assembly and that, indeed, the government should consider implementing this in a most serious way, providing Albertans with individuality and with the possibility of just making a slight change in their lives that may add something to it and, at the same time, may better the balance sheet in the province of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

[Motion carried]

head: **PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS
OTHER THAN
GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS
(Second Reading)**

**Bill 209
Public Access to
Pollution Monitoring Surveys Act**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move second reading of Bill No. 209, the Public Access to Pollution Monitoring Surveys Act.

The two principal aspects of Bill 209 would be with respect to the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. It would be to specify an obligation on the part of the hon. Minister of the Environment to deposit with the Legislature Library a report to be known as the Monitoring Surveys report re the Clean Air Act and also the Clean Water Act, and to make such information available for public inspection in the city of Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the hon. minister, who I see has entered the Chamber, would perhaps enter the debate and let us know that the government is going to take this idea from the opposition and agree to it. There was some press speculation over the summer that we were going to have a healthy approach

on the part of the administration, sort of a new look for this government, and that is making available information the public has a right to receive. I notice in Votes and Proceedings that we're going to have a Bill, the Environmental Statutes Amendment Act. Perhaps the minister would like to tell us today that the government — a little later than they should, but of course this is a Conservative government — is going to follow the sage advice of various environmental groups and introduce the basic principle contained in Bill 209. We'll have to await with interest, Mr. Speaker, the minister's contribution to this debate to learn that.

In 1977 the then Minister of the Environment approved the following role and mission statement for Alberta Environment.

"To be an environmental advocate, to promote and practice an environmental ethic and to promote environmentally responsible action by groups and individuals."

We will strive for public confidence by being candid, by sharing information with the public and its government agencies, and by being responsive to public needs.

That was approved by the Minister of Environment on February 17, 1977. Mr. Speaker, if that was the situation which prevailed on a continuing basis, there probably wouldn't be any need for Bill 209. It would be self-evident that this information would be made available to the public.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that if we are going to ask industry to police itself — a condition of licensing is monitoring equipment which is to be administered by the company — if we're going to guarantee the public interest, then the information contained by that monitoring of whatever the industry may be, by the industry, has to be shared with the public. Any effort to refuse to make that information available would undercut the entire system. Frankly, in my own view, I'm not sure whether it's in the best interests of monitoring data that we're giving the companies the right to monitor themselves. But having said that, at the very least, if you're giving the companies the right to monitor themselves as a condition of approval, then we must make sure there is no doubt at all about the release of that information.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that since the House last met we have had all kinds of memos going back and forth — or at least one memo from the Attorney General's Department to the Department of the Environment with respect to access of this monitoring information. I say to members of the House that any effort to modify the release of public information is clearly inconsistent with this statement of objectives from 1977. Over the last number of years it hasn't always been the easiest thing to get information. It's difficult to sort of correlate and sift through it. Nevertheless, over a number of years we have been able to get a fair amount of this self-regulating information from the companies, whether it be Syncrude emissions or GCOS emissions or what have you.

What concerns me is the suggestion that this may be limited in the future. I would hope, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, that there was no question about it being limited. The basic purpose of Bill 209 is to be totally consistent with the statement of mission from 1977, but also to put some onus on the department to make sure this information is not only available but available in a way that is easily locatable. There's not much point in having information made in a way the public can't obtain easily and digest in an understandable fashion. After all, the purpose of the release of this public information in the first place was the proposition that the public could in fact monitor the reports and be able to review this information from time to time. Through that kind of back-up, if you like, the checks and balances would be there.

Mr. Speaker, the judicial authorities that I gather have been obtained — there may be some dispute over just whether this information should be made available at the present time. If there is, then it's incumbent on the government to clear away any legal ambiguities that exist at all. Some may argue; oh, just a minute, this is confidential information; this is, after all, information these companies have collected. That's true. We've allowed the companies to be their own policemen, if you like. But, Mr. Speaker, the environment — the air and water — belongs to everyone, and the information on pollution emissions must belong to everyone. It isn't good enough to use commercial confidentiality or the confidentiality of a company or the fact that a company may be in a position to sue someone as a result of the release of this information. The fact of the matter is that the licence to operate presupposes that they will meet certain standards. The only way in which you can judge whether those standards are being met is to have public access to the information. I don't think there should be any doubt about it, but apparently on the part of at least some, or so the speculation goes, there is.

The common law relating to confidential information appears to hold that where information is provided to the government, the foundation of the rule prohibiting disclosure is not that the information is confidential to the person providing it, whether a company or an individual, but that its disclosure would result in injury to the public interest. Mr. Speaker, I think it's very hard to believe that the disclosure of emission beyond the prescribed standards would be injurious to the public interest unless, of course, you presuppose that it's all right for large companies to break the law. If it's all right for large companies to break the law, then you have a rather peculiar approach to the administration of law. If you want to change the standards, change the standards. If you want to say that we're going to give people a licence to pollute more, then at least come to the Legislature and say, we're going to change the law so we give people a licence to pollute more. But it seems to me you don't try to hide the results of the monitoring from the public, because that's the only way the public has the foggiest idea of what, in fact, is going on in a given industry.

On many occasions I have heard members of this government speak, not only here in the House but when they've gone to conferences and elsewhere, and they'll take some pride in the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. The Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act are only as good, Mr. Speaker, as the methods by which we administer them and the safeguards which we lock into place. Now, I don't expect the minister's department to have an army of civil servants to run around the province to personally supervise every possible breach of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. That's one of the reasons why the information from this monitoring that goes on should be made public and should be available to the public, because then the public becomes the best kind of monitoring agent at no cost to the government and no cost to the taxpayer. But that's only possible if that information is in a form which, as I say, can be locatable and understandable.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's a public issue here beyond the legal question, and that is the public's right to know. I would note with some interest that the federal government has set up an official public participation program that not only ensures public input on departmental policy but guarantees release upon request of all monitoring information. I noted with some interest today — and of course I'll have more opportunity tonight to chat about this — that there seems to be a kind of cosy arrangement on a number of issues between the federal Liberal government and the Conservative government here in Alberta. The so-called "evil Easterners" are now in bed with the Tories

in Alberta and I don't know who's doing what to whom. In any event, the fact of the matter is that we have this rather interesting close relationship.

Some of the things that the Ottawa government is doing though are good, Mr. Speaker. One of the things they're doing, that it seems to me is providing an excellent example for legislatures across the country to follow, is the whole approach of the new Minister of the Environment and a recognition that the public has a right to know. So I would hope that in the time left in this debate, and I'm going to conclude my remarks uncustomarily early, the minister will have lots of time to bring us up to date on just what he plans to do. I hope that in this instance we could at least follow the lead of the government of Canada in terms of the release of this information, and we could get back in step with the basic mandate given in 1977 to the Department of the Environment.

Having made those initial comments, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate from members on both sides of the House, and anticipate with some eagerness the contribution of the Minister of the Environment on this important subject.

MR. ZIP: Mr. Speaker, I wish to enter the debate on the subject of Bill 209, introduced by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. Initially, one has no difficulty with Bill 209, since a cleaner environment is everyone's goal. As far as I could see in my travels, seeking new ways of helping provide for a cleaner environment for all Albertans strikes immediate sympathy and interest on the part of the people of this province. Difficulties arise, however, when one looks at the practical side of things and probes the practicality of Bill 209, which proposes a monthly report by all licensed operators in the province of Alberta, available to the public. There are over [5,000] such operators — licensees — in the province. The physical volume of reports that would be coming out every month as required by this Bill, and the subsequent bureaucracy that would have to be created to administer and deal with this requirement, would add a great deal of cost to our taxpayers in this province, who are already overburdened.

At a time when we have a recession and are experiencing fiscal problems in this province, fiscal restraint and careful management of public funds must be given top priority. It might be argued that this costly procedure is justified if compliance by industry to provincial pollution controls was unsatisfactory. However, this is not the case. Under present regulations, corporations are required to notify the department within 24 hours with regard to any contravention of their licence exceeding their emission standards. A written report is required within 72 hours. This provides the department with an opportunity to determine if contravention will have an adverse effect on the environment, and to ensure that both short-term and long-term preventative or corrective measures are implemented to preclude the problem from reoccurring. If the contravention will have an adverse effect on the environment which would affect human population in adjacent areas, the notification provides the department with an opportunity to respond in an appropriate manner and to notify the appropriate authorities to advise the public.

In addition, that department has a toll-free number — an emergency number, manned 24 hours — which [enables] both industry and the public to report complaints or emergencies and provides an efficient response through the department to complaints and emergencies.

Pollution standards in this province have been raised consistently and very significantly since 1957. The experience in Alberta has been that we are moving toward the lessening of environmental hazards rather than increasing them. Since 1974,

for example, Alberta has reduced SO₂ emissions by about 10 per cent while, at the same time, sources of sulphur dioxide emissions have increased from 77 to [122]. In short, industry has been doing a good job in protecting the environment. Older plants have been upgraded and new plants are installing better pollution abatement controls. In the case of sulphur, I wish to remind this Assembly that significantly better marketing prospects for this commodity are encouraging industry to remove and market this significant cause of pollution in the province.

Coming back to the realities of disclosing pollution monitoring information, an important factor is that along with the information on polluting materials such as hydrogen sulphide, additional information is given out which is proprietary in nature and would disclose information that would be valuable to competitors and would undermine the position of the company doing the complying. On checking with the Department of the Environment, compliance with present regulations is very high in Alberta — over 95 per cent. Adding further burdens onto the vast majority of operators who comply is simply not fair. Dealing with a tiny minority of non-compliers is difficult. Enforcement through legal action is costly and defence is relatively easy, based on due diligence, arguments, defence procedures, and so forth. It is better to win the co-operation of these few people through co-operative rather than confrontational methods.

In summation, there appears to be an obsession on the part of our colleagues of the left with promoting regulations, as if through regulations the miracles of a perfect society will be produced. I wish to remind my colleagues of the left that the performance of miracles does not belong to man but to God alone. Overregulation of our society is an unpalatable evil, just as overtaxation is a burden that impedes industry and discourages, destroys, and erodes initiatives; a burden that we must all bear for the sins of the undisciplined few among us.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the rejection of Bill 209 by this Assembly. Thank you.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak as well to Bill 209, presented by the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview. In doing so, I think I should say at the outset that I share the goals the hon. member has when he presents the Bill, and I think the minister does as well. In his public comments this summer, he too has said that he would like to bring forward legislation accomplishing the same objectives, so I don't think we have any difficulty with those objectives. I think that where the government and the hon. Leader of the Opposition might have some difference of opinion is in how we obtain those objectives.

Bill 209 is a very simple Bill. It's just a few pages in length; several paragraphs, really. The substance of it is that all the reports be filed in the Legislature Library. That's nice, except that there are 5,000 or more filed each month. I'm sure our librarian would be delighted to squirrel away those documents each month. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as deputy minister for the Legislature, you might have some concerns about the amount of paper that would be deposited on the front doorstep of the Legislature. So I quarrel not with the concept but with the details, I suppose. It might be more reasonable, Mr. Speaker, to have the reports available to the public at some other depository; perhaps in the office of the Environment, where the public can have ready access to that kind of information.

I think another thing we ought to consider doing is standardizing the reports that companies file, so that for statistical information for the department, for a citizen, or for companies, again it would be readily available. I think the Department of

the Environment probably already has that. I think it would be a very simple process for the department, for example, to run these kinds of reports through a computer and, rather than having 5,000 documents, have more or less a list showing who's doing what and if there are any deviations from the norm — that sort of information. With 5,000 pieces of paper, I think it would be very difficult for the average layman to spot, month to month, what the trends are. I think that would be a desirable thing to have.

I don't think any of us are quarrelling with the objective of the hon. member, but I think the way he's gone about it is just a little bit difficult.

May I take issue with my hon. colleague sitting beside me. Perhaps it's because I'm a member sitting to his left. But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's now got to the point in this province where we should be looking at regulation, not just simply handholding. I don't view the concept of regulation as being an onerous burden necessarily on the backs of the private sector. I think what we're looking for, hon. colleague, is a balance, where we protect the interests of the public as well as try to make it possible for companies or the private sector to function efficiently. It's that balance that we have to strike. Until now we've done very well with the clean air and clean water legislation, and I think it's fair to say that in the last 10 years or so we've accomplished a great deal in cleaning up our air and water. However, it also is fair to say that there are some bad actors out there who until now have successfully resisted all our encouragement, advice, and best wishes that they would improve their performance, and there are some companies out there that don't respond well to carrots. It's just like a child. Carrots work well sometimes, and the occasional pat on the behind works well sometimes, and I think you should have both available to you at all times.

I guess that what I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that it's also important that we recognize that the real issue here is freedom of information for access to surveys. I don't think there's any quarrel with that concept. I think the idea of regulation is a debate for another day. We have gotten to the point now where those people in the community that will respond well to encouragement have responded well. Those that are left are not, and that's a debate of a different calibre.

I'd like to close on one final note, and that is that there's a very useful document available in the Legislature Library. It's a green paper filed with the U.K. House of Commons in 1979 by the Thatcher government, and it outlines a freedom-of-information strategy for British parliamentary institutions. Basically the onus is on ministers of government, the executive, to produce documents and to prove why they should not be released. I think that's generally what we're accomplishing in Alberta; maybe not in a stated policy, but I think we are accomplishing basically that. The Minister of the Environment made a commitment earlier this summer to make the information available, and I'm sure he will be bringing forward legislation to that effect shortly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'd close simply by saying I think it's timely that the Member for Spirit River-Fairview has brought the legislation before the House, and I hope we can find a more efficient way to accomplish the same objective that he has before us.

MR. DROBOT: Mr. Speaker, Bill 209 proposes to amend the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act in order to provide access to monitoring surveys required by the Department of the Environment. The Minister of the Environment would be responsible under this Act for filing monthly reports for all such surveys with the Legislature Library and the city of Edmonton.

I think we can all agree that pollution is a matter of general public concern: the public shall have access to information which concerns them directly. But Bill 209 proposes to go about this in an inefficient and simplistic manner. Bill 209 is basically a freedom-of-information Bill, dealing specifically with pollution monitoring surveys. As such, it shares a common flaw with many other freedom-of-information Bills. It falsely assumes the right of people to know what is being denied due to the absence of specific legislation. This completely ignores all of the department's current practices and policies which ensure that Albertans have access to much information and as much information as any other province in Canada.

The Bill does not improve upon what is currently practised. It would require that a person seeking information would need a request from the Legislature Library or the city of Edmonton. All this does is transfer what is already done into the hands of another branch of government. Mr. Speaker, it makes more sense to go directly to the Department of the Environment, as is now the practice.

Another common flaw between the freedom-of-information Bills and Bill 209 is that they make privately supplied information publicly accessible without consideration of its content. In some instances this can be a gross violation of a company's right to privacy. Some small proportion of current pollution monitoring surveys is not presently made available to the public. This is the practice of all governments at all levels. To release all information is to violate a trust with a private company. Without this trust, the department would not be able to continue to work co-operatively with industry to develop our economy and to maintain a clean environment. Information like process chemistry and energy balances in production is necessary for pollution monitoring surveys but should remain strictly confidential. It is a private industry's privilege to keep information like this out of the general public's eye, because this type of information may give them a hard-earned competitive edge. This is called free enterprise, and it works.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my doubts about the practicability of the Bill that would require the minister to file roughly 5,000 monthly reports a year. This appears to be a massive undertaking and would place great constraints on the minister. It is far more practical to meet each individual's request for information as it arises. The information is already currently available; the public has access to well over 85 per cent of it. Therefore the present system can and does work. If further measures are required, perhaps it would help to educate the public about the information already available. Mr. Speaker, I can strongly say that the present system is far superior to Bill 209.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to rise and speak on the Bill. In particular, I might indicate that I was not going to speak today, and I thank the two previous speakers who apparently had indicated they would, in allowing me to rise on this matter. I mention that because, as I sat in my seat, I listened to some of the remarks and felt it would be very remiss not to respond in view of some of the remarks that had been made.

As the Member for the Lac La Biche-McMurray constituency, I represent an area that would be seriously affected if there were improper waste emissions. The two plants that were mentioned, Syncrude and Suncor — the hon. member referred to it as GCOS, and I'm sure that was an error on his part. He is well aware that the plant name is Suncor. While living in the area that's in close proximity to these two plants, I'm very confident of the controls and standards that are exerted upon them and in particular, Mr. Speaker, would emphasize that they're the highest in North America. I'm very proud of the

corporate responsibility exercised by both plants, and they've always been able to make this information available to the public. With the ongoing reporting and monitoring, I also would indicate that hey, there has been no secrecy of it whatsoever. And contrary to what the hon. member has indicated, there is no licence to break the law. As a recent court case has proved, Suncor was proven guilty and fined. Any appeal that might take place, of course, is up to litigation. But I would emphasize to the minister that they should certainly penalize any particular violator and take whatever court action would be deemed necessary and, in particular, have the responsible legal assistance to follow through with that action.

The Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, as indicated, are very high standards. But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to let you and the Assembly know an example of what I call close co-operation by the minister and the department. Just recently an order of variance was issued through the Minister of the Environment and from the department. It was with regard to Syncrude and the sulphur emissions. I was able to work in close support with the local community, Fort MacKay. In particular, I would like to indicate a very prominent lady in the community, Chief Dorothy McDonald.

In working with the department we were able to request, and had approval to set up, a portable monitoring station, and this was put into place immediately. My main concern, though, with any type of equipment such as this, that is a special need, is that people would properly understand what the equipment is. I think that's one of the dangers we have when we talk about information not being publicly available or being withheld. It's not that it's an attempt to withhold anything; it's sometimes in the inaccuracy or the interpretation or misreading of this particular material. The Department of the Environment indicated, of course, that there's a great need to make the people fully understand the equipment so they could be familiar with it and, in particular, have agreed to train them and to make this information available to them at all times. So there's no attempt whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, to withhold any of this information.

Now if this had been a precedent, or the only one I could think of that would have been established in Alberta, then I would say, hey, the department has conceded or was attempting to withhold information. But it's not. I'm certain the hon. Member for Clover Bar would indicate that such a unit is in existence in Fort Saskatchewan for the various industries that are represented in that area, so that information is there to inform the public at all times. So really, Mr. Speaker, it's not an attempt to withhold or not make information available. It's to make information available to the public so they can fully understand at all times, but to work closely with industry to maintain the Act and to ensure the safety for all concerned.

For one living in the area, I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, to feel that those safeguards are in effect and in joint co-operation with the department and the industries in those areas. We're pleased to say that we believe this is the right way of doing it. I would certainly endorse a rejection of the Bill, not because we're trying to withhold anything but because it's already in existence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my comments to the debate on Bill 209 this afternoon. Like the Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray, I too have deep concerns regarding emissions into the atmosphere and the monitoring and long-term effects of such emissions. In March of this year, a sour gas plant was approved by the Energy Resources Conservation Board just west of the city of St. Albert. In recent weeks, this

has become a growing concern through public discussion, public debate. Between two factors — sour gas and the company that was responsible for or at least owned the well at Lodgepole — the debate has flared and has triggered fear, anger, and concern on the part of many residents. However, an examination of the facts would dispel those fears, as the approval has taken into consideration not just conservation of natural gas which is presently being burned off but, secondly, does not increase the amount of sulphur dioxide that would be dissipated into the atmosphere. The same amount that is dissipated today would not change after the new process is in place.

However, I do believe that the public has a right to know the amount of emissions dissipated into the atmosphere or given off by any particular plant, and that information is available. That information can be retrieved by calling the Department of the Environment, whose toll-free number was mentioned by a previous speaker. That information is available, and it's not everyone that can take technical information and put it into a form they understand. I appreciate that the mover of the Bill suggested the information should be compiled into a readable form and that this should all take place within 48 hours or a very short period of time. So when we're talking about approximately 6,000 reports a month in a 48-hour period, compiling it into a readable form, I think we can visualize the horrendous job that is suggested in Bill 209. Is that really practical? How many people in the province are wanting this type of information? They rely on government services to protect them. They rely on the provincial Department of the Environment to ensure that proper monitoring is carried out. They rely on municipalities to inform them of information that they should be aware of.

If there is a concern regarding emissions, health standards, they rely on the people involved, the technicians, to provide that type of information. However, I appreciate there are those people in society that are non-governmental, that want access to technical information, that have the ability to interpret this type of information, and obviously they should have a right to the information. I would disagree in part with the Member for St. Paul, that felt the information should be strictly confidential, because I think there are cases where this information is not in the interest of the public.

It's important that correct information be given to the residents of our province. I recall a time when I was campaigning in a municipal election. It was after a proposal for an assembly plant for Syncrude had been set forward for the town of St. Albert. Because the words "Syncrude" and "assembly plant" were used in the same sentence, the same context, many residents felt that this was some type of large refinery or gas plant that was going in adjacent to their homes. There was great concern. Often this is the difficulty in information that is misinterpreted. So I think it's important that the public do have access to information — correct information — but that it not be information that can be misinterpreted.

Taking the Bill literally and trying to take very technical data and put it into readable information in a short period of time has the tendency to make that information concise but often not correct. Not the information itself, but the interpretation may not be correct. This is a hazard. This causes undue anxiety from people that are concerned about information they do not understand.

The gas plant I referred to earlier, that was approved by the Energy Resources Conservation Board in March, states in the approval that the board had concern for both conservation and the safety of the residents, and that in all the information they garnered — the technical information that was reviewed by the ERCB and also by the Department of the Environment — there

would be no differences in the releases that would come from that particular plant. Even so, without reviewing the technical data, there is still a lot of misinformation about the effects of this particular plant.

I think it's extremely important that we as government provide leadership in ensuring that information is available, but that that information is correct. And in my mind the Bill that is proposed, Bill 209, could not only lead to misinterpretation but also to tremendous increases in cost. To take this information and interpret it in a short period of time — I can imagine an enormous expenditure would be required for that type of operation. In the long run, I don't think it would provide a benefit to the people of the province, as the information is available in other forms or at least the Department of the Environment has that information available and can assure that monitoring is going on.

So while I would agree with the intent to have public information access regarding emissions, I do not feel that the clauses in Bill 209 would serve to benefit the public, and certainly would add horrendously to the cost of government, particularly at a time when we are concerned about the cost of all government and should do what we can to insure proper standards but not at increased costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Speaker, I too have reviewed Bill 209, placed before us today by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. While I take issue with the aspect of this Bill in terms of provision of services and procedure, I can say that the intent is very important and, I guess, illustrates a common concern that we all have for the quality of life in our province and, more specifically, for the quality of the environmental heritage.

I would say that while I support the intent of this Bill, I feel it is strongly lacking in its practical application. In evidence, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the suggested legislation will have very little effect, if any, in ensuring that people would be any better informed than they presently can be regarding the quality of their environment. We presently have good strong legislation by way of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act that, in fact, can be regarded as the most stringent in the country.

I believe our minister has also expressed his intention to amend these Acts and to ensure that privately supplied data is available to the public where a hazard does exist, which is in line with the policy being followed by the department presently. I feel that one should look carefully at the progress that has been made in a very short period of time on the question of protecting the environment of this province. In fact yesterday the Premier referred to our tremendous growth — in 10 years we have more than doubled our population — and how that growth brought with it difficulties as well as benefits. I think one of the difficulties, one of the changes it has brought, indeed, has been an increase in the hazards that threaten our environment.

Another change we also should recognize is the tremendous improvements — advances, I guess — in science and technology that have enabled us to increase the kind of control we can have over the municipal and industrial pollution of our air and water. I'm sure that anyone the age of people in this Assembly who has travelled to Banff can remember the dramatic changes that occurred in that valley when there were renovations to the plants there, when they were upgraded. Formerly we people that used to live there would be able to use the stack there as a weather vane down the valley. I think the changes that now have come about because of those renovations should indicate to Albertans that industry is endeavoring to cooperate with the government in meeting our environmental standards.

I think there are several factors we should consider when we're looking at this type of change in present legislation. We have in place right now licensing arrangements to protect the public, and they rigidly control the emission standards and the quality of the air and water. These regulations are in place now and, in addition, define and strictly enforce monitoring procedures that accompany the standards. This is all set up in the licensing privileges.

With that in mind, it should be stated that our present licensing procedures require a fair degree of information regarding the secret processes and operation of the plants, as some of our members have already stated. Presently this information is given to the government, and a trust relationship has grown up about the confidence of the information required. As a government, a choice must be made on whether or not we choose to be fully informed about the procedures involved in the industries, or should we require less detailed information?

Secondly, I think we should take a look at the monitoring procedures in place. These procedures are put in place by the company, and the department also exerts control over the standards by their inspection and monitoring services. Now these two factors are extremely essential in our efforts to protect the public, and I feel they are of major importance, rather than just the uncontrolled accessibility of the data.

I think a third fact is that the policies and procedures developed by our government have always assured, where there are environmental hazards, that the public concerned must be fully informed. In one instance reported in the House last spring, I recall that studies were done, and the procedures followed were that the employees were informed, there were meetings of the town and municipal districts involved, and the residents in the area involved. I feel that our minister and the rest of the government were well informed of these procedures, and all efforts were made to inform the public of the hazard.

I also feel the third measure, that will ensure existing standards of control are followed, has been the very strong and substantial penalties for abuse and contravention of any of the legislation as it is presently set out in the Act. It appears that while other provinces in Canada impose fines of between \$500 and \$5,000 — depending upon whether it's an individual or a corporation — when an infringement of their legislation occurs, under the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act in Alberta, persons who do not comply with the regulations when informed, or do not comply with a stop order, are guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to \$50,000 for each day that the offence occurs. In addition, a person who fails to comply with a direction given to him to provide records or data relating to the emission of air or water contaminants by the plant, is liable to a fine of not more than \$5,000 for each day that the contravention continues. I am sorry; did I say \$50,000 per day? I meant up to \$50,000, formerly.

AN HON. MEMBER: Inflation.

MRS. KOPER: Yes, inflation.

All of these penalties seem to point to the seriousness with which our government views any infringement of standards. One of our members has already mentioned that corporations must inform the department within 24 hours of any aberration in their licensing requirements, and a written report is required immediately. I think these factors are essential to consider when we're looking at this Bill. Because of these factors, I think we should also recognize the extremely high rate of compliance with the requirements of the Act, as pointed out by the Member for Calgary Mountain View.

It should be noted that the sulphur dioxide emission violations decreased by 10 per cent in the same space of time that there was an increase of 30 per cent in the number of plants emitting SO₂. Just as a matter of interest, our legislation to control sulphur dioxide emission is the most stringent in North America. There is also no indication of any damage from acid rain in this province, which I feel is most comforting.

In 1975 Alberta also entered into an agreement with Canada to study the environmental effects of oil sands operations. The studies were directed exclusively to the effects of sulphur dioxide from tar sands operations. However, in 1979 the federal government unilaterally withdrew its support of this program. But Alberta has continued to support it alone and is committed to it. In addition, the environmental departments of the four western provinces and Environment Canada are co-ordinating their monitoring and research activities to assess this situation and develop early warning systems for any environmental effects.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at things that have already been mentioned — such as 5,000 reports per month from the companies that are required by regulation in order to monitor their ambient air effluent — the analysis that is required by the department in order to provide information, how the data can be sorted out so the proprietary rights of the company are protected, and how this data is presented so it can be of value to the public: all of these things would in fact create an extra expense of, I would anticipate, between \$.25 million and \$.5 million. That's a very modest sum, and it would be worth it if in fact it contributed one iota to the quality of our air and water and the understanding of the public.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Assembly to defeat this Bill, as I feel it will needlessly add considerably to this expense of the government at this very critical time, again without improving at all the use of the data or the preservation of our environment. I hope, however, that our minister will contemplate some means whereby there could be continued protection of the proprietary rights of companies concerned, yet the public is guaranteed access to information of the studies that is carefully monitored and correctly interpreted. That will enable Alberta to continue its lead in environmental protection and will encourage industry to employ the best technology possible in order to control our hazardous emissions.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, although this afternoon there has been an excellent debate on this Bill and most of the points have been covered, I would like to make several comments. In view of the time, I would like to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, this evening the Assembly will continue debate on Government Motion No. 22.

[The House recessed at 5:27 p.m. and resumed at 8 p.m.]

head: GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

22. Moved by Mr. Lougheed:

Be it resolved that this Assembly approve in general the operations of the government since the adjournment of the spring sittings.

[Adjourned debate October 19: Mr. Notley]

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the opportunity to participate tonight in this resolution. At the outset, perhaps you'll permit me to offer a gentle observation or two about the tone of the speech yesterday. You know, unlike Mr. Keith Spicer, I happen to believe our Premier is a very good public speaker and, normally, when he speaks he can rouse a crowd as few politicians in Alberta can. But yesterday, after all the years of listening to these speeches, I must confess that the thing that surprised me was how quiet the government members were, how unreceptive to the Churchillian phrases — the call to duty, the call to responsibility.

I suspect that the reason my hon. friends in the government caucus were so quiet had nothing to do with the ability of the Premier as a performer in the House, had very little to do even with the suggestion that they weren't used to heckling from the opposition. It probably had a great deal more to do with the undeniable fact that this government is on the defensive. Members of the House know this government is on the defensive. Members in the opposition . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Could I just equally gently interrupt the hon. leader. With great respect, when he comments on the number of members being quiet, my observation would be that the level of sound was sufficient without any more members taking part.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. We didn't ask you for that observation.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the members of the Assembly that I welcome interjections whether they come from this side, this side, or even the Chair. If one is in politics, one should be prepared to take what comes and not be excessively worried about it.

I do want to just take a moment and say that notwithstanding the level of the elocution, there was a distinct coolness on the part of the government backbenchers. That really had nothing to do with the unusual heckling that occurred from this side. It had to do with the fact that — as every talk show host can verify, as members of the Independent caucus can verify, as my colleague and I can verify — people in this province are not very happy with the performance of this government.

DR. BUCK: And write that down, Bert.

MR. NOTLEY: They are not very happy at all, because we've seen, since that election on November 2, which the Premier verified — no question; the results were pretty overwhelming.

DR. BUCK: Why didn't they have it in the spring?

MR. NOTLEY: But there are a lot of people in this province, Mr. Speaker, that are wondering. If they could sue this government for breach of promise, I think there would be a lot of suits in the courts. I look back on that election campaign, and it's interesting to note that, even with a much larger deficit than we're facing today, in the weeks just before the election the purse strings were loosened, and we had Tories running up and down the street practically bribing the people of this province with their own money. Why, we had a new promise practically every day.

Toward the last stages of that campaign, when some of us — in all parties: Independents, WCC, Liberals, the NDP, what have you — said that, you know, there are some problems on the horizon in Alberta, it was interesting that at that point the

Premier said that the race is between the doers and the knockers; things are going to look up; we're going to be entering a much stronger economic situation. That's when we had 60,000 unemployed. Now we have 130,000 unemployed. That's when we had serious foreclosures. Now we have a very serious situation of foreclosures, almost 8,000 foreclosures in terms of family homes in this province either taking place or pending before the courts.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 1982 the Premier said that the race was between the doers and the knockers and that we were on the road to a strong economic recovery. What did he use to justify that argument, the sort of solemn pledge that is made to the voters of the province before one receives a mandate? When I asked that particular question on March 11, 1983, I got this answer, on page 14 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, I could go into it at some length. Well, we know that.

Let me just deal with some highlights. The first one was the Conference Board quarterly ... forecast ...

Mr. Speaker, during the course of this evening and, I suspect, during the course of this legislative session, we will hear a good deal about the Conference Board of Canada, because if we're going to compare apples and apples as opposed to apples and elephants, or whatever the case may be, we have to have a consistent base. And since the Premier of this province went to the people of Alberta and said the base on which I am going to be appealing for your support is the Conference Board of Canada, then when the prediction comes in from the Conference Board which perhaps is not quite as rosy, those of us in opposition — but far more significant for the Tory backbenchers in this House — those people in Alberta who voted Tory a year ago are going to be saying that if you can run with the Conference Board figures when they are rosy, we are also going to use the Conference Board forecast to judge the performance when things are not quite as promising.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier told us that we were in for tough times, that we had to tighten our belts, that we had to get a number of things under control, and the day before that we had the Provincial Treasurer with his news conference. I want to say just a word or two about that news conference. I wouldn't want to be overly suspicious, but the way in which that news conference was called I found intriguing: an hour's notice to the press for the most important announcement that's been made by the government this year. An hour's notice. Mr. Speaker, over the last dozen years that I've sat in the Legislature, I know this government: the way in which they pave the way for good news is unparalleled in the country. As a matter of fact, I don't know any public relations agency in the world that couldn't take lessons from the way in which this government paves the way for good news. But when the bad news comes in, we have an hour's notice.

Another interesting thing about the bad news, Mr. Speaker: wasn't it intriguing that the bad news was released the day after the civic elections, when every front page in the province carried the news of who was elected mayor in Lethbridge, in Medicine Hat, in Calgary, in Edmonton. Throughout the province, the daily newspapers and the media for the most part were completely, totally preoccupied with the civic election results. That's when the Provincial Treasurer, in his open way, said: shucks, we made a little miscalculation last spring and we have to bring in a massive increase in personal income tax.

What was really intriguing is that when one looks at the budget speech, on page 25, as my hon. colleague in opposition the leader of the Independents pointed out, it says:

There will be no increase in personal income taxes and no increase in corporate ... taxes in 1983.

Mr. Speaker, that's correct. There won't be. It will be January 1, 1984. So you can't say that the hon. Provincial Treasurer is deceiving the House in this statement. It is technically correct. But it's a kind of slippery statement, Mr. Speaker. It's not dishonest or deceptive in any sort of legal sense; it's a kind of used car salesman approach to the truth. That is disturbing.

Mr. Speaker, if this government was going to talk about increasing personal income taxes, I think it owed it to the people of Alberta a year ago to say, look, we're in serious trouble and we're going to have to increase taxes. They didn't do that of course. Or if they were going to at least be consistent with the principle that this Legislature means something, then they would have said in the budget that before the end of this fiscal year, we are looking seriously at bringing in new tax increases. But on the face of it, a person could read this budget speech — and I would defy any member of this House to go to his constituents and ask the average person in the street to read that paragraph and not come away with the conclusion that there would not be any tax increase in the operating year of this government. It doesn't say that in so many words, but certainly the inference is there.

So what do you get, Mr. Speaker? You get the Provincial Treasurer, the day after the civic election, one hour's notice, notwithstanding the inference made last March, coming in with, well, happy days are here; we're going to give everybody an Alberta Progressive Conservative, Ebenezer Scrooge, Christmas present; instead of December 25, it's going to be January 1. Small wonder that Albertans are calling government members, opposition members, and hot-line hosts, and are saying: we think this government has been anything but forward and correct.

Mr. Speaker, it's probably fair to say that times can change, circumstances can change. Governments have to adjust. But if this government were to bring in a policy of restraint, then it would have to set an example itself. Unfortunately, we don't have an example of restraint by the Tory government; we have just exactly the opposite. Today in the question period we raised the issue of the sand in Kananaskis park, whether we should have very expensive color-matching sand to the mountain or whether we could have cheaper sand. If we're going to be tightening our belts, talking about user fees, and giving all kinds of pious pronouncements about restraint, surely one of the things we could have examined was sand that was the least expensive, not the most expensive.

The Premier, during the last election, said that the only place he would debate the Leader of the Opposition would be in the Legislature. I notice that he's not here tonight. But I would say to every Tory member — and I think I can say this on behalf of my colleagues not only in opposition in the Legislature but in opposition parties outside — that we would be prepared to debate any member of this government, in any forum in the province, to discuss the waste and extravagance in Kananaskis park — any time, any place.

Mr. Speaker, we have another example of waste and extravagance. The Premier was a little annoyed the other day when my colleague raised a question about his press aide going to Hawaii to deliver a dispatch box, apparently with all kinds of briefing material so the Premier could be brought up to date. We checked with other governments, and we find that that is not the customary practice of other governments. We checked with the government of Canada. Perhaps you might say that the Liberals in Ottawa are old-fashioned fuddy-duddies who don't spend money the same way we do in the new west, here in Alberta. But let me tell you, when the Prime Minister needs to be briefed, normally it's done by telex on the basis of what he needs to know. Don't send people on special all-expense

trips to Hawaii to bring the Premier or any other cabinet minister up to date. I found out yesterday in the question period that it's not just the issue of the Premier's briefing, but it appears that this is the practice right across the board.

Mr. Speaker, if this government wants to be taken seriously by anybody — if it wants to be taken seriously by the senior citizens in Waskatenau or Smoky Lake or Fairview or Rycroft or Lethbridge or the Crowsnest Pass — it's got to be able to demonstrate that it is exercising restraint in terms of its own expenditures. What we see in contrast is one example after another of what can only be classified as blatant waste and extravagance.

In the return that the hon. Member for Little Bow received the other day, I notice all kinds of interesting information about travel. No one quarrels that elected members have to travel — fair enough. But when we own an air line, and that air line travels almost every hour to Calgary, what in heaven's name are we doing sending government planes down to Calgary, at four or five times the cost, when we own the air line which would save the taxpayers a great deal of money? It might even increase the profits of PWA and make it more saleable to the private sector, which I gather is one of the objectives of our friends in the government.

Mr. Speaker, this is the government that wants us, the people of Alberta, to tighten our belts, but the examples of their own waste and extravagance grow each day. We have — and I stand in my place and say this so that government members can bring it back to haunt me if I'm wrong — one of the most ridiculous examples of government decision I've even heard of in this decision to choose Mount Allan as the site for the Winter Olympics. In Alberta, where the one thing we have in most of the province is snow, lots of snow, we choose a mountain that has no snow. And one of the persons who helped us choose a mountain that has no snow is a person who is a consultant in a snow making business. I just simply say to members of this government that I would ask the members, especially in the Peace River block or in the northern part of the province: in January and February and March, we'd be glad to discuss Mount Allan and the choice of that site, and debate under any terms that our government members would like to debate among their constituents on that issue. Waste and extravagance, yet we have the appeal to Albertans to tighten their belts.

One of the things that is always very interesting when you sort of separate the sheep from the goats politically, as it were, is to determine how people react in times of difficulty. It's pretty hard not to be successful when we had the economic boom of the last decade. But since this government took credit for the boom, they must also be prepared to take responsibility for the recession. What is vital is to look at how priorities shift in the face of difficult times.

One of the things that I find astonishing as I look over the record are the double standards. For example, let me just cite some. In July of this year, we had the great public debate over whether or not the Minister of Social Services and Community Health, who also is not in his seat tonight, would bring in a system of user fees for those people who receive appliances under the aids to daily living program. The argument was that a system of user fees would stop abuse. In actual fact, when one looks at the operation of the aids to daily living program, there are serious problems with the administration of that program, which are not the fault of the recipients but the fault of this government that designed the program. In Saskatchewan, they run an equally effective program at a fraction of the cost, because instead of giving everybody appliances, people who have appliances use them as long as they need them and then they go back into the system for someone else. It is a cost

cutting arrangement that keeps the cost of the Saskatchewan program to a fraction of the per capita cost of the Alberta program. But instead of looking at that as the option when we face difficult times, Mr. Speaker, we had the department floating around the ridiculous concept of actually charging people who have wheel chairs or appliances or aids of one kind or another, user fees.

Well, we have the double standard. Last spring this Legislature, the government members, rammed through changes in the labor Act which will not only allow but mandate arbitration panels — and as a labor lawyer, Mr. Speaker, you know the implications of that — to take into account the fiscal policy of the government in handing down awards to workers. If that was going to be the policy with respect to wage earners in this province whose right to strike has been taken away by legislation, one would think that it would be the consistent policy of the government across the board. We would ask the Public Utilities Board, for example, to follow the same logic and bring in the necessary legislation. But of course we aren't doing that. The net result is that at the end of September we have the PUB saying it doesn't make any difference about five and six; those figures don't mean anything to them. We're going to give the owners of the two private utility companies a guaranteed rate of return of 15 per cent, and that is going to mean an increase in utility rates this year.

Mr. Speaker, if you're going to be saying, as we did last spring, that the government's fiscal policy must guide arbitration awards, why don't you say that the government's fiscal policy should guide the decisions of the Public Utilities Board? Or are the owners of TransAlta and Alberta Power suddenly more important than the people whose right to strike has been taken away by legislation and who have to rely on the decision of arbitration awards? A set of double standards, and people are beginning to see that. They didn't for a long time, but they're beginning to see that now because things are tightening up in this economy.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar raised the business today of the cutback in the shelter allowance. What has the cutback in the shelter allowance done? It's forced all kinds of low-income people to move. It's not a program, in my view, that will save the taxpayers money. One might say that it is the government's economic resurgence program for slum landlords, because people are going to have to move. Double standards again. Or we have the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs — who, I'm pleased to say, is in his seat tonight; at least that's a plus — who apparently wrote a letter to Ottawa saying that we want all the information dating back to 1930 kept under wraps. Yet when we look at the public accounts this year and the annual report of the heritage trust fund, we find that we spent almost a million dollars advertising the wares of this government before the last election. But when it comes to access to the public's right to know basic information, we say to Ottawa that it doesn't make any difference what Ontario, Quebec, or the other provinces say, or the federal Parliament saying we want to loosen up and make more information available — if it applies to Alberta, whether it's confidential or not we want you to stamp confidential/closed on the document. All kinds of money in a time of restraint for advertising, but we're going to keep from the public the vital information on which people can judge government decisions.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if this government is going to be credible, they have a lot of changes that I think they have to seriously make. But some of the things I've raised pale into insignificance compared to the incredible mess that we have in our health system. The Tories are attempting to tell the people of Alberta — nobody believes them — that the fiasco we have is their

fault, that they are overusing the system. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's just take a look at several basic, hard facts. A few years ago, when hospital costs began to rise, the then minister of Hospitals and Medical Care announced to this House, with great fanfare — and I still remember the *Edmonton Journal* gave it headline billing — that there would be a hospital utilization committee that would look at the operation of the health system. So whenever we raised questions — Social Credit members at that time, myself, Independent members — every answer was the same: this hospital utilization committee is examining the system; we can't make any decisions until we get the report. They get the report, and they sit on it. And now they have the audacity, notwithstanding the series of recommendations that are made in that hospital report for changes, improvement in the system — and they've done nothing to speak of about any of them — to come in and say: We have to blame the users, we have to bring in user fees, we have to increase medicare premiums. The Premier warns us yesterday that unless we can get these costs under control, we've got even further taxes. Mr. Speaker, where has this government been?

But there's another aspect of why our system is costing so much money, and that is the mismanagement in capital works. Does any member in this House seriously think that the Walter C. Mackenzie, that project that was going to cost us \$100 million and is now \$400 million of \$500 million — who knows what the final figure will be? — isn't going to cost us an awful lot more to operate than the old University hospital? We look at all these rural hospitals that have been developed — no serious plan to integrate the health needs of the community. During the last election my Conservative opponent, in a very articulate news release, took issue with this government. He said, you know, instead of political hospitals what we need is total health planning, so we have auxiliary beds and nursing home beds. We've got all of the extended care applications on hold now, Mr. Speaker, while we're building active treatment hospitals in places where we don't have doctors.

DR. BUCK: Just throw money at them.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to bring back the new Berwyn hospital, that is being built in Grimshaw, which is going to cost us more to operate than the old one because the architect, whoever it was that Dave Russell got to plan the thing, did such a rotten job that it's going to take more staff and more money to operate a new hospital than it took to operate an old hospital.

MR. MARTIN: It's in Boomer's riding, though.

MR. NOTLEY: Now, Mr. Speaker, whose fault is that? Is it the evil easterners? Is it the terrible socialist hordes? Is it the awful Independents? Is it the WCC lurking in the bush? Is it Nick Taylor's fault? No. It is the fault of this government. They are the people who have the mandate; they are the people who, frankly, have muddled up the system.

We have just recently another report on excessive surgery. Excessive surgery, Mr. Speaker, costs us money. What's the government been doing about that? Again, precious little. Today in the question period, my colleague asked what was happening about this one particular doctor. But we're told by the College of Physicians and Surgeons that there have been about five doctors a year that they understand have been over-billing the system. Yet the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care, in four years in the House as minister, could only remember one case where any action had been taken to recover the

money. If we're going to recover money from people who haven't paid their premiums — and perhaps we should; no one is arguing that. But if people have billed the system fraudulently, surely there has to be some kind of policy to recover that money.

MR. MARTIN: A law for the rich and a law for the poor.

MR. NOTLEY: Is it a law for the rich and a law for the poor, as my colleague says? Or do we have some kind of consistent approach here? Is it because these people are gentlemen and can frisk away that we aren't going to prosecute them? Surely not, Mr. Speaker. Surely we have to have some policy if we are then going to come back and piously say in the Legislature, with all the television cameras rolling, that we have to bring in more taxes because we can't control the costs of the health system. Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has the mandate to do something about it, and they are not handling that situation very well at all.

I could deal with the health situation even further, but let me just add one comment. I thought that the decision to bring in the user-fee system on October 1 was a silly date, for a number of reasons. First of all, it's predictable that hospitals are going to appeal their budgets; they always have. The government has always come through with some degree of additional funds. So when the minister announced yesterday that this additional money was made available, that's not new for us who have been in the House for a decade or more. It happens every year; it's part of the system. Before hospitals could even begin to evaluate user fees, they had to know where things stood in terms of their appeals. There's an appeals process; we've even dealt with that formally in the Legislature. So let's not try to pawn that off as being a logical reason for October 1.

The second thing is that when we had civic elections this year throughout the province, most of us, in our different regions, chose hospital board members — not in every place, but most of us did. What are you going to be doing with your new hospital board members if you set October 1 as the date for bringing in this kind of system? Surely common courtesy on the part of the Tory caucus would have caused them to say, maybe we should wait until the new members are chosen, until they get their feet on the ground, until they have some opportunity to look over the operation and the administration of the hospitals. But oh no, we are going to bring it in on October 1, because everybody knows best in this House. It doesn't make any difference what the people out there think; we're going to make the decisions here. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's a case of undermining any sense of local autonomy.

The one additional comment I want to make about the health system is the sad mess that we put all kinds of people in who paid their premiums. I'm not talking about the people who didn't pay their premiums. I'm talking about the many Albertans who did pay their premiums and didn't get their cards. The minister can say it was due to somebody else's — it's always somebody else's fault with this government; never their fault, never their responsibility, always somebody else's fault. The fact of the matter is that we set October 1 as the date, when there were literally thousands of Albertans who had paid their premiums in good faith and didn't have their cards.

The minister said the other day that some people are good customers. I really wondered at that kind of comment from a health minister — that some people are good customers. Nevertheless, setting aside for a moment the fact that doctors are expected to give charity, how in heaven's name can a minister of this House stand in his place and say everything is okay

because people can use the RITE number, and then the department would get around to sending them a card in a few days. If you've got need to go to a hospital or to a doctor, you can't sit around for a few days. What you then have to do, not because it's your fault but because there was a mix-up on the part of this government and its administration of the plan, is to go to the doctor and say: I'm sorry; there's been a mix-up; I really paid, I have entitlement, I don't have the card. You've got to make the case with your doctor.

As my colleague pointed out yesterday, what about some of the people who don't have guardians but have mental problems of one kind or another, serious emotional problems? What kind of torture have we put them through by having to go in a humiliating way to the doctor and say: I'm sorry; I paid my premiums, but I don't have my card?

I would say to members of the government that I think you can be very happy the election has come and gone, because with the record of the last year I personally would not want to be seeking re-election if I were you.

Mr. Speaker, let's deal with the economic outlook of the province. When I began my remarks, I said we would use the Conference Board of Canada report. The reason is that the government sought their mandate using the Conference Board as a rationale. Let's review the last year of Tory rule, using the Conference Board as a bench mark, as a way to calculate performance. Yes, the last decade, the boom years, have been good to Alberta, but it's also obvious that the recession has hit this province in a more severe way than any other part of the country. All one has to do is look at the vacant office space in downtown Calgary or Edmonton. All one has to do is look at the number of small businesses that are facing bankruptcy or are going out of business; the liquidation sales. All one has to do is talk to the 130,000 people who are unemployed. It's pretty obvious that we have some serious economic problems in the province.

Just taking the data in the Conference Board report that hon. government members were able to use a year ago to talk to their constituents, in the way where, in our parliamentary system, one goes back to the people who elect you and you have to have accountability with those people — all right. We used the Conference Board last fall, didn't we, Mr. Speaker? Let's use it again this year. Take retail sales. The Provincial Treasurer tells us, on the basis of one month, that everything is fine. We lead the country. Of course, that's before we get the personal income tax increase. I'm not sure how much leading we'll be doing after that goes into effect.

But if we look at the raw figures in the most recent report of the Conference Board, we find that Alberta ranks 10th among the 10 provinces in growth in retail sales. The recovery, such as it is, in the economy as a whole is greater in retail sales everywhere else compared to Alberta. We've had a modest recovery, but it's barely half the national average. Let's look at an even more important index — real domestic product. There we find that we are the only province that will have no increase at all. We look at next year and we might say, well, we have lots of natural gas. The Premier told us, when he came before the heritage trust fund committee, that we literally discovered an ocean of natural gas under Alberta. So maybe things are going to improve. Maybe the Americans will change their mind, and everything's going to be hunky-dory. What does the Conference Board say about next year? It says, Mr. Speaker, that next year the only province that will be worse than Alberta in terms of real domestic product is P.E.I. The other Atlantic provinces will have a better showing than we will have; so will Quebec and so — astonishing though it may be — will the socialist government of Manitoba have a better performance.

Here in good old free-enterprise Alberta, we are only outranked for last place by the other Conservative government which is behind us, and that is the government of P.E.I.

I am not surprised that today, when the hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud asked the Premier to reconcile the difference between the Conference Board and the Provincial Treasurer's statements, all of a sudden we had some backpedalling and efforts to justify their position, and maybe the Conference Board is not looking at things in quite the right light. From a PR point of view, no. But from the viewpoint of the same basis of facts the Premier took to the people of Alberta a year ago, yes it is.

DR. BUCK: That was a good spontaneous question.

MR. NOTLEY: The results are not very promising at all.

It's pretty obvious that certain things have occurred in the last decade. In 1974 we were told that we had a decade left to diversify the economy, despite the talk about petrochemicals. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we have done precious little to diversify the economy of this province. We are still more dependent in almost every way on the sale of depleting natural resources in 1983 than we were in 1971. We have some additional industry; there's no question about that. So does every other province. But to suggest that we are the most diversified economy outside Ontario is really quite unbelievable. That statement may go over in a House dominated by 75 members of one political party. But no reputable economist, no business analyst, no newspaper publisher — even people who are Tories in those fields — are going to believe that kind of ridiculous assertion.

No, Mr. Speaker, we are as dangerously dependent on the sale of the depleting natural resources as we were in October 1966, when a young leader of the Conservative Party, who had no seat in the Legislature, went down to Pincher Creek and said we had to do something about it, because if we didn't this province was going to be in serious trouble. He was right in '66, he was right in '74, but somehow he has forgotten in 1983.

During the last few months, we have seen the government side-step some pretty crucial issues. I guess the first issue that astonished me was the question of the Crow rate. It took a long time for the government to develop any kind of policy at all on the Crow rate. Long after everybody else in the west had a clear policy on the Crow rate, we were still thinking about it. We finally had a statement in March of this year, and we had a submission to the parliamentary committee in August 1983.

Mr. Speaker, I differ with the government's position on the Crow rate. That's not news to anyone. If we want some sort of long-term approach to the transportation of agricultural commodities, not just grain but the processed agricultural commodities, I think we have to go back to the Hall commission report, which is still the most solid set of recommendations for a modern transportation system that will be of benefit to western Canada and will allow us to be able to compete in the markets of the world. I said that when the Hall commission report came out, and I've said it every year since that time.

But now, Mr. Speaker, we have the rather interesting position taken by the federal Tories. Their position is that they want the government of Canada to delay any change in the Crow rate for three years. It was intriguing indeed to watch this government waffle on that issue today in the question period. Where do they stand? Does the Member for Vegreville provincially support the Member for Vegreville federally, who says, a three-year moratorium for grain farmers? Where do they stand? At a time when the Liberals are bringing in closure, and we have the Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan saying it's shock-

ing and he opposes that and makes it known to everyone in Saskatchewan, we have the hon. assistant Government House Leader, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, stand in his place in answer to my question today and say, well, maybe the Leader of the Opposition has a good suggestion. What kind of limp-wristed, weak response is that?

DR. BUCK: It's a waffle government.

MR. NOTLEY: Yes, it's a waffle government. That's right. Pancake, waffle — call it what you want. But when it comes to protecting the farmers, where in heaven's name does this government stand? Are they with the federal Liberals and just want the Trudeau Liberals to make the changes and get it over with? Or do they stand with their federal Tory brethren? I wonder, Mr. Speaker. I wonder. You can't be serious when it comes to any kind of coherent economic policy if you waffle on something as critical as the issue of the Crow rate, that is now before the House of Commons. I would have expected the Premier to have used the opportunity in his speech to the province to stand up and say, look — I wouldn't have agreed with the recommendations in the Minister of Agriculture's report, but I respect the Minister of Agriculture. I know he's concerned about the future of the farmers of this province. If the Premier had stood in his place and said, look, I am making it clear in Ottawa that we oppose closure, I have phoned the Prime Minister, and I am sending Jim Horsman down to camp outside the Parliament Buildings to make it clear that we are opposed to closure, then we could have taken this government seriously. But to say instead that maybe we'll send a note, maybe we'll send Ron Liepert to deliver our message — that will really wow them in Ottawa, I can tell you. That will smash the press gallery. Mr. Speaker, where do we stand on something as important as the Crow rate?

Another issue that the Premier mentioned was the question of natural gas exports to the United States. In early September of this year, the ERA held hearings in the United States. There was political representation there. A number of congressmen, through one congressman, made representation directly. Senator Percy, who wants to repeal legislation, sent a strong letter recommending changes. We had representation from state regulatory agencies. We had the tremendous pressure of those who want to repeal the take-or-pay provisions in our contracts. Mr. Speaker, we should have had the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources down there, but we didn't.

This government can say, oh, we're reacting in a strong way. What kind of strong way are they reacting in, Mr. Speaker? We got into a lot of these projects — the prebuild is a good example — because the Americans wanted long-term natural gas commitments. The party that I am privileged to lead has always been critical of overemphasis on export of natural gas. We have opposed and opposed. Our energy critic went to the ERCB in June of 1982 to oppose the TCPL application for more natural gas exports to the United States' market.

Mr. Speaker, when the Americans lock us into long-term contracts and part of the price of those long-term contracts is take-or-pay provisions, then they have to live up to those provisions as well. It's a two-way street. Good neighbor policy involves a two-way street. In 1977 and 1978, when they had cold winters in the United States, we made additional gas supplies available beyond the authorized amounts, and so we should, because that's part of being a good neighbor. The other part is that however rich and powerful you may be when you sign contracts, you live up to those contracts. We've had an extraordinary response on the part of this government. I simply

say to members of the government — I don't expect you'd agree with me — that it's the wrong path.

In this spring session, we had the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources suggest that if the importing companies who had signed take-or-pay provisions would take 50 per cent of their agreed-upon volume, we would give them a massive discount from the already-reduced Canadian price.

MR. MARTIN: Shrewd bargainers.

MR. NOTLEY: A sort of Brick Warehouse approach, Mr. Speaker, to the sale of natural gas. I think that's wrong.

What should have been done was that the government of Alberta, the government of British Columbia, and the government of Canada should have said, not in an abusive way but to make it clear, that we got into all kinds of infrastructure — which we have to pay for indirectly, in part, because of the royalty provisions — because of commitments we made to make it possible to give the U.S. a long-term supply of natural gas. And if they want that long-term supply protected, then it's not unreasonable that they live up to their take-or-pay provisions. We should have done that as a united Canadian effort all along the road — the Parliament of Canada, the government of Alberta, the government of British Columbia. We should have gone down and made the representation the Premier did in June, and I respect him for doing that. We should have followed it up at every conceivable avenue, in every way — diplomatically, economically, using the allies we have not only in the industry but working people who are employed by the industry — to make that point to the United States as clearly as we can.

I hope that the chairman of the ERA, who I think is an extremely able man, will be able to convince the Reagan government not to stand back in the face of congressional initiatives. The problem with our natural gas markets, as anyone who has studied the situation even peripherally knows, is that in the final analysis what is occurring — with a congressional election and a presidential election just a few months away — is tremendous consumer pressure to take advantage of this short-term gas surplus. And it is a short-term surplus. Over the long haul, that 4 per cent of the market that we have is going to be an important part of self-sufficiency for our great neighbor to the south. For the next few months, we're going to have a tremendous amount of political pressure. We could well find that Congress will be retroactively and unilaterally doing things to abridge our contracts that I think can only be met by strong, united, federal/provincial challenge on this issue, by Canadians standing together.

There's one other point that I want to make when it comes to natural gas exports. I say that these take-or-pay provisions must be lived up to. But I suggest to members of the House that regardless of what members on the government front bench say about getting ourselves into the sale of commodities in the world market, we should not overlook domestic markets for natural gas in Canada, options to increase the use of natural gas in this country. In New Zealand they take natural gas and turn it into gasoline, for example. We have to explore ways in which we could expand the use of our resources within the Canadian market.

I guess that leads me to one other economic issue that I want to deal with, and that is a proposal of the United Mine Workers union that was brought to my colleague's attention and my attention. It is with respect to the use in Canada of western Canadian coal. I don't want to go into a long, detailed recitation of the statistics, but Canada exports about as much coal as eastern Canada imports. The problem with our export of coal

is that, increasingly, the export market is jeopardized by lower cost coal that has been discovered in Australia, where they can out compete us in the Japanese market, and jeopardized by South African coal. The fact of the matter is that our foreign markets for coal are very shaky.

On the other hand, we import about as much coal as we export to central Canada. A large part of the electric power generation in Ontario and even a little bit in Quebec comes from the fossil fuel generation of electricity. But the coal that we import has a very high acid content and contributes to the problem of acid rain, which is not only a serious situation in Ontario but is a problem in the northern United States as well. You're well aware, Mr. Speaker, that in the last short while there has been a good deal of debate between the United States and Canada over the issue of acid rain.

One way in which we could reduce the acid rain problem, not overnight but over the next few years, is to gradually shift away from the use of coal produced in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, and substitute it with coal produced in British Columbia and Alberta which has a much lower acid and much lower sulphur content, so that the acid problem is much less serious. Mr. Speaker, in Ontario at the moment, Ontario Hydro is looking at the options. They have a limited hydro-electric potential; they can expand that a little bit. But the real question in Ontario, and something that should be of interest to us in Alberta, is whether they continue to expand their fossil fuel generation or whether they go to nuclear power in a big way. Right now in Ontario, that's a major issue. There are a lot of Ontarians in all three parties who are saying no, we're not so sure that we want to go further and further down the road to dependence on nuclear power.

Mr. Speaker, in Calgary three or four weeks ago we held a conference, and I was surprised to find that we had a number of people that, to be honest, I didn't think would be interested in this proposal at all. We had the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour, who came to the conference and said: in the interests of reducing the acid rain problem, I think that I can go along with the substitution of eastern American coal with coal from western Canada.

We get a lot of people, especially when they talk to business groups, who take little shots at the trade union movement and say that they're controlled by their Washington offices. It's no secret that the Washington office of the UMW is not enthralled with a proposal that would substitute coal produced there with coal produced here. But the UMW in this province and in British Columbia is pushing for this proposal because it would be good for Canada, it would be good for Ontario, and it would be good for the west. And yes, there's a transportation subsidy involved. But with that subsidy, coal produced from this area of the country would be more than competitive with coal imported from the United States.

I remember the hon. Member for Drumheller, Mr. Gordon Taylor, would raise this issue over and over again during the years that he was in the Legislature. At the time when he raised that issue, I always thought it was an area that we should follow through on.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk all we like about foreign markets, but we've got an important domestic market. The figures that I've seen would indicate that if we can substitute the coal that I've discussed, there would be literally thousands of jobs directly and indirectly involved in western Canada. When we talk about economic recovery, we can talk in generalities but we also have to talk in specifics. If we can achieve the main objective of lowering an environmental acid rain problem, which is of concern to all of Canada, and at the same time

generating economic activity in this part of the country, why shouldn't we press forward with it?

I was interested when Mr. Pepin said the other day, when this matter was raised, that the reason is economics; it's cheaper to import the coal. Mr. Pepin is probably right in the narrowest sense, but he didn't point out that it would be cheaper for us to buy Japanese cars; it would be cheaper for us to buy almost anything produced elsewhere in the world than from the industries of central Canada. But we pay more, maybe not happily but because it's part of the compact of federation. That's what the bargain of Confederation was all about. There has to be a give and take.

Mr. Speaker, I simply suggest to members of this Assembly that they might well consider carefully and not reject out of hand the proposal of the UMW. I know it's not as glamorous as flying to Hong Kong, touring China, visiting the Soviet Union, spending time in Egypt, or these various other intriguing little trips that we have a motion for a return on — not nearly as interesting. But I suggest that it would be somewhat more productive for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks this evening by coming back to the announcement on Tuesday of this week: an increase in personal income tax from 38.5 per cent to 43.5 per cent of federal taxes, a 13-per cent increase in relative terms. I would simply say to members of the government that, in my view, this tax increase is inconsistent with the mandate that you received in the fall, that there were other options that members of the government should have considered. A leaner government doesn't mean firing all kinds of civil servants. It means taking a close look at some of these extravagant projects, these kinds of money consumers which the government has been so proud to present to the voters just before the election: for example, Paddle River dam; Kananaskis Country; Mount Allan, the mountain without any snow; the park in front of the Legislature — those kinds of things. We should have looked at leaner government.

If we were going to undertake this Churchillian approach to deal with our economic problems, we might have investigated some of the more expensive programs — the economic resurgence programs that apply to the oil industry — and made sure we had performance guarantees. That's not an unreasonable suggestion. We expect other people to be able to account for public funds. Why not across the board?

Or if we had to have more money, instead of an increase in the personal income tax right across the board — so that it hits everybody, including those people just above the bracket where the lower rate comes in — maybe we should have looked at a surcharge on higher income people; perfectly appropriate under the tax arrangements that we have with the federal government. An income surcharge would have raised the same amount of money but would have taken it from those people who are at a point where instead of spending their money on goods and services in this province, they have extra income to go to Hawaii or Bermuda or elsewhere in the world. Make sure that that money is recycled here in the province. If the tax man is going come along to grab, let's grab from that excess amount of money. It isn't going to be spent here anyway, because it will be on import of luxury goods or trips abroad.

Mr. Speaker, there were other options the government could have looked at. But oh, no, we didn't do that. We decided we're going to bring in an increase in personal income tax — hit the little guy, hit the working person — of 13 per cent January 1, at the very time that our retail industry is in trouble. We all know that after the Christmas sales, it's a tough time in the retail trade. January, February, March, April, May — difficult time in any circumstance. But you add to that difficulty

a 13-per cent increase in provincial income taxes, and then you have Mr. Trudeau and his friend Mr. MacEachen and the new Minister of Finance, Mr. Lalonde, bringing in their increases, all scheduled for January 1. Let me tell you, the quietest place in Alberta will be Main Street, Alberta, after January 1. We'll be able to fire a cannon down any main street in this province, it'll be so quiet.

But the net result, Mr. Speaker, is that we're going to find that economic problems which are serious now will grow worse. Businesses are going to be in trouble, they're going to have to lay off staff, and unemployment, which is bad now, is going to be a good deal worse. Even if the government were so pig-headed as to pursue this policy of increasing personal income taxes, the worst time to do it would have been when the retail trade is going to need at least some kind of leeway, some kind of shot in the arm. But instead of that, they are going to be getting a reduction in the ability of Albertans to consume, and it's going to be difficult in the extreme. Even the timing is bad. But isn't it interesting that in the unholy coalition between the Ottawa government and the Edmonton Tories, the informal coalition on the Crow rate, we now have a coalition so that the federal tax man and the provincial tax man hit us at the same time — January 1, 1984, George Orwell's year of both Liberals and Tories.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that members of this Legislature this fall should be able to go back to their constituents without having an opportunity to have on the record of *Hansard* their views, and particularly their votes, on this question of the 13-per cent increase. I even hear tell, Mr. Speaker — I'm not sure if it's a mischievous rumor by somebody in the press, but I hear that even the caucus wasn't notified of this little surprise package until Monday night.

DR. BUCK: That couldn't be; this is a team.

MR. NOTLEY: I was astonished to hear that, Mr. Speaker, because for years I've been told that this government is a team of all the members, and all the backbenchers would have been participating fully. So I am sure that government members, during the course of the debate, will want to rise in their place and say: no, no, no, we knew all about it a month ago; as a matter of fact we advised. Perhaps the Member for Edmonton Glengarry would like to tell us the advice he gave the Provincial Treasurer. The Member for Vegreville, the Member for Barrhead, and the other members — we can go right around. I'm sure that this is just a nasty rumor by that awful press. And you know, you really have watch that press, because I hear that sometimes they don't always follow the Tory line. Usually they do, but every once in a while there's an exception to every rule.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want members of the House not to have an opportunity to fully tell their constituents why they are in favor of this devastating, retrogressive move announced on Tuesday by Mr. Hyndman. That being the case, I would like to move the following amendment:

that the motion be amended by adding the following words at the end of it "but deplores the fact that the government's failure to effectively resolve our economic crisis has led to a decision to increase income taxes substantially."

I think it would be interesting indeed for hon. members of the House to tell us and tell their constituents where they stand on this latest effort on the part of the Lougheed government to turn their backs on the people who elected them last fall.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, we've had an invitation issued, and I'm pleased to take up the hon. gentleman's invitation. First

of all, I would like to state quite clearly that it's some months ago that I recommended that we start looking at increasing income taxes. I wasn't alone either. I'd now like to go into the reasons, because the hon. gentleman apparently didn't listen to my remarks during the estimates of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care. He obviously didn't read them, and I'd like to repeat some of them and add to them.

The facts are, Mr. Speaker, that our health care budget in this province is now well in excess of \$2 billion a year. That's approximately a quarter of the total expenditures of the provincial government. The amount is now approximately \$1,000 per head for every man, woman, and child in Alberta, and it's an amount that is going to increase unless this government behaves responsibly and unless there are some changes in attitudes.

If we look at the \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker, the budget of that department really is in two parts. The first is for the Alberta health care insurance plan, essentially doctors' fees, although it includes chiropractors, podiatrists, optometrists, and some others. Let's look at that share of the \$2 billion.

Last year, after some discussions with the Alberta Medical Association, the government unilaterally decided that the increase in the schedule of benefits would be 5 per cent. Now the population of Alberta has not increased significantly in the interim since that decision was made, and I'm sure that any increase is less than 2 per cent — I don't have the exact figures. If we look at what is happening in dollars, not in percentage increase on the schedule of benefits, we are looking at an increase of over 21 per cent in the dollars expended over the same period of the preceding year. That increase is because of what is called increased utilization. So essentially, in the AHCIP budget we're looking at an open-ended budget.

The major portion of the total expenditures, heading for 70 per cent, is related to the hospital system. After the third strike in six years, nurses' salaries went to arbitration. The award was stated to be 30.8 per cent over two years, and on working it out, most hospitals found that it was indeed not 30.8, but was rather 38 per cent over two years. The largest item in any hospital's budget is salaries, and by far the largest portion of those salaries are for nurses. So one can see what is going to happen to that portion of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care's budget.

That system is essentially also an open-ended budget, until this year, because of the custom for the department to pick up operating deficits of the hospitals the succeeding year to the deficit being developed. So what we had in the hospital system was the authority to spend money in almost limitless quantities with no responsibility for raising one cent. In other words, the hospitals were functioning on one hundred cent dollars from the government, with no responsibility for raising any of those dollars themselves.

Now I'm not much of an economist, and I'm not much of a business manager. But I know that there are two bad principles of business management: one is authority without responsibility, and the other one is responsibility without authority. What we had in the hospital system was authority without responsibility. The responsibility has been introduced with the introduction, on the volition of the individual hospital board, to charge user fees, which in my mind are reasonable in that they apply only to those who, in the case of a married family with two children, are earning somewhere in the vicinity of \$18,000, or in the case of a single person with no family, somewhere in the vicinity of \$12,000 a year. The most that those user fees can be is \$300 a year, \$20 a day. We all know, or should know — I doubt if some people do in this room — that the average cost of a hospital day in Alberta is somewhere over \$300. In

other words, the maximum cost in a hospital will be less than 10 per cent of the hospital day, and that will only apply to a maximum of \$300 per family in the case of a family, or \$150 a year in the case of an individual person.

I said these were open-ended budgets. The problem we really have is not that of the open-ended budget but of the attitudes of Albertans. I'd like to divide Albertans into two portions. The general public — the patient, the family, the relations, the friends of patients. We all feel the same way when members of our family are sick: we are prepared to pay anything. Of course, nowadays when we say "I am prepared to pay anything for my child's health, or my wife's health, or my husband's health, or my own health", we really mean that I am prepared to have the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care spend any amount, and it's a reasonable attitude if you look at it from a humanistic standpoint.

Speaking now as a physician, the natural instincts of any physician are to say that "my patient is entitled to the best". It's an admirable attitude if you look at it from the professional standpoint or from the standpoint of caring for your patient. The only problem we have is that, just as the individual patient or family is committing the spending of dollars from government, so is the physician committing the expenditure of dollars from government. The potential for spending those dollars is increasing at such a rate, because of modern technology, that it cannot go on.

The premier got quite emotional about the subject of the ability of the health care system to bankrupt this province or this country, and he was accurate in that statement. The ability to put in artificial hearts, or artificial [pancreases] in diabetics, the ability to put in artificial hips and knees, and the ability to keep people alive who are brain-dead and beyond recovery, comes at very considerable cost. I don't know what it cost in Utah to keep that man alive with an artificial heart in, and I doubt if the University of Utah wants to know. But those things are happening.

Mr. Speaker, when I was a medical student I was very fortunate in that, what would here be called the professor of oncology, the head of the department of cancer at the University of Aberdeen, was a man who came off a northeast of Scotland farm. His name was Jimmy Phillips. He is, unfortunately, dead from the disease that he treated for so many years in so many people. But when the 104 of us started our course in oncology, Jimmy Phillips, who was a skilled surgeon and also had a degree in radiotherapy, said that the aims of his department were to cure when possible, to relieve pain and suffering when necessary, and not to prolong the act of dying.

It's a very good philosophy for somebody who is treating cancer; it's an excellent philosophy for the health care system. But do our attitudes nowadays allow of it? I don't think so, and the changes in our attitudes are resulting in incredible escalations in the cost of health care, escalations that, quite honestly, the economy cannot afford and in the future will be even less able to afford.

Let's look at just some examples of how we could spend money without really either curing or relieving pain and suffering. If you get an old man of 80 or 78 who's got bad coronary artery disease and arthritis, and isn't very mobile, do you really do him any service by opening up his chest and by-passing the blockages in his coronary arteries? Or do you indeed subject him to unnecessary suffering and pain, without any real benefit to his life style? If you have a senile woman in a nursing home, is it really any benefit to her to replace an arthritic hip? Is it any benefit to the family of somebody who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease to keep them alive with intravenouses or putting tubes into their stomachs for feeding, for three years

after they've ceased to have any mental functions? Those are very, very hard questions. Somebody in this society is going to have to address them.

What we're really looking at is needs versus wants — really the best use of the available and reasonably available health dollar in our province. We're looking at the allocation of realistic resources, not limitless resources. The Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about the Mackenzie centre. In this province we have two excellent tertiary care facilities, the Mackenzie centre and the Foothills hospital in Calgary. We have some very specialized tertiary care centres — the two cancer institutes and the Alberta children's hospital in Calgary.

The hon. leader seemed to me to indicate that he felt we were wasting money with the hospitals in small centres, but really in the large cities we have overgrown community hospitals. Should they have tertiary care facilities in addition to those in the Foothills and the Mackenzie centre? Somebody's going to have to make that decision and allocate those resources to their best use. The 10-bed hospital in an isolated farming community on the east side of Alberta may be an excellent use of resources. It can be more than a first-aid centre. It can stabilize somebody who otherwise might well die, so they can be adequately transferred to the tertiary care centre.

We should remember that the 20 largest hospitals consume 80 per cent of the hospital budget. In other words, we have an excellent system. But because of the increased ability to spend dollars because of technology, we are going to have to allocate it. It's going to take some time to change attitudes. It may take us two or three years; I don't know. People are certainly much more aware of the health dollar because of the user-fee discussions that have gone on over this summer. I've been involved in many, on open-line radio shows and around the constituency. Once people realize what user fees do, they are quite accepting of them.

What we are really doing at the moment is trying to get our budget in balance while other things can be changed. Provincial incomes from non-renewable natural resources can drop off very rapidly. It takes time to change and turn systems around, and that's what we need to take — time to do it. In the interim, if we are going to behave as a responsible government, we have to get our budget in balance. We have a limited ability to suddenly change expenditures and introduce cost controls. Therefore it is perfectly reasonable that we have gone to increasing income taxes at this time to assist in balancing that budget. For that reason, I would strongly recommend to this House that we reject the amendment proposed by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Thank you.

MR. COOK: I'd like to rise and participate in the debate on the amendment. Mr. Speaker, I have a poor memory perhaps, but it wasn't so long ago that we had a motion on the Order Paper on the subject of user fees and health care costs. In fact, to refresh my memory, I went down to the library and got a copy of the *Hansard* for April 11 of this year. Gee, that's about six months ago. I thought it would be instructive for me to refresh my memory and, perhaps in doing that, the memories of other members of the House.

I'd like to refer to that debate and to the remarks of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. On that day, our friend from Spirit River-Fairview said that the beauty of the Canadian system "as opposed to the American system is that there is ... an element of fairness" — I don't have the rhetoric and the movements, but I'll try to do my best — "in the paying because so much of the money comes from our general tax system."

Isn't that what we're doing with this tax announcement? We're allowing the health care costs, which are escalating so rapidly, and that the hon. leader accepted as being a significant burden on the treasury — we're paying for those extra costs through general taxes. [interjection] Wait, Ray. I have a reference of yours.

Mr. Speaker, he goes on in the paragraph to say that Many things can be developed to restrain and implement cost controls which are reasonable, but the point that has to be made — and I close on this — is that those costs should be borne in relationship to our ability to pay.

That's income tax. He goes on to say:

Don't bring in this tax on the sick when there are other avenues open ...

There are alternatives, he says. What are those alternatives? Those are alternatives that

would force those of us who are in a position to contribute our fair share to ... do just exactly that.

He obliquely refers to income tax, but his colleague did so much better. Perhaps it's because his colleague isn't so learned in the House yet that he didn't skirt around the issue like his leader did. He came right out and said:

The point ... is clearly that this is a regressive tax [referring to user fees] no matter how you talk about it. The Provincial Treasurer said in the budget the other day that we are very proud because we're not increasing income tax. When you take money out of the lower income, as we are here, it is clearly a regressive tax because people pay medicare premiums or user fees if they're sick. It doesn't make any difference whether you earn \$12,000 or \$122,000, you end up paying for that. So as my colleague said,

Who is his colleague? His leader.

instead of trying to nickel and dime the middle- and lower-income, why don't we bring it through our income tax? Make sure we have [the] money there.

That reference is on page 476 of *Hansard* of April 11.

Now we have these socialists saying one thing in April, when it's convenient for them, and quite a different thing today. I don't understand what's happened, except that I think these gentlemen are being consumed by a lust for power. That's the only explanation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's fair to allow the hon. member and the hon. Conservative backbenchers to get away that easily. I think there are others in the back benches that still haven't placed their position on the record of this Assembly as to where they stand with regard to this tax. They seem to indicate they're all in favor of an increased personal income tax of 13 per cent, but only two stand up and make a very weak case as to why the tax must be increased.

They're saying it is all the fault of the health care program and hospitals. Well, that's only \$2.2 billion out of a nearly \$9 billion budget. What about the rest of the budget? Are all the costs in other areas of expenditure going down? Has the government got them in control? That's a bunch of nonsense, because the Premier's speech just yesterday indicated that there is no control of government expenditure — we're going to try to control it, but not one indication as to what he was going to do with this government. Everything is great. We have a 1970 boom mentality, and we're going to carry on. Carry on, on the backs of whom? On the backs of Albertans. Not one Conservative backbencher — hon. members, as it rightly should be put — is able to stand up in this Legislature and say:

my constituents sent me here to ask the government to increase their personal income tax. There isn't one of you that can stand up and say that. Nor is there another of you that can stand up and give a legitimate reason why that tax should be increased at this time. Not one, because there is not a legitimate reason at this point in time.

This government is so out of sync with what the private sector and private individuals in this province are doing, where they are living within their means by not increasing their income, because that is an impossibility. Anybody in the business world, as the hon. member for mud — Whitemud, Whitemud [laughter] ...

MR. MARTIN: He's a good golfer.

MR. R. SPEAKER: As the hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud rightly knows, there isn't anybody in the construction business, in the investment business, the banking business, the little business on the streets, that can go out and say, today I'm going to increase my net income because I want to live within my means. That's an impossible situation. In terms of this province, the only body that can raise personal income tax is the provincial government. This government has done it, irrespective of the situation in Alberta.

That's the Conservative backbenchers of this party, that supposedly speak up in caucus. They have their say and they determine the direction of this government. Well, as I and others have heard in this Legislature, the backbenchers of this government didn't even get to say anything or react to that tax. They were told that the Premier and one or two cabinet ministers had decided to implement a 13 per cent increase in personal income tax: take it, accept it, be quiet, go back and tell your constituents across this province of Alberta that they deserve it and this is the result they get from electing a Conservative government.

MR. MARTIN: That's the team.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Don't go home and don't stand up in this Legislature and talk negatively about it; don't tell the truth as to how you really feel. That would be one of the best things you as backbenchers could do at this time. Many of you that haven't reached the front bench after sitting in here more than one term should learn the lesson: you might as well come in and represent your people and speak your mind. To you for whom it's your first term, if you look back at your history after you leave this Legislature, you will wish that you had spoken your mind and said it as you thought it should be said and as you wanted to have this government of Alberta run the affairs for the people.

But that isn't the way it is with this government, that is run from a central position and a heavy hand; a leader that says, if you get out of line, tough break, buddy; you're ended with this party.

MR. NOTLEY: You're out the door.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Tough break, buddy. That's the directive. If the Premier were really interested in what Albertans were thinking about this new tax, the Premier would be sitting in his chair here this evening.

MR. NOTLEY: Exactly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I served under a Premier that never left the chair and served for 25 years. He listened to every debate,

day in, day out. And when there was a matter you wanted to discuss with him during the time of session, you may have discussed it just outside that door for a minute or two and he said, I'll look after it, and back in his seat he moved and took his responsibility as a leader in this province. When the backbenchers don't show the backbone they should and stand up to him, that power a Premier has is only increased, and those people that have been elected democratically lose that freedom of speech and don't take the responsibility they should in this Legislature.

That's Conservative backbenchers. Cabinet ministers — in question period today I raised a matter of studies of background information that supposedly was provided to the Provincial Treasurer, information that would determine whether this tax was legitimate in some very basic economic fields in this province, asking the Minister of Agriculture if there were any studies or considerations of what effect that 13 per cent personal income tax would have with regard to agriculture in this province. There were none.

MR. MARTIN: They weren't consulted.

MR. R. SPEAKER: When we look at what is happening to agriculture in this province, since 1981-82 we have had a decrease of some 30 per cent or more in net income. We are having farmers facing very difficult times. Certainly most of them are carrying on. I have done a check with every one of the banking institutions in my constituency. I have spent at least a half hour with each one and asked, how is it going in my constituency? I have gone to every one without exception, from one end to the other. I said, how are my farmers doing in this constituency? Are they in difficulty? My findings were consistent in every institution.

Number one, their savings are decreasing; they're using their savings to run their operation. Number two, their operating loans are on the increase. They've certainly got equity, because over the years a number of farmers have built up equity. What the bank is worried about is the equity, but the operating loan is increasing. The number of loans that have been issued to farmers with regard to new machinery has decreased significantly: 50 per cent in one bank, 40 per cent in another. The number of loans for land has decreased. That means that these farmers are trying to put their house in order. They're trying to say that the economy has turned down; I'm not sure what the sales are going to be in the next few years, and I'm coming to grips with my business; I am lowering — what is called by this government — expectations; I am cutting back on my expenditures. They haven't any way to go out and run around and get new revenues. They're cutting back on their expenditures.

I've heard the Premier stand in this Legislature and say, what are the most important industries in this province? Number one: agriculture. Lip service.

MR. NOTLEY: There won't be many farmers left.

MR. R. SPEAKER: What does he do to our farmers? He gives them another slap in the face, another personal income tax increase of 13 per cent. I would say I have some 4,000 taxpayers in my constituency, and I just thought about that as I was sitting thinking about my remarks in this Legislature. It's going to cost them \$200 at minimum. That's \$80,000. Isn't it terrible that this government, the cabinet ministers that sit here, blew that much tax money by running around the country in January 1983. Not one of them has ever reported to this Legislature what they did in terms of those travels, and we've had a session.

The results to Albertans: zero. That's the way this government frivolously wastes money, and our farmers suffer. That's agriculture.

I raised the question with other ministers today. What were the results? Small business: no studies, no background. My indication is that the Provincial Treasurer didn't even ask what the effect would be on small business. Education: I got a bunch of garbled drivel about the consideration that should have been given to this very serious matter. I am sure that the Minister of Education doesn't realize the impact on the 28,000 teachers in this province. After January 1, it is going to cost them at minimum, between \$5 million and \$6 million out of their pockets because of this increased tax.

Here is a government that, because it's local government and local school boards, is saying to local school boards that we're really twisting the neck; we're putting the screws to education; you had better keep those teachers down to a 2 to 3 per cent increase; give them no increase if you can. That's the attitude. At the same time, this government, through the Provincial Treasurer, is reaching into the back pocket of every school teacher, taking \$5 million to \$6 million out of their net income. They are concerned about being able to maintain certain standards of living. That's no way at all to treat good consumers in this province.

The point I make is that the cabinet ministers in this government did not do their homework, did not make a cause to the Provincial Treasurer for a very important group of producers or group of consumers in this province. Those people had no one representing them in the centre of decision-making — that is, cabinet — in this province. A decision was made without anybody representing them. The backbenchers said nothing. Now I find that the cabinet ministers didn't have any input or didn't try to give any kind of concerned input.

MR. NOTLEY: Just the patio crowd.

MR. R. SPEAKER: So the Premier and the Provincial Treasurer made a decision, and 74 other Conservatives that sit in this Legislature followed along. Mr. Speaker, it's unacceptable and unbelievable to think that that kind of thing would happen.

How in the world can we ever support a tax such as that, which isn't accepted by the electorate? I can't, when I see that democracy, the process by which a decision is made, is so eroded by this Conservative government. I always listen to the case that is made by many backbenchers, and many people sitting in the front bench, that we have great debates and great discussion in our caucus.

DR. BUCK: Nonsense.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I always listen to that. I remember when I sat in the Sacred caucus, where there were some 50 members as well. We in this room — at least we stayed in the Legislature Building — always thought that, boy, we really had a good debate and a good discussion, and we really knocked it out with each other. But I look back at that time, and I remember many times when the minister came in and said, look, we're going to do this and that's it. The discussion wasn't as great as I thought it was.

When I hear these backbenchers talking about their great debate in caucus — you may be fooling the people, but you're not fooling somebody that was involved in that process at an earlier time. At that time I remember that our Premier — and that doesn't sit with the Premier in this Legislature — said time after time after time, and my colleague can vouch for this: why do you debate some of these issues in caucus? He said, go

debate them on the floor of the Legislature; if you want to vote against it, vote against it out on the floor of the Legislature, because I don't care whether you do that or not; go out on the floor of the Legislature. For some reason or other, through that caucus process, after it was decided in caucus, it would come back into the Legislature, and there would be an air of silence. The debate seemed to cease on other occasions.

But this caucus hasn't even debated the issue in caucus. It was told what to do and has come back into the Legislature and told Albertans what they're going to get. To me, that was the only possibility of some democratic process occurring in this province, and it didn't happen. Totally eroded. If anybody can stand up in this House and tell me something different, I'd be glad to hear it. But I sure haven't heard it to this point in time.

MR. NOTLEY: It's really quiet, Ray.

MR. R. SPEAKER: There are a lot of reasons why we are in the situation that we're in at the present time — a number of causes for the problem. It isn't just health care, as the case is being made in this Legislature by the Conservative backbenchers.

[Mr. Alexander left the Chamber]

DR. BUCK: Hey, Whitesands, where are you going?

MR. R. SPEAKER: He's going to check his medicare, he might need it.

The case is not just health care. There are a lot of other things that this government has done, not only this last year but in 1982 and since 1971, that has brought us to the point where we are today. I think the climax to it, though, was the rather irresponsible attitude that was taken in the last election with the people's money.

MR. NOTLEY: Exactly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: The estimate during the election was that there were promises of over \$8 billion. I think it was \$8.3 or \$8.4 billion that was going to be handed out to Albertans. We are going to look after you. Don't worry, there will be no deficits. We have lots of money in the heritage fund, things are great and going well, no new taxes. We have the government in hand.

Well, the government was saved a few dollars because mortgage and interest rates have gone down, and that has lowered that election promise to something like \$7.7 billion. But that's like one year's expenditure in this province. They blew one year's expenditure in one election, and now they are coming back to the people of Alberta, crying like babies that we are in trouble: we need some help, Albertans; we gave you all of these things, and we need some money to pay for those election promises. They are as bad as Mulroney's group and Joe Clark's group. The Conservatives always do that. They have a good time — big band, lots of posters — and then later on the poor old private sector has to pay for it. Here we are again, the very same way. We have to dig out of Albertans nearly a quarter of a billion dollars — all the little workers, the wage earners, the school teachers, and the farmers of this province. We have to pull it out of them again. But that's one of the causes: that kind of irresponsible management of government. They all wanted to get elected, so they handed out some \$7.7 billion from the resource revenues. Who cares if it's not fiscal respon-

sibility? We'll blame it on Ottawa and health care after the election. We'll get the people; we'll fool them.

The other deception that came along with this, as has already been mentioned in this Legislature, is that the Provincial Treasurer — and this is really sneaky — said we won't have any increase in personal income tax in 1983. But he didn't say that he was going to slip it in the door on January 1, 1984. There it is. Give it to us right on the nose.

DR. BUCK: Talk about scruples.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Most likely we'll work up this argument with Ottawa; never blame the real factor. When you spend double your total budget in one year, in expenditures and committed expenditures, that would bankrupt anybody. Then they cry in this Legislature about health care. That is unfair and unacceptable to Albertans.

What else has this government done in 10 years that's caused the problem we have today? Civil service. I remember the Premier and the hon. Mr. Hyndman — I kind of feel hesitant about calling the guy honorable, with the rather devious little mind he's had lately.

AN HON. MEMBER: Slippery.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Slippery mind.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I am sure that the hon. member can find a better way of furthering his view in the debate than following the line that he's just embarked upon.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it makes it difficult for me to understand how this hon. member and hon. minister moves around the facts and starts to confuse many people in the province. The results of that are rather detrimental to the general population of Alberta.

What has happened to the civil service growth of this government?

MR. NOTLEY: Every Tory is on the payroll.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Every Tory is on the payroll. I've got a few remarks that I have to make in a few minutes about Conservatives on the payroll. When this government took over power in Alberta, there were 17,000 civil servants; we're over 70,000 now. Seventy thousand on the payroll. The population of Alberta has not increased four or five times — we'd have them coming out of our ears in the cities and on the prairies and out on the farms, but they're not doing that. The population of Alberta is now decreasing 4,000 a month, but the civil servants are still going up — everybody gets a job. The Premier labelled this plan so well. He said: it's my pragmatic approach to government; I have some friends who need a job, give 'em some more jobs; we'll look after things and keep them quiet. That's what's happening — pragmatic approach to government. But the fact of the matter is that that is the biggest cause there is of this government being out of hand today.

I think I'd better raise this at this moment. My friend is very concerned that I was going to forget my comments with regard to the Premier's friends in the gallery. There were 10 of them sitting up there yesterday. The Premier stood there talking about living within our means and that we're going to look after this government; we're going to restrain spending. There were 10 of them sitting up there. Every one of them, on an average, with their salary, their expenditures, their back-up and their trips, spend a minimum \$50,000. He had a half million dollars

of staff sitting up there, saying: go get 'em, buddy, we're behind you; you're my boss and I'm sticking with you: I need the job. A half million dollars of staff sitting up there, and that's typical of this government. That kind of expenditure is the reason it is in trouble. In his time, Premier Manning had a secretary and one press agent, and that ran this government efficiently and effectively.

I saw one of that \$50,000 crew. It cost us \$25,000 to keep him in that gallery to make the first notes on the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and then he ran over here and spent his other \$25,000 on the other side: \$50,000 to make notes to tell the Premier tomorrow morning that the four opposition members were in the House and they were bad guys, out of hand. But that's typical of this government. Who cares about the expenditure? Keep the friends on the payroll and they'll look after us in the election.

It's all a part of the cause of the problem of this government. It's out of hand. They don't know how to shut it off. They've got it running so fast, with people coming out of their ears, programs coming out of their ears, that they don't know which is an important one and which isn't an important one any more. There's no understanding of priority, and that's the other problem. It's not health care; it's not people going to the hospital when they're sick. That's not the cause of it. It's not administrators in hospitals that are trying to beat this government and take funds and spend them frivolously.

MR. MARTIN: Everybody is frivolous but them.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Hospital administrators across this province are good operators. They do everything that is possible to save money and to cut costs in hospitals. It isn't their fault that costs may be increasing the way they are at the present time. If we saved things in some of the other areas of this government, we wouldn't have to worry and blame local government for what the Conservatives consider a bad job. I think we should compliment them for the good job they're doing under very difficult conditions at the present time.

To me, that's the cause of the problem. It's uncontrolled expenditure by this government, lack of priorities, lack of direction, and every minister and the Premier afraid to come to grips with the problem — that's what it is. I have heard nothing in this Legislature about priorities, or whether the Premier is saying: this time, we're going to act like people in their private lives or like people in the private sector, and cut our cloth accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly support this amendment that disapproves of this personal income tax that has been imposed upon the people of Alberta. I think that was just uncalled for, unsupported in any way, unnecessary, and that the government of this province should have taken other steps to bring about meeting the deficit they're going to face.

What are some of those ways the government could meet that deficit without introducing an increased personal income tax? I've already talked about one way, and that is that you should stop the growth of civil servants. I think the Premier should set an example in his own cabinet and with some of the staff around him, and take some direct measures at the present time. There are some 30 cabinet ministers on that side of the House; 20 are ample to show the people of this province that the Premier means business. Ten should be cut out.

DR. BUCK. We'd never miss them.

MR. R. SPEAKER: If there were priorities established by this government, there wouldn't be a necessity for 30 in the cabinet

for such a small population as Alberta. It's not necessary. That's number one.

He should also take a look at his own staff and see whether they're really productive or not. I see them sitting in this gallery day after day taking notes, frivolous notes, to run back and tell him, when the Premier should be sitting here himself and listening to what's going on. That would show the people of Alberta that he's willing to come to grips with the economic problem, with this growth of government that is out of hand. But the Premier won't even do that. In his speech yesterday we heard no indication that he was going to come to grips with the problem of the cost of government. So that's number one.

Number two: we should take some specific programs in government and do something about it. I'm only going to mention one tonight, and to me it's the most obvious. This government spends some half billion dollars in the area of housing, and I've mentioned this before in this Legislature. I believe that we could have taken \$200 million from that area of housing expenditure, reallocated it to other areas of importance in the current fiscal budget, and then in the budget of 1984-85, we could have most likely reduced that housing expenditure substantially again and allocated the funds to other areas.

That's one obvious area where the government could act and do something. I think the ramifications would be significant in terms of eliminating a lot of competition which is going on now with the private sector. Walk-ups are being developed in some of the areas of this city where there are vacancy rates down the street in privately owned apartment buildings and other rental accommodation. The vacancy rate is 30 to 40 per cent; it can't compete. I've got examples of that. A fellow came to see me just yesterday with that very problem, and this government isn't even aware of it. It continues to go on. We budgeted that half billion dollars in the spring, and they're hellbent to election to spend it some way on housing in this province. I think it's time that they reassessed that kind of function that's being carried on.

That's one example, and there are a lot of others throughout the government where we could pick up a billion dollars, reallocate it to the important functions of government: health care, hospitals, education, transportation, police protection — put those at the top of the pile, and then the other areas take their position and fight for whatever is left. But this government doesn't do that kind of thing. We want to go on subsidizing private business; we want to intervene; we want to run around the world trying to do things — I'm not sure what it is — in terms of federal/provincial international relations. There are lots of areas where we could cut back, where it isn't really essential.

People in my constituency, in the little area of recreation, tell me: you know, I think we've spent enough in that area; let's maybe cut back there. They were telling me at this time, it's time to cut back on some areas. They were giving me examples in their local community, and they haven't done that before. Every time I did my constituency tour — and I must say I've spent the last two weeks walking door to door, business to business, and house to house talking to people. Other years prior to this, they always said to me: what's available from government to help us out to do this and this and this? I found the question changed this time. They said, how are you going to cut back the expenditures of government? To me, that was a clear directive when I went to this Legislature: I had better speak to that point and tell the government that that's what the people think at this point in time.

What else would I do? What else could this government do? I've made this recommendation on the Heritage Savings Trust

Fund. I think that the Heritage Savings Trust Fund has reached its limit, that we should cap what is in it at the present time, that any revenue that is available in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund be invested to have earnings. Those earnings in turn can be used to complete various capital projects. But the other 15 per cent which we're diverting and which, again, the Provincial Treasurer in a very ...

MR. NOTLEY: Slippery.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I don't know whether the word slippery is acceptable, Mr. Speaker. I beg to be corrected if it's not. But the Provincial Treasurer manoeuvres the public mind. What he does is take the 15 per cent and say we're allocating that to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund; we're still meeting our commitment to allocate natural resource revenues to it. But at the same time he reaches in on the other side of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, takes the same amount of money out that came from revenue earnings, and puts it into general revenue. You know, I've never seen such a person that can go through contortions and manipulations ...

MR. NOTLEY: Louis the magician.

MR. R. SPEAKER: ... to kind of fool the people a little. I think we should be upfront and say to the people of Alberta, the good times are over; We put a lid on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund; its earnings will complete whatever capital projects we have in that fund; all other non-renewable resource revenue at this point in time goes into the general revenue budget, and we set up our priorities in that budget and meet our responsibilities as government. That does not mean that we introduce any new taxes, such as has been introduced in this Legislature. Taxes that are wrong at this time of our economic turnaround — wrong, wrong, wrong.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what I see as those acts taken by this government, and clearly taken and enunciated to the people of Alberta, would show that this government still wants to lead for the benefit of the people of Alberta. But that non-committal, evasive, omni-approach that the Premier used in his remarks yesterday will lead us nowhere but to continued economic disaster in this province.

The Provincial Treasurer and the Premier have said that after this increase in personal income tax, there may be other taxes — like a threat to the people of Alberta. I'm sure there will be, with the continued spending record of this government. That's number one.

Number two: the other thing that alarms me, that's in the back of the minds of the Premier and the Provincial Treasurer — and hopefully you as cabinet ministers and backbenchers will watch this for us when you're in caucus — is that we will borrowing on the New York market to fund this government. We're going to move back into a debt position, that will most likely lead to bankruptcy in this province. We cleared that up in the 1940s. The people of Alberta said they didn't want that kind of government again; they wanted to pay as you go. Well, this government doesn't even understand those words, because they don't understand the definition of living within your means. Living within your means, means going out and getting some more revenues out of the poor innocent taxpayer and filling your coffers and having a good time. Not serious about the responsibilities of government. Mr. Speaker, what this government is doing, specifically the Premier and Provincial Treasurer in their actions, is unacceptable.

I can only add to the condemnation of this government and their acts by adding to the amendment that was submitted some

words that I think are rather general, not quite as strong maybe as the other words. I'd considered other types of things, like asking for the Provincial Treasurer to resign from his office, but knowing the majority in this House, that maybe wasn't the thing to do. But if an amendment that jolted the government a little to realize that they have to re-assess what they're doing were passed in this Assembly, maybe that would do something for the people of Alberta. It was the best we could do. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the former amendment as follows:

that the motion [that has been amended] be amended by adding the following words at the end of it: "and request the government to reassess their priorities".

MR. PAHL: Mr. Speaker, I feel that it's hardly right to let this much misinformation pass, before the people of Alberta find out where the leadership in this Assembly is [interjections]. I have 14 points that would address the amendment, which makes reference to a substantial increase in income tax.

MR. SPEAKER: May I respectfully draw to the attention of the hon. minister the subamendment. I've had some difficulty with the amendment, and it's not really helped in any way by the subamendment. Ordinarily amendments tend to narrow the main topic in certain specific ways. It's a little difficult to do that in this case when there are expressions like economic crisis and income tax, because they're almost integral to the main motion as well. But we have a subamendment, and the question now before the House is whether the amendment itself should be amended by adding these words on the end. It seems to me that we do now have some narrowing down of the situation, and we are directly confronted with the issue of whether or not the government should reassess its priorities. I respectfully suggest that that's where the debate should now be confined.

MR. PAHL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your good advice. I will take it and address in 14 brief points how this House should not accept this subamendment with respect to reordering its priorities. I will speak with respect to the priority announced by the Provincial Treasurer with respect to a personal income tax hike of 15 per cent, which, in earlier debate related to the amendment, was referred to as substantial.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this substantial increase, a typical Alberta family of four, with a gross income of \$30,000 annually, would pay \$182 more tax per year. A single person, earning \$15,000 per year would pay \$81 more. Even with this increase, Alberta's personal income tax rate will still be the lowest of all 10 provinces, and that's a priority I don't think we want to readdress. I might note, that this is the first personal income tax in 11 years. Personal income taxes were reduced by 28 per cent in 1975, and it would have been interesting to see what the hon. Member for Little Bow said at that time.

Mr. Speaker, our priorities involve protection of low-income Albertans. The Treasurer, when he announced the tax increase, also announced an enrichment of the selective tax reduction, which will ensure that about 500,000 low-income taxpayers will retain the benefits they've enjoyed since 1975.

Mr. Speaker, with perhaps four notable exceptions, most Albertans understand that the fundamental reason why we must increase taxes now is that we must all live within our means. Continued deficits of \$1 billion or more every year can simply not be sustained by a province of our size, and I believe that was raised by members opposite. Such huge deficits, if left unchecked, can prevent substantial economic growth, close off lasting job, opportunities, put an upward pressure on interest rates, discourage investment and consumer confidence ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I have some difficulty in relating the hon. minister's remarks to the question of a reassessment of priorities. That is the narrow issue that's before the House. I realize that we're almost in a sort of throne speech debate situation. But it does seem to me that the subamendment narrows the issue before the House, as I've just explained, to a reassessment of priorities.

MR. PAHL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hoped that I was developing the argument that the necessity and the decision, the leadership decision, to establish a tax increase would in fact reflect a priority, and I wanted to speak to that. But, Mr. Speaker, I understand your difficulty and the length of the subamendment, so I would simply urge all members to defeat the subamendment on their way to defeating the amendment. Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise to support the subamendment to the amendment. I'd like to explain why I think we should shift priorities and do it very quickly.

It seems to me that the government is not listening to the people. It seems to me that we're trying old solutions that didn't work. I would be unkind, but it seems to me that we're almost repealing the 20th century. I think we should take a look at what it's really like in October 1983 in Alberta, and cut across the rhetoric and talk to the real people of Alberta. When we say we have 12 per cent unemployment in Calgary and Edmonton, that just figures. The Premier, yesterday in his speech, called it overhang. That's a new word for unemployment, an overhang, as if he's talking about some figures. The point that I want to make clear to the government is that these are real, living, breathing people that are being affected by this government's policy if they don't reassess it and change their priorities.

I've talked before in the Legislature, but it's worse now, about what happens when unemployment goes up — the human element. We will not even talk at this point about the economics of what I consider a stupid policy, but what happens in human terms? We've talked about the fact that more people end up in mental asylums, that we have more child abuse, that we have more spouse abuse, that we have more drunkenness: all these things are well documented. For the Premier to sit there piously and say, well, we just have overhang — I remind the Premier that these are real people we're talking about, not just economic terms. When you start to talk to the real people, it's not the people making Tory cabinet ministers. When the minister gets up and says it's only \$182, where is he at? Has he talked to people lately about how much money \$182 is? It's not much for his salary, agreed. Maybe he can dole out a number of \$182 around, because people need it.

MR. SZWENDER: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of your previous ruling, I don't feel that the present speaker is speaking to the subamendment, reassessing the priorities.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, I rather thought that he was. I realize that it's a difficult thing to sort out in a tidy way, but it seems to me that he is talking about things that are of concern in the province and could very well be termed as priorities.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will continue. Going back to talking about real people, let me give a couple of examples in my riding.

MR. PAHL: I would respectfully request that the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood — and I am flattered when any member

quotes me — would quote me accurately. I believe that the *Hansard* will record that my remarks in no way said "only" \$182 per year, Mr. Speaker. I have full appreciation of the value of \$182 on anybody's salary, and I would respectfully request that the member use some fidelity when he quotes my statements.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, if he didn't say "only", I humbly apologize. I really didn't mean to hurt the hon. member's feelings. The impression I got was that \$182 wasn't a lot of money and we were making a lot about nothing. But I will take it back. He didn't say "only", I'm sure, if he said that.

Let me come to the main issue, though, rather than playing little games here, because I want to give examples of why this government has to change its priorities. Besides the figures that I've quoted, I want to give two examples in my riding. My neighbor, 50 years old, has worked for 25 years — all of a sudden laid off. I've seen what it's done to him. You get to talk to him about his pride and his dignity as he goes around trying to find jobs, and tell him he's just economic overhang and see where you get with him. Another example of a young person that's been looking for work — and they're not the freeloaders that some people in this government have called people — for two years now and hasn't been able to find work. You see very quickly what that does to you in a personal sense. Besides the human element — I'll come to it later — it's an economic loss there that we'll be facing.

Also, you tell people that this is actually happening in Alberta right now, and I've talked to these people. I see women on the shelter allowances after they're cut back — and we're told it has no effect at all — feeding their children pasta and bread to get through from day to day. This is happening in Alberta right now. We see soup kitchens by the churches right now. Go down to some of the churches, Mr. Speaker, and you'll find that there are soup kitchens in Alberta in this day and age, and I'm shocked and embarrassed when people across Canada find this out. We see some of the terminally mentally ill being let out with no place to go, dumped on Boyle Street — well documented in their document that they put out. They have to deal with this. This is happening in Alberta.

We also know why we have to reassess priorities. People are getting hit both ways: no job creation and, at the same time — call it a tax if you like — we had a tax. The last time it was higher medicare premiums, \$106. Again, a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. We have, coming January 1, user fees. And we have the most recent example of cutting people off medicare. I heard that the minister said that these are freeloaders. Where has he been? We're not even talking about the administrative problems with that program, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about the people that are actually being cut off. The majority of those people, of the estimated over 100,000, are women and children. Are we really going to cut children off medicare? Is that really what we're saying? I don't believe the minister means that, but I hope that he would reassess such a short-sighted policy and come back with new priorities.

We could go on and on. For the first eight months, up to the end of August, we have over 8,000 foreclosures in this province. We are leading the country in bankruptcies. We have \$6.4 million of square feet sitting there in the city of Calgary. We have a third of the teachers in Alberta on the verge of going on strike. Surely these things would indicate that we're in deep difficulty.

What I'm suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is clearly that this government has to reassess its priorities, or things are going to get worse. Their answer, as I can understand it so far — listening to the ministers, having sat through this session and the

second session — is that we're strictly at the whim of OPEC; there's nothing we can do till the private sector pulls us out.

Well, there is hardly a private sector left. If you talk to small business people, as I have in my community, they are up against the wall. Some of them have gone now. You can go down 118th Avenue and see the number of people that are no longer in business. For those that are still in, they're hanging in by the skin of their teeth. So that they can't do much about it. The government answer, the only thing I can follow, seems to be — and I don't like to be cruel, because I don't like to hurt their feelings. We seem to have Herbert Hoover back, leading the government again. To me, it's called trickle-down economics. Unfortunately, not many people in Alberta have been trickled down on lately, except Tory cabinet ministers.

The point that we're trying to make is that people are being squeezed. First of all, no particular program for job creation; it's just overhang. We'll wait, the Premier says; we'll wait till the economy rebounds. Surely, Mr. Speaker, it's this government's job to assess their priorities, to look over their priorities, and if they're making mistakes and things aren't working, change it and do something that's different. That's what a good government should do — not sit there and wait for OPEC to raise the price of oil. That seems to be the only thing that we have left.

So people are being hurt in many ways. First of all, no job creation, and when I talk about the economics of that — we talked about the human aspect of unemployment. But to me it doesn't make any sense economically to have this many people out of work — at least 130,000, and we're going into another cold winter. That is billions of dollars that we're taking out of the economy. People do not have purchasing power if they're unemployed. What are they going to do? We're having bankruptcies because when people are employed they go to the local store and spend money, and the local store buys from other people. It's a chain effect. It's a trickle-up theory that works, not the trickle-down theory, and always has. So we should get on with putting people back to work because it would make good economic sense. Our latest thing makes no sense at all.

I recall little Rollie Cook in the back benches, the back, back benches. We were talking about general revenues at the time. It wasn't an either/or. We did not call for a tax increase, and the member knows full well that we didn't. We were saying, take it out of the general revenues. There are also other taxes that go into general revenues, but this government hasn't taxed that. It's the corporate sector too. If the member would be aware of that, I'm sure he would.

So what we've had since the budget, for the middle and lower income is higher medicare premiums, user fees, and now tax increases for them. At a time when people need money, more purchasing power, to drag us out of the recession, we're going to take purchasing power away from them. The only effect of that can be — and as my colleague pointed out, the federal government is doing the same thing. The only effect of taking money out of people's pockets to put into this government's mismanagement is going to be higher unemployment and more stagnation. It's the only thing that can occur from a tax increase like that.

You know, it would be one thing — and the Member for Little Bow talked about this — if this government was honest in their priorities. We hear all this pious prating about restraint. I look on and I see, well, we just made a little mistake in the Saddledome but we can get \$6 million there; we can send Ron Liepert around, \$1,500 to Hawaii; we can have white sand and cedar toilets — that's just a little bit of money.

We can go through the aides' travelling. That's very interesting, in the priorities, if we look at some of the aides and

some of the members. Just take a look at some of the more spendthrift ones. The Provincial Treasurer: \$1,298 expenses for one day to Calgary. That's a good place to cut back.

DR. BUCK: That's more than Peter's wine, Louie.

MR. MARTIN: We could go on; there are other ones. Another \$12,000 for a trip by Mr. Horsman to Halifax; he took along Mr. Fischer and Mrs. Deters. Twelve thousand dollars — that's a good saving. We could start there. That would take a few people off the soup kitchen. Then we have \$2,000 for Mr. Planche. I don't know where he went, but it was just \$2,000. Maybe he just went over to Westlock; I'm not sure.

But worse than the MLAs and the ministers are the aides. Just a couple of examples of waste, if you want. The Minister of Municipal Affairs: his executive assistant goes down to Calgary for one day, and his expenses are \$588. How he could get \$588 expenses in Calgary ... But not to be outdone, the Provincial Treasurer's executive assistant spent \$649 in one day. Talk about government waste — there's where we can start saving money.

We can start saving money in Members' Services. When I sat on that committee, everything that was for the individual members was passed in that committee. Everything was passed in that committee, if I recall, except the opposition budget. Of course the backbenchers' budget went up 17 per cent; we're not sure what they do, but they had a 17 per cent increase. Talk about government waste. That's the biggest bunch of government waste that I could ever see.

Then of course we have mood music to advertise the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. We don't put a telephone [number] down, but we have mood music and pretty faces telling us how good things are in Alberta. That was over \$800,000.

We could go on and on about government waste. If they're really serious about restraint, this is where they'll start. As the Member for Little Bow said, they won't say: blame Ottawa and health care for everything.

Let's go through the priorities. Let's look at what's essential and what's not essential. To me, putting people back to work and having a decent health care system should be top priorities. A lot of these other things are frills, and we can do without them. We could have lived without Kananaskis, and we could have lived without that park out in front if we were serious about restraint. But we're not serious. Restraint to this government is for somebody else. Do as I say, not as I do.

When they come to people and say we need to cut back in health care because the sick are abusing the system, I say that this is absolute nonsense. They better get their own house in order, Mr. Speaker, because I'm tired of hearing this sort of nonsense from this government and, I suggest to them, so are the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I support this resolution. I think it's mild. It requests the government to reassess its priorities. If they are serious about restraint, instead of mindlessly getting up — if they really say that they believe in this income tax, that it's necessary without cutting back on all the rest of the waste that they're dealing with here first, then I hope that they can be counted in *Hansard*. We're going to remind the people, and we're going to watch this vote and see how people feel about it, and see if they can justify it to the people when they are, as I mentioned, having soup kitchens and that.

This government should go back and reassess its priorities, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing wrong in reassessing its priorities. There was a boom in the '70s. It had nothing to do with this government; it had to do with OPEC. They took the credit for it. As my colleague said, now that times are tough they

have to take the credit for that too, instead of blaming health care all the time. I'm so tired of hearing that.

We spend less in health care in this country than we do in the United States, and they know it. They're looking for a bogey man, a scapegoat. If they had any decency at all, when they see what they're doing to the low-income and middle-income Albertans, they would reassess their priorities and change what they are doing.

There would be nothing wrong with the government saying, we've made a mistake and we're going to change. But I don't see any evidence of that when we have the Treasurer bring in an income tax. Then we have a minister — I know that he didn't say "only" — say that it was \$182. As the Member from Little Bow said, we have here a cabinet that's as big as all of Canada's cabinet. I'm sure Alberta would go on and maybe be run just as well, as the Member for Little Bow said, with 10 fewer people. That would save a lot of money and give 10 more backbenchers help, because they really do need help.

So we're saying clearly, Mr. Speaker, through you to this government — and we're prepared to go across this province and say it to everybody, and talk to people in local meetings — that there is a different way. If you believe in restraint, start where you can, without hurting people, rather than the garbage that we're into now. Thank you.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, I've got a little problem with this. You've lumped these two amendments together, yet we have two very distinct ideas. One is Mr. Notley's amendment to deplore the decision to increase income taxes, and the other is basically, as I read this thing, to reassess priorities. There are two distinct and separate ideas there. As far as the amendment of Mr. Notley, we listened to an hour and a half of criticism, but I didn't hear any solutions. No, not one — empty phrases, meaningless rhetoric.

DR. BUCK: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You know really well, and you should have interjected . . .

MR. SHRAKE: After spending one hour criticizing . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Would the hon. member just take his seat for a moment while we deal with this point of order being raised by the hon. Member for Clover Bar.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, it is your duty, sir, and I humbly beseech you. The hon. member knows how to address the other hon. member by the name of his constituency. Mr. Speaker, I expect that you would interject and do your duty to remind him of that, sir.

MR. SHRAKE: Oh, I most humbly apologize. I'm sure you're very offended, and I'll send you a written apology.

Back to the amendment of the motion by the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. After a very long, an hour and a half, criticism without solution . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member again, but it's true that we refer to each other by our constituencies rather than by our names. I think members will find that over the years, I've been fairly consistent in not being too overly vigorous about that with members who are relatively new. I realize that the hon. member who has been speaking has been a member since last November, but he hasn't spoken very often in the Assembly. I certainly had the intention that if it had gone on for any length of time — and I know it was inadvertent; I

wasn't expecting it would go on — I would say something about it.

MR. SHRAKE: Well, I will apologize again for not saying Spirit River. I'm sure that's very important.

Anyway, after the many hours, we get this motion to deplore the increase in income tax. I suggest that perhaps somebody didn't do their homework, as it was only a few short months ago that they proposed this themselves as the answer to the problems. So I really begin to wonder about this motion. Other than its being negative — playing to the news media — and sensational, it's not serious. I don't consider this a serious amendment, so I hope you don't vote on that one.

As far as we get into the other one, our second amendment, again we seem to have had a very, very long criticism without any solutions, except at the end. We finally got into assess priorities. What are these priorities or suggestions? That we go ahead and go after the housing for the elderly and the less fortunate people; going after that housing as though that is not a priority for the elderly people to live their lives out in dignity. No wonder the Social Credit government went under. [They] were not worried about the less fortunate people.

I really wonder if somebody does their homework. He used the figure of 13 per cent through the entire speech, which is the information that was in the newspaper. I can only presume he got his information out of the newspaper and has not even read the material the government has provided. I wonder how serious that really is. If you get into a retrogressive tax, let's be honest about it. I'll quote part of a speech I heard some time back from a member who I think was the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. He spoke about property tax. You pay property tax on a home in a city whether you have any income at all. As far as your business tax, whether your business has made money or not, you still must pay your business tax and your business licence. You only pay income tax if you had an income and if you're beyond your certain amount of deductions.

I hope both of these amendments are soundly defeated, as they should be, because I see nothing serious here — no attempt, no solutions at all to assist the people of this province one iota. I really wonder what these people are spending the half million dollars they have to run their offices on, if this is the best they have come up with.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take part in the debate on the subamendment. I would like to say to my hon. colleague, the Member for Calgary Millican that I can understand why the Saddledome cost \$100 million. What we're speaking about this evening on this subamendment is priorities.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. It's Millican with a "c".

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, Calgary is with a "c", Millican is with a "c". I didn't know what the hon. member was trying to say, and it's the Saddledome with the \$100 million debt. We all understand that, and that's what we're talking about — spending priorities.

I say to the Provincial Treasurer, as my colleague said, that I think this government misled the people of this province when they said there will be no tax increases in 1983. But at the stroke of midnight December 31, there will be a tax. I think that is so misleading that I accuse this government of not having any scruples. I say that seriously, because outside the House I like every member of this government. I respect them as individuals, but I don't think they have the political integrity

to stand up in this House and justify to their constituents why they raised the tax 13 per cent. What are their priorities?

The Premier, with his best Harvard accent, with his MBA, talked about priorities. We heard about priorities many times in this House, when he sat on this side of the House and when he's sitting on that side of the House — priorities. The reason this government doesn't have any priorities is that it's drunk with its own power. If this government would have had some priorities, it would have had the intestinal fortitude to call the election in the spring of this year, not in the fall of last year. They did not have the intestinal fortitude to tell the people of this province, before they went to the polls, what they proposed to do. If that's not a lack of intestinal fortitude and scruple, I don't know what is.

Now we're going to try to blame medicare. We're going to blame Ottawa. When I asked the Premier today, Mr. Speaker, if he had a commitment from Mr. Mulroney, because this is all tied up with our spending — well, he said, we had a little conversation. The heir apparent, the next Prime Minister of this country — he does not have a commitment. We may have to be fighting with our Tory cousins in Ottawa when we look at how we're going to assess the oil and gas industry in this province, because this government as much as the Ottawa government was responsible for ruining the oil industry in this province. Let's never forget that, because surely governments can understand that when you take away the revenue from an economy, they cannot reinvest. The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud can understand that. You take their life blood away from them. That's what happened to this province. Both levels of government got so cotton-picking greedy, they didn't leave the industry any money. It's that simple. Even a lawyer turned Treasurer can understand that.

That is so fundamental to business, and supposedly Conservatives can surely understand that when you take out an additional 13 per cent from the private sector, you are putting sand into the lubrication that drives the private sector, which generates revenue. The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud can laugh all he wants to. He knows that is the fact, because he's in the investment business. But at the rate we're going, he won't have anybody to sell investments to. The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood said, talk to the little business man, because he may be an endangered species. Are we going to have to have the Alberta Opportunity Company financing all the small business in this province?

Where are the priorities? Why do we need that money? Since this government took power, it knows how to spend but it does not know how to manage. The hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont asked that very heavy question about where the Oilers were going. When this government took power, they immediately went on a spending spree. Maybe they didn't start spending the dollars at that time, but in those minds of theirs they knew what would buy votes: you throw money at people. They have been throwing money at people in this province for four elections, but now they are running out of money to throw at Albertans. This is why this government is in trouble. It has forgotten that word "priorities".

Mr. Speaker, at the rate this government is spending the taxpayers' money, the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund will be a thing of the past in five years. If we were to be honest with the people in this province, we would tell them that we took over a billion dollars to prop up the budget so that it wouldn't look so bad. We would tell the people of the province it's now an additional billion dollar deficit, or very nearly. So two times five is \$10 billion, and that is being very conservative in my estimates.

So this government has a lot of house cleaning to do, because the so-called Mickey Mouse programs this government dreamt

up are now coming home to haunt them. Tippy-tappy, hippy-hoppy dance group. The minister of culture at that time, the Hon. Horst Schmid, wore out I don't know how many cameras handing out money before the 1975 election: 600 different handouts. Even if you didn't want the money, you got it. Len Grant from CHQT didn't really want that much money, but the minister of culture thought he should have a little more than he asked for, for a non-existent language group. Priorities.

The only thing that saved this government before the last election was, number one, that they were smart enough to have it in the fall and, number two, that there was nobody to vote for in opposition to this government. [interjections] That's a fact, because in this province the WCC had them very, very twitchy in the spring of 1983. I've never seen such paranoia in this caucus.

MR. R. SPEAKER: It cost us \$7.7 billion.

DR. BUCK: Then, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about spending priorities, the Premier of this province said, you've got to vote for me because I'm the only man that can protect the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Who in the dickens has been spending the money? The opposition? The opposition hasn't been spending the money. This government has been spending the money, and not very wisely. That's why we have to get back to some priorities.

Medicare is expensive. We don't have to review the socialist philosophy behind the inheritance of the medicare program from across the water, merry old England. Canadians seem to think that, well, somebody else has made a gigantic mistake; we want to make it our own. We don't seem to learn from other people's experiences. But we have medicare, and we have one of the best systems in North America. There are some abuses, certainly. But the abuses are not so great that we have to go ahead and bring in another tax on the people. What we have to do is rearrange these spending priorities.

I know it's nice to have the sand in the bunkers match the Premier's hair. I looked at the sand today; it matches his hair beautifully. It's supposed to match the peaks of the mountains, but it's not white; it's sort of sandy colored. I get a kick out of the Premier. I like the Premier outside the House, but I can always tell when there's an election coming because his hair gets darker. If Grecian Formula will work for Rocket Richard, Grecian Formula will work for the Premier.

AN HON. MEMBER: At least he has some. [laughter]

DR. BUCK: I hope the friend that made that interjection has some too, because he doesn't have much a little lower than that.

Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of government is to administer the people's business, and this government is not doing that. What thought did this government give when they went back into their hospital building program? What planning was there? There was absolutely no planning as far as I can tell. I have looked at the Elk Point hospital. It's an architectural masterpiece. I have been in many hospitals, and I have seen inefficient hospitals. I think that's one of the most inefficient hospitals. Is that the way we spend our money? Is that the way taxpayers feel we are doing the job on their behalf?

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business we talk about spending priorities, the nearly \$300 million that we have spent on Kananaskis. If we took just half that money, we could build one hundred \$1 million golf courses in this province. The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud knows just how many people in this province would have a golf course

right in their back yard, because that is a revenue generator. It is an economic generator. The hon. member, the Minister of Culture, the hon. Member for Vegreville, and I were looking at historic sites down in the maritimes this summer. The two provincial golf courses in Prince Edward Island and the provincial golf course just outside Fredericton were built by the province — very adequately designed, very adequately laid out, and very, very frugally done. They can even wear jeans. The taxpayers can even play on their own golf course, wearing jeans, without a tuxedo. But when you've got the Cadillac Conservatives, with their thinking process and their *modus operandi* for the way they waste taxpayers' dollars, you as a taxpayer of Alberta cannot even play on your own golf course unless you are properly attired, whatever that term may mean. Mr. Speaker, did we build that golf course for Albertans, or did we build that to be a jewel in the Premier's crown of accomplishments in this province?

Later in the debate I will be going through what legacy governments leave for the future, how we judge them after they're out of this august chamber. This government doesn't stack up too well with the people before them. As funds become tighter, as people question more how our money is being spent, this government will pale in significance even further.

Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to indicate to the government is that this government seems to have lost direction. The people in this province suspect that this government has become tired, it has run out of ideas, and it is wasting the

taxpayer's money. If the government backbenchers have the intestinal fortitude to stand in their place tonight and tell the people of this province what the spending priorities are, why they have brought this income tax in, why they need the revenue, and justify to their constituents what they have done, then I challenge them to stand in their place tonight and tell the people the answer to that question.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some remarks on the subamendment proposed by the hon. Member for Little Bow, but in view of the hour I beg leave to adjourn debate at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow it is proposed that the Assembly, after dealing with motions Nos. 23 and 24, be in Committee of Supply with respect to the capital projects division. The first department to be called will be the Department of Agriculture.

[At 10:48, on motion, the House adjourned until Friday at 10 a.m.]