

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, November 24, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 248
Tax Refund and
Provincial Grant Intercept Act

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a Bill called the Tax Refund and Provincial Grant Intercept Act.

This Bill is aimed at allowing the government to collect moneys owed to it as a result of paying support for single mothers, children, and single women who have court awards of alimony and maintenance, yet whose husbands refuse to pay. The Act will assist the government by allowing it to withhold provincial grants, which includes tax refunds, from debtors who refuse to honor their responsibilities to their dependants.

[Leave granted; Bill 248 read a first time]

Bill 251
Criminal Compensation Intercept Act

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a similar Bill, called the Criminal Compensation Intercept Act.

This Bill is similar to the earlier one in that where a criminal has injured a victim, either financially or physically, and the victim is owed restitution, the victim will now be able to ask the Provincial Treasurer to withhold the criminal's tax returns as well as any provincial grants payable to the criminal. The money will instead be used to compensate the victim of the crime.

[Leave granted; Bill 251 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table three reports. The first is the 1982-83 annual report for the pension benefits branch of the Department of Labour. The second is the annual report of the Department of Labour, for the same time frame. The third is the annual report of the Alberta Human Rights Commission for the period ending March 31, 1983.

Mr. Speaker, with the consent of Assembly, while I am on my feet I would like to introduce to members of the Assembly the chairman of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, who is in your gallery today and who this week was appointed chairman of the Alberta Human Rights Commission for another two years. Mrs. Marlene Antonio has served four years on the commission, two of those as chairman. I would ask that she rise and receive the usual welcome of the House.

MR. CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table with the Assembly the response to motions for returns 149 and 156. I would also like to table the 1982-83 annual report of the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, today it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, a total of 54 young, bright students from two schools in the constituency of Calgary McCall: Falconridge school and Chris Akkerman school. These schools are situated at both ends of the McCall constituency. Considering the weather, these young people have travelled a great distance today. They are with their teachers, Mrs. Dora Ingelson, Arnold Ingelson, Marilyn Flockhart, and Gordon Hunter, and are in the capable hands of their transportation director, Charlie Sexsmith. They are on both sides of the House. I would like them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I don't get a chance to do this very often, so I am indeed happy today to be able to introduce to you and to members of the Legislature 34 grade 6 children from Kitscoty. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Harris. The motto of these children is: happiness is going to school in Kitscoty. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask at this time that they stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, on your behalf, 50 grade 6 students from Thorncliffe elementary school, situated in the constituency of Edmonton Meadowlark. This group of students is accompanied by two adults, Les Duxbury and Mac Southworth. They are seated across from me in the members gallery. I would ask them to rise and be recognized by this Assembly.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly eight members of the Committee of the Unemployed. They are sitting in the public gallery. I would like them to stand and be acknowledged by members of the Assembly.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, I beg the indulgence of the Assembly to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, two young ladies from Auckland, New Zealand: Miss Heather McRae and Miss Jane Goudie. They have travelled across the United States, and they are now on their way across Canada. One of their main objectives of touring at this time is to enjoy a white Christmas in Calgary. They are seated in the members gallery. I would ask Jane and Heather to please stand and receive the cordial welcome of this Assembly.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****ACCESS Operations**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my first set of questions to the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications. What changes to the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation has the minister initiated in response to the Peat Marwick study of February 1983, which said that ACCESS

program costs are higher than those of its counterparts in both the public and private sectors?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that that is an appropriate question to be placed on the Order Paper. As the hon. member is no doubt aware, the administration and the policy direction were transferred to the ACCESS board in late 1982. The study the hon. member has referred to was commissioned by the board and was made public through me in this Legislature. But as it is a matter of some detail, I would suggest that it be placed on the Order Paper.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. I'll be a little more specific. Can the minister confirm that ACCESS is offering 300 rolls of Kodak movie film for sale at a reserve value of \$125? That's some 99 per cent less than the \$11,000 ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. First of all, there's a little problem about asking supplementaries to a question that's going on the Order Paper.

MR. MARTIN: He said it was going on the Order Paper; I didn't.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry — a question that should go on the Order Paper. Secondly, the second question is obviously of such detail that the members should not all have to be here while it's dealt with, because it can be dealt with more efficiently and effectively by means of a direct communication to the minister or by means of the Order Paper.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I'm now asking about a specific operation of ACCESS, over which the minister has direct control. So I will ...

MR. SPEAKER: It's a question of some detail. If the hon. member wishes to pursue it, it should definitely go on the Order Paper.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this is a fairly specific question, not dealing with the Order Paper. I'm sure the minister can answer yes or no to it. It's that simple.

MR. SPEAKER: It should go on the Order Paper.

MR. MARTIN: Let me try the next question, then. I'm sure the minister wanted to answer. Can I ask: has the minister reviewed with ACCESS officials why they have taken a Brick Warehouse approach to the sale of cameras and equipment in their November 7 ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. MARTIN: Are you standing up?

MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible] ... I'll answer ...

MR. MARTIN: I understand the reserve is valued at some \$10,000 less ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member well knows that there are probably many members sitting here who would like to comment on the introduction to his question. If he wants to ask the question to seek information rather than ... Questions that seriously seek information are not barbed with all sorts of bristles.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I find you rather inconsistent in some of your rulings.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. That also is out of order.

MR. MARTIN: [Inaudible] ... knows everything.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The hon. leader of the Independents.

MR. MARTIN: I have a second set of questions.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry. It'll have to wait.

MR. MARTIN: Till when?

MR. SHRAKE: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Just to help the hon. member out, I've made up a list of question period criteria. Maybe if one of the pages would give it to him, it would assist him in asking these questions.

MR. MARTIN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. From that member who couldn't even introduce a Bill ...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. leader of the Independents.

Altel Data Microcomputer Sales

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is with regard to the document presented in the Legislature, called *Alberta in Canada: Strength in Diversity*. On page 24, the government outlines three principles relative to the private sector and government activities. I wonder if the Premier could indicate or inform the House whether this guideline was used in allowing Altel Data to move into the field of selling microcomputers.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'll refer the question to the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the operations of Alberta Government Telephones are directed, in a policy sense, by the Alberta Government Telephones Commission, a body that has representation from the senior management of Alberta Government Telephones, several departments of government, and the private sector. Decisions as to what activities Alberta Government Telephones, through its various branches, should be involved in are made by the commission.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier with regard to this document. Could the Premier indicate whether the document will apply, in its implementation, to the various Crown agencies such as AGT, and that it will affect the policy of those respective agencies?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is yes.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question, then. Would the Premier take it upon himself to review the matter of the selling of microcomputers by Altel Data, which is a subsidiary of this Crown agency, and report back to the Legislature on his findings as to whether or not it is consistent with government policy?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, that policy also applies to the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications, and it will be his responsibility to respond.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister, then, in light of that answer. Would the minister make a commitment at this time to respond to the Legislature as to the consistency of a policy of the agency under his authority and the document that is the guideline for the Conservative government?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, in a broader sense, I have already made that commitment. During the spring session, I committed in this Assembly that a review was under way of Altel Data and the other two branches of AGT which are involved in what might be referred to as direct competition with the private sector. This fall I advised the Assembly — in fact, the first document I tabled was a document containing the report and recommendations of the Milvain committee, a committee jointly struck by the then mayor of the city of Edmonton and me to look at outstanding issues between Alberta Government Telephones and Edmonton Telephones.

The first recommendation of that committee was that the two telephone systems should be merged into one and that shares should be made available to the public. In my public responses since that time, Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that we saw that as a desirable goal, providing that a number of details could be worked out. I further committed that if, for any one of a variety of reasons, we are not able to achieve the overall objective of bringing the two existing telephone systems together and offering shares to the public so that it would be a company something like Alberta Energy, with a mix of private- and public-sector involvement, we would then go back to a specific review of Altel Data. That commitment was restated in this Assembly, I believe last week or the week before. I restate it today.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Since the commitment, Altel Data has moved into the micro-computer field. Has the minister reviewed the impact that intervention or intrusion by Altel Data has had on the private businesses here in Edmonton, or in Alberta, who sell exactly the same model of microcomputers? And there are a number of them.

MR. BOGLE: To be clear, Mr. Speaker, Altel Data has been involved in commercial microcomputers for some time. This summer Altel Data was involved for a short period of time in home computers. That is no longer the case.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, could the hon. minister indicate what type of review is going on within the department? Are meetings planned with the various microcomputer businesses of Alberta? Is the department taking a formal survey to look at the impact on the microcomputer business by Altel Data?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, there's no formal survey, as indicated by the hon. member. When responding to questions earlier during these fall sittings, I indicated that I had had correspondence from six firms, I believe, or representatives of six firms. Some meetings have been held. I believe it's fair to say that other meetings will be held between now and the spring sittings.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In light of some of the findings at this point in time, in terms of the meetings, could the minister indicate whether he is looking at changing the policy or maintaining it in harmony with the private sector?

MR. BOGLE: Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, the most desirable objective would be to see the existing telephone systems in this province operating under one management, providing the best, most efficient, and cheapest possible service to all Albertans, and a company that would give Albertans across this province an opportunity to purchase shares in that corporation. That is the most desirable goal; that is the objective we are looking toward. If that is not something we can achieve, then we will look at a variety of other alternatives.

Blackfoot Grazing Reserve Park

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife. I'd like to know if the minister is in a position to indicate if any tenders have been called to start work on the Blackfoot grazing reserve multi-use park.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, the tendering process is under way right now, and work will be taking place this winter.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate to the Assembly what phase of the development will take place this winter? Will it be a preliminary start or the start of the entire project?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, the project is designed to take place over a three-year period. Certain ranges will be cleared this winter and fencing will take place, but the total project will be a three-year project.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate if there's still an opportunity for public input or if all the decisions have been made and the plan cannot be changed at this time?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, before I was minister, quite a lot of public discussion took place. Some 40 different organizations and 500 people were involved in the process of the discussions, and the plans arrived from that. There has been some discussion about having another public meeting to make sure everyone is aware of the final result of those original plans, and there is always room for input and improvement on any plan.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, that's basically the point I was trying to find out from the minister, because representation has been made about a motorcycle group.

My supplementary question is: what assurance has the minister given farmers in the surrounding area that there will be some protection for their crops and stored hay? Have any provisions been made for protection from the game animals that are going to be in the area?

MR. SPARROW: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there definitely has been consideration given to that. A fence is being placed around the external perimeter so that the animals that are in the area will stay within the area.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Ponoka, followed by the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who wishes to add to some information previously given.

High School Examinations

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct this question to the Minister of Education. What is government policy with respect to administering high school diploma examinations in the event that a teacher strike is taking place in a school jurisdiction at the time the exams are scheduled?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, in the event that there is a strike under way in a jurisdiction at the time set for writing the provincial examinations, the Department of Education would ensure that the opportunity to write the exams is maintained for the students. If necessary, we would designate a writing centre and, if necessary, we would provide professional supervision of the writing centre.

MR. JONSON: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the opportunity for students to write at a later date be included in that policy?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that would be feasible. To be effective, the exams have to be secured; that is to say, all the students have to be writing them essentially at the same time, so as to ensure that there isn't word-of-mouth communication about the contents of the examination. I agree that it's highly unlikely that anything like that would happen, but we can't say it's impossible. The alternative is for the department to set additional examinations in each subject, and then to provide for the security of those and backing them up. That becomes a very expensive proposition. In summary, I think we would have to operate on the basis of providing an opportunity to all students at the same time.

MR. JONSON: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I should have been clearer with my last question. I meant to refer specifically to the next scheduled round of writing those examinations. Let us say the situation developed in January. Could students write the set that comes up in June?

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker. If that question has not been dealt with in the course of our communications with school boards, then I'd certainly be prepared to make the undertaking to the House this afternoon that if, because of a strike or lockout, students are unable to write exams at one sitting of the exams, they would maintain the right to write the exam at the next scheduled occasion.

Rental Deposits

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. Member for Clover Bar asked me some questions with respect to trust provisions as applied to security deposits. One of the questions related to other provinces that had that type of provision. For the hon. member's information, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland have trust provisions with respect to security deposits.

I also wanted to supplement my answer, Mr. Speaker, because yesterday I couldn't recall all the discussions that had taken place when this matter was reviewed some time last winter. I would now like to supplement that answer. The trust provisions unfortunately impose an audit duty on the department. The assessment of that led to the conclusion that this was very expensive and, on a cost/benefit analysis, it wouldn't have been practical. The other part of that answer is that as has been experienced by other provinces, trust provisions have been fairly easily circumvented; that is, the landlord would state in a situation that the trust deposit was utilized for repairs or whatever. Then we would get into a discussion between the landlord and tenant, and normally that situation ends up in the courts.

DR. BUCK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. My understanding of trust funds is that you cannot do that. That's the purpose of setting up a trust.

After that representation, my question is: what information as to how prevalent the problem is in Alberta at this time did the hon. minister glean in her research? In light of the fact that we're having many people in the rental business going bankrupt, how big is the problem of people losing their deposits because of that?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, with respect to our situation vis-à-vis the other provinces, there doesn't seem to be an abnormal rise in that situation, though there have been some problems.

If I could also comment on the other part of the representation, if you will, made by the hon. member, I think his view of the provisions of a trust account may be different from mine, and that's a matter I'll also check out.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister, just for a point of clarification. At this time, there is no protection other than the small debts court for people who lose their breakage deposits. Is that what the minister is saying?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it would be by a civil action if in fact there were a question or a disagreement between the landlord and the tenant.

Occupational Health and Safety Courses

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation. It results from the 1981 to 1983 review of the occupational health and safety heritage grant program. Under the education projects, how long will the courses for health care workers, such as the off-campus occupational health nursing program, carry on?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, the one that is referred to in the report was completed in the spring of 1983. But I'm pleased to advise that the committee approved another one for the next three years, starting in October '83, to provide for nurses residing in other parts of the province, particularly Calgary, to be able to get their occupational health nursing certificate, because the only program we have is at Grant MacEwan college.

MRS. EMBURY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the minister received any submissions from nurses in southern Alberta, to try to put that program on a more permanent basis within the college system?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, to the best of my recollection, yes. Those have been referred to my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education.

MRS. EMBURY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. How many nursing research projects were submitted and accepted for funding under the heritage program?

MR. SPEAKER: I have some difficulty with a statistical question of that kind.

MRS. EMBURY: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister please advise the Assembly if any nursing research projects were submitted?

MR. DIACHUK: Mr. Speaker, I would have to take that on notice, just to be accurate. I do recall that some representation

was made, but I'd have to check out whether it was a submission or just representation to my office.

MRS. EMBURY: A supplementary question. I wonder if the Minister of Advanced Education would comment on my question to the Minister responsible for Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation regarding whether there have been any submissions from nurses in the southern part of the province for budget considerations to include the occupational health course in the college program.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, if that course has been in the college system for more than two years, then of course it's included in the institution's base budget, and any decisions with respect to severing or modifying that course rest with the institution. If the course has only been initiated in the last year or so, then that is within some discretion of the government. It would be our intention to continue it if it's within our discretion; however, I can't really commit more specifically the institutions who are delivering that program.

Extra Billing by Doctors

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Will the minister advise the Assembly on what basis he has determined that extra billing by 33 per cent of physicians is reasonable?

MR. SPEAKER: That is certainly a debating question, and we've been around that one quite a bit in the Assembly. To give reasons that something is reasonable is of the very essence of debate. I really don't think we should translate that debate from the House into the question period.

MR. MARTIN: I can't believe it.

MR. SPEAKER: Notwithstanding the incredulous look of the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, he is just doing as I said: he is transferring the debate into the question period. I am sure that in addition to the hon. minister, there might be others who might wish to enter it if it were introduced under proper circumstances.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll say it as nicely as I can to the minister. The recent news release indicates that 33 per cent of the doctors in the province are billing. What assessment has the minister made of this?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, there are three sets of data which must be related one to another before any assessment or opinion is given. As the hon. member has pointed out, we look first of all at the percentage of doctors in practice who are extra billing; secondly, at the number of procedures as a percentage of the total claims that are extra billed; and thirdly, at the amount of money involved in extra billing as a percentage of the amount paid by the Alberta health care plan. If the hon. member looks at those three sets of figures, he will see that although one-third of the doctors in Alberta do practise extra billing at one time or another, the percentage of procedures and the amount of money involved is very, very small. So on that basis, I felt it was fair to say the practice is being used with discretion by the medical profession.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. Has the minister assessed what effect his expectation of a 0 to 3 per cent increase,

I believe, for the medicare fee schedule will have on extra billing in the coming year?

MR. RUSSELL: No I haven't, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the difficulties about the whole practice. It can be affected by any number of external items, whether it's a projected fee schedule, a new piece of federal legislation, or any other item of that sort.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. What steps is the minister taking to prevent further increases in the amounts being extra billed to patients, in view of the restraint policy on practitioners' fees?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I believe the systems we have in place are working fairly well. First of all, there's a monthly monitoring of all claims, indicating which are extra billed, which must be reported by all doctors. The college has made good strides in ensuring that literally no senior citizens or low-income groups are involved in extra billing. The assessment committee which hears appeals appears to be working very well, and it's my understanding that pretty well all doctors' offices now have notices of the existence of that committee posted in their waiting rooms. Judging by the data, which is of course historic each month, it appears that those combined moves are resulting in what I believe is a fairly reasonable compromise in this very difficult situation.

Now, it's impossible for me to predict whether or not the practice will change due to any number of economic factors next year. But we now have behind us a year of a very responsible attitude, I believe, by the medical profession. I have no reason to believe that that will not continue.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the restraint policy, how does the minister expect the physicians to cover the 5 per cent overhead costs they estimate they are facing, if not by increased extra billing?

MR. RUSSELL: In the same manner as all other professionals are coping with present conditions, Mr. Speaker.

[Two members rose]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Red Deer is trying to get the floor. It seems to me that it's perhaps more effective, when an hon. member has asked a question, that he be permitted a reasonable number of supplementaries instead of having another member come in, and then having the original questioner return. I'll be glad to recognize the hon. Member for Red Deer next.

MR. MARTIN: Just one final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. What consideration, if any, did the minister give to holding public hearings on the subject of extra billing, so the public would have an opportunity to determine what extent of extra billing is acceptable to them?

MR. RUSSELL: I'm not sure I understand that question, the way it was worded, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: It's very clear: did the minister give any consideration to holding public hearings on the extent of extra billing that the public wants?

MR. RUSSELL: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McPHERSON: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister provide the House with any indication as to whether the practice of extra billing has increased or decreased over the past year, in light of economic conditions?

MR. RUSSELL: It has held pretty steady, Mr. Speaker. Members may recall that two years ago, some 44 or 45 per cent of the doctors in the province were extra billing. And mind you, it's important to remember that even if a doctor only bills one time during the calendar year, he is included as part of that percentage statistic. So it can be misleading, on the face of it.

But in view of the fact that we've dropped it down from 45 per cent to 33 per cent and that that figure has held steady over the past year, during a time of changing economic conditions, I have to at least be encouraged by the fact that I believe we can achieve success by co-operating and working for mutual objectives with a professional group, rather than provoking confrontation.

Natural Gas Marketing

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. It arises from a program called *Conversation with the Premier*. I understand the Premier will be having talks in the United States with regard to natural gas. Could the Premier indicate whether the discussion that will be held, I understand in the coming week, will be with regard to new markets or with regard to the pricing of natural gas?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the conversations that I'll have next week, in addition to those that are involved in the private sector in California, involve our very important market which at the moment, in the state of California, accounts for 40 per cent of our export market just in that one state. I'm meeting with the governor of California and some of the members of his staff next week.

The primary objective is to try to assure that in this difficult period of gas marketing, action taken in the State Legislature in California that might be discriminatory to the import of natural gas from Alberta is not endorsed by their administration. It won't be that much directly involved in pricing; it is more the preservation of our existing market. But obviously the conversation will move into the longer term position, of which we're quite optimistic of the longer term need by the State of California and their utility companies for expanded purchases of natural gas from Alberta.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of the Environment has to do with waste disposal. Can the minister indicate if there's any new information to be given to the Assembly as to where and when we are finally going to have a hazardous waste disposal site?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not able to provide any further information than I did the last time the hon. member asked the question.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, is the minister or the department getting any closer to making an announcement as to where and when?

MR. BRADLEY: Yes.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate to the Assembly, within the next decade, when that decision may be announced to the people of Alberta?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I hope to be able to finalize a decision with regard to this matter either before the end of the year or early in the new year.

DR. BUCK: You're making progress.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to deal with a number of the motions on the Order Paper today. But first of all, there are some that I would like to request stand: motions 216, 219, 220, 221, and 222.

[Motion carried]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, you will recall that last Tuesday, the hon. leader of the Independents agreed that Motion 217 might be reviewed and, in view that it has very marked similarity to Motion 214, which was adopted on Tuesday, it might be withdrawn. It's my understanding that the hon. member is prepared to do so.

With respect to Motion 223, which asks for one additional month's accounting of a similar nature, the government is prepared to undertake to supply that information in conjunction with the return on Motion 214. Therefore the information sought by the hon. Member for Little Bow will be supplied, and both 217 and 223 might be withdrawn today.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to formally indicate that I am prepared to withdraw 217 and 223.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered. It doesn't require the consent of the House, because I understand that those motions haven't been moved, so the hon. member is entitled to withdraw them on his own.

218. Mr. R. Speaker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) the name and official position designation of every government of Alberta employee working in an office outside Canada, listed by location of office, as of October 25, 1983;
- (2) in respect of the fiscal years 1981/82 and 1982/83 and the period April 1, 1983, to November 1, 1983:
 - (a) the itinerary of every trip that each such employee has taken outside the city where his office is located, in his official capacity;
 - (b) the purpose of each trip;
 - (c) the persons or groups he met;
 - (d) the name of every other person accompanying him at public expense;
 - (e) the cost of each trip, showing separately, travel, accommodation, meals, and entertainment;
- (3) the total cost to the government of Alberta to operate each of its offices outside Canada.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, dealing with 218, I have an amendment to propose to that. I have copies of the amendment handy, and I'll just speak to them, if I may.

In respect of Motion 218, the first amendment is to strike out subparagraph 2(c) and re-letter the following subparagraphs appropriately: and secondly, in paragraph 3 to add the words

"In respect of the fiscal years 1981-82 and 1982-83 and an estimate for the fiscal year 1983-84".

Just speaking briefly to the amendment, Mr. Speaker, the government believes that because of the nature of commercial confidentiality in particular, item (c) is not appropriate but in fact can be basically covered by 2(b), which will describe the purpose of the visit of the official in question. And with respect to paragraph 3, it just provides a time frame in which to provide the information.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would move Motion No. 218, with the amendments suggested by the minister.

[Motion as amended carried]

224. Mr. R. Speaker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing: total cost of Premier Lougheed's November 1983 mission to New York, including expenses incurred for transportation, accommodation, entertainment, and other expenditures; identification of the person or persons who accompanied Premier Lougheed, including all expenditures incurred by each.

[Motion carried]

head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

218. Moved by Mr. Purdy:
Be it resolved that the Assembly consider the desirability of legislation in Alberta to provide for the mandatory use of seat belts in motor vehicles.

[Adjourned debate April 22: Mr. Nelson]

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to take a few moments to offer some comments related to the motion before us. I guess the question is, should we or should we not legislate the wearing of seat belts or any other type of restraint in a vehicle? Should the restraint of persons in a vehicle be for all those in the vehicle, all age groups, or should it just be for a certain few, such as young people?

Mr. Speaker, much has been said and, in many cases in other provinces, much has been done about the wearing of seat restraints or seat belts, whatever you wish to determine them, in the vehicle. In fact, much that has been debated in the positive, makes a lot of common sense. I would suggest that most people — in fact, maybe all people — agree that seat restraints should be worn whilst we are on our highways ...

AN HON. MEMBER: And byways.

MR. NELSON: ... and, of course, in our cities.

MR. SZWENDER: What about in airplanes?

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, some of our colleagues here are a little quick to put words into my mouth. Unlike many, I don't like long speeches. I try to speak on my feet.

Mr. Speaker, I guess it should be identified that many people do not in fact wish to have legislators legislate them into their seats. Many people are of the opinion that whilst they are driving on the highways, they should wear them, yet whilst they are on the residential streets in the communities, it's not necessary. Yet most accidents are caused within approximately

20 miles of home, as I understand it. In fact, most serious, accidents are caused within 20 miles of home. So it doesn't really matter whether it's a highway, a residential street, a collector street, or a major road, we can all have accidents.

I guess the question should be asked: rather than placing all our attention on seat belts, should we not be giving more attention to our dangerous drunk drivers? I use the term "dangerous drunk drivers" because in discussing this issue with one of our esteemed police chiefs in the province, there is a difference between a person who has been drinking in a social manner and a person who has been drinking and yet is known to the police as a dangerous driver. In fact, the person who has a couple of drinks after work, especially during the Christmas season, who is not known to the police as what they would determine to be a dangerous driver, is not necessarily a major threat to the community on the roads.

AN HON. MEMBER: At least they don't think they are.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, the dangerous driver—I guess you could term him the clown out there that's creating hell and havoc on our highways and roads by stunting and what have you — once he has a few drinks in his person, becomes not only dangerous but a dangerous drunk driver. Maybe these are the people who should be removed from the streets, and if in fact they cause death or injury on the roads, maybe they should be penalized a little more than they are today. In fact, maybe some of them — or maybe in some people's views, all of them — should be put in prison, as the taking of a life, be it through drinking and driving or a felonious act of another nature, could be examined as being one and the same.

Some feel that driving a vehicle is a right. Others suggest that it is a privilege, not a right. Too many people today get behind the wheel of a vehicle and really don't know how to drive. Oh sure, people will say: I know how to drive a vehicle, because I can put my foot on the accelerator and I can steer that car and occasionally I might be able to find the brake. Big deal. Because you can do those three things doesn't mean you're a good driver.

Mr. Speaker, should we not also be giving consideration to increasing the fines that are offered for moving violations on the highways and roads in the cities? I believe some two or three years ago, through initiatives by the Calgary city council and subsequently through the AUMA, representation relative to increasing fines on our highways and roads in the province was made to the government. Much of the information that was provided was qualified. Much of it related to the economic times of today rather than 20 years ago. The attitude of a lot of drivers is: well, I'm speeding today; if I get a \$25 ticket, so what? It may only be an hour's wages. Possibly the only deterrent, if we have a bad driver out there who gets a few extra points and loses his licence, is suspension. Of course, many of them just go out and drive anyway. So I would suggest that we need to examine not only the issue of wearing seat belts — whether it should be legislated or not — but some of these clowns who are out driving drunk and some of the people who are out speeding around the neighborhoods and creating difficulties for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the other area we should examine is what not using seat belts costs the taxpayers. How much could we save in medical costs if we were to ask people to belt up? It's interesting to note that professional drivers, especially those on raceways and speedways, and even when they get on the highways in their own cars — I must admit that at one time in my life, I did a little driving on the speedways. It's amazing how those fellows or ladies that are driving not only belt up with a

lap belt; they use a shoulder belt and put a roll bar on their vehicle. You know, there's less carnage on a race track than on the highways. I'll tell you, the guy that's been in a race car feels a lot safer on the race track than he does on the highway, and he belts up on the highway too, I'll guarantee you — most of the time.

What about people that fly in airplanes? If you fly in an airplane, you buckle up or you don't go. What about amusement rides? Many of those are fairly dangerous — possibly no more so than the highways — and you're either belted in by a bar or some other means.

The question of individual rights: do I as a driver have the individual right to have an accident or cause an accident and, by the fact that I do not have a belt on and am pushed aside from my steering in the vehicle, create a death? Do I have the right to do that? What about the person I kill? What about his or her rights?

Then there's the discussion of who should belt up in a car. Should it be the driver, the passengers, or everybody? I did a little examination on this some time ago, whilst I was a member of the police commission in Calgary. I went out to the speedway with the police and took one of their cars, just to do a little test. Certainly the driver should buckle up. In examining what happens, especially when there's sudden movement of a vehicle, if the passengers are not buckled up, they can create more harm in the control of that vehicle than the driver, because they move around considerably. The reason they do that is that there's unexpected movement within the vehicle that a driver has some knowledge he's going to make, whereas the passenger does not.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

Also, Mr. Speaker, if a driver has reasonable control over his vehicle and knows how to drive, he can use his legs to control himself on the seat of the vehicle. I'm not going to go into all of that in any great detail. It seems that it may be amusing to some people in the House, but I suggest that they might take a few little driving courses and find out some of the things that happen out there.

Another situation is public education. Some suggest that public education is ineffective. It is ineffective to some degree, but possibly we ought to examine that and consider doing more of it.

Should we examine the area of making vehicles on the roadways somewhat safer than they are? Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to visit my mechanic too often recently. He tells me that many people who bring their vehicles to the garage come in for some minor repair. When they examine the vehicle, they suggest that there is considerably more wrong with the vehicle and it may even be unsafe on the road. Unfortunately, the owner of the vehicle determines that he or she knows best and continues to drive a possibly unsafe vehicle on the roads. Should we examine the placement of vehicle check stations to check out the major points in a vehicle that can cause accidents, other than the driver, of course, because the driver causes most of the accidents, not the vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, many countries and, of course, some six or seven provinces in Canada, placed seat belt legislation to a vote in their various Houses. When seat belt legislation is made law, people do initially wear seat belts. It's very difficult to enforce it, though. Because of that, people start removing them and don't wear them until such time as they may be caught. It is very difficult for police to enforce it. I guess we have to examine it in the same light that we examine mandatory life jackets in boats, helmets forced on people riding motorcycles,

and other areas where we force people to do certain things they may not like.

It's interesting to note that in Calgary this year, for example, reported traffic accidents are down some 35 per cent. What is the reason for that? Is it because of our economic times, or is it because many of our accidents that have been waiting for a place to happen have moved elsewhere, back home or whatever? I don't want to repeat a comment made by the mayor of Calgary a couple of years ago, but maybe that has also happened.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where did they go?

MR. NELSON: They went back east.

Mr. Speaker, although I haven't established a clear position on where I'm coming from as far as legislating this issue, as an individual I believe people should wear seat belts or some restraint in a vehicle. I think it is especially important for young people to wear seat restraints, and I know that most of us who have young children have placed seats with belts and what have you in the vehicle so they can see out. Most people encourage young people to wear seat restraints, because they are somewhat helpless if something happens in that vehicle.

Some arguments against the placement of seat belts can be described as emotional. Of course, it's somewhat infrequent that it's very difficult to get out of that vehicle — such as immersion of a vehicle in water or fire or some other means. I guess, Mr. Speaker, on the bottom line, seat belts do save lives. Seat belts can of course cause people to lose their lives, but that is very minimal. It has been shown by many manners and methods that they do save lives.

I would be interested in hearing others comment on this issue, but for the moment, as far as I am personally concerned, I would encourage people to use seat belts. Whether or not it should be legislated is another matter that we're dealing with here. I will listen to the arguments for and against as other speakers approach the issue prior to making a commitment as far as legislating this in our province.

Thank you.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to speak on Motion 218. I'm sure there are figures, studies, statistics, records, and possibly even clinical surveys, that show that seat belts save lives and can reduce injury. There's no question that there is a benefit to wearing seat belts. Personally, I wear mine, and I believe every Albertan definitely should wear a seat belt when travelling from place to place in an automobile.

But at this time I do not believe we should pass a law that threatens Albertans with a fine if they don't buckle up their seat belts when they travel in their automobiles. My reason is very basic and simple. If you take the statistics, figures, and so on that we could go through, there are a lot of things that are good for you and that you should do. You should quit smoking, quit drinking; the list is endless. When you pass laws governing these individual decisions, you have to do it with extreme care. You have to do your utmost to educate people to the benefits of complying with this law and the hazards of failing to do so. You should educate the public to want to do this thing. But if we go straight out on the idea that we'll put a law through — do this or else — we'll find we have not gained a thing.

Wearing seat belts would be one of the most difficult laws to enforce that you will ever run into. By the time a person is stopped by a policeman and the policeman leaves his car and comes over to the vehicle this offender is travelling in, the person could buckle up that seat belt very, very quickly. I know

there is the one case in a thousand where a person does get hurt because he has a seat belt on. That's in the case where the automobile catches fire and the person can't get his buckle undone, or if the thing ran into a lake and the person was under water.

I really believe that before we put through a law, we had better do our homework and do a good PR program on this. There has been a lot of this done; I think they've spent a lot of money on it. I think we can do better with our people by educating them and getting them to wear their seat belts because they want to rather than trying to force them. So, with a lot of reluctance, I do not support this piece of legislation.

MR. BATIUK: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to participate in this motion. However, seeing that it is your motion and you're in the Chair, I trust that you won't be prejudiced, even if I have different views.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: It depends what the views are.

MR. BATIUK: The issue of seat belts is nothing new in this province. We've been approached about it on numerous occasions. The interest expressed in Alberta has been of great concern. As of November 5, this year New Brunswick has become the seventh province to legislate the mandatory use of seat belts. However, I do not feel that just because there are seven provinces, Alberta must follow. There are many things that we have in Alberta that other provinces would like to have, but they are not able to. So I don't think we have to look at it in that sense.

I believe in the provision of seat belts, and I think that whoever uses a seat belt is making a move in the right direction. At the same time, I believe that seat belts do save lives. However, the average usage in Canada is 44.9 per cent. In the five provinces — and I refer to five provinces because two have come in with legislation this year, and I don't have the statistics — where they are legislated, 54.3 per cent use them. In the provinces where there is no legislation, only 11.6 per cent use them.

There is an area of concern that has been expressed to me in the past; that is, legislation on the mandatory use of seat belts is an infringement on people's rights. I believe people should have a choice. Non-use of seat belts has never caused any accidents, and I am sure that the use of seat belts does not prevent accidents. It is the drivers who cause accidents by not obeying the laws. Many times it has been said that it is the nut behind the wheel who is most responsible for the accidents.

We do not need more regulations. People are actually looking for deregulation. Seat belt legislation would just be another law. There are more deaths for users of tobacco than there are for people not using seat belts. I have heard no requests that there should be a ban on the sale of tobacco. I have left smoking myself for a good number of years, and I feel that if I had not left smoking, I would not be here today, because I know how it affected me at that age. It has been quite a number of years.

The same may be said of alcohol users. Alcohol users cause a great number of accidents. I have quit smoking, and someday I hope to totally abstain from alcohol. But I don't want to do it yet; I'm scared that I might live too long. You never hear that we should maybe ban the sale of alcohol. There have been suggestions that revenue from the tax on alcohol means such a lot to the province, and no doubt it is a big revenue. But I think it is much less than the cost to the province when we look at the number of accidents and deaths, and handicapped people who need financial assistance for the rest of their lives. Just two years ago I remember statistics showing that property

damage to vehicles exceeded \$300 million in this country. So I do not believe that the revenue is worth the problems it creates.

Some people find wearing seat belts uncomfortable. If a person is uncomfortable, I think that may be a detriment to their driving. I recall a number of accidents which caused death because people used seat belts. For example, a truck and a car collided at an intersection, and the car overturned. The trucker stopped and went to help the fellow out. But the car was upside down, and he was hanging in his seat belt. He went back to the truck for some instrument to cut the belt, but by the time he was able to get back, the car was burning.

Just a couple of years ago, a couple driving near my hometown signalled to make a left turn. They were on their way to make arrangements for their wedding a month later. While the person signalled for a left turn and waited for oncoming traffic to go, somebody from behind came directly into the rear of the car. There was enough room to pass him, but the empty beer bottles found in that second car were an indication of why that driver didn't. What happened? The gas tank of the car that was hit exploded and fire set in. Luckily, there were some people close by. They were able to take out the girl who did not have the seat belt. Because of the seat belt, the driver burned.

I know another area where a driver was probably travelling too fast at a corner. He flipped into not a deep slough of water and was drowned. Looking at the very shallow slough, there is a likelihood that if the seat belt hadn't been there, he may have been saved.

When we talk about legislation for the mandatory use of seat belts, it makes me wonder. It would just be another burden for the RCMP. There are several towns and villages in my constituency that on numerous occasions have requested more police to patrol their area. If we are going to ask the police, who are probably overburdened at present, to start monitoring the use of seat belts, are we going to provide again as many policemen as there are? Or are we going to ask the police to relax on following murderers, thieves, rapists, stranglers, arsonists, or anything else? As I mentioned, the police are overburdened at present. They are finding it difficult to do the work there is. If we are going to ask them to monitor seat belts and relax in some other areas, that is not right.

I wonder about provision for seat belts in school buses. You find 30, 40, and up to 60 children riding in a school bus. If anything ever happens, there is a concern that maybe there should at least be a provision for seat belts in school buses. However, it would be another burden. Who is going to monitor that those children use the seat belts? We would have to have another person on the school bus, because there is no way the operator would be able to monitor it. Here again, even though I favor the use of seat belts, and I am glad that there is a provision, I really can't say that we should be regulating it.

I had a survey in my weekly column about two years ago. I think there was a discussion in this Legislature about seat belts, and I asked my constituents if they had a concern over seat belt legislation. It was surprising. I got more responses than I expected. A great majority of them said: leave it to us; we have enough regulations. Mr. Speaker, even though I appreciate the provision of seat belts, I cannot see my way clear to vote on this motion.

Thank you.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member has already spoken on this particular motion.

MR. R. SPEAKER: . . . just add a little. Mr. Speaker, I think what I promised in the spring was that I would add a little bit of information at this time, and I was going to do that.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry; the rules don't allow it, unless the hon. member gets unanimous consent of the House.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I appreciate your efficiency; you are on the job. Well done.

MR. STILES: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, on that point, I thought the hon. member had unanimous consent to put his information in.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Has the hon. member unanimous consent?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that very, very much. In my comments earlier this year ... [interjection] Certainly I will, and I won't prolong the debate.

One of the promises I made to the Legislature — that's another reason I appreciate the opportunity to put this into *Hansard* — was that I would do a survey of my constituents' feelings with regard to seat belts, whether or not they accept them. I asked the question on the basis of two items. First of all, would you favor adult restraints in terms of seat belts? Secondly, do you favor child restraint?

The results of that survey are coming in at this time, but I think our sample is adequate enough to show a very valid trend. In terms of adult restraint, 33 per cent of the returns we have are yes, 58 per cent are no, and 9 per cent are no opinion. So in a rough ratio, we could say that one-third are in favor of adult restraint, two-thirds not in favor of adult restraint.

In terms of child restraint, the survey shows exactly the reverse: 61 per cent are in favor of child restraint and seat belts; 27 per cent are not. So in a very general way, we could say that two-thirds are in favor of that and one-third not. I would say that's a very definite trend and certainly a very definite opinion of my constituents. From that I would have to make some attempt to interpolate the meaning of what they are saying.

I recall standing in this Legislature earlier in the debate and saying that my constituents, because they wished to have the right to choose whether they buckle up or not, said no restraint. That was the majority opinion that I felt was prevalent at that time. I feel that most likely is true with regard to the adults, but I would also say that the 33 per cent in my constituency at the present time is even greater than I thought it was.

The second thing that they may be saying to me as their representative is that they wish to protect their children, and those under the age of 18 need to have that extra care when riding in an automobile. So on that basis, they felt that the younger person — I suppose that by definition a child would be less than the age of 18 — should wear some type of restraint mechanism. I feel that those are the two points of view that are coming to me at the present time. I have to say, though, that there is certainly a contradiction in principle. In one sense, if you feel you have a right to choose when you're over 18, maybe you have a right to choose when you're less than 18, but that principle doesn't follow through in terms of child restraint.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity of putting that into the debate, because I did make a commitment to the Legislature to add that to my comments at some time and to report back as to my constituents' actual attitude. I'd have to say that the

opinion of the constituency is somewhat in transition. There is a change, and there has been a change. I think we as legislators should be very aware of that. If we take a hard-nosed position saying, no seat belts, because we're going to maintain that principle of the right to choose whether or not we wear them, we as legislators should listen as closely as we can as this transition is going on. Maybe the public will come around to a point where they're saying: now is the time to do it: we're a little fed up with and concerned with the amount of abuse and carnage that occurs because there is a lack of restraint in the automobile.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. STILES: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise to speak in this debate. I thank you, sir, for having given us this opportunity by introducing the motion.

It's my personal conviction, and has been for almost 20 years, that a person is a fool to be riding around in a car without a seat belt on. I arrived at that conviction having had the experience of losing three close personal friends of my wife and me in a head-on collision in 1967. I should just tell you how they died.

The three individuals died from a base fracture of the skull. That is the most common injury to cause death due to a person not wearing a seat belt in a head-on collision. The occupants of an automobile in a head-on collision not only tend to be thrown violently forward in the automobile, they also tend to be thrown violently upward. Their head strikes the roof or the upper framework of the windshield, and the body continues and the spine is driven up into the base of the skull causing a base fracture. These are either fatal or result in brain damage.

In the accident I happen to know of involving our friends, three of the people in the car were killed and two suffered brain damage. So out of three couples, involving something like 11 children, one of each couple was killed; of the three remaining parents, two suffered brain damage to the extent that they no longer looked after their families. That drove home to me the importance of seat belts at that time, and my family and I have worn seat belts ever since.

However, notwithstanding that conviction, I'm not satisfied that the benefits of seat belts and the reduction of injuries that results from the use of seat belts are necessarily the proper justification for government making the use of seat belts compulsory. I believe that if we are going to look at the issue — and this is actually a rights or a matter of personal choice issue, and I think it's important that we analyse that issue. I believe that driving is a privilege. I believe it's a right to operate a motor vehicle of any description whatever on your own private property; that is a right. But if you're going to operate a motor vehicle on a public road, it is no longer a right; it becomes a privilege. It becomes something to do with the conditions under which you are issued a licence to operate a vehicle.

When we started to have motor vehicles, there was a considerable conflict with pedestrian traffic and with horse traffic — horse-drawn vehicles and horses being ridden by individuals. That was resolved by the regulatory process, in the same way we resolved the matter of how fast automobiles and trucks would be driven on roads, whether there would be a centre line, and whether traffic would move in one direction or two directions on a roadway. Those are all regulatory matters that are perfectly within the ambit of government to decide and to make laws on. That regulatory process flows from the responsibility of government to make laws for the protection of the public. Obviously speed limit laws are not there to protect the individual operating the car: they are there to protect the other

individuals using the highway. So also are centre lines, one-way traffic regulations, and so forth.

Government has the right to establish a road system; there's obviously an economic benefit to be gained. It also has the right to make laws respecting the use of those roadways. However, as I said, these laws all respect the protection of others using the highway. So do the laws of careless driving, drunk driving, reckless and dangerous driving. Those are all designed to protect the other users of the highway.

On the seat belt issue, it is suggested or proposed that the government make a law to compel individuals to take a precaution for their own safety. I'm not satisfied that that is the proper role of government. We have made laws with respect to the installation of seat belts in vehicles. I think it's perhaps somewhat significant that the law does not extend to the installation of seat belts in school buses; however, I think that's perhaps a subject for another debate.

But this is a matter of freedom of choice, and if we are going to be a free people and have freedom of the individual to make choices, one of those freedoms must be to make choices that are wrong, when it affects the individual and does not affect others. I don't think there's any merit to the argument that the wearing of seat belts is in some way protective of other people using the highway or that wearing a seat belt reduces the number of accidents. Certainly the statistics are there that seat belt use does reduce injuries and fatalities resulting from accidents. But I would be curious to know from those same statistics, in how many of those accidents the use of alcohol, as well as the failure to use a seat belt, was a factor. We might have some interesting information out of that research.

I believe that the argument that the use of seat belts should be made mandatory because injuries that result from failure to use them result in a cost to the taxpayer, is equally invalid in the sense that there are all sorts of other activities we engage in. Hon. members have already mentioned smoking and drinking. Perhaps skiing is another one. Skiing results in injuries. Are we suggesting that we should regulate skiing and forbid people to ski because it's a cost to the taxpayer when they have an injury? We have a hospital and medical insurance scheme — it is an insurance scheme; we do pay premiums in Alberta — and as long as we are paying premiums, I believe we cannot use that cost as a justification for imposing on individuals the compulsory use of restraints.

I don't want to prolong the debate unnecessarily, Mr. Speaker. I know there are others who wish to speak on this topic, so I would simply close with this proposition. I don't believe we're dealing here with an erosion of individual rights, although it has been cast in that light to some extent, but I would say that when we embark on legislation which is in the nature of Big Brother government, imposing on the individual laws to make the individual take care of himself or herself, we are tending towards creating in the individual a state of mind in which he will more and more lean toward government making other decisions on his behalf. I think that's a dangerous and undesirable direction in which to go. For that reason, I cannot support introducing legislation to compel the use of seat belts.

MR. OMAN: Mr. Speaker, this subject has been around this Legislature for a long time — far too long, in my opinion. As far as I'm concerned, it ought to have been dealt with positively long before this. I appreciate that you yourself have brought the matter to our attention again.

I think it comes home to me this way. Tonight in the city of Calgary a family, children and mother, will sit down to supper. There will be a place for a father who won't be there,

because he's dead. He was killed in a car accident. So far this year in the province of Alberta, there have been 338 fatalities. In the month of October, there were 41 fatalities from car accidents. The statistics indicate that 48 per cent of those people would be alive today if they had had on seat belts. That's mind boggling, in my opinion. In this year, approximately 450 people will die; 225 of those wouldn't have to die if this Legislature had a law which said people should wear seat belts.

The statistics — we've gone through them; they're here, they're clear; there are reams of them — indicate that seat belts save lives. They also indicate that in those seven of 10 provinces where it is in effect — and we're one of only three that don't have it — about 60 per cent of the people driving wear seat belts. We talk about freedoms. Sure it's involved; it's a factor. But anybody who drives on the street has his freedom limited by speed limits, stop signs, and all kinds of directions. It's a social factor that when you live in a society, your freedom is limited by the way you affect other people.

I'm concerned that this government hasn't been able to come to grips with this yet. It's time we did; people are dying because we haven't. In theological terms we talk about sins of omission and sins of commission, and one is at least as bad as the other. Not to act can be as bad as acting. I know there was a court case — not recently — that comes to mind; I haven't investigated it. A woman sitting in the passenger seat was convicted of criminal negligence because she failed to warn the driver of a car that was coming, that he didn't see because she didn't act. I wonder if we're not getting close to that, Mr. Speaker, because we haven't acted. That's the way it comes home to me. It seems to me that it's time to act.

Thank you, sir.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words on Motion 218. I'm going to speak against it for two reasons. One, my constituents are against the mandatory or compulsory use of seat belts, and I'm against it for a different reason.

I was interested to hear the Member for Little Bow come up with his statistics, because they're far more recent than the ones I've taken. I took a survey on this when it was before the Legislature about three years ago. At that time about 3 to 5 per cent of my constituents were in favor of the mandatory use of seat belts. I hope some of them are changing their minds on this, but I still have a long way to go to convince people in my constituency on the mandatory use of seat belts, partly for the reason the Member for Olds-Didsbury mentioned. They feel that individual rights are involved in this, and to some degree they are.

But I will agree that the use of seat belts is desirable. I'll also concede that if we pass a law like this — the mandatory use of seat belts — it would increase the use of seat belts. We have very good examples where they put this law in across Canada. It goes up to the 60 per cent people talk about, and then it drifts back. I live very close to B.C. and have occasion to go into British Columbia. I don't know where this 60 per cent figure comes from there. I don't bother counting on the road, but I think I would be closer cutting it in two. Anyway, I won't argue on that.

My point in opposing this motion is the fact that any time a government decides to pass a law that it knows in advance over half the people will ignore, it had better be very careful. We have that example all across the country. I would like to give you three examples of people ignoring the law, and when they ignore the law, it breeds disrespect for the law. Several years ago the city of Edmonton passed a no-smoking by-law. You can go out to the Municipal Airport, and there's the sign on the post with "no smoking" and the circle with a cross across

it. Right underneath the sign is an ash tray. I don't really feel that anything is gained by passing a law and then ignoring the law.

Another example. Drive down the highway to Spring Coulee, and there are signs down the road: littering is an offence, a \$500 fine, and all that. And you have the littering anyway. I don't think passing a law that is unenforceable does anything for the law.

Of course the classic example of all is prohibition. They tried it many times; people ignored it. They either bootlegged or made their own. But just the same, society is forced to go along and say: we can't have prohibition because people just ignore the law. We found that it just didn't work.

I don't think the province of Alberta is doing itself any good by passing a law when they know before it's passed that half the people will ignore it. It really puzzles me that the police chiefs in Calgary and Edmonton are in favor of mandatory seat belts. If there's any person who should know that they aren't going to enforce that law to its limit, it has to be those people. Because if they did, they wouldn't be doing anything else. So from that point of view, I am against the mandatory use of seat belts.

What I do think we should do, Mr. Speaker, is make a real effort on education. We've tried it in the past. I think it was a fairly feeble effort, but still and all we tried it. We have our highway signs with "Buckle Up"; we were distributing buttons that said "Buckle Up". When Dr. Horner was in charge, I think we even had a little machine that went around to all the local fairs, and you could get an example of the results of a low-speed accident when you hit the end of this little sled you were riding on. There's nothing wrong with that; I think it was a good attempt. But we have to do more.

For instance, I honestly think that when people take a driver's test, there's nothing wrong with them having to sit through a 15- or 20-minute film — and we have them, because I've seen them as an MLA — showing the bad effects of not wearing your seat belt. I think it should be part of the driving test. I think there should even be a few questions asked on this subject on the written test, so everyone is at least aware of what they're doing. I think that would help.

Another thing I think would help is that in the school system — and not in grade 10, 11, or 12, but from grade 1 right through the whole system — there should be a certain attempt made to educate students in the use of seat belts. If the breakfast food companies can sell corn flakes by appealing to children to get their mother to buy them, surely if children are convinced in school that the use of seat belts is good, not only would they want to buckle up when they get in the car but they'd be asking their parents to buckle up and it would have some effect. So there's another area I think should be investigated. It wouldn't be a big thing, but I think if we really believe — and the statistics prove it; there's no argument there — that the use of seat belts is beneficial, I think that we should probably be prepared to spend a little time and effort on education. I think it's really the only way it will work.

You can look at what has happened with smoking. Over the years there has been an education program to prove to people that smoking causes lung cancer — you're fighting the odds when you smoke, and all that — and there has been a dramatic decrease in the use of cigarettes.

MR. SZWENDER: What about chewing tobacco?

MR. THOMPSON: No, that's different.

I honestly do think an educational program would do far more than passing a law in the Legislature saying it's going to cost you \$25 or \$50 if you don't buckle your seat belt.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to get on to this one thing. Last spring, the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood called for a free vote on this subject here in the Legislature. All I will say in conclusion is this: every time a person gets in a vehicle, either as a driver or a passenger, he is voting on the use of seat belts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to slip in just a couple of words on the motion. Like other members, I am caught in this conundrum of a good idea that's very difficult to apply. I'm also officially on record as being opposed to excessive regulation, so I want to try to be consistent. I appreciate the benefits of the motion and of seat belts and all the things that have been said before, and I don't wish to repeat them. But I do have difficulty with the method, the mandatory element in which people are legislated into their seats. As other members have said, I too believe strongly in the right to choose.

I also believe that it's not realistic to suggest that we're going to be able to legislate people into their seats in any meaningful way. As the preceding speaker has well pointed out. I think the attempt to legislate this kind of thing really produces the worst of two worlds. It's a law which is too generally ignored and not easily enforced and thus too easily disrespected. I fully agree with that. I would like to add some reinforcement to what was just said. I personally do not like, indeed I am alarmed by, the trend toward erosion of the rule of law. I think that's very detrimental, not just in the matter of such things as seat belts and injury but as a very general thing.

But like others, I want the benefits of the protection that's provided by seat belts, where that's applicable. I also would like the savings in medical and hospital costs if those are substantial, and I'm led to believe they are. That's why I'm a little bit ambivalent. I like the benefits, but I don't like the mandatory element. Thus, Mr. Speaker, I'd be prepared to suggest perhaps as an addendum or a revision to the motion that we provide an inducement rather than a mandatory element, and the inducement may come in the form of an incentive. What could be an incentive which would get people to think about putting on seat belts when they get in their cars while still having the right to choose not to do so?

MR. SZWENDER: Money.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Not another government grant.

MR. ALEXANDER: Money, someone said. I think he is right on the nose. I suggest the possibility — and this is very preliminary and not refined — that if one is involved in an accident resulting in an injury to himself or his passengers and he has not used his seat belt, for that occasion it would result in the loss of hospital and medical coverage. In other words, your AHC and hospital coverage benefits would be removed for this particular accident. All the costs of those in your car who were not buckled up and were therefore injured, would be charged to your account. We're talking about \$300 or \$500 a day, in terms of active care. Whatever the doctor's charges are, I don't know. In some cases it could be quite substantial; in other cases it might not be quite so much. As one member has already observed, we do pay premiums: we're already contributing to the system. I think that's small and incidental to the real point, if we're interested in making a law that works.

Something like this would in fact provide the incentive. I know it would certainly make me think. If I were going to be driving down the street and be hammered by someone — maybe even in an accident that wasn't of my own doing, wasn't my

own fault, but if I was injured in that accident and got banged against the dashboard or someone hit me from behind because their belts weren't on, and I had to pay for the whole shebang when it landed in the hospital, I don't think I'd have a second thought. I'd probably buckle up. But I would still be free not to. In other words, the law doesn't require it, but it strongly induces it. I would go further — and I think it has been suggested already — that the same provisions ought to be applied to drunk drivers.

In essence I'm saying — and I won't say much more — that I would be interested in supporting such a move if we were prepared to get serious about it, provide an incentive which would make people do what we want them to do by choice, rather than by mandating it. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge the experimental and preliminary nature of what I'm suggesting, it could even be one of the first examples of sunset legislation, which might make the Member for Edmonton Glen-garry happy. But it would have the value of an incentive to obey good sense rather than an unenforceable law, and leave free choice.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this motion before the House. I really admire the interest of our colleagues and their concern for the safety of others and for preventing lives being lost. I feel, however, that there has been quite a bit of recognition of the reality of this situation in our debate this afternoon.

We have heard people discuss the issues, the problems in the enforcement of the law, not only in the costs, but because — as the hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud said — there is no way we can have laws on the books that are unenforceable. We've talked about the rights and responsibilities of individuals for their own care. We've talked about the need for publication. But I think the truth is that restraints do save lives, and we can't ignore this any longer.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud also spoke about the conundrum of trying to prevent needless deaths on one hand, juxtaposed against the idea of a law to compel the use of seat belts. Feeling rather frustrated about the issue and recognizing this possibility, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce an amendment to the House that would perhaps resolve the problem, the conundrum that we are presently facing. I would like to delete the words "seat belts" and substitute therefor, that

the Assembly consider the desirability of legislation in Alberta to provide for the mandatory use of child restraint devices in motor vehicles for children from birth to five years of age.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that this type of car legislation is a positive way to not only save lives but to reduce Alberta's growing health care costs. Alberta health care insurance and hospital costs incurred for one seriously ill child in a recent Alberta motor vehicle accident were about \$50,000. Car seat legislation can prevent this. They are 85 per cent effective in preventing death and 65 per cent effective in preventing injuries to young children.

We've talked about the seven Canadian provinces that have car seat legislation protecting young children. As well, there are 41 states that have similar legislation. In Tennessee, the first state to introduce such legislation, within two years the death rate decreased by 55 per cent for children in this age category.

I believe that by amending the motion in this way, we could perhaps appeal to the public of Alberta. The Alberta Action Committee for Child Transportation Safety conducted a survey even more recently than the hon. Member for [Little Bow], I

believe, and it indicated that 83 per cent of those polled supported the concept of car seats for children. The same support was not evident, however, in the use of seat belts for adults. Therefore, I believe we should capitalize on the feeling of the people and look at some legislation to this effect.

We have tried education. Alberta Transportation has presented an excellent booklet called *Life is Precious, Buckle Them In: Child Restraint Manual*. It's excellent. It conveys all the ideas that we have discussed, heard about, the needless deaths encountered by adults. But it pertains to the adults' responsibility to keep their children safe.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the work of the Alberta Action Committee for Child Transportation Safety leads us to the inescapable conclusion that we can't put this off any longer. We've talked about supporting seat belts; we've talked against the use of seat belts, the compulsory aspect of it. But somehow all of these things, even though we need them, are hopelessly entwined with one's freedoms, rights, and liberties, and the intrusion of law into freedoms. But I don't think we can wait any longer to protect young children, needlessly hurt, sometimes crippled for life.

Car seats have proven their effectiveness in saving these lives and preventing needless deaths, and I believe we can't put a price on it. If we can save one life, this legislation would be worth while. Next year, Mr. Speaker, we can expect 25 Alberta children to die, 1,000 Alberta children to be seriously injured, some of them disabled for life, and 4,000 Alberta children to have minor injuries. Mr. Speaker, I don't think we can afford that, and I put these statistics to the House at this time, realizing full well the time. We really need to talk about this issue. I feel strongly that we should look at the issue and give some consideration to introducing another Bill in the spring that will protect children. I think the people are ready for it. In the meantime, before we introduce another Bill, we should be able to use this period to try to educate the public further on the alarming and needless deaths.

Thank you.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise to support the essence of the amendment that's now before us. I believe that the hon. Member for Calgary Foothills has perhaps hit upon the point on which most members in the Assembly can agree. I would endorse her comments that this is one option which should be considered by this Assembly over the next few months.

In my opinion, there is absolutely no question as to the correctness of the argument by the hon. member, no question that there are now deaths and injuries caused as a result of not having child restraint devices, which would not take place if that situation were corrected. Also, from statistics I've read, there's no question that because of their size and frail nature, that happens to a much greater degree with children than it does with adults. So while I personally believe that seat belts for all individuals is something people in our society should recognize and accept, I think we have a responsibility for the young who are losing their lives or being injured without that kind of protection.

The House will recall that I presented a Bill to the Legislature a couple of years ago asking for legislation for children under the age of 18. One reason I hope this debate will be adjourned rather than passed is that I would like to negotiate further with the hon. member and other hon. members before we bring a final piece of legislation to this Legislature. I made that presentation based on two points of view. Indeed philosophically there's a legitimate argument, in my opinion, that individuals have the right to make up their own minds whether they're

going to save their lives or stop injury to a greater extent by wearing seat belts. But in our society, government has taken responsibility for individuals under the age of 18. I think at this point we are neglecting that responsibility by not having legislation of this sort in effect.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the time and the fact that I think we now have several options before us in this discussion, I move to adjourn debate on the amendment.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it agreed that the debate be adjourned?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

**Bill 211
Public Ambulance Act**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise to present private member's Bill 211, the Public Ambulance Act. The Bill is fairly straightforward. I will hit the highlights of it in a minute, Mr. Speaker, but I think there is some necessity for a brief background of why I am presenting this private member's Bill at this time.

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, in reviewing some of the research from the Alberta Ambulance Operators Association and the paramedics, there seems to be some confusion with existing government legislation. It falls into about five separate pieces of legislation. The intent from all five, though, is that there are some differences. The main thing is that there are Class A and Class B ambulances. Class A means a commercial ambulance operating in and out of the cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and suburbs thereof, and the latter means a commercial ambulance other than Class A. We are mainly concerned with Class A of course.

I believe we have excellent ambulance service in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat, but the main concern comes in some of the other places with Class B. It seems that the legislation is rather lax in those areas. About all you need to do to run an ambulance in some of the rural areas is to take a St. John course and have a station wagon. So there are some real problems there and some horror stories that have developed because of that.

Mr. Speaker, since 1973 — it's not just the Official Opposition that has been pressing for this. The Alberta Medical Association has called on the government of Alberta at least five times to establish a provincially planned, co-ordinated, and funded ambulance service and set minimum standards for vehicles, equipment, attendant training, and licensing ambulance personnel. It's not only the Alberta Medical Association. We've had other groups: the Alberta Hospital Association, the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Alberta Ambulance Operators Association, the registered emergency paramedics, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and various municipal governments and private citizens. What they are clearly saying to the government, Mr. Speaker, is that they see the need for some types of minimum standards in terms of both

the paramedics — if I can use that term — running it and also the vehicles themselves.

In a position paper from their convention dated September 16, 1981, the Alberta Medical Association states

that many people are dying needlessly because of inadequate emergency medical services, and that ambulance services represent one of the 'weakest links' in the delivery of emergency health care in this province.

Those are fairly strong words—"dying needlessly". And they say that

within the existing health care system, the provincial government has not accepted its social responsibility to put a properly trained medical team where it is needed most urgently — directly at the site of sudden injury or illness.

They conclude that

the need for government action in this regard is not just urgent — it is a crisis which must be addressed immediately.

Mr. Speaker, they were saying this in 1981. As we know, we're near the end of 1983, and I guess they would say the crisis is still there.

The other point many groups are making, Mr. Speaker, is that there is some breakdown here in accessibility of medical care. For example, if you are fortunate enough to live in an urban centre, as I and many of the members are, then you're going to have better accessibility to medical care because of a good ambulance scheme that can get you to the hospital in good time. In some rural areas — not all — this is not the case. If you are unfortunate enough to have an accident in some parts of the province, they are very clearly saying that in their minds there is a serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, they say it very clearly. Dr. Sosnowski, the medical director of the emergency medicine section of the AMA, states it rather forcefully I think — much better than I could — in just a paragraph to try to push home the point of how serious he believes it is. He says:

it seems incongruous that the Alberta government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on new tertiary care facilities containing every item of technology and therapeutic capability known to man, while refusing to demonstrate a commitment and responsibility to the pre-hospital care of their citizens, despite the fact that estimates of the effect of various medical intervention techniques indicate no substantial decrease in mortality and morbidity of the most common medical entities (for example, heart disease and trauma) can occur today without a reduction in deaths that are presently occurring outside the hospitals.

What they are really saying there, Mr. Speaker, is that CPR administered within four minutes of cardiopulmonary arrest can result in a 28 per cent survival rate. They point out that advanced life support systems combined with CPR and applied within eight minutes can result in a 40 per cent survival rate. Those are significant figures. Obviously people in the urban centres are probably getting the type of care that can result in saving lives, but in some parts of the province this is just not the case.

I'm sure hon. members will remind me about the cost later on in the debate. I'm almost sure I can count on that. I recognize that the cost — and I will come to that — is estimated at about \$1 million to bring in the type of service I'm talking about in this Bill. They point out, though, that over the long haul that \$21 million would not be that expensive.

We might even save money, Mr. Speaker, because one of the most expensive things in hospital care comes from accidents. The previous debate on seat belts is relevant here too,

because obviously that saves money. But in accidents, if they can get to people with decent ambulance care — decently trained people, like very well-trained paramedics that are coming out of NAIT and SAIT — besides saving lives, if they administer to and deal with people quickly, this could actually shorten their time in hospital, which again would save money at the hospital level. I have no figures to indicate how much that would be, but I think all members are well aware that the sooner you can attend to an accident, the less time that person will spend in the hospital. It's basically that simple.

I could go on, but we have well-documented cases from doctors, cases where they thought the ambulance care was so poor that it resulted in death or unnecessary long-term injuries. If they'd been handled right . . . I won't bore you with it, but if at some point hon. members were interested in looking at that, they certainly would be welcome to borrow it from me.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, we thought it would be appropriate at this time to bring in the Public Ambulance Act. As I said, it's fairly straightforward. Basically the highlights — and I'll allow all hon. members to discuss the Bill. The major purpose of the Act would be to ensure uniform and adequate standards of ambulance service right across the province, so there is, if you like, that accessibility. Under this Bill, the minister would ensure that no substandard ambulance service be allowed to operate in the province. As I've mentioned before, this is particularly necessary in a province where a large number of people live a long distance from adequate hospital facilities and, as a result, are totally reliant on top-quality ambulance service in a time of crisis.

The other point that I think is important is that provincial funding of ambulance services would ensure the uniformity of service across the province, particularly at a time when municipalities and counties are facing severe financial problems. If we can go by what is happening in Red Deer and what the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs are saying, it probably isn't going to get much better. It is dangerous to leave ambulances in a position of vulnerability to municipal funding cutbacks. As a result, only provincial funding will accomplish the twin problems of relieving part of the municipal debt and protecting the health and safety of all Albertans, which of course is the prime reason behind the Bill.

I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, that nothing comes cheap. We're well aware of that, but we think it's still a good bargain. The cost would be in the range of some \$21 million, but I'm sure we have tried to make a case of many other ways where the government can save money, and perhaps it can squeeze together the \$21 million for a service that we believe is essential for all parts of medicare.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I hope hon. members, especially rural members, would seriously take a look at the Bill. Like every other Bill, there's probably room for improvement, but I would like the members to at least discuss it seriously. Maybe there will be some directions we can move on, I even liked the compromise in seat belts. I would like to go all the way, but the amendment . . . If there's something we can salvage in the Bill, or some compromise, I'm sure we'd be willing to look at it. I believe that it is a very serious matter, and I hope I will receive some support from government members on Bill 211, the Public Ambulance Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to Bill 211, the Public Ambulance Act. I certainly agree that we should

all keep working towards a better ambulance service in Alberta, and any improvements we can find would certainly be appreciated. However, I caution against too many regulations by the province. There are some ambulance services in Alberta that are privately owned and operated by the owner, and are subsidized by the municipalities. However, I believe the majority are municipal ambulance services, and are either administered by a committee of the municipalities or administered under the hospital board or the fire department, but in almost all cases are subsidized by the municipality.

As a former member of a municipal ambulance service, I'd like to take a little of your time to relate some of the experiences I had during my time in the service. In the early 1970s, we had one ambulance in Brooks. It was a little International van operated by one of the town's public works employees, who at times drove up to 12 hours a day on transfers. He handled all ambulance service for rural people, highway traffic accidents, and hospital transfers. This, I assure you, was completely inadequate.

In the early 1970s, the county decided to join the town of Brooks, and the Brooks and district ambulance association was formed. We bought a new ambulance, kept the old one on as a stand-by, and hired a director. The director's job was to arrange for volunteer ambulance attendants and drivers on a continuous basis. Most of those people had a full-time job other than driving the ambulance. They were paid a daily rate to be on stand-by for 12 hours in case there was an ambulance call, and they were paid at an hourly rate when they were on call. Most of them had a St. John Ambulance training course, but none of them were highly trained. At that time the cost of the service, over and above charges, was subsidized by the town of Brooks and the county on a population basis.

Today the service has grown so that they have three active vehicles and a stand-by that is on loan to the St. John Ambulance Association. They use it to attend all sports events and rodeos on a volunteer basis, and they're also on stand-by for the regular ambulance board in case they're needed.

Until 1979 the service was administered by a board of directors that was established from the contributing municipalities: the town of Brooks, the county of Newall, and some of the towns and villages that joined the association. At that time there were some 35 to 40 calls a month. Approximately half of those were transfers. In [most] cases, a third to a half of them were motor vehicle accidents on the primary highways that pass the town. In 1979 the administration was changed over to the hospital board, but it is still subsidized by the municipalities, as originally it was, on a per capita basis.

In 1983 the budget for Brooks ambulance is \$350,000. That is partly picked up by charges made to the people who use the ambulance, and the deficit is picked up by the contributing municipalities. Charges for the use of the ambulance has always been a concern, because in rural areas people generally don't have Blue Cross. The impact in earlier days, particularly of transfer charges, was a great concern of the ambulance board. So we set a maximum charge for local calls and a maximum charge for transfers.

We were certainly thankful in 1981 when the hospital benefits plan was announced. That picked up the cost of these transfers. That is something that we as a hospital board have been asking for, for some time. We justified the need for that because we felt that the sophisticated health centres in Alberta belonged to all the people of Alberta and that there should be access to them by all the people.

The hospital benefits plan certainly made a difference in equalizing health costs. However, we still have a problem in that area, and that is if you are admitted to a hospital and you

are assessed and find that your medical needs can't be looked after in that hospital, you are then transferred by the doctor to a more sophisticated centre and your costs are covered. If the doctor goes out to a highway traffic accident or, in his office, takes a look at a patient and says that there is no use sending this person to the local hospital because he needs more medical attention than they can offer there, then that person has to pay the cost of the ambulance service to the other centre. This is something that I think we could be looking at.

Probably the argument to get the hospital benefits plan was — and rightfully so — that if you were admitted to a hospital under medicare and that hospital discovered they couldn't attend to your medical needs, then in the ambulance you were a ward of the municipality and yourself until you were admitted to the other hospital. Under medicare, you then became a ward of that hospital. That was a good argument to bring about the hospital benefits plan. But we still have this fellow who is out on the highway and needs to be transferred. In that case, it is at his own expense.

Because municipalities generally look after the subsidization of ambulance services, they probably should set up the standards for what kind of ambulance they have. I understand that there are some provincial regulations now that call for a driver to have a Class 4 licence. In my opinion, that is another thing we could look at. Under certain circumstances, ambulance drivers have the right to speed on our highways. They have equipment which signifies that they are allowed to speed. But as a protection to the rest of the public on the highway, I wonder whether a Class 4 licence is adequate to cover that.

The other regulations an ambulance has: I believe the provincial requirements say they have to be enclosed, they have to have a heater, they have to have minimum equipment — and I think that only includes a stretcher — and they have to have turning lights if they are going to speed. Municipalities, because they subsidize these, have generally increased by by-law — and legally so — the requirements for these ambulances. We have some really sophisticated ambulances in Alberta at this time.

In the Brooks ambulance service, at one time we considered hiring a paramedic service. But the argument came about that if you had one paramedic on three shifts, you were only protecting people for a given time of day. If he were on the 8:00 to 4:00 shift, if you wanted to get top medical protection, you had to have an accident between 8:00 and 4:00. There were two problems with that. One was the cost and the other was the fact that there were not a lot of paramedics around at that time. I think paramedics have to take 1,000 hours of training.

At that time the Brooks ambulance service decided that they would go for an EMT training program. Through adult education and the local community college, they set up a training program for EMT. I don't recall how many hours it was, but it was partly by correspondence and partly a computerized course. They could take it at their own speed. Every one of the people working for the ambulance association at that time took the course, and they all passed it. I believe there is now a requirement that anybody working for that ambulance service must have EMT training. Those courses are still available. They are not available at the local junior college, but they are available at some of the better colleges in Alberta.

We generally had some problems every time we hired a new director. All directors had an idea of what the best kind of vehicle was. We went through several kinds of vehicles, from a maxi-van to a type of vehicle that has a body on it like a motor home, only it has a two-ton chassis. These were recommended to us because they could handle up to four stretchers in the case of a multi-vehicle accident: there wouldn't be people

held up while you transferred them to hospital. All these vehicles have their place. The motor home type of vehicle is certainly a better vehicle for local calls, but it isn't very good for hospital transportation, in particular when you're looking at hospital transfers between Brooks and Calgary, which is about 200 kilometres. They are not a high-speed vehicle, and they are hard to drive. Because they are not a high-speed vehicle, they tear tires off them, et cetera.

We finally had to go for a transfer vehicle that was a little more sophisticated and made for high speed. In the case of a transfer vehicle, it was our experience that it should be fairly streamlined and should have a roof high enough so the attendant can stand when he is working on a patient, and so you can get an intravenous high enough when giving it to a patient.

Mr. Speaker, for us to say that we should standardize all ambulances does not recognize that there are a few different types of ambulance services. First off, we have the different service that is a requirement of the Workers' Compensation Board for some construction companies to have ambulances on-site at all times. These are always paid for by the construction company. I don't believe anybody would agree that they should be the equivalent of a municipal ambulance service vehicle, because those people are also taxpayers and have the right to use the municipal ambulance service.

Of course to have a standard vehicle for the transportation of sick or injured people to emergencies or hospitals would also cut out a person using his own vehicle. In that case, I'm reminded of an accident a year ago when a person was working on the roof of his house with a jigsaw. He carelessly laid the jigsaw on top of the chimney and was doing something with both hands, and the jigsaw vibrated off the top of the chimney, hit him across the throat, and severed his jugular vein. He fell off the roof; his wife picked him up, threw him in the car, and screamed at somebody to phone the hospital, that she was bringing him in. In eight minutes she drove 15 miles to the hospital. That fellow walked into the hospital holding his jugular vein together. The doctor said that in four minutes he would have been dead. If she had phoned an ambulance, you know what would have happened. And those are the kinds of judgments rural people have to make when we start talking about ambulances.

Mr. Speaker, I'm all for an improved ambulance service in Alberta. However, this Bill has some implications with budgets and local autonomy. One of the things it relates to is communication problems, and I certainly have had some experience with that.

During my time as an ambulance board member, we tried to get a frequency for ambulances that was used only by ambulances. We were never successful in that. We were always told that you have to go to the federal Department of Communications and get this approved, and we were not able to do that. To have a communication service on an ambulance that is open to several people's use — VHF for instance — the problem is not being able to get on it, because generally if an ambulance picks up a speaker and says, I need the use of this immediately, everybody will get off and you can use it. Part of the problem is that what he has to say sometimes should be a confidential conversation with either a hospital or a doctor. Because he's on an open VHF communication line, everybody there hears the information. I don't think that should necessarily be the way it is.

The other improvement if we were to have communication strictly for ambulances would be that if you were on a transfer call and you couldn't reach the hospital you were transferring to, you could easily reach another ambulance service that would be along the way. They would understand your communication

and could transfer it on. But if you phone an oil company and say, I can't reach Calgary with a communication; would you transfer this message? — you don't know for sure whether they understand the message and are able to transfer it. So that is one reason we should be looking at a frequency in communications for ambulances alone. I believe the police service of Alberta has its own frequency. Why ambulances are not able to get that, I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the cost of \$21 million mentioned, and I don't know what that included. Did it say that it would cover the cost of all ambulance services in Alberta from beginning to end? Did it mean it would cover the costs of ambulances that are presently being picked up by the municipalities? Did it mean that it would cover the costs of ambulance services over and above what is now the hospital benefits plan? I somehow have a little concern about the \$21 million.

I read in some material that the cost of a transfer from the Royal Alex hospital in Edmonton to the University hospital and back again is \$234. That's probably as short a transfer as you'll find. So I wonder what the \$21 million would [cover]. Would this mean that no one pays any costs? Would it mean that municipalities are absolved of their responsibility. I would be concerned about that. One of the things I think we could be looking at besides improved communication is some contribution to the municipalities to offset their financial needs. Certainly that would be a benefit to ambulance service in Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments as well on the Bill before the House, presented by the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood. I agree that there have to be some improvements to the provincial ambulance system. I'm not sure how we go about doing it, and I'm not sure that Bill 211 is necessarily the right vehicle.

I read the Bill and noted that it was largely a permissive piece of legislation. It would allow the minister to do certain things, but it wouldn't require him to do certain things. It also didn't provide for funding, and I think that would be a major problem. You could consider the case, for example, where the minister would prescribe that certain standards had to be met, and the community would simply not meet them and not provide a service. Perhaps rather than having a very poor service, there'd be no service. I'm not sure that is a desirable goal as well. So I think there has to be more thought, in the Bill, to the other side of the question. You have to set up standards plus provide funding, and that isn't there.

Living in Edmonton, I think it's noteworthy that in the last couple of years the city ambulance authority has dramatically improved the level of ambulance care given in the city. We've moved more or less from the station wagon the hon. member mentioned to a service that probably in the long run even reduces some of our costs, because if you can stabilize the patient and get him to hospital in good shape, it's likely that the medical care system is not going to have as much of a problem when the patient arrives at the hospital.

The member noted in his remarks that he thought an improved ambulance authority province-wide would cost us something like \$21 million. That intrigued me, because I don't know how he arrived at that figure. I think we have to ask ourselves who is going to pay for the improved ambulance service: whether it will be the province entirely on its own; whether it will be the municipalities — because I'm sure the member or his party has advocated local autonomy. Perhaps he'd like local services funded by the municipality. I know the hon. member believes in fiscal responsibility and a tight budget

and good administration. Maybe he would want the individual to be partly responsible for some of those costs so the system isn't unnecessarily used. I think the concept is called user fees, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure he would want something like that in there so the system is administered well and there is not an undue level of demand for service. So I think we would have to look at those high standards we want to have set and then look at parcelling out those costs to the different interest groups that would be involved. But that's not dealt with in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that there are about three types of services in the province. There are the services provided in major centres like Calgary and Edmonton, with paramedics in radio communication with hospitals and centrally dispatched. They're fast, they give a good level of care, and they stabilize the patient en route to the hospital.

There is a second type of service. The hon. Member for Bow Valley gave us a very good description of how a rural municipality would go about setting up its authority and delivering a good service to the community, and some of the practical problems involved in doing just that. In that second group there would probably be contract services a municipality would hire. A third group is a voluntary ambulance authority, where citizens would volunteer to drive people in the community to a hospital in the event of an emergency. We have those three basic types of delivery systems.

It's tough to try to mesh a plan that will deliver the service and so respect those three types of organizational modes we have in the province right now. I suppose we can be centralistic and just impose a standard, a system, right across the province. I'm sure the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood would not want to be accused of being a centralist or imposing anything on anybody. I know that's not in his philosophy. So we would probably want to work out some sort of system that would respect local autonomy — because that's another goal of the hon. member — respect the local conditions and problems, and also provide for a good base level of service.

I've been scratching my head and talking to my colleague from Olds-Didsbury to my left — and it's worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury is to my left in the House. [interjections] These things are all relative. I'm in the far left corner, so ...

AN HON. MEMBER: You're out in left field. [interjections]

MR. COOK: There is a system that is working in British Columbia that provides for a base level of care, and the province provides a good degree of the funding. They also have a largely co-ordinating role, and provide an air ambulance authority.

I understand that the system in British Columbia is that local communities still have their local services. They have trained people, and the personnel involved today are encouraged to upgrade so they have a higher level of background, so they're not simply driving a body — hopefully live — to a hospital facility. The British Columbia authority provides a much needed co-ordinating role, so if there is an accident or disaster, as we saw in Carstairs, the province would have some central dispatchers and would know where the resources are in the province. I'm told by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury that in Didsbury there is an ambulance bus that could have been used had people thought of using it. It could have transported a great number of the people to the hospital at one time. If there were a radio dispatching system for the province, it might be possible to hook that into the police system and dispatch nurses and doctors where needed in the event of an emergency like that.

So I think we have to work at finding some kind of system that doesn't simply impose on the province a set of standards that municipalities cannot afford, or whose cost the province is going to find onerous, and that also respects local autonomy. We can make some greater efficiencies. I think the regional dispatching system we see working in British Columbia might be a model for us to take another look at. It would provide bus or air ambulance service — whatever the needs are.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood for bringing the matter to the House, and I'd like to assure him that the minister does have it under his attention. From talking to him in committee meetings, I know it's a continuing source of concern, and we have to find something we can both afford, that will give a good level of service to Albertans, and respect the local volunteers and organizations that now operate.

Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say just a few words on this very important Bill. The reason it's so important to the members of the Legislature and the people of Alberta is the impact it might have on our health care system in Alberta. As you're all probably aware, the costs now are in excess of \$1,000 per capita. Government members are attempting to have a restraint program, and here we have an individual, the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, coming forward and increasing the costs of health care. The impact this might have on our health care system in Alberta is that it will destroy it. Maybe this is what he wants. I don't know.

But I do know this. We are reaching a point where \$234 to transport a patient from the Royal Alexandra hospital to the University hospital is a mighty lot of money — and he's hoping to increase the cost of ambulance care. He wants the same standard set throughout the province. He doesn't believe in volunteers. He doesn't believe in family responsibility. He doesn't believe in user fees. He doesn't believe in an increase in income tax. So, Mr. Speaker, we have a dilemma here. We have a dilemma where the costs are going up and there's no way to meet those costs.

I can remember when my grandson was run over by a truck and broke both legs severely. He had to have an ambulance to bring him from Kitscoty to Edmonton. Because we feel it's a family responsibility to take care of our own, we paid that bill for the ambulance. We don't believe in total state control. We believe that we as individuals owe something to our families and to our communities. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask members of this Assembly to soundly defeat Bill 211.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join this debate on Bill 211. On first reading on March 28, the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood stated:

This Act would ensure uniform and adequate ambulance standards province-wide, as related to training of personnel, equipment, communications, and a host of other essentials of good ambulance service.

This Bill will attempt to deal with ground ambulance service without consideration of funding. When I say "deal with ambulance service," it will include registering and licensing ambulance operators by the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. There will be regulations in force governing the ambulance vehicle standards, ambulance equipment and supply standards, training and qualification standards for ambulance personnel, records maintenance and submission, communications system, agreement terms and conditions. That's quite a bit of regulation in a world that's overregulated today.

It all sounds very, very good and it's very, very desirable, and I think everyone in this Legislature supports the concept. But so do we support the concept of eliminating cancer, of providing paved roads to every door, and so on. Let it be known that we support those concepts. But it's got to be within the realm of affordability. I'm afraid the Member for Edmonton Norwood didn't take too much of the cost factor in. I think the \$21 million was a stab in the dark. When I look at the mouthful of words that I just gave you, \$21 million didn't even cover the printing of all the regulations that would go in place over the years ahead.

Let's take a look at our present Alberta scene, Mr. Speaker. In the cities we have very well-equipped ambulances. The staff are very well trained and they're very costly. I've heard of the cost to transfer a patient from the Royal Alex over to the University hospital. It's a very costly situation to maintain ambulances at that level. But what I'm concerned about when we bring this in is not that service. I'm concerned about the small towns, the villages, and the rural areas that are covered today — maybe not as good as the cities, but they're served by ambulance service.

Let's deal with the towns first. In Lacombe we have what I consider adequate ambulance service. It's manned by some well-trained full-time staff, but it also has volunteer staff. I don't think they're what you would call up to the standard indicated by this Bill. But they're there and they're serving a purpose. They're playing a role. When we say to them, we're going to bring you up to a standard from here in Edmonton. I don't think those volunteers will be around too long. We'll be paying them, because we dictated what they had to do. As soon as you dictate and lay down the rules to any volunteer, he isn't there or you're going to pay him. So what have we done to that ambulance service? We either increase the cost beyond the means of the people in the town of Lacombe to have that service, or we do without it.

It's worse in the rural area, because some of the staff in the rural area afforded a station wagon with a light — that's basically what they have — and a structure fixed in there. It's all manned by volunteers. If we brought this down on their heads, do you know what you would have, Mr. Speaker? I'm sure the person who moved this motion didn't consider that. It's very, very desirable, and they want that service out there just like the residents of the city of Edmonton. But all we accomplished out in the rural area was to make it totally impossible for them to have the service they have today, so they do without. That's the other side of the coin.

Again, this Bill hits on a concept that bothers me; it bothers a lot of us sitting around here. Mr. Speaker, it's the erosion of people to make the decision for themselves. Somebody way up there makes the decision, and all you have the opportunity to do is to carry it out and pay for it. It's always "pay for it" down at that end.

We talk about Ottawa taking our responsibilities, making the decisions, and telling us to pay. I think this Bill is just a case of our saying the provincial government will tell the people at the municipal levels just what they will have, and they can pay or do without. I don't like that concept. I like it the other way around, where the local people make the decision and the Ottawas and Edmontons are up there in supportive roles. I'm down with local municipalities and those councils. Anybody who has had any connection with local councils knows that they know best what kind of service they want, but they also know better than the Member for Edmonton Norwood what kind of service they can afford. They don't want the people in Edmonton coming out and saying: how in the world can we afford what Edmonton lays out for us?

There are other alternatives to this, and I hope we'd consider them before we'd even consider looking at this Bill, as desirable as it is. There's the ambulance service provided by private companies, and that's done in a lot of cases. There are a lot of towns across this Dominion of Canada that have company-provided ambulances. They're doing a damned good job, and that can be done. There are other private services like the ones under contract to government. But when we put all these regulations in place, I don't think we're going to have anything but a very costly bureaucratic system, and I doubt it will provide service any better than we're getting today. Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you the costs will be so far beyond us that we will be talking about this along with our hospital and other costs.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would say that I support the concept but oppose the Bill. Before I sit down, I would like to move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Lacombe, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, in case there's any question, I would just like to indicate that this evening, government business will be a continuation of second reading of Bill 98 and, if there should be time, the Committee of the Whole will be asked to consider Bill 100. I move that we call it 5:30.

[The House recessed at 5:25 p.m. and resumed at 8 p.m.]

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

Bill 98
Hospitals and Medical Care Statutes
Amendment Act, 1983

[Debate adjourned November 23]

MR. SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. minister for second reading, would the members in favor of the motion please say aye. Those opposed, please say no.

[Motion carried; Bill 98 read a second time]

MR. NOTLEY: You can't win them all. [laughter]

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

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

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the committee please come to order. Before we start consideration of Bills, could the hon. Leader of the Opposition have permission to introduce visitors? Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**
(reversion)

MR. NOTLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my privilege today to be able to introduce some — now I find that they aren't here yet. Well, I gather this is a day we will long remember in the affairs of our committee. Unless they're in the members gallery — but I see that they aren't. I'm going to have to defer that and ask for permission, as soon as they come in, to introduce some people I'm sure members would like to welcome.

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

Bill 104
Treasury Branches Amendment Act, 1983

MR. CHAIRMAN: The difficulties seem to be contagious. We'll proceed with Bill 104. Are there any questions or comments regarding the sections of this Act?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 104 be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman, may I ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition if it's agreeable for us to move Bill No. 100 through committee without the sponsor being here? I'll move it on his behalf.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I would agree to proceed, presuming that the sponsor will be along at some point. I'm sure we'll have some debate on Bill 100.

MR. SZWENDER: Why?

MR. NOTLEY: Somebody says, why? Mr. Chairman, I now note that the people I wish to introduce are in the public gallery. Perhaps if I could ask you to seek permission for me to introduce them, we can proceed with that part.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we'll understand that the agreement was continuous.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**
(reversion)

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I'm delighted today to be able to introduce delegates to the Canadian Federation of Labour meeting, which has taken place at the Chateau Lacombe in Edmonton. They are seated in the public gallery: Arnold Deroode, Harley Murphy, Ken Richmond, Ellen Reynolds, and Jim Kennedy. I would ask if they would stand and be recognized by members of the House.

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

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman, I've been informed that the hon. Treasurer is in the building and is on his way in, so we can proceed with Bill No. 100.

Bill 100
Alberta Income Tax
Amendment Act, 1983 (No. 2)

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is one amendment. Are there any questions or comments regarding the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions or comments regarding the sections of Bill 100 as amended?

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I want to make a few observations on Bill 100, which is now in committee stage. It may just be that we'll have to deal with it in a little more detailed way than some of the Bills — at least the last Bill, which went through so easily.

Since we had the last opportunity to meet on this matter, we have the October quarterly forecast of the Conference Board of Canada. One of the main principles, if not the major principle, in this unfortunate piece of legislation is that we are going to increase personal income taxes by 13 per cent. It seems to me that in committee stage, we have to evaluate very carefully what the impact of that increase will be.

It's pretty obvious that local governments in this province are not very happy with the fact that they are caught with declining revenues. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs made it clear to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association that there would likely be no increase in unconditional grants. So what's going to happen is that our local governments, without any access to a tax base that has growth potential, are caught with the property tax and, unlike the provincial government, can't move in and grab a few more dollars through increasing the personal income tax.

Mr. Chairman, when we assess the impact of our 13 per cent increase, which the Provincial Treasurer is recommending in Bill 100, we have to realize that that increase does not stand by itself. It has to be examined in the light of the total tax picture in the province. That tax picture, frankly, is pretty grim. We're going to see federal taxes come into play on January 1. We have the Provincial Treasurer asking us to increase personal income taxes, though not corporate taxes. We have local governments, very few of which are going to be able to hold the mill rate in 1984. We have the Minister of Education telling us that there's not likely to be any more money for education from the provincial coffers. So the net result is that we will see an increase in supplementary requisition for education, an increase in local property taxes to meet local government expenses, a 13 per cent increase in personal income tax, the federal taxes that come into play on January 1, plus the user fees and increased medicare premiums which the government has already brought into effect — or at least the user fees will come into effect if and when the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care gets his Act through the Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, I think we have to ask ourselves whether or not that 13 per cent increase in personal income tax is setting in place a chain of tax increases which in fact is going to be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The reason I made

reference to the quarterly forecast of the Economic Research and Information Centre of the Conference Board of Canada is that one of the major observations the Conference Board makes is that

Alberta's economy is thus faced with the problem of adjusting to a very different and unfavorable economic environment. In 1982, this adjustment took the form of a massive retrenchment in consumer spending and a major cut in construction activity ... Manufacturing industries in Alberta rely heavily on the province's consumers and building contractors as customers, and when these customers stopped buying, manufacturers were forced to curtail production by nearly 18 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, when one looks at the prognosis contained in the October 17 quarterly report and examines the key indicators, first of all examining the real domestic product, you find that in 1983 Alberta will enjoy a net decline of just under 1 per cent, .8 per cent, where all other provinces have at least a positive increase.

The other aspect that I think is so important if you look at retail sales — and the Provincial Treasurer tells us we don't need to worry, because we've got the highest per capita expenditure on retail sales. But not for long. Even with the rate of retail sales and the rate of consumer buying, as the Conference Board points out, we have a decline which has created a sluggish economy.

Mr. Chairman, we look at the Conference Board report for 1983 — and I don't know where the hon. members of the government have been, but if they examine those statistics, they are not very encouraging at all. We have an increase for 1983 of 2.1 per cent, the lowest increase of any of the provinces in Canada. This quarterly forecast was compiled before the Conference Board had an opportunity to assess the impact of taking \$220 million out of consumer purchasing power. So when we talk about an increase of 13 per cent in personal income tax, I have to say to members of the government: what in fact are we doing to consumer purchasing power?

At the moment, Mr. Chairman, particularly in Conservative quarters, we have the sort of fashionable view that we have the trickle-down approach, only not too much is trickling down to the consumer these days, and that if we make enough in the way of concessions to business — tax concessions, capital cost allowances, and all these sorts of things — there will be all kinds of investment made available, and that will generate employment. What that does is overlook the most elementary part of any equation, and that equation has to be based on the need for some sort of consumer demand. What this tax increase is going to do is completely destroy consumer demand in Alberta. Consumer demand, which is faltering as a result of the information we have available, is going to falter even more by the cumulative impact of all these tax increases which I have described.

It isn't good enough, Mr. Chairman, for the government members to pound their desks in enthusiastic support of this tax increase, although I note that there's a distinct lack of enthusiasm for this particular Bill — small wonder considering the consultation that took place in caucus, which was virtually none. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that if we give authorization in committee stage to the proposal, what I think we're doing is assaulting one of the most important pillars of economic recovery, and that has to be consumer demand.

Mr. Chairman, I think we have to do the reverse. This government's management policy has always amazed me. When we had an incredible boom in the private sector, just before the 1979 election, you'll recall we eliminated the gasoline tax. My, how that bought all kinds of votes. So we reduced

taxes. We reduced personal income tax. We brought in all kinds of moves of one kind or another to please the voters before the election, at a time when we had a boom and, if anything, we didn't need excess consumer demand. We might in fact have curtailed it a bit so that we would have cushioned the impact of this boom. But when times were all out, we were making it easier for people. Now that times are tough and we want to get the consumer spending again, we bring in tax increases that are taking away from the purchasing power of the average Alberta citizen.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Provincial Treasurer and I went to university at approximately the same time and both passed our economics courses, and I think both passed them quite well. It's certainly unusual that he seems to have forgotten all that even Paul Samuelson used to say in his learned discourses both of us had to learn when we were taking economics at the University of Alberta, and that is that you use the fiscal and taxation system to inject purchasing power into the hands of people when you have a slowdown in the economy, and then you try to draw back a bit when you have excess demand. What we have with this Conservative government at the moment is taking all of Keynesian, Samuelson, and various textbooks which have been considered to be the basis of modern economics — we throw them all out the window and now go on exactly the reverse course.

There may be some who would argue, well, isn't that a good thing because we'll have more investment capital. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, as the Conference Board of Canada points out, nobody is going to invest any money unless there's a market. The most important market for any area — community, city, province, country — is its domestic market. Of course we have to strive for international markets, but those people who overlook the domestic market are completely missing the boat. The economic report of the Conference Board of Canada makes that point very well.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to take just a few moments and say to the members of the government that there is an alternative at this juncture. That alternative is going to mean an increase in the deficit in the short run. But I say to members of the government caucus and the Provincial Treasurer that the kind of unemployment we see is so serious at the moment, and we have representatives here from the Canadian Federation of Labour and the construction industry, that unless we can get this economy moving again, unless we can increase purchasing power, unless we can do as the Economic Council and the Conference Board of Canada suggested — deal with the construction industry — people aren't going to buy houses. We aren't going to get carpenters working unless people are buying houses. They aren't going to buy houses unless they have jobs, and they aren't going to have jobs unless there's purchasing power in the hands of ordinary men and women in order that they can buy goods and services. It's that simple.

I know the Provincial Treasurer is worried about the deficit. Any Provincial Treasurer is going to be worried about the deficit, but at this juncture the fact of the matter is that we have to look at how we can get the total economy moving. Small recompense for this government if we reduce the deficit in the short run for a few months but have such massive unemployment that we have the people of Alberta collectively looking for a job.

Mr. Chairman, at times you have to make judgments which even involve deficits. Nobody likes deficits. I think there are certain areas where we should be cutting, and we've advanced those suggestions in the course of the debate on second reading. I'm not going to go over them again, but I think those matters should be examined by the Provincial Treasurer as he prepares

the budget for the forthcoming year. But what we are going to be doing in this Bill is taking \$220 million out of the hands of individual Albertans whose money we need to fuel any kind of consumer-led recovery. That is in contrast to every modern economist's view of how you deal with a recession.

Mr. Chairman, I know that this government wants to hang on to every dime of that Heritage Savings Trust Fund. No one is suggesting that we should liquidate the trust fund. The fact of the matter is that we can't liquidate the trust fund even if we wanted to, because most of it is tied up in rather unimaginative long-term government bonds in publicly owned corporations, which, even the Member for Edmonton Whitemud and I agree, is not a very imaginative way to invest money from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. But the fact of the matter is that it is not the best time to go chasing around marketing debentures.

So we have some difficulties; no question about that. I am not suggesting that the Provincial Treasurer has some easy choices to make. The choice that he is making at the moment, backed by his government members in caucus, is the easiest choice for the government to make his books look a little better. But it is going to depress consumer purchasing power, and the impact on the total economy is going to be bad.

Again, I have yet to see anybody in this province come to me and say that we should increase personal income taxes. Yesterday, when I had the privilege of addressing the Urban Municipalities convention and meeting with a number of our local government leaders in the province. I didn't have these people come up to me and say: you people are wrong; we should increase personal income tax. I didn't have a single person come up to me and say that we should increase personal income tax by 13 per cent. A lot of people say: what in heaven's name is this government doing increasing personal income tax when we have a recession; where have they learned their economics? I have had people say that to me. But I haven't had anybody come up and say: Mr. Notley, you are certainly on the wrong side of this issue; the Member for Edmonton Glegg and the Member for Edmonton Belmont are totally right; you should increase personal income taxes, the higher the better; that's the way to get out of this. They didn't say that.

The feedback I have been getting from people around this province is that just from the standpoint of simple horse sense, when you are into a recession and you want to get out of the recession, the way you get out — not totally, but an important way — is to get people buying goods that are produced within the province. With that in mind, why are we increasing personal income tax? If ever there was an argument for decreasing personal income tax, it's right now. In fact, we should be doing just exactly the opposite of what the Provincial Treasurer is proposing, to stimulate the economy. To deal with the Conference Board of Canada forecast, which tells us that consumer demand has declined — that is a major reason for our unemployment — we have to get money back into the hands of individual men and women who will spend it buying goods and services from the businesses of the Vegrevilles, north Edmontons, Calgarys, Rycrofts, or wherever the communities may be.

Mr. Chairman, I just can't understand what this government thinks it's doing at this juncture. Certainly it might tidy up the books for a little while. But even in the long run that isn't going to work, because if you contribute to the reduction in consumer demand, people have to look at inventory they haven't sold, they have to lay off people, and manufacturers, other than being able to maintain production because they have a market there, that market has shrunk, retailers can't get rid of the material that is produced — the fact of the matter is that

what we do is create unemployment that grows and grows and grows.

I don't want to regale members of this House with the sad analogy of what happened in the late '20s, 1929 to 1933.

MR. SZWENDER: Go ahead.

MR. NOTLEY: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont says, go ahead. A little bit of education might not hurt him.

If you look at what happened in those days, we took the same route entirely that the Provincial Treasurer is proposing this evening. We tried to increase customs duties, we tried to increase taxes, we tried to reduce the deficits of government. But in the process, more and more people were thrown out of work. As those people were thrown out of work, they became people who were dependent on government in the form of public assistance, rather than people who were paying their share of taxes, through income tax, to the government of Canada or the government of whatever the jurisdiction may have been. It wasn't until the New Deal came along in the United States and we recognized that government has a role to stimulate the economy that we began to slowly but surely work ourselves out of the Depression. We were in such a mess that it took a long time in order to do that and, unfortunately, a war as well.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend to the members of the committee this evening an amendment. I think it's important that we ask ourselves what our action in the House is going to do to the economy of the province. The details of this Bill will have an impact on the economy of the province. Therefore, I would like to move the following amendment:

The Bill is amended as follows:

A Section 2(1)(c)(iii) is amended by striking out "43.5%" and substituting "30.8%".

B Section 6(1) is amended

- (a) in clause (c), by striking out "43.5%" and substituting "30.8%", and
- (b) in paragraph (d)(iii), by striking out "43.5%" and substituting "30.8%".

Mr. Chairman, the purpose of this amendment is to recognize the sound advice contained in the Conference Board of Canada report, to recognize that we need an increase in consumer spending, even if that means in the short run that our deficit — I'm not going to be dishonest about it; of course our deficit is going to increase slightly. The fact of the matter is that it is better that the Provincial Treasurer has to deal with a slightly larger deficit if, in the process, we begin to put people back to work in the long run. That's the choice we're in. We're not in the situation where we have easy choices to make, where we can be all things to all people.

This government, which is so skilful in coming in with tax reductions just before an election — better that we look at using the fiscal policy of the government to stimulate the economy when the economy needs to be stimulated; better that we have a deficit when we have 150,000 people out of work, rather than running up a huge potential deficit just before a provincial election campaign when we chase after the voters with their own money.

Mr. Chairman, I think the particular amendment that I present to the committee this afternoon would have support not only among someone like John Maynard Keynes, were he still alive, or John Kenneth Galbraith, who some might consider to be a terribly left-wing economist, but I suspect that Paul Samuelson and the vast majority of economists would agree. I would not be entirely surprised if even some of the federal Conservatives would agree, because at the time Mr. MacEachen brought in

his budget, there were all kinds of cries from Tories about the increase in personal income tax by the federal government. Now that Mr. Lalonde has taken on that responsibility, I think there is still the same recognition by the federal opposition caucus that we have to put purchasing power in the hands of the ordinary men and women in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I would commend the amendment to members of the committee. I think the amendment is appropriate. I think it hits very directly at whether the fiscal policy of the government should be viewed simply from the vantage point of covering the government's propaganda position or whether the government has a role to stimulate the overall economy. In this economy, most of us — it may not include the Amway crowd and a few of the people on the extreme political right, but it includes the vast majority of people, who, I would suggest, encompass the majority of Tories as well — recognize that government does have a responsibility to stimulate the economy.

I would urge members to consider that the amendment will be increasing purchasing power at a time when purchasing power needs to be increased. That in itself would stimulate a consumer led — if not a total revival, at least a significant impact on the economy. While there would be an increase in the deficit in the short run, we'd be better off in the long run. By rejecting this amendment, by going the route proposed by the Provincial Treasurer, the alternative is that in the next three or four months, the books of the province of Alberta will look a little better, but we will be taking away consumer demand. The cumulative impact of our increase in taxes, school board increases in taxes, municipal increases in taxes, user fees, increased medicare premiums — the whole range, the litany of tax increases that are going to hit the consumer will be taking away valuable purchasing power, which won't be available to spend on goods and services. It will be sucked up by eliminating — if not eliminating, at least cutting back — the government deficit in the short run.

Mr. Chairman, if there was any place in Canada . . . No one says it's easy; it's not easy at all. If the Provincial Treasurer came in and told us: look, we're going to eliminate medicare premiums and we're not going to bring in hospital user fees, and the impact of that will be an increase in personal income tax, then frankly I would have to ask myself if the advantages of the equity in the tax system may be worth the loss in consumer demand. But we're getting the whole shot; we're getting everything. We weren't told that last November, but we're getting everything. We're getting an increase in medicare premiums, where other provinces, outside of Tory provinces, don't have medicare premiums. We have higher medicare premiums, user fees. We have the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care telling us happy days are here again because only 35 per cent of the doctors are second billing now. We have that kind of situation. We have increased property taxes, we have increased school taxes, and now we have a 13 per cent increase in personal income tax on top of that.

There's only so much that the average Alberta taxpayer can adjust to, and I just don't think the government has presented the evidence for the change at all. I believe it is time that, rather than taking our leaf from those who want to make the government books look a little better for the next three or four months, we had better look at how we can balance the business cycle over the next two or three years and put people back to work. That is going to be involved, in no small degree, on the question of how we get purchasing power back into the hands of the average men and women of this province.

For those reasons, I commend the amendment I have moved to members of the committee and urge its adoption.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to rise on a point of order. I think the amendment is out of order, for the reason that there is no section 2(1)(c)(iii) as referred to in the amendment. The relevant section is to be found in 2(1)(c)(ii), not 2(1)(c)(iii). There not being a section 2(1)(c)(iii), I would ask the Chairman to rule the amendment out of order.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, on the point of order. If in fact there was a slight typing error ... [interjections] If the government wants to go this route, then I will tell you that the little errors we have in government Bills which we accept many, many times over, we won't be accepting anymore. If the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry wants to make a very small, picayune point, then we can certainly have the thing retyped and adjusted — no question about that — and for the record, I would move the change. But I would simply say that as gentlemen and people in this committee who respect one another, very often we agree to make minor textual changes.

So I say to the Member for Edmonton Glengarry — I know he wants to gain a few points so he maybe has better standing when the leadership race arises. I want to tell him that I wish him well. I would certainly support him and endorse him heartily, as will Nick Taylor and whoever is in Social Credit these days, as well as the WCC. But I do think he's making a bit of a mountain out of a molehill, and I urge that we carry on with the discussion. If the member is very upset about it, we will certainly make the necessary adjustment in the wording.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. Leader of the Opposition explain to the House what the changes are that he would like to have made.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, maybe I could help the House here. Could I move unanimous consent to help the Leader of the Opposition in his drafting. With unanimous consent of the House, I'm sure we can proceed by changing section 2(1)(c)(iii) to section 2(1)(c)(ii) in the first section, under A. Secondly, there's another drafting error. In the B part, he refers to paragraph (d)(iii). There is no (d)(iii). That should probably be (c). Maybe the hon. leader can help us out here.

So with unanimous consent, as hon. gentlemen I'm sure we can help the leader out and just accept the amendment as redrafted. I make that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I certainly welcome the meagre but nevertheless useful assistance of the hon. member. I would not want to be discourteous or make fun of him at all. He does that himself. Therefore I am delighted that he's made the motion, and we can carry on with debate. I look forward to his arguments, trenchant I'm sure, in the pursuit of this amendment.

MR. COOK: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could proceed further. I've enjoyed the hon. leader's remarks about my youthful vigor and interest, and I accept them for that. I assure him that I will be just as vigorous as he expects me to be, and probably a good deal more accurate with my figures than he is. I think his accuracy has been demonstrated in his drafting and, just as an aside, I would volunteer to help him in any drafting he wants done in the future. I'm sure we could clean up a lot of errors in fact as well as in theory. I propose to deal with the theory part in this part of my remarks.

I too have read the Conference Board quarterly report dated October 1983. In fact I happen to have a copy of it here, Mr. Chairman, and I thought I would deal with the hon. leader's remarks. He takes as his source the Conference Board report, and so do I. I think it's an excellent source and one I would commend to him for more detailed study, because I think the hon. leader has used his figures selectively. My dad used to tell me that there are lies, damned lies, and statistics, and I think the Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated that for us once more.

First of all, I'd like to deal with page 1 of the report. In the second paragraph, the Conference Board states that the rate of growth in the economy is going to be determined by federal Canadian and U.S. monetary policy, not the actions of an individual province, that the key determinants are the high real interest rates, not provincial tax policy. That's dealt with thoroughly in the second paragraph. I could take some sections from it:

The medium-term outlook for the economy is one of low inflation and relatively slow growth. While the economy recovers from the recession over 1983 and 1984, this recovery is weak by historical standards, and the economy is plagued by considerable underutilization of its resources.

It goes on to say:

The main reason for this poor growth and improved price performance is the continuation of high interest rates.

Those are set by the Bank of Canada, Mr. Chairman, not by the Provincial Treasurer.

These rates result from an ongoing conflict between expansionary fiscal policy and relatively restrictive monetary policy in the United States ...

I'd like to go on to page 4. There it refers to high government borrowing.

The recession also had a major impact on governments by causing a dramatic rise in their deficits.

Mr. Chairman, the point to be made there is that governments, with their high deficits, are competing with the private sector in the demand for credit, and that demand is pushing up interest rates — the point that was cited on page 1 as the cause for slow growth in the economy.

In short, if we follow the advice the hon. Leader of the Opposition is offering us, by increasing our deficit and expenditures and not increasing our tax resources, we will be doing exactly what the Conference Board does not recommend.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, are we on a point of order?

MR. COOK: No, we're dealing with the amendment.

MRS. CRIPPS: But he hasn't finished his amendment.

MR. HYLAND: Yes he has.

MR. COOK: I'm speaking to his amendment.

Mr. Chairman, what does the tax increase proposed by the Provincial Treasurer amount to? It amounts to \$280, more or less, for a family income of \$30,000. In this province, that's average.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have order, please.

MR. COOK: That amounts to about 1 per cent of a family's income. One per cent is going to be taxed back by the provincial government.

MR. NELSON: Less than that.

MR. COOK: Less than that, actually, as my hon. colleague from Calgary McCall points out.

If I could refer to the same report the Leader of the Opposition so accurately refers to as being a base document for economic analysis in this, the Conference Board points out on page 2 that real disposable income in this country is supposed to rise by 2.5 per cent. Actually, if you look at average weekly wages, not adjusted for inflation, that's 5 per cent. We're proposing to take 1 per cent. So that leaves 80 per cent of the increase in wages in the hands of the consumer. We're going to take 20 per cent more of the consumer's average weekly wages. We're going to take 20 per cent of the increase; the consumer gets to keep 80 per cent.

I think that's delightful, and I think that will help fuel the drive and the expansion that the hon. leader wants. As the hon. leader points out, the Conference Board does a thorough analysis on this, and the figures are there. We're only going to take 20 per cent of the increase, and we're going to leave 80 per cent of the increase in real wages in the hands of the consumer. I think that's good fiscal policy on the part of the Provincial Treasurer.

Let me go on, though, and refer to page 21 of the same report that the hon. leader cites. The Conference Board cites the policy alternatives available to governments. It deals with one alternative which suggests that there be increases in defence spending in the United States. That's rather esoteric. We're not buying missiles in Alberta, so I'll deal with the second alternative, which is the one that the Leader of the Opposition is advocating. The Conference Board says:

The second alternative is quite the converse, as the U.S. economy experiences rising deficits [because of increased defence expenditures], rising interest rates and a resurgence of inflationary expectations. This situation emerges ... continuing concerns in financial markets regarding the federal deficit and the stringent response of the Federal Reserve [Board].

So what would happen? As governments increase their expenditures, as the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting, there will be greater concern in the financial markets, real interest rates would rise again, and the Federal Reserve Board would clamp down again. In this scenario, both interest and inflation rates rise substantially, and economic activity grows by 4.4 per cent the next year — that's true — but by a mere 1 per cent in 1985. So what, in sum, is the Leader of the Opposition's economic strategy? It's short-term gain for long-term pain.

Mr. Chairman, why would the Leader of the Opposition responsibly advocate that when he has read the Conference Board report as we have? He knows, as we do, that that is the result of his policy analysis. I don't think that's very responsible, if he has read the report thoroughly. But perhaps his researchers who drafted his amendments were as thorough in the drafting as he was in the reading of the Conference Board report.

Mr. Chairman, I wonder why the NDP leader is doing this. Perhaps it's political posturing. Perhaps he's trying to be all things to all people so that he can clip this out of *Hansard* and mail it off to all sorts of interest groups and say, I advocated no more taxation — which sounds delightful, except he knows that it's short-term gain for long-term pain. But he's not going to tell them that. He's only going to tell them: I tried to fight off the income tax.

I wouldn't want to accuse the Leader of the Opposition of being politically opportunistic, because I know he's much more

responsible than that. I can only conclude that the sloppiness of his drafting of amendments is indicative of the sloppiness of his economic analysis.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry. I was going to vote for the amendment until he explained so exceptionally well the ramifications of the amendment, and as such I'm forced to vote against it. I thought I'd also help out the Leader of the Opposition, being so forlorn and solitary here. Maybe if he wanted to leave the Assembly and get a coffee or something, if he wants a rest off his feet, I'll stand here and speak while he's away. If he won't take me up on that — I can see that he used the afternoon exceptionally well; he got himself a haircut.

I'm also extremely disappointed that his cohort from Edmonton Norwood isn't here, because I wanted to respond to a couple of the comments that the ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the hon. member, if he's speaking to the amendment, could confine his remarks to the amendment. Then, if he wishes, he can speak on the ...

MR. SZWENDER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I was getting around to that. The Member for Edmonton Glengarry covered a number of points that I was going to make about this particular amendment. I will reserve my remarks for the Bill itself.

MR. NOTLEY: I'm delighted to take part in this discussion. I'm pleased to see that the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry has decided to enter the debate. I can only assure him that I'd be more than pleased to have transcripts of this debate mailed out extensively, including the riding of Glengarry. I can think of all kinds of people in Glengarry who would love to read the hon. member's view of economics — a trifle muddled. It reminds me, if I can use an historical analogy, of Robespierre's definition of Louis XVI — his mind was like chaos before God said, let there be light. As I listened to the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry wade through the economic data in the Conference Board of Canada report and miss the point over and over again. I could only conclude that it's no small wonder the Treasurer is in trouble if this is the kind of assistance he gets from his caucus members.

Mr. Chairman, as I tried to follow the argument from the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry, he said that provincial taxation matters don't really make any difference because that's going to be determined by the overall deficits caused by U.S. fiscal and monetary policy. That presumably was the argument why we shouldn't provide stimulus in our budget. Then he jumped to the position that somehow if we have a deficit, somehow that is going to be relevant. In other words, if you selectively grab economic indices to rally behind your point, as the Member for Edmonton Glengarry does, then if we have a slight increase in the deficit in the short run, somehow that's going to wreak havoc.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of factors we have to take into account. I hope the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry will give us as members of the Assembly credit for being a little more intelligent than the kind of junior economics lesson we received a moment ago, and recognize that there are a number of factors that have to be taken into account. No one argues that U.S. monetary and fiscal policy isn't going to have an impact on the Canadian economy. As a matter of fact, the high interest rates we've seen in this country have been a major problem — not the only problem, but a major problem. The party I happen to represent has raised that issue over and over again in the House of Commons. In a rather unusual display

of unanimity, both the Premier of this province and the Premier of Saskatchewan who led a New Democratic government at the economic conference in 1982 raised the issue of high interest rates and simply following along with U.S. monetary policy.

The fact of the matter is that politics is never static, and I'm surprised the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry seems to overlook it. Of all people in the Tory caucus, I would presume that the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry would be hoping for a change in the U.S. political climate. After all, as a great supporter of Jimmy Carter I hope he'd be urging, to the extent that he has any influence — although somehow I rather doubt that the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry is a household word in Washington, that Ronald Reagan is sort of wrestling with himself tonight saying, what does the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry think of my policy in Grenada? It may be that that isn't quite the situation. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that I hope the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry would be with those Americans, who represent a very substantial number, who want a change in U.S. fiscal and monetary policy. The hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry knows enough about American politics, if he has been following it at all, to know that one of the major positions of the Democratic Party is exactly the reverse of the monetary and fiscal policies of the Reagan administration.

Mr. Chairman, the question is, what can we do in the short run? I think the hon. member and all members of this House should correctly hear what I and other members say. No one suggested that you can solve the economic difficulties of Canada or of this province by the stroke of a pen. The fact of the matter is that that eludes us. But can we do things which are helpful rather than hurtful? Can we do things that will stimulate rather than retard economic activity? That is the essence of the argument that members of the committee have to face when we debate the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, the fact is that there has been a decline in purchasing power. The fact is that that decline in purchasing power has affected everyone from small shopkeepers who are in the retail trade business to the people sitting in our gallery tonight who represent the Canadian Federation of Labour, who are in the construction trade. If people don't have disposable income because they are thrown out of work, they aren't going to be able to buy houses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I regret to interrupt the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but the comments he is making now are the ones he made in consideration of the amended Bill. We are speaking to the amendment now, and I wonder if he could confine his remarks to the amendment.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I am going to do exactly that. The purpose of the amendment is to increase consumer purchasing power. The way in which we can increase consumer purchasing power is to reduce, not increase, income tax at this time. I think the arguments I present are quite clear. At this juncture, with the unemployment that exists in this province, moves which increase income tax are going to exacerbate that unemployment, are going to increase, not decrease, that unemployment.

Mr. Chairman, there can be no doubt that consumer purchasing power is very directly related to tax rates. We all realize that. What we have left at the end of the various deductions is a disposable income, that you can spend, that I can spend, that the Member for Edmonton Glengarry can spend, that any member of this committee can spend. I don't think there is any doubt that there has been a decline in consumer purchasing power. The Conference Board makes that point. As a matter

of fact, the Conference Board reports says that there was a massive retrenchment in consumer spending. It isn't good enough to say that it's just a question of one mall in Edmonton replacing another mall, that the problems of downtown merchants exist because we have a new mall in west Edmonton. That's part of the problem. My colleague and I have no hesitation in speaking out on that issue, but that is another issue.

The issue that we have to face today is the overall rate of consumer spending. That overall rate of consumer spending is going to be cut as a result of this increase in personal income tax. Frankly, what we should be doing rather than playing cat and mouse with people and having a big smile on our face just before an election and saying: here we are just before election time, happy days are here again, a cut in income tax . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: Good strategy.

MR. NOTLEY: The Minister of Advanced Education said "good strategy". I think the university professors would love him more if he gave them some money. They would be happier with fewer smart remarks in the House and more money. They would probably even give him an honorary doctorate if he came through with some money.

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that we are just taking the opposite approach to one that makes sense. Again, it amuses me that the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry should be part and parcel of this kind of approach. It is an Alberta version of Reaganomics, and I thought he was a Carter man. I know that we all have to rally behind the old party. But when it's totally inconsistent with our beliefs — I suspect — I find that hard to follow.

Mr. Chairman, the arguments have been made as far as the people of this province are concerned. No one is saying the choice is an easy one. I fully admit that if we had a tax reduction as opposed to a tax increase, there would be an increase in the deficit in the short run; no doubt about that at all. But if I could use a term that I think was accurate from an economic standpoint, even if it had some problems in terms of definition, from a hero of the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry — the hon. member who was the leader of the opposition until the events of last June, when the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry didn't work hard enough. He talked about a stimulative deficit. That was the argument Mr. Clark used in 1978. Mr. Chairman, you may recall that there were major proposals by the federal Conservative Party in 1978 to allow mortgage deductibility, and there was going to be an increase in the deficit. The argument that was properly advanced at that time by the opposition was that there should be a stimulus to the economy. The fact of the matter is that this is what you need when you have a slowdown in economic activity. You need an economic stimulus for people who are going to spend their money on consumer purchases.

Mr. Chairman, there are two pillars to any kind of economic development. One is that you obviously need funds for investment; no one is denying that. The other is that you need a demand so that there is a market for the investment in whatever enterprise may exist, public or private. What this proposal doesn't recognize is that the market at the local level is going to be deliberately shrunk by tax increases, which we know will not be just this 13 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, I would say that the proposal that I advance will at least nullify the impact of the other increases that we are going to face and will perhaps allow the forecast of the Conference Board for a slightly better outlook in 1985 to take place. But if you add this increase to everything else — I want to tell you that we can kibitz and play games in the House as

much as we like, but the fact of the matter is that if we don't take a different course, the net result is inevitably going to be a decline in consumer purchasing power and a worsened recession. That means that all kinds of people — not the people in this room, because we're Members of the Legislative Assembly and have a tenure until the Premier dissolves the House, unless some of them have a shift in nomination plans. Who knows? That's up to the voters. But at least it's a three-year tenure.

But there are all kinds of people in this province who don't have tenure, Mr. Chairman. They're going from job to job. There are construction workers in this province who have not worked for a year. They've not worked for a year because nobody is buying houses anymore. You can't buy houses; no one is going to build houses any more. We have a tremendous downturn in the construction industry. We have unemployment of record proportions. No one is saying this amendment is going to change that totally. I'm not claiming it will. But I'm saying it is at least something we can do to modify. It is a constructive, helpful move, rather than a move which is going to hurt the economy of Alberta.

I don't mind standing in my place in this Assembly and having any member of this House, whoever he or she may be, taking the words I've said and sending them everywhere in the province — fair enough. They have every right to do so. But I think the proposal of this amendment makes sense, and I urge hon. members to support it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions or comments regarding the Bill as amended?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. HYNDMAN: I move that the Bill be reported as amended.

[Motion carried]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole Assembly has had under consideration and reports Bill 104, and Bill 100 with some amendments.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (Third Reading)

Bill 45 Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 1983

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill No. 45.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take up much of the time of the proceedings of the House this evening. But I

missed second reading and also committee stage, and I have a couple of questions regarding the Bill. I'd like to bring them up in third reading to the minister who is responsible for this Bill.

As I understood the Bill when it was first presented to the House, it would allow utility companies to pass on work in progress to utility consumers. I see by looking through my paper that there was an amendment passed in committee that that particular aspect of the Bill would not go forward. I was a bit concerned as to why this particular amendment was passed, why they would not allow work in progress to go ahead, when utility companies can only pass on work in progress after the utility plant is actually coming on stream. They have an investment of maybe a half a billion or a billion dollars, and it's passed on to the consumer in one lump sum. You get into the situation where consumers are then hit with a 25 per cent increase. If it were allowed to go ahead with work in progress, you may only see a 4 or 5 per cent increase in utility rates at one time.

I wonder if the minister could clarify that situation for me.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, the point raised by the hon. Member for Stony Plain is certainly one that was given consideration. It was indeed part of the Bill prior to amendment. The thought is that that is still a very legitimate matter to raise in respect of utilities legislation, for the reasons given by the hon. member. It is something that, given application over a period of time, might have a very beneficial effect on the rate of increase of utility charges. However, an observation of the current scene seemed to bring to light that there had recently been a number of abrupt and high amount changes for utility users in various parts of the province, particularly in respect of electrical utilities. That being the case, a change in the law relative to work in progress would not change the situation in respect of the recent significant rises in rates.

It also seemed to be the case that for the immediate future, there would not be the likelihood of another very large plant being commissioned at an early date and that therefore the real usefulness of such an amendment would not be as great as it might have been under other circumstances. Also, it's most probable that future projections of needs for utilities, in particular electrical power generation, have rather stretched out and are not likely to be urgently required in the short term, possibly in the medium term.

During the time of the next year or so, it will surely be possible to address this principle again and consider making it part of the atmosphere in which utility rates are regulated. What was thought to be the case now, though, was that little harm would come and perhaps it would be best in some respects to leave previous practices in that respect undisturbed. That's the reasoning.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a third time]

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

No.	Title	Moved by
83	Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation Amendment Act, 1983	Hyndman
88	Ombudsman Amendment Act, 1983	Payne
89	Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Capital Projects Division) Act, 1984-85	Hyndman
95	Municipal Government Amendment Act, 1983 (No. 2)	Batiuk

No.	Title	Moved by
101	Alberta Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act, 1983 (No. 2)	Hyndman

MR. CRAWFORD: For business tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, the Assembly will deal with second reading of Bills 71, 114, and 115. There are a few Bills that might be considered in committee, but because of the absence of some ministers and an

undertaking with respect to Bill No. 81, the ones that will not be dealt with in committee tomorrow will be Bills 98, 81, and 110. Because of the possibility of amendments to Bills 107 and 109, I think it's unlikely that we'd be able to deal with them until Monday. Other Bills available for third reading will be proceeded with at that time.

[At 9:21 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

