

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Monday, November 28, 1983 2:30 p.m.**

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 257****An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act**

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 257, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to permit the sale of beer and wine in Alberta food stores, provided the shelf space devoted to these products does not exceed 10 per cent. Sales would be prohibited on Sundays and, through passage of a local by-law, municipalities would have the option to opt out.

[Leave granted; Bill 257 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the response to Motion for a Return No. 200. I also file with the Assembly four copies each of the visit books to China, Hong Kong, and Japan by Premier Peter Lougheed.

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to statute, I have the honor to table two orders of the Members' Services Committee, Orders 5 and 6.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. LYSONS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly three very distinguished people from Vermilion: His Worship Dave Hughes and his wife, Opal, and with them, Rotary Club exchange student from Brazil, Nelton Dé Nadai. I would ask them to stand and receive the welcome of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe the hon. Minister of Manpower wishes to revert to Introduction of Visitors.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the House, the Hon. James McGrath, Member of Parliament for St. John's East. He was first elected to the House of Commons in 1957. He was re-elected in six subsequent elections, and he served for a period of time as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He is seated in your gallery, and I would ask that he rise and receive the welcome of the House.

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

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, on your behalf, it's a great pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you, 32 grade 6 students from Aldergrove elementary school, located in the constituency of Edmonton Meadowlark. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Kim Falkenberg and by parent Reva Coles. I would ask them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the House.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we have 53 grade 8 students from the rose city of Alberta, which is Camrose. The school they represent is Charlie Killam junior high. Along with them are teachers Mrs. Gilbertson, Mrs. Torrence, Mr. Moen, and student teacher Bob Carter, and one of the better school bus drivers in Alberta, Ken Gerber. They are seated in the public gallery, and I ask them to stand and be recognized by this Assembly.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you, and through you to hon. members of the Assembly, 38 grade 6 students from Normandeau school in north Red Deer. Our students are accompanied today by teachers Mrs. Marianne Williams and Mr. Marv Harris, along with parents Mrs. D. Jacobs and Mrs. J. Spafford. The students are seated in the members gallery, and I would ask that they rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this afternoon to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, 15 representatives of the Committee of the Unemployed. They hail from throughout the province: Red Deer, Stony Plain, the Slave Lake area, Spirit River-Fairview, Whitecourt, Banff, and the Edmonton area. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they stand and be welcomed by members to the House.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Labor Legislation**

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the ministerial statement I thought might be forthcoming, I'd like to direct the first question to the hon. Minister of Labour. Can he advise the House what discussions have taken place between the minister and representatives of the building trades, and what proposals the government has, if any, for re-evaluation or reassessment of Bill 110?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the government has been considering all the representations, but in particular the ones which seemed to be recurring most in the contact between members of construction unions and Members of the Legislative Assembly during last week. Last Friday afternoon I and a few of my colleagues had a meeting in this building with the Alberta council of the Alberta Federation of Labour, which was formed on Thursday and Friday of last week. On Friday evening I had some discussions with the Alberta Building Trades Council president. Saturday I had rather long and enduring meetings with representatives of the Alberta Building Trades Council. Yesterday I had a variety of discussions by telephone, through conference calls and otherwise, and I had yet another meeting this afternoon.

The matters under discussion related to the construction industry in general and the challenges facing that industry; the fact that it is upon difficult times, relative to the rapid build-up in capacity, talent, and resources which it enjoyed during the last decade; and the concerns that were expressed about Bill 110. On Saturday we explored with the building trades representatives a number of amendments which I might recommend to my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I think that generally sums up the nature of the discussions. I might add that there has been discussion about delay in the proclamation of Bill 110. Those are all matters I propose to discuss at further length with my colleagues.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. What is the status of the review committee? I gather there is a suggestion that there be a review committee to examine the construction industry. Could the minister outline to the Assembly what the government sees as the composition and mandate of this review committee?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the committee would be along the lines of that proposed during my comments on second reading of Bill 110. In the first instance, it would involve a review of the relationships in the industry on a continuing basis: what vehicle might best serve as a multipartite forum. It would look at other specific problems, such as the process of review of labor relations in the industry. It would examine and determine objectives for the construction industry, and particularly for labor relations in the construction industry. And finally, it might address other matters that it would agree upon, and report those to me.

In terms of the composition, Mr. Speaker, I can indicate that last week I had the opportunity to approach both the chairman of the Construction Owners' Association and the president of the Alberta Building Trades Council, and invite them to submit a list of names in the nature of nominees from whom we would make a selection for that council. This morning I had the opportunity to speak with the chairman of the board for the Alberta Construction Association and the chairman of the board for the Construction Labour Relations Association of Alberta, and asked them to advance their list of nominees. I have indicated to them that I would prefer to receive those responses by the end of this week. Additionally, I can indicate that I have already received a list of nominees of their preference from the Construction Owners' Association.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question to the minister. Will the committee be composed of equal numbers of members from both the building trades and the construction labor association? What will the weighting of membership be?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, that has not been fully determined. But if it is not equal, it will likely be very near to being equal.

It is going to be challenging to keep the committee down to a size that we would consider to be a workable number and still give adequate representation. There is some considerable potential for duplication, in other words, of one person representing a number of experiences, backgrounds, and different interests. I really can't respond further until I have the opportunity to review the nominees who are advanced.

MR. NOTLEY: A supplementary question. The minister indicated that one of the mandates of this committee was a review of labor relations in the construction field. I note that the Government House Leader has indicated that we will be adjourning rather than proroguing. Would the government be

prepared to consider as an option, rather than waiting for proclamation, that Bill 110 be retained in committee until such time as this new working committee the minister is appointing has an opportunity to review the labor relations aspect of the construction industry?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I have not indicated to any of the representatives of the unions with whom I've been meeting that that is an option.

With respect to an observation made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I want it to be very clear that the committee is being structured not for itself to do a review of labor relations, but rather to advise on the process which should be followed in a thorough review of labor relations within the industry. There is a distinction. It may in fact turn out to be the same committee. I await their recommendations. But in fact I have asked them to recommend what style of consultation, if you will, what process for hearing all inputs from various parties, would be the preferred process, in their view.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. The minister indicated that one of the options would be not proclaiming the Act. Not proclaiming the Act until when? Until this committee has had an opportunity to make formal recommendations? To make formal recommendations as to what. As to labor relations or as to the process or what?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the position advanced to me by representatives of the trade unions was that we should consider passing but not proclaiming. The question then becomes: not proclaiming until what, and for what purpose would one do that? The subsequent suggestion was that we pass and that I submit the Bill to this advisory committee for response or reaction prior to proclamation. That is one possibility. In fairness to all members of the Assembly, I want to be very clear that I indicated that I would raise that matter with my colleagues. I did not, however, indicate that that would be a position which I would necessarily be recommending.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. The chairman of the Building Trades Council indicated his support for public hearings. Would the government consider some mechanism by which that concern, which obviously would be well supported by workers in the construction field, could be accommodated?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Building Trades Council and others with whom I've met also acknowledge that Bill 110 does not really address the major problems in the industry, but rather a very specific facet of a problem. I believe that their interest in public hearings and broad consultation in a general overview is much more in the direction of the larger task than to make the case for public hearings or Bill 110. That request was put to me and, as I've already indicated, I did not respond favorably to that notion.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, one final supplementary question, to the Government House Leader. Given the minister's indication that he wishes to discuss this matter with his colleagues, could the minister outline to the Assembly when it is the government's intention to proceed with committee study and third reading of Bill 110?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, that will depend on the advice given me by the Minister of Labour.

MR. NOTLEY: Rather than pursuing it . . . The Minister of Labour is going to have all kinds of problems with that caucus.

Water Management — Peace River

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my second question, if I may, to the hon. Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications. It's with respect to the Acres-Monenco report on the Dunvegan dam. Is it the department's intention to proceed with further site investigation work and the engineering studies called for in the report?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, it's too early to give a response to that question. The report, which was tabled in this Legislature last week, was received by the department in October of this year and is currently being assessed.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the minister give some indication as to the time line of that assessment? Given the Premier's announcement in 1980 that a low-head dam would be constructed, what is the new time line for reviewing the Acres-Monenco report?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, first to clarify a misunderstanding the hon. member has with regard to the Premier's comments relative to Dunvegan, the Premier's commitment was clearly that we would pursue the various studies necessary to determine whether or not we could proceed with the project. The study which has been tabled in this Assembly is part of that overall process.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I won't argue with the minister; I'd just recommend the *Hansard* in 1980 to him.

I'd like to ask the hon. minister when the government will be in a position to decide either yes or no on the additional studies that the report indicates must be done before any decision can be made on the dam.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I responded to that question in my first response to the hon. member.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the hon. minister give some indication as to when the government will announce the studies? Will it be three months, six months or, in fact, is one option at this stage not to commence the studies at all?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I can't be more definitive than I already have been.

MR. NOTLEY: Certainly no one could accuse the minister of being definitive.

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister advise the Assembly what the report has done in terms of the government's planning for major hydro-electric facilities; i.e., Dunvegan versus the Slave project?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the very purpose in tabling the document was so that all members of the Assembly, and indeed the public, could have an opportunity to assess for themselves the viability of a low-head dam at Dunvegan vis-à-vis other projects that are contemplated in the province.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the minister in a position to indicate whether, as a consequence of the study report, the government has developed any priority

with respect to Dunvegan versus the Slave project, or the western power grid?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the priority was clearly enunciated by me in this Assembly earlier this spring, and this report confirms the priority enunciated at that time as in fact being the right one.

Red Meat Stabilization

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Agriculture is with regard to the red meat stabilization plan. Can the minister indicate what stage that's in at the present time and whether agreements have been signed?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, no agreements have been signed. The discussions are now under way with the commodity groups. The department officials from each of the governments met last week to go over some of the legal details of the plan and the numbers that are being looked at. Those have now been communicated in a document to the commodity organizations, and those discussions are under way. I might say that it's not my intention to sign anything on behalf of the province of Alberta unless we have agreement among the commodity sectors.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In terms of commodity groups, is the minister referring to Canadian commodity groups or to Alberta commodity groups, as such?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it was a decision among the provincial ministers of agriculture that rather than the governments of each province disseminating information to all the groups, the national commodity groups would do that and make sure that all the different organizations within each province, in each sector, would thereby receive communication and no one would be missed. The discussions that I said I've had over the past few days are particularly with the cattle association within the province of Alberta.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. At this point in time, does the minister have any target date as to when the plan would be presented to cabinet and possibly endorsed by the government of Alberta?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, whether or not we would go ahead with the plan would depend on how quickly we get a consensus, either yes or no, within the province. I stated clearly that it was the intention of the four governments that were involved — and I'm speaking of the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, and the federal government — to try to have the plan in place on January 1, 1984. The only factors that could come into play that could change that date would be the legalities of, for example, how many provinces would actually have to be involved to in fact call it a national plan. Some areas like that would have to be considered, and maybe that could put it off until toward spring. But the target date we all have for implementation is January 1, 1984.

MR. KOWALSKI: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the Minister of Agriculture considered a plan that might see him solicit the individual views of producers throughout the province, rather than simply depending on the collective views of several commodity sectors?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I suppose there's always the option that we could consider a plebiscite among producers in the province. But I would think that an accurate assessment of the wishes of the producers in the province could be done through the Alberta Cattle Commission and the Pork Producers' Marketing Board.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Has the minister received approval from the Alberta associations, particularly the Alberta Cattle Feeders Association and the cattlemen's association, and met with all those groups to date?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: No, Mr. Speaker, I have not met with all the groups. But part of the task force that was initially established to draft the plan had the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Pork Congress, and the national lamb people involved in those discussions, and the representative of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association was an individual from the province of Alberta. Input into that was also received from the Alberta Cattle Commission and others, because that in fact is supposed to be the national body that speaks for that particular commodity sector. As far as meeting with every one of them, no I haven't.

MRS. CRIPPS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Has the federal Minister of Agriculture indicated to you, or through you to your department, that he may be intending to introduce supply management if this proposal fails?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, for some time it's been a very clear indication from the federal minister that he favors a supply-managed industry in the red meat sector. We've stated just as clearly that there are areas that are discussable and areas that are negotiable, but as far as I'm concerned, the area of supply management in the red meat sector for the province of Alberta in a national plan would not only be not negotiable; it is not discussable.

Farmers' Markets

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, I would like to inquire if the Minister of Social Services and Community Health is in favor of the some 50 farmers' markets now operating in Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible] have related the question to government policy, except for the identity of the minister to whom it was directed.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, I should have explained. The minister has come down with a policy that they can no longer sell fresh cream in farmers' markets. This really affects a number of farmers' markets in my constituency and in my home town of New Norway. I'm at a loss as to why he has come out with such a policy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame, shame.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Camrose is making a ministerial statement that doesn't exist. [laughter] I'm happy to see my colleagues reacting the way they are, along with the reaction of the opposition.

I guess the question could just as well have been addressed to the Minister of Agriculture — probably more properly addressed. The Provincial Board of Health does have a role to play, in terms of health standards throughout the province. But

certainly there has been no policy by the Provincial Board of Health outlawing farmers' markets or the sale of unpasteurized milk at farmers' markets. Having said that, there are municipalities in the province that pass their own by-laws relative to whether or not unpasteurized milk can be sold.

MR. STROMBERG: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture. In light of this rather discriminatory ruling as to one of the best-selling items in our farmers' markets in Alberta, has the minister or his department had any discussion with our local health units with regard to selling fresh cream at farmers' markets?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that the staff of Alberta Agriculture and of Social Services and Community Health are currently working on regulations and program guidelines regarding the farmers' market program, and this is certainly one factor that's under consideration at the moment.

The question the hon. member raised with respect to having approval to sell pasteurized or unpasteurized milk or cream in farmers' markets relates to a commercial milk producer, for example, needing a certificate of registration from the dairy division of Alberta Agriculture and, following that, an approval from the local board of health would be needed. A producer needs to have both of those before he can sell milk. If you have fewer than two cows or two goats, I believe, then you don't need the certificate of registration from the Department of Agriculture, but you need the approval from the board of health.

With respect to the cream producers, they feel that the costs of complying with the rules and guidelines are a little bit too high to make those necessary modifications. But that area of concern is certainly one that is now under discussion between our two respective departments.

MR. STROMBERG: One last supplementary, Mr. Speaker. If there is a lack of co-operation from the local health units, will the minister's department be willing to get into this controversy and perhaps bring in some compromise?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of points that I'm sure we could debate. However, I would have to say that there are some municipalities across this province that have a pasteurization by-law, and each of those farmers' markets within those areas must comply. There are others that do not have that pasteurization by-law. If they wish to sell an unpasteurized product, they have to identify it clearly, saying that this milk or cream being sold is unpasteurized. That must be clearly identified. So it's "buyer beware".

There is concern by the department of health that there can be some danger in drinking unpasteurized milk. I can assure the hon. Member for Camrose that our two respective departments are working to see that farmers and farmers' markets are able to handle safe products, to make sure the consumers in this province continue to receive the benefits of the best products in the country.

MR. HYLAND: A supplementary question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health. The Minister of Agriculture related some of the unsafe conditions of pasteurized milk. I wonder if the minister has any studies that indicate how badly harmed are those of us that grew up on a one- or two-cow operation and drank unpasteurized milk and cream all our lives?

AN HON. MEMBER: We could answer that for you, A1, but you may not want to hear it.

AN HON. MEMBER: The results are evident.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'm getting a lot of assistance with the answer on this one. By "us", I don't know whether the member means the MLAs in this Legislature or Albertans at large. However, I'm not aware of any studies. I just observe the fine health of some of the hon. members around here that were raised on fresh milk from cows.

I just want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that currently there are guidelines in place for farmers' markets. And I emphasize the word "guidelines"; they are not regulations. There is the desire by some to have them made regulations and, in order to go that route, they'll have to convince the elected members that that is a desirable route to go.

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know if the Minister of Social Services and Community Health is advocating the sale of unpasteurized milk in our province.

DR. WEBBER: I was thinking that the question from the hon. Member for Calgary McKnight might relate to putting ingredients in our water supply, as opposed to pasteurization of milk in this province. However, I didn't think I was advocating or not advocating such a measure.

MR. BATIUK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise whether, after 10 years of smooth operations by farmers' markets, the minister advised the health unit inspectors to change these regulations?

DR. WEBBER: A good question. The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

Legal Aid for Government Wards

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health has to do with the Legal Aid Society discontinuing paying legal costs for wards of the provincial government. Is the minister in a position to indicate if the Department of Social Services and Community Health will be picking up all the costs of legal counsel for wards of the provincial government?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Attorney General may want to comment further on the question. However, in view of the recent decision with regard to Legal Aid not providing services to wards of the government, the department is covering, on a temporary basis, the legal costs for any court hearings or procedures that are in place, until the matter is reviewed further to see what kind of policy we can come up with.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the minister indicate to the Assembly what policy is in place as to how a ward of the government goes about receiving legal counsel? Is it through the case worker as such? What mechanism is in place to provide that legal counsel will be provided for these wards?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, it would be the responsibility of the director of child welfare, who is responsible for wards of the government, whether they be temporary or permanent, to look after the concerns; in this particular case, any legal counsel

for a ward of the government. In actual practice, however, that responsibility would likely be with the child welfare worker.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might add something which might help a little bit with respect to the background of this issue. My understanding is that the decision made by the Legal Aid Society, perhaps not long ago but a number of weeks or months ago, was tied to a review of the eligibility criteria for granting free legal aid to any person, really. What occurred when they looked at it was that for minors they have taken the view that if the parent or guardian was financially able to provide some support for legal aid, the Legal Aid Society should not be providing it on the basis of a publicly supported program.

What happened was that when they looked at the situation where the guardian happens to be the Crown, they came to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that that particular guardian was probably able to pay, and looked upon Her Majesty in that way. Therefore, the new situation is the one the hon. member described. The reason for it is that the guardian, being the Crown, is deemed to be in a position to pay.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to either minister. In the budgeting process that will be taking place from now until the budget comes in this spring, will the Legal Aid Society budget be appropriately lowered and those funds transferred into some other department of government? How will that mechanism work?

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member won't mind my responding that I don't know the answer to the question of just how it will work out. I'm not so sure it's appropriate to reduce their budget on that basis. The eligibility criterion was applied across-the-board, not aimed at the Crown. It was applied to any young persons whose parents or guardians had financial capacity. But the hon. member is quite correct: it's something that will have to be examined at budget time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo, and then the hon. Minister of Social Services and Community Health wishes to supplement some information previously asked for.

Planning Act Amendment

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. In view of the minister's attendance at the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association conference last week, what is his intention with respect to Bill 102?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, the intention is to proceed with the principles contained in Bill 102. However, in order to permit certain members of the AUMA to familiarize themselves with the content of the Bill, the Bill will not be presented to the Lieutenant-Governor for Royal Assent this fall.

MR. LEE: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister looking for submissions or comments by way of representation through the AUMA, or would he accept direct representation from the municipalities concerned?

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I look carefully at submissions that come my way, regardless of their source.

Right to Privacy

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, last Friday the hon. Member for Clover Bar asked questions concerning recent regulation changes under the Vital Statistics Act, with specific reference to the capability of researchers to access otherwise confidential information.

The regulation amendments provide for disclosure of information to all government departments and agencies within Canada and administrative changes allowing the director of vital statistics to make some disclosure decisions without the necessity of ministerial approval. In addition, the amendments consolidate the categories of organizations that may obtain vital statistics information. Researchers are included in the list because of the need, from time to time, for representatives of credible organizations to obtain certain facts relating to births and deaths. Such organizations are typically medical and research related, such as the Mayo Clinic or the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary, to use two recent examples.

The hon. member also asked about penalty provisions for those who inappropriately disclose confidential information. I hesitate to take the time of the House by providing public information which could be otherwise sought; however, I will refer the hon. member to section 47 of the Vital Statistics Act.

There are also policies which govern the release of confidential information. If the director of vital statistics decides there are credible reasons for releasing information, the person to whom that information will be released must sign a letter or form guaranteeing that the information will not be used in any way which would reveal the identity of any person to whom the information is related. I have samples of the documents that are signed by the people who receive the information, should hon. members wish to see them.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Committee of the Whole Assembly will please come to order for consideration of various Bills.

Bill 81 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 1983

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is an amendment to this particular Bill. Are there any questions or comments to be offered with respect to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions, comments, or further amendments to the Bill as now amended?

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to offer a few comments as we get into the committee stage of Bill 81. I'd like to make

a few general comments first of all, and then I have a specific amendment.

During the course of second reading, members of the opposition pointed out that in this particular Bill, we are departing from what I think was an acceptable approach to the delineation of electoral boundaries, an approach which tried to bring together two things: one, the experience of those of us who've been in elected office; and the other, some independent participation by people who are not directly connected with the political process.

Mr. Chairman, the way in which it was previously set up in this province worked quite well, always with the odd exception. Nevertheless, the boundary changes which came into effect in 1971 were, I think, fair efforts. Similarly, the boundary changes that came into effect in 1979 were also fair. The process which was followed by the commission in 1969-70, I believe, and again in 1976-77, worked well.

What we're proposing to do in this Bill is to shift away, for no apparent reason, from a process which has worked quite well. There doesn't appear to be any strong argument as to why we should shift the basis of this commission from equal representation by opposition members to a situation where there are three government members and only one opposition member. But I want to deal with that in a more detailed way when I get to proposing a separate amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I think there are other aspects of this Bill that deserve to be discussed and reflected upon in committee. As I see it, one is whether it makes any sense to increase the size of this House from 79 to 83 members. When one looks at the size of our House and contrasts it with other provinces — for example, British Columbia has a much larger population, about half a million more people than we have in Alberta; yet they have 57 members in their provincial Legislative Assembly. So here we are in a situation where we are going to have 83 members in the Alberta Legislature, with half a million fewer people than the province of British Columbia. We are going to have way more members in comparison to our population than Ontario or Quebec.

At a time when we should be attempting to set an example of restraint, I really wonder whether it makes sense to increase the size of the House. It is the easiest thing to do — less rocking of the boat. But the point of having a commission is that we have a fair drawing of the electoral boundaries, so it is not a case of rigging the system at all. Keeping that in mind, if we are confident in the capacity of the commission to do a proper job, then why are we so bound and determined to inflate the size of the House? It seems to me that what we have to do is simply give the commission the authority to draw up the boundaries according to the formula that we have established in legislation. Sure, that's going to mean that some ridings won't exist. But one of the provisos of any redistribution commission is that some ridings will be altered a little bit, some ridings will be altered a lot and, as we found in 1976, occasionally we have to eliminate a riding. It's not easy to eliminate a riding. Frankly, it's very difficult; no question about that. All kinds of people were very annoyed. It's easier just to add members to the House.

But I say to hon. members of the committee this afternoon is that the most efficient — not the most efficient; yes, I think "efficient" is probably a word I could use here — thing to do, at a time when we surely should be setting an example of restraint, to say that we will eliminate as many of the political problems as we can in the short run by simply increasing the size of the Legislative Assembly? Mr. Chairman, I would argue that surely there are better ways of dealing with the redistribution of seats. I think we could well set an example by saying

that we are going to stick with the 79-member composition of the House — not go beyond that — and that we are going to give the commission the mandate to redraw those boundaries fairly, within the context of the legislation that sets out certain provisos as to the number of voters you can have above and below the mean average, and we simply give that commission the assignment of drawing the boundaries accordingly.

Mr. Chairman, what we are doing here is attempting to avoid political flak by increasing the size of the House. For a government that is already experiencing a very sizable deficit and is telling everybody it can get to listen that we have to set all kinds of examples of restraint — of course, we don't see much evidence of it practised by the government, but at least we get the rhetoric over and over again. One area in which we could set an example of restraint is in the size of this House. As we take the afternoon to reflect upon Bill 81, I would heartily recommend to members of this committee that we carefully consider the merits of keeping the size no larger than 79. There may even be an argument for reducing the size to perhaps 50 members. But at the very least, we shouldn't be increasing it beyond 79.

Mr. Chairman, I want to deal in a more detailed way with the question of the composition of the commission. I think there have been some fairly woolly-headed comments made by certain members during second reading on this particular Bill; woolly-headed in the sense that they are confusing the role of a commission with the role of a legislative committee. If we are talking about a legislative committee, one has to take into account the composition of the Legislature so that legislative committees, where there is a majority government, always have a majority of government members.

Mr. Chairman, all the arguments members advanced on second reading, about the role, the composition, and the membership reflecting the House, are totally irrelevant when we're talking about a commission, because it's a totally different thing. We're not talking about a legislative committee. If this government wants to say in an upfront way, we don't like the idea of an independent commission, we don't like the idea of even a semi-independent commission, and we want to redistribute the boundaries according to the old Sir John A. Macdonald school of hiving the Grits and having a partisan political committee do it, then say so, bluntly and honestly, so people know what the government is proposing. But don't try to slide around it by using arguments that might be relevant to a legislative committee but aren't relevant to a commission.

Members of this committee should remember the discussions that led to the establishment of this formula during the 1967 to '71 Legislature, which at that time the Tory members in opposition were quite prepared to accept, because the old government came in with a very workable formula: representation from the general public, equal representation between the government and opposition. The Official Opposition would have one representative, and the next opposition party would have one representative. Mr. Chairman, that worked very well. Since it worked very well in the past, I really wonder on what possible basis we are now changing it, other than perhaps the confusion in the minds of some of the backbenchers between the role of a commission, which is to be independent from the caucus, and a parliamentary committee, in which you have the traditional composition that relates to the make-up of the Legislature.

So because I think this is the heart of the issue and because it has worked well, I would like to move an amendment. The amendment I'd like to place before members of the committee this afternoon is to strike out (a) and (b) in section 3. Mr. Chairman, the purpose of the amendment would in fact bring

us right back to where we are at the present time, in terms of the composition. Were this amendment accepted, the composition of the electoral boundaries commission would be exactly the same as it is at the moment, which is

2 members of the Legislative Assembly nominated by the Leader of [the] ... loyal opposition, to be chosen ... from the Leader of the opposition's party and, where possible, one from the next largest opposition party ... [and]

2 members ... chosen from the Government party by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

In other words, Mr. Chairman, the amendment would in fact reinstate the, I think, quite workable system that we have at the present time, instead of getting into the partisan politics which government members seem to be thrusting upon the committee this afternoon in the proposal we have in Bill 81.

In speaking in favor of the amendment, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to suggest, as gently as I can, to members of the committee that what you're doing by changing the composition, weighting it substantially in favor of the government, is confusing the role of a legislative committee with an independent electoral boundaries commission. That's the first thing. Number two, you are setting a very bad example. Instead of going further along the road to a type of redrawing of the boundaries which is not only fair but is seen to be fair, in fact we are retreating to a system which smacks of old-style partisan politics. Instead of moving forward to a fairer, less politically dominated method of defining the boundaries, we are taking one giant step back.

Mr. Chairman, one of the reasons that this democratic process that we all are here to honor is looked upon with a good deal of cynicism by people is that they don't trust politicians. They don't trust politicians to do things such as draft electoral boundaries in a fair and equitable manner. One of the reasons the public doesn't trust politicians to do it is that as one looks over the history of North American politics — not just Canadian politics — there's lots of evidence that it hasn't been done in a fair and equitable method. So over the last 20 years we've had a gradual recognition among most fair-minded politicians that if the method of redistribution is going to be fair and equitable, then we have to get away from this dogmatic, partisan approach of: we will defend our own polls, our own seats, our own process, and that's it, regardless of the equitability of the system. That's just completely wrong, because it contributes to the sort of growing public cynicism at this juncture.

I would just add to that, Mr. Chairman, a couple of additional points. I know that it's a truism to talk about the public being cynical of politicians and politics in general. I think our democratic system is under some very severe pressure at the moment because of that cynicism. It behooves those of us who are genuinely concerned about maintaining our democratic system that before we do something which adds to public cynicism, we have to be sure in our own minds that that something is going to be a dramatic improvement. I would defy any member of this government caucus to tell me why loading the boundaries commission with Tory members is going to be an improvement.

Having served on one of those commissions and knowing the way in which the commission worked — the excellent contribution made by our Clerk; the outstanding contribution made by Judge Tevie Miller; the representative of the general public; as well as the members of the House, opposition and government members alike, who worked not on the basis of partisan differences but on the basis of providing what practical knowledge we had ... Of course when you redraw boundaries in a province this large, there are going to be some differences of opinion, but the process was nevertheless a good one. It was an excellent one; it was a fair one. Why then are we

changing it? Why are we running the risk of increasing the alienation and the cynicism among the electorate? For what purpose? What are we going to gain, other than that we have three backbenchers or three members of the government caucus on this boundaries commission instead of two? Mr. Chairman, I just think that's totally wrong.

I believe that when this commission starts work in 1984, it would have its mandate enhanced considerably if we had a fair and equitable representation from both sides. So I'd like to suggest to members of the committee this afternoon that it would be a very serious error for us to push ahead with the composition as has been outlined by the government, when we have an alternative that has worked well. Mr. Chairman, if members of the government caucus could tell me clearly why the system adopted for two redistributions now hasn't worked and why there has to be a change, it would be a different matter. But that is not the situation.

We've heard no reasonable arguments, other than this argument that this is somehow a legislative committee. Mr. Chairman, it isn't a legislative committee. Members have to realize that it's not a legislative committee; it's a commission. Every one of the arguments that was presented on the composition relating to the Legislature was totally irrelevant, didn't mean anything in terms of this particular piece of legislation. We are not talking about a standing committee of the Legislature. We're not talking about a special select committee of the Legislature. We are talking about an electoral boundaries commission. We have not yet heard from the minister or from the legion of backbenchers one plausible argument as to why we should make this change — not a single one. If there'd even been one plausible argument — we're reasonable people, hon. minister. With all the people in Public Affairs, with all the money we spend on propaganda in this province, one would think that we would have a more plausible case presented, that we would have all kinds of evidence deduced by various members of the House who would speak with some persuasion.

But frankly as yet we don't have any plausible arguments at all presented for the change, other than that there seems to be a make-work policy for government backbenchers as part of this government's fight to deal with 130,000 unemployed. That's very nice, Mr. Chairman, but let's not destroy the effectiveness of a system that has worked very well.

Mr. Chairman, I think the first amendment that I'd like to propose to the members of the committee this afternoon is an important one which I hope members of the committee will consider carefully; that is, that we don't destroy something that's working well. Something that's working well is a system that is not only fair but is perceived to be fair, a system that brings together representation from the public at large and also equality between government and opposition. I would say that since this particular amendment was good enough for the Tories when they were in opposition from '67 to '71, good enough before they became so preoccupied with maintaining their own power, and good enough for them in 1976, I see no reason at all why we should make the change in 1983. Therefore I commend to members of the Assembly the amendment that I've proposed.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a moment or two to respond to some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition as he put his proposed amendment before the committee this afternoon. He makes the point — and I don't think it's accurate to make such a point — that the arguments advanced heretofore by other government members have been "woolly-headed" or that there has not been any logical ration-

ale brought forward in defence of the Bill during second reading debate or on any other occasion. I'd like to correct the record.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, while we are in committee. I would like to point out that the population of this province has undergone incredible growth in the eight years since the last electoral boundaries commission. I'm advised that the population of this province has grown over that eight-year period by about 500,000, and I would like to suggest to the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues that it's our view that a growth in population of half a million justifies the addition of four seats to the House.

In advancing his argument for the amendment, the Leader of the Opposition made a fleeting reference to the province of British Columbia, indicating that there are 57 MLAs in that province's Legislature, serving a larger population. The Leader of the Opposition of course is correct in drawing that statistic to our attention, but I think he does us all a very great disservice by not mentioning also that there are at least five other provinces in Canada who have MLA per capita ratios that are greater than that of the province of Alberta, including the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I'm not so sure that these kinds of interprovincial comparisons are useful, but if the Leader of the Opposition insists on making a comparative reference to the province of British Columbia, then I think an equally meritorious case can be made on comparisons with the MLA per capita ratios of other provinces. I cite Manitoba and Saskatchewan in particular, whose rural to urban ratios and rural/urban population densities are much more akin to those of Alberta than is the case of British Columbia.

I think the Leader of the Opposition does a further disservice to the House with the disparaging remarks he made about government members' contributions to second reading debate. I don't have the *Hansard* of that evening with me, but I do have my admittedly brief notations, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that the arguments advanced by the members for Barrhead, Drayton Valley, Edmonton Glengarry, Calgary Egmont, and St. Albert were all quite rational, very plausible, entirely appropriate arguments in support of Bill 81. Although the hon. leader has left during the discussion of his amendment, I would like to summarize some of those arguments for the record.

Members will of course recall the very worth-while observation made by the Member for Barrhead when he pointed out that he had talked to a number of his constituents about the proposal to change the make-up of the MLA representation or the commission to three government members and one opposition member. If I recall his comments from that evening, the constituents with whom he had discussed that proposal felt that the three to one ratio was entirely logical and fair. I suspect that would be the dominant view of our constituents throughout the province.

I would like to remind members that the Member for Edmonton Glengarry made what I thought was an entirely arithmetical, sound argument in favor of that particular provision. Members will recall that he pointed out that although the members of the opposition represent but 5 per cent of the seats of the House, on the commission they will still represent 25 per cent of the Legislature. In fact, as I recall, he even characterized that as inordinate representation, but I think the point remains that it's an arithmetically supportable, logical argument that the proposed representation of three and one is entirely fair and logical.

There are other comments I could make, Mr. Chairman, but in the interest of the committee's time today I'll defer, for the time being at any rate, any further comments other than to suggest to my colleagues in the House that this amendment be defeated.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to support the amendment which certainly sets up a committee that was endorsed by the roots of the Conservative Party, the six original members of the Conservative Party who stood on this side of the Legislature and endorsed the concept of a redistribution committee that would be non-partisan, independent in its actions, and able to make decisions in a very objective way.

I look back at the records of April 1969, when Dr. Horner stood on this side of the House and said that he was concerned that there may have been some gerrymandering going on, even with that kind of objective committee. But the present Premier, Dr. Horner, the Deputy Premier, the present Provincial Treasurer, and other members supported the committee structure at that time, and all of a sudden, because some of those same members now have powers and want to make sure they can protect their legislative seats — so that nobody is able to take away their seats because of some objective thinking by citizens of this province — they build in a system of protection, a committee that's going to have four government persons out of seven.

Some people say that's not right. There are only three Conservatives, one opposition, someone appointed in an agreement between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, and two other persons: the judge and a person representing the Legislature. I know that the Premier of this province will not approve anyone who isn't either a member of the party or who will heel to the party word and direction; that person is affiliated or associated with the party in some way. So of seven members, we have four who are partisan in nature, and if that isn't the roots of gerrymandering, nothing else is.

It's very obvious why this amendment should be supported. I think other members of the Legislature should stand up and support the amendment for that very fact. I have never in my life, in terms of being a member of this Legislature, seen anything where a government with 75 out of 79 members, each of whom can make presentations through their constituency body, through the three Conservatives on the committee — or through two as it should be — to the committee, influence the committee significantly, let their word be known, and then boundaries are objectively established for the various constituencies across this province.

But that's not the way the present government works. They want total authority, they want to control everything, and it doesn't matter what kind of representation the poor people of this province get as long as it's set up so that the Conservative Party can elect members across this province. That's one of the worst established patterns of gerrymandering since the original concept was put in place many years ago in 1811 by one of the state governors of the United States, Governor Gerry Elbridge of Massachusetts.

You'd think that people would have matured and be more understanding, a little more objective, a little more considerate of the general public, and a little more respectful of the intelligence of the general public. But not this government; that doesn't mean anything. All this government has in mind is to control and maintain a position of power through any means, and who cares how it's done.

We have the minister who introduced this Bill supporting the position of the hon. Member for Barrhead, who said that the executive of his constituency endorsed this kind of concept and couldn't understand why three members of the Conservative Party shouldn't be on it with one member of the opposition. I'm sure that when it was a member of the NDP they even said, why should it be anybody; why should that person have even one little voice in this House? I'm sure that's what was said, but the hon. member said: well, we have to look fair;

we have to put on one person from the opposition. But nowhere did anybody explain to that constituency executive that fairness means objectivity outside the partisan political arena. They've put this ratio at 75:4 and said it's fair. That was the result of the last election. Who knows what the results of the next election will be?

When the election is called, every person who goes into that arena should have an equal opportunity to present the best case he or she can and to win the seat. The boundary and the movement of various partisan viewpoints placed by a government or committee that is partisan should not be the factor for some individual winning a particular seat. We say: oh, that can't happen in Alberta; there's consistency of voting patterns across this province. Well, there is not.

I know that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview has certain pockets of support in his constituency that are stronger than others. In terms of some of the communities I've visited in that area over the years, when delegations and representations came to me as a minister at that time and also as an M.L.A., it was very clear what party they were supporting, and that was even before the hon. member was elected to the Legislature. It was clear that they weren't supportive of the Conservative Party or the Socred Party. There was a pocket of votes that was definitely for the New Democratic Party. If we allow that kind of gerrymandering to go on, maybe we can push that over into a stronger Conservative seat, and the poor Member for Spirit River-Fairview or candidates from that constituency will lose because they have lost a certain pocket of support. We say that kind of thing can't happen. I wouldn't put anything by this government. They would make anything happen for their own personal ends.

People say that can't happen. I'd just like to cite an example. If 60 per cent or maybe closer to 70 per cent of the vote in that constituency were heavily Conservative and other in another area, we could have different kinds of results from that kind of voting pattern. For example, if we divided the area in different ways, under plan one this district is automatically going to be a Conservative seat. If we look at the second and third districts — they are the other — it could win, and it may not win. But we still have a concentration of Conservative votes to begin with. So we have a pattern such as that.

We could divide that area differently again, where the first district is all Conservative — towns, A, B, C, and D are in the first district, and it's going to be a Conservative seat. The second district is again automatically a Conservative seat. They'll give the third district to the other party; they may win it, who knows. But two out of three ... [interjection] There it is. Thank you. That's right. Two out of three are automatically Conservative seats. It can happen just by boundary changes.

We have plan three with first, second, and third districts. We have an area to divide. All three seats are automatically Conservative. The majority in each one is Conservative. People say that you can't do that, but we know that in Alberta over a period of time voting patterns are generally somewhat consistent unless some kind of revolution occurs or something unusual happens. It can happen; it will happen in Alberta. But where it's relatively stable and consistent, you can predict where the pockets of support are, and that kind of manipulation and manoeuvring can go on.

So it's very important that this committee look at constituencies and say: what is the best way we can establish the boundaries of the constituency so there is a community or communities of interest for the person who will represent that area; what is the most convenient way in which representation can occur, in which the democratic process can initiate itself

from that constituency level? That's the important thing. That should be the objective assessment that's done by the committee members.

First of all, they should look at a formula for representation by population. We can't have that in Alberta because of the way the population is distributed in various patterns across this province. It's impossible to have true representation by population. If we only had the city of Edmonton to divide, maybe it could happen, but we haven't got that. We have large areas in northern Alberta where there are very few people. We have constituencies such as my own that has 22 population interest centres where people congregate to do various kinds of things. We look at Lac La Biche-McMurray where there are two major population centres or centres of interest. We have a sparsely arranged number of little communities of anywhere from 10 to 50 to 100 people, but they congregate in little clusters. They're not spread out all over the place throughout that constituency. If you took the populated areas of Lac La Biche-McMurray you could put them into a very small constituency. It is a large area with very few major population centres. So in our formula we have to look both at area and the arrangement of people and interest centres. I think that's very necessary.

That can only be done when a committee establishes an objective formula and implements that formula irrespective of who represents that particular seat in this Legislature at the present time. Whether it's someone from the opposition or someone from the government side should be irrelevant. It shouldn't even become part of the decision. If the question is ever asked in that committee: I wonder what the minister from Chinook would think when we set up a new constituency for him — I remember when that happened. I was on the committee last time. We had a very difficult time, because we had to eliminate one seat from this Legislature. We didn't take a list of the members of the Legislature and say: who do we wish to eliminate; who should we get rid of; which seat should we get rid of? First of all we looked at areas of population concentration and decided where the population was the heaviest, where we could maintain the smallest possible area with a fairly reasonable size of population that could be represented by one person. It became the area that now is the Chinook constituency. That's where we focused our attention. That became the area where one seat was eliminated; Chinook then became a constituency.

Mr. Chairman, those are some of the things that are necessary, and I can't understand in any way ... I would have to say that in his few remarks a moment ago the hon. minister who introduced the Bill didn't do a bit of good in terms of justifying the present committee. There was no justification in those remarks. If you can stand in this House and argue, hon. member, why we need a committee that has the capability of manipulating in a partisan way, without really being answerable to anybody, not only the committee itself but any boundary across this province as well, I'd like to hear those arguments, because I certainly haven't heard them to this point in time. You as a government have made a decision. You say we're going to do it that way. Who needs to argue? That's an awfully sad commentary on the responsibilities we have in this Legislature.

I wish Dr. Horner could just reappear, and we'd give him his moment of time back in this Legislature again. As well, I'd like to have him sit on this side of the House. The hon. member would be coming across his desk, and the tongue-lashing that would occur in a few moments in this House would clearly bring the point home that the rules that are being established are wrong and should be changed.

I think we have one more chance to support the amendment that has been presented to us, and then we can go from there.

The other committee worked; why can't we leave it the way it was?

MR. SHRAKE: I think our opposition have got a new word; I've heard it again and again. They've got a nice buzz word, "gerrymandering". I have listened very patiently and very long. If either the Member for Spirit River-Fairview or the Member for Little Bow can really take the city of Calgary, where the constituency of McCall that our good MLA here represents has roughly 90,000 people — that's an area that's going to have to be changed; there's no question about it. Almost 90,000 people and it's still growing, so there are going to be changes. The constituency of Calgary McCall is very near Calgary Forest Lawn, et cetera.

I have waited and waited for this. If these members with their amendment and all their threats and fears of this terrible gerrymandering can show me any way you could alter those boundaries — let's take the figures and statistics from the last election; they're there, if you'd only do your homework — any combination of those polls that would alter the results of that last election, I will vote for their amendment. That is a promise; I will vote for it. You show me any changes in Calgary that would affect that. I got roughly 68.8 per cent. If you wish to give me part of the Calgary Forest Lawn constituency and make it part of Calgary Millican — they got 71 per cent, so I would have probably got a better piece of the vote then. Or give me part of Calgary McCall, the area that's been shifted and changed. They've got to change that; they can't let 'em go on to 100,000 people in that one constituency when all other constituencies only have 35,000 people. Give me a piece of that within my constituency. I think the Conservatives took 75 per cent in that area.

I leave this as a challenge for these members who seem to worry about this gerrymandering. Take the map of the city of Calgary. I have one available, if you don't. I'll get one to you. I have the figures from the last election; I'll be glad to supply those to you. If you can show me any way we would have lost a seat or you would have gained a seat by shifting boundaries, if there had been any changes, it is my promise to you that I will vote for your amendment, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I want to speak during committee debate rather than to the amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. BATIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to try to make a few points, if my voice will allow me.

I thought the six-day adjournment would be an opportune time for me to get the feeling of the people in my constituency regarding Bill 81, along with Bills 98 and 100, but I will just refer to Bill 81. Throughout the four urban centres that I visited, I didn't ask anybody to direct me or tell me what their feeling was. When anybody asked me what I was doing, I said that we had an adjournment of a few days, and I would like to find out from the people.

Of the four urban communities that I attended, about 80 per cent of the people felt that there should only be government members — it's a government function — on this committee. There were a number who said maybe it should be the way it was before, two and two. But surprisingly enough, when I was in the town of Lamont — I had reason to be there; it's outside my constituency; it's in the Member for Clover Bar's constituency — I spoke to a good number. A few there, and partic-

ularly one, felt that they should only have the same percentage of representation that they have in the House. I said that's virtually impossible, because that would be about four twenty-fifths of a person, which is one-sixth of a person. I said that the opposition would probably only have a pair of shoes on that committee. This person from Lamont figured that maybe there is more in the shoes than there is on top of the head.

Mr. Chairman, this is the way it is. Looking back in *Hansard* of November 2, the hon. Member for Clover Bar says:

If we're really concerned about saving the taxpayer some money, why don't we cut this House back down to about 60 seats?

Maybe that's something to think about. When I realize that the people from Lamont continuously come to me with their problems and so forth, even though I don't represent them, having eight towns and villages in the constituency, maybe the town of Lamont should be annexed into the Vegreville constituency. Probably Bruderheim and Fort Saskatchewan should be put into the Redwater-Andrew constituency. Put Tofield into the Camrose constituency, and we could do away with Clover Bar. That would probably fit into the desires of the Member for Clover Bar.

But when somebody makes a statement that we should cut down to 60 seats — when we look back to 1940 when the Social Credit government was in office, they had 58 members when the population was far less than half of what it is today.

Another area that's right in that same paragraph:

Let's just throw in another four or five seats. Because that way, none of our buddies ever gets redistributed . . .

I think it was just mentioned that one of the areas in east central Alberta held by one of our colleagues was taken out. So there's no way there's any area that we're going to be trying to get to protect ourselves.

When we mention that, if we're going to be looking at that saving, maybe we should look at the constituency of Spirit River-Fairview. I see that the member for Peace River has almost a quarter of the area of Alberta in his constituency. Add Fairview and Berwyn, and it would just be like a drop in the bucket. Maybe there should be a boundary cutting it at the Dunvegan Bridge. The other areas, Spirit River and Rycroft, could probably go onto the Member for Smoky River, and you could do away with that constituency. Then probably the people from Spirit River-Fairview would have representation in the Legislature.

The Member for Little Bow made a statement on November 1 with which I can't agree. He is very famous for praising their government and how fair they were. Here he says:

They're not, Mr. Speaker. They're sitting quietly. I think of the MLA for Cypress, who represents the constituency of the former premier of this province, the premier who endorsed the principle of the composition of that redistribution committee. Earlier in the evening, the hon. Member for Cypress had some catcalls and a few comments, but he isn't even here for the debate and isn't showing concern with regard to the historic fairness that came from the constituency of Cypress.

Mr. Chairman, I know what kind of fairness there was. I can think back to November 18, 1970, when the premier of the province, who represented Cypress, for the first time . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. I wonder if the hon. member could come back to the amendment.

MR. BATIUK: I'm just giving an example of the fairness they're talking about. Others were given that opportunity, Mr. Chairman. That's when the premier of the province spoke at

the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and I think he spoke reasonably well. But in his conclusion, he really reamed out the association for asking the leader of the opposition to present him. I was there; I was a reeve of the county at that time. He said: when you want something, you go to the government, not to the opposition. That was the first time that a leader of the opposition was ever called to that convention. However, a year later, the shoe was on the other foot. The fellow who made those remarks came as the leader of the opposition; he had some difficult times to swallow.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot go along with this amendment. I think it should be defeated, and we should vote on the Bill and accept it.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I'd like to . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Red Deer.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to participate briefly in the debate to the amendment. In doing so, I would like to point out, perhaps not dwell on it but re-emphasize the comments of the minister responsible for public relations in relation to the strength of the proportion and percentage of the people in the opposition who will serve on the committee. That percentage is certainly greater than the percentage that they enjoy as elected representatives in this House.

Mr. Chairman, in the Bill under section 12(1)(e), I note that the commission shall establish "the city of Red Deer as 2 proposed urban electoral divisions". As a consequence of that, there has naturally been a considerable amount of interest in this particular Bill in the constituency of Red Deer. I can assure this House and all members that I have not had one representation from one constituent with regard to the make-up of the commission. I have certainly received considerable representation with regard to two members in the House. I suppose the old Jesuit dictum that one should not debate from specifics puts me at hazard here, but I would like to offer some specifics.

It's interesting and pertinent that the 1982 Red Deer electoral division voter population was 29,597. It represented the fourth largest constituency in the province, followed only by Calgary McCall, St. Albert, and Calgary Fish Creek. The 1978-82 voter population increase for the Red Deer electoral division was 37.6 per cent, which was almost twice the provincial average of 19.4 per cent. During 1978-81 Red Deer's voter population increase was 31.5 per cent, again more than twice the provincial average of 14.1 per cent. The 1981-82 increase for Red Deer was 4.7 per cent, only marginally below the provincial average of 4.9 per cent.

So again, Mr. Chairman, the '78-82 voter population increase in Red Deer, as mentioned, was 37.6 per cent, which was substantially higher than the 21.6 per cent increase for all city divisions in the province. Having made those few comments in relation to the growing size of Red Deer, perhaps any comments that I might make in relation to two MLAs, I would do at some risk of appearing immodest. I would like to say that I am very pleased with Bill 81 in that it will provide additional representation for the city of Red Deer, a city which, as most members know, has all of the provincial institutions within its own boundaries.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. The hon. member is getting far off the amendment that was presented by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. McPHERSON: I abide by your ruling. I just wanted to make those comments and would urge that members defeat the amendment.

MR. NOTLEY: I'd just like to make an observation or two on the amendment. I'm sure others may wish to continue the debate.

The Member for Calgary Millican indicated that he didn't see how gerrymandering could work. If one looks at the results of the 1982 election in Calgary, I suppose that is a reasonable comment. Mr. Chairman, the only thing that the hon. member should realize is that people can change their views. If one had taken a look at the 1967 results and if the former government had been of a mind to gerrymander, they could very easily have gerrymandered so that the people who were elected in '71 — a number of whom are even here today and sitting in the cabinet — might not in fact have been elected, because the results of the provincial election in Calgary in 1971 were relatively close. A few discreet additions and omissions of polls here and there could have made it pretty tricky for some of the Conservative members who were elected in 1971. Just because it might not have made a difference in Calgary in 1982 is totally irrelevant. In the election of 1971, it could very well have made a difference.

Similarly, if we take the Edmonton results, it could in fact make a very significant difference. We have my colleague elected by a very small margin; a few polls here, a few polls there could make a difference in his case. Alternatively, we have the Minister of Municipal Affairs elected by a very small margin; the Member for Edmonton Kingsway elected by a very small margin. A few votes here or there could in fact make quite a difference. To suggest that gerrymandering isn't possible in Edmonton is just simply not true, even taking the 1982 figures. My good friend from Vegreville mentioned Spirit River-Fairview; there's no question about that. If one looks at any of the seats in opposition, all four of them are certainly vulnerable to a little bit of discreet — we presume discreet — gerrymandering; it might in fact make a difference.

The suggestion that gerrymandering couldn't have an impact on the results of the vote is just not correct. My guess, Mr. Chairman — this is just speculation about the 1985-86 election — is that by the time it comes around, people will be so fed up with this government that any opposition candidate running for re-election would be in a very good position. But I can only go by what I hear from Alberta citizens, some of whom came to the Legislature today to tell us in no uncertain terms what they thought of this government.

But that is not relevant to the issue of the amendment. The issue of the amendment is very clearly: should we have a system which stacks the representation on this committee in favor of government members, or should we have a fair and equitable method of redrawing boundaries in the province. I have yet to hear any arguments at all, other than the apparent confusion between a legislative committee and a commission, as to why we should go this route.

I note that the hon. Member for Red Deer says that there will be a higher number of members on this commission than we have in the House — 25 per cent. That's true but a significantly smaller percentage than even the opposition received in total votes in the last election. Almost 40 per cent of the people voted against this government but only 25 per cent representation on the commission.

But that's not the point either. Mr. Chairman. The point is that if we're going to have a commission that involves politicians at all, then there has to be parity between the opposition and the government. If this government had wanted to go the route of a totally independent commission, fair enough. Or if we wanted to go back to the old days of a totally partisan approach, fair enough. But don't try to disguise what is a partisan approach to drawing boundaries with just a little bit

of fluff to make it appear as if it's a commission. Even the arguments of the Tories, including the minister, so confuse the two that it's pretty obvious in my mind that what we have here is basically just an effort to return to the good old Sir John A. Macdonald days of let's do it to our opponents; maybe if we can do it long enough, we can keep them out forever. But the day comes, Mr. Minister, when you've been doing it to people for so long, they do it back to you when they come to office.

Mr. Chairman, what is unfair about this whole process is that we had a system which works and which this party was prepared to accept when they were in opposition and accepted for their first redistribution. Now they want to throw it out the window without any reason at all, with the most specious kinds of arguments. If the minister had to clothe himself in those kinds of arguments, he'd be arrested for indecent exposure. The presentation of the government's case by both backbenchers and minister alike is woefully inadequate.

Mr. Chairman, we have a system that works, and I say to you and to members of the committee: why meddle with it; why change it; why frustrate the democratic process? Is this government so worried about its prospects, so worried about the political lay of the land that they even have to rig the redistribution commission? Surely they have more confidence in their ability than that. If they do, then it would seem to me that the amendment we have before us would allow us to go through an important process, not only to do it fairly but that the process be seen to be done fairly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I want to say first of all, Mr. Chairman, that I clearly hear from the government that their basic assumption is that the present members of the Legislature have the right to determine the boundaries of the constituencies in this province. That is wrong. Those boundaries are not the property of any member of this Legislature nor of the government of this province. It is not their right.

The various constituencies are arenas that are established in which free political thought and competition can occur. The people elect someone to represent them for a period of time and, at that point in time, that decision becomes the determining factor in who is government, who is opposition, and the redistribution in terms of partisanship as such. But to think that the members of this government use that as their assumption, that they have the right as present sitting members of the House to determine the boundaries of constituencies is totally arrogant, irresponsible, and not understandable.

I know you can go to various groups in this province and say: we're going to redistribute the boundaries; we've got 75 seats and the other side has only got four; shouldn't there be more representation of the government party? People say: well, I guess. But the other side of the argument is not explained; that is not the basic assumption to be supported in this argument. It's the assumption of fairness and objectivity, and that can only happen outside the political arena, outside partisanship. But it happens that that is not understood in this Legislature. I would certainly appreciate it if the government would sit down and reassess the position they've taken on that matter.

I hope the media of this province will explain the other side of the argument to the people. I know that at the present time that is not being done. Only one side of the argument has got to the general public: it's a committee, and most members of this House are Conservatives so that means that the majority on that boundaries commission should be from the Conservative Party. It doesn't follow. I think that's why the members of the opposition feel that a lot of time must be spent on this argument, even if we have to repeat it over and over again. We must get out to the public of Alberta that partisanship is prevailing in

this House and objectivity is lost, and the people who are going to suffer are the people of Alberta.

The committee we're establishing is not a legislative committee like the Senate committee, or the workers' compensation committee that was to look at a new policy for the Legislature. But we're not looking at a new policy that may be partisan or non-partisan. We're looking at the redistribution of seats, the best way to design the boundaries, and the best ways representation can occur in this Assembly, irrespective of the party the person comes from who eventually represents that jurisdiction. I wish the members of the government would think about that.

The other thing the government is missing in this debate at the present time, is the fact that they will not be government all the time. Nor will the present members sitting in the House possibly be members after the next election or the election after that. There are various ways by which we as members finally get turned out to pasture, and that will happen. But the guideline that we leave in this Legislative Assembly is the composition of that committee. The next government — who knows what it may be — will say: well look, the last government used it; it's a terrific instrument to manipulate the political system; we didn't even bring it in, it was a gift; let's use it as well to our advantage. So that's what we're gifting to somebody else.

The Socreds gifted a seven-man redistribution committee which was to be objective, made up of a judge, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, an independent citizen, two government MLAs, and two from the two largest opposition parties. I remember the debate at that time from a number of people in our caucus who said that politicians should not be involved in that committee, because they will create a partisanship; they shouldn't be involved at all, because then politics becomes involved in the redistribution formula.

The other side of the argument — and I guess this is the side that won in our caucus at that time — was that MLAs understand the kinds of things they're faced with in terms of representation. By having MLAs sitting on the committee, they can give input as to how the boundaries can be established, to set up the conditions for the best kind of representation. Not so they could gerrymander or influence the direction of the committee — however I'm sure just by being there that does happen, but there was veto power. The two members of the opposition could say to the two members of government: no you can't do it. And there could be a stalemate.

Following that, the three people who were outside this political arena would make the decision. An impartial judge, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and the appointed independent citizen could at that point in time establish what they felt was the most objective decision possible. So objectivity reigned, even under that environment.

I recall very clearly — and I was quite actively involved in the process at that time — agreeing to that formula and saying, all right, let's accept it. We went with it, presented it to the Legislature, and it received the total support of the Legislature at that time, but on those conditions so we didn't violate that principle of objectivity.

Our government has done it today, because it protects its ego, protects its power position. There is only one government in Alberta, so we only do things for ourselves anyway. Who cares about the democratic, parliamentary system that we work within and are trying to protect? Who cares about that? Not this government. They've got all the companies in this province so scared off. They've got all the papers so scared off, because of the way they control their funds. Now they're trying to scare the people that elect them into saying: look, if the constituencies aren't a certain way, we'll take away a road, or we'll do this.

Roads are going to start ending at the boundaries of certain constituencies. All kinds of things lead from this type of mentality.

MRS. CRIPPS: Be fair.

MR. R. SPEAKER: You just don't understand it, because you're so close to it.

I'd also like to answer the hon. Member for Calgary Millican, and the challenge the hon. member made with regard to how gerrymandering could affect one of the seats in this Legislature? I would like to give an example of how it can be done under redistribution.

The most likely one of the real victims of this boundary redistribution is going to be the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood. Let's have a look at his seat and see just what could happen. Everybody is laying in wait to get him, and most likely myself too — fine. Whoever it is, we'll work through the system. I've been around long enough. We'll do our best.

The hon. member won by 75 votes. If you look at his constituency — and I'm sorry that I haven't got a map large enough for everybody in this Legislature to see — along one boundary lie polls 16, 18, 17, and 32. In poll 16, the Member for Edmonton Norwood won by 39 votes; poll 18, 5 votes; poll 17, 40 votes; and poll 32, 7 votes. If we slip over a little further to the middle and adjacent polls, not that far into the constituency, in 19 he won by 64 votes, in 15 by 16.

In the present redistribution, polls 32, 17, 18, 16, 19, 15, 5, and 4, which he won as well, could very easily be moved into this adjacent constituency over here, that is now very heavily Tory populated. As I understand it, a Tory member won all the polls. There it is. Just move those out, and it is now a Tory seat with those few polls. It is very easy to move those polls over there. In a city you can draw the boundaries anywhere you want — up and down the back alleys, here, there, and everywhere. Hon. member, there is the example. It's very simple. And don't tell me that doesn't happen and that it won't happen.

I'll relate this to the Legislature. Who gave one of the submissions to the last redistribution committee? Who was very actively involved? Members of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party. One of the members of Parliament who helped and did a lot of work in redistributing the seats as they stand in Edmonton at the present time made the submission to the committee — a terrific amount of influence. We as members had to sit down, though, and objectively assess that. But under the present conditions, let's say three Conservatives, one person appointed by the Premier — I don't know what option the Leader of the Opposition has when that appointment is given — four people out of seven who are partisan look at the submission of very prominent Conservatives. They don't have to be members of this Legislature, but prominent members of the provincial and federal organizations. They were making presentations to our committee for one very significant purpose: to design the constituencies of Edmonton for the needs of the Conservative Party and nobody else. They weren't there for my good, or the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview or any member of the Socred Party who was going to run. They were there for their own purposes. I saw it; I witnessed it — presented with the goods.

The thing was that we had a committee that didn't have to go along with all those changes. Some of the suggestions that were made were instituted. Hon. Member, that's the kind of thing that can happen with this in reality. It could have happened in the last redistribution. In this next redistribution, it will happen. I can't see how you can stand in your place and say

that it won't, because it will. The seeds were there before the last redistribution. The seeds are even going to be multiple in presentation for the next redistribution. I think that's totally unwarranted.

Anybody in this government who is doing some thinking should take it back to caucus and say, maybe we've made a mistake. If you're having a caucus tonight at five o'clock — whatever time of day it is — why don't you take it back and say: I think maybe we made a mistake; in the history of redistribution, I don't think we are doing the right thing; our assumption is wrong. The people of Alberta would praise that kind of change. Nobody is going to lose face. The day after that kind of change comes before this Legislature, I hope every paper and piece of media in this province praises the government in support of objectivity.

But if you want to continue the doomsday trek you're on right now, carry on with what you are doing. In history, you will look back and say: how could we have done such a silly thing? It will even become sillier. As members on the government side, I know you can't understand this, because I couldn't understand it when I sat over there where the hon. Mr. Horsman sits. I couldn't understand it either. I couldn't understand in any way how a Social Credit government could ever lose. I thought we had answers to not only 100 questions but 1,000 when there were only 90 questions. We had an answer for every question. We are in the same environment again, the very same place. Why don't you think and learn from history? Maybe that isn't the history of mankind.

Mr. Chairman, I hope this government will take a look at what it is doing. You can defeat this particular amendment, but maybe we can continue the debate until 5:30, the debate can continue in caucus, and you can reassess what's going on and come back with another look.

Maybe I should also mention this. Most likely if another member was appointed to that committee — and I was on the last one — I would be the other member. That doesn't matter to me. I couldn't care less one way or the other whether or not I am on the committee. We are discussing the principle of the matter, as to what kind of ground rules we are setting up for not only the coming redistribution but the redistribution 10 years from now or whenever it is. I think that's what we should look at. My involvement in the committee should not be part of the discussion; that doesn't matter at all. It is what we are setting up here and what we have to live with on a long-term basis.

MR. COOK: One quick observation, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member seems to be doing what I think we all used to do as youngsters; that is, we were afraid of the dark. You probably laid in bed at night creating monsters in your mind. Maybe at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning you actually believed there were monsters. It wasn't until the clear light of day came that you realized you conjured up something out of nothing. I think the hon. gentleman has created some monsters in his mind, and I am quite confident that he actually believes it. He believes it quite sincerely.

Perhaps it's time for the government caucus to turn the light switch on and let the hon. gentleman know that we have no intention at all of doing anything untoward or unreasonable. I think it's fair to say that the proof will be in the pudding. If this committee were to do something impolitic, as the hon. member is suggesting we might, then I think we would be judged very poorly when the report comes in. That was the experience in British Columbia, where the administration brought in a very unfair electoral boundaries report and was forced to withdraw it. I don't think this administration in this Legislature has any intention of doing anything patently unfair.

I would like to reassure the hon. member that the nightmares and monsters he is creating in his mind don't exist. What he really needs to do is wait until morning and see, in the light of day, that he has created something out of nothing.

MR. NOTLEY: A final comment or two. The hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry perhaps demonstrated the government's confusion on this issue when he made reference to the committee. In fact we are talking about a commission, not a committee. That gets us right back to the difference between a legislative committee and a boundaries commission. It gets us back to the question of whether there should be parity or the normal rules with respect to a parliamentary committee.

I simply say to members of the committee this afternoon that I have yet to hear any plausible argument that the process is going to be improved by stacking the commission with government members, to move away from the parity concept to overwhelming government majority. If there were some arguments as to why government members, as opposed to opposition members, are going to be in a better position to advance proposals, then that's the kind of debate which would be relevant. But we have heard none, because there are none.

The Member for Little Bow, because he was on the commission last time, correctly identified the checks and balances in the system we had in place. If there was any pressure on members of the commission to give undue consideration — and the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry and other members of this committee should know that when you're going through boundary changes, if you don't think those pressures are there, subtle or not so subtle, you really have to be pretty naive. Having sat on the boundaries commission, the fact of the matter is that they're there.

But the check and balance system we had in place was that there were two members of the opposition and two members of the government, so they would counteract one another. If there was pressure by opposition members to accommodate things which maybe were a bit unfair, there were two government members there. If there was pressure on the part of the government members to move in a certain direction, there were two opposition members. And the independent people, representing the public as a whole, were in a position to judge.

The net result was that as a consequence of the checks and balances in the commission's structure, the whole system worked very well and we did not have partisanship. We made some very difficult decisions as a commission in 1976 and 1977, but we made those decisions as a commission. The government and opposition members agreed on what we had to do. It wasn't a case of playing politics. I can tell members of the committee that what you have today is a commission which is going to be extremely difficult to lead from the standpoint of its organization and structure, because you have a political component where there are no longer any checks and balances; there are three to one in favor of the government. So I frankly can't see any arguments at all.

In concluding debate, I want to say that one of the most troubling aspects of this change was raised, perhaps inadvertently, by the hon. Member for Barrhead during second reading stage. He told us that in discussions with his constituency executive, they asked him why it is that there was parity between the government and the opposition. Mr. Chairman, the only thing I can conclude, knowing that the hon. Member for Barrhead is an honorable gentleman, is that members of the government have gone back and discussed this with their constituency executives — they've got input from the Conservative Party — and what we have is a move by the Con-

servative Party to regain control of the boundaries commission, move it away from independence and bring it under the control of the Conservative Party.

If that's the route the government is taking, why doesn't the minister say: look, we've had enough of this business of independent commissions; we're not interested in independent commissions. We want a nice, partisan arrangement, so we'll set up a boundaries commission. We won't have anybody from the general public on it. We have 79 members and there are only four opposition members, so we don't need to have any; we'll just have a committee of seven or eight, and they'll all be government members. Maybe we'll have the government caucus redesign the boundaries.

At least that would be a straightforward approach — good old-fashioned partisanship. But instead what we have is a thinly disguised move back to the good old days of Jimmy Gardiner politics, Duplessis politics, Sir John A. Macdonald politics, Tammany Hall politics, Governor Gerry politics — the whole process of fiddling the system. Mr. Chairman, what the amendment does is allow the members of this committee to make, if you like, an honest Bill of Bill 81, as opposed to the blatant partisan manoeuvring we have before the committee this afternoon. I hope members of the committee would keep that in mind as they vote this afternoon.

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I had an opportunity to speak on Bill 81 when it was before the Assembly for second reading. At that time, I indicated to all members present that I wanted to raise a concern during committee stage study of the Bill. Essentially I need an explanation from the minister responsible for introduction of this Bill. It relates to section 2 of the current Bill, section 2(c) and (d) as compared to the amendments outlined on page 1 of Bill 81. The rules under the present Bill — and they'll be continued under the new Bill — are that the Members of the Legislative Assembly from the government party are to be chosen by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. In essence, that's a collective decision made in Executive Council, a collective decision made by upwards of 30 people who will get together and look at all Members of the Legislative Assembly who are representative of the government side. The decision previously was two members. Now three members will be asked to undertake the rather onerous but honorable responsibility of assisting the commission in determining the new electoral boundary divisions for the province of Alberta.

On the other hand, when looking at the proposed number 3 on page 1 of Bill 81, it says there should be "1 member of the Legislative Assembly nominated by the Leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition". To the minister: the concern I have is that I simply don't understand how it is that three government members on this commission would be asked to serve not by the leader of the government party but as a result of the rather in-depth discussion, I would think, in Executive Council, and only after there was a collective decision of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. On the other hand, we have a situation where the one member from the opposition party is to be nominated and selected by only one person, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

I have great respect for the member who currently serves the people of Alberta as the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. My concern and my question is: I wonder where the fairness is, and how can we all be assured that there will be fair play when there are four members currently represented in the Legislative Assembly in the opposition and only one, the

Leader of the Opposition, will nominate their representative on the commission? It seems to me another alternative might have been to consider the fact that the opposition member on the commission be the result of a collective decision by all four members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, in much the same way that the three members from the government side are the result of a collective decision by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I want to re-emphasize that it's not because of any disrespect to the member who now leads the Official Opposition; it is a result of a concern I have. I think fairness is important.

I have no inclination at this time to know whether the minister responsible for the Bill has in fact given any thought to this concern I raise. But I think one has to take a look at the other members who sit in the opposition. I'm concerned that perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might choose to ignore the experience that's been brought to this Assembly by the Member for Little Bow, a member who has been in this Assembly for more than 20 years, who is the dean of the Legislative Assembly. I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition would consider having the Member for Little Bow as his nominee on this commission. By the same token, the second most senior person in the opposition is the Member for Clover Bar. Certainly one would have to consider that experience is important when we deal with these matters. We've certainly heard it discussed on a number of occasions in the past. I really wonder if the Leader of the Opposition would consider nominating the Member for Clover Bar to this commission.

I think it's an important question that I have to address to you, sir. It's a question to which I want you to respond: if in fact there is an alternative to simply having a one-man rule in the opposition. There is an alternative outlined in the Bill in terms of how the three government representatives are to be appointed. Again, not to be repetitious, it's the result of a collective decision of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

I suppose one would say that possibly there could be no decision forthcoming from the Leader of the Opposition because currently there are two members of the same caucus and two members of the Independent caucus on that side. Perhaps if the Leader of the Opposition looked at all four, he would say: we're going to have a discussion, fellows. The Member for Little Bow and the Member for Clover Bar might say, well we're a team. The Member for Edmonton Norwood and the Member for Spirit River-Fairview would say, we're a team, and we can't really arrive at getting a view on this. Perhaps an alternative would be to say that the member with seniority in the House on the opposition side would clearly be the opposition's nominee to sit on the commission.

I say this because I don't want to see the Leader of the Opposition being put in a difficult position with respect to the greatest degree of dignity and honor he will have to bring if in fact he does choose to nominate himself to sit on the electoral boundaries commission. I know that the man is above reproach, and that temptation would never fall within his portfolio of alternatives. But quite clearly, other members have alluded to the fact that a colleague of his, who represents Edmonton Norwood, was elected to the Assembly with a plurality that was not very significant. If in fact, sir, you cannot assure me that the Leader of the Opposition will resist any temptation to look at some of these little adjustments, then perhaps I'd be more reassured.

But my basic point to the minister essentially is this, Mr. Chairman: was the alternative considered of asking the members of the opposition to collectively work together to submit their nominee to the Legislature for appointment to the electoral boundaries commission, or was a concern somehow being

raised by the minister saying that on the one side it's okay for the government to have a collective decision but, on the other hand, just the Leader of the Opposition should make that decision because we're somehow bending over backwards to try to assist and to prove our fair play to all the people of Alberta? Again, it is with fairness that I'm most concerned.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of things to say with regard to this Bill, and I hope a lot of things are said by the people of Alberta either after redistribution or during redistribution. I think that's very, very necessary. But the whole problem as to who represents the opposition is raised with the introduction of the amendment. Under the former rules, there was no problem. When you appointed two members of the opposition, they were

2 members of the Legislative Assembly nominated by the Leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, to be chosen one from the Leader of the opposition's party and, where possible, one from the next largest opposition party in the Legislative Assembly.

It made it very simple, very straightforward, and answered the question. There was no choice. I would certainly assume that in assessing who will represent this side of the House, the Leader of the Loyal Opposition would want to be on that committee to know that his or her interests are protected in the process. The leader's party always hopes it will become government. If there is any way it can observe the redistribution of seats, it is going to do so. So I think that we on this side of the House, my hon. colleague from Clover Bar and myself, are quite realistic and practical in terms of that type of assignment, and know that the Leader of the Opposition certainly would take that approach to who is chosen from this side of the House.

Besides this area of the composition of the commission, I think the Bill itself leaves much to be desired in other areas. The government itself has never offered an explanation as to who assessed the number of seats in the Legislature and why we should increase the number to 84. I'm sure it would be a little difficult to take away some of the present urban seats and put them into rural Alberta so there's a relatively equal distribution between rural and urban seats. I know this government is afraid that if they break that principle they'll live with the consequences, because rural people take an interest in their politics and boundaries, and who represents them becomes a very important question.

If we had to reduce the number of rural seats by two or three — with the growth of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, that would happen if you take into consideration a formula of representation by population — and we maintain 79 seats, I'm not sure who would be the victims. Most likely the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview and I would be the first point of interest in that discussion. But that would be it. The government has chosen not to go that way, and wishes to add more seats to the Legislature. I think that when we do that we should consider the cost element. We must recognize there is an increase in cost. I did a very quick assessment of what it costs to have an MLA sit in the Legislature this year, and it's a 'guesstimate': salary, \$24,000; tax-free expense allowance, \$7,000; office in a constituency, \$14,000; PWA travel card, about \$5,000; committee salary, \$2,000; office space, \$3,000; support staff, \$2,000; gas credit cards, \$2,500. On average, taking into account the factors I have just enumerated, it costs approximately \$60,000 per member in this Legislature. That means that to add four new MLAs, we're adding a cost to government of some \$240,000.

Certainly the question has to be raised: will we have that much better government and representation? I don't know. When I sit on this side of the Legislature, I become a little alarmed that we have members — and rightly so; they have a right to do this — who enter into very little debate and very few question periods. It has happened historically too. Maybe their total focus is getting things for their constituency, and constituency representation outside the House. That's their own business, but a very important part of an MLA's responsibility is debate in this Legislature. So do we need four more people to do that? That question should be raised. Sometimes I feel the way that matter could have been handled, rather than it being a political discussion and political decision as it was in this House, is that that could have been a question handed to the commission. We could have said: we would like you to determine the number of seats adequate to represent the people of Alberta.

It concerns me that if we pass the first part of this Act we have a partisan commission that would then make a partisan decision with regard to the number in this Legislature, and that's what would follow. But I feel that would have been one very objective way of handling it. As well, the government or party in power, the Conservative Party in this province, which is quite concerned about its political future, could have left that in the hands of another commission. It wouldn't have been the fault of the government if we'd eliminated so many seats in this province, or had to change the distribution of rural and urban seats. It would have been the responsibility of a third party commission, and rightly so. Maybe that's the way it should be. All the people of Alberta would have had input into this commission. The commission would have looked at it on an objective basis, made a decision, and then gone from there. But I guess money really wasn't one of the considerations in this matter. It was how to eliminate as much political flak as possible, and we now have four more seats added.

Just to get a few more viewpoints on the matter, I think a discussion of that kind would be worth while in the Legislature at this time, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to move an amendment to that effect. I'd like to amend the Bill as follows:

In section 4,

(1) by striking "83" and substituting "79" . . .

I do that for the reason I have just enumerated. That is the present size of the House, and it would be one of the subjects the commission could look at.

Secondly, I recommend:

(2) by striking clauses (a) and (b) and substituting the following: "a number of proposed urban electoral divisions and a number of proposed rural electoral divisions to be determined by the Commission."

In other words, this would be a matter the commission would look at. And why not? They can do it without political intervention or political interference, on a very objective basis.

My colleague has made a strong argument in this Legislature that there should be 79 seats. I'm not sure if he said there should be fewer. That argument could be presented directly to the commission by my hon. colleague, his constituents, and other interested people. They would have access to that body.

This Legislature says that we represent all Albertans. If somebody wants to come and talk to us as MLAs, they can come and talk to us and we will transmit their point of view in this Legislature. But I'd have to say that I've heard only one side of the story in terms of how the hon. Member for Barrhead feels about the Bill. He says: my constituents feel this way, my executive feels this way. But I'm sure there are people in his constituency that feel the other way. A commission could

hear both sides of the story and debate it. They could debate the number of seats — how many, how few, how many more — and it would be done on an objective basis as to how representation can take place in the best possible manner. I think that would be proper.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move that amendment. It's being distributed to all members. It says very clearly, first, let's leave them as they are, and we give the option to the commission to determine the best number of seats to make representation best in this Legislature.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, when I see a proposal such as the one advanced by the hon. Member for Little Bow, which would save about \$250,000 a year, or \$1 million over a legislative term, and a government composed of caucus members that are telling school boards there is no more money and local governments that there's no increase in grants, that are going around poor-mouthing from one end of the province to the other, I must confess that it surprises me that nobody seems interested in even debating a proposal that would save \$1 million over a legislative term.

Mr. Chairman, I think that's one of the things we have to address. Is the quality of government going to be advanced in this Assembly by increasing the size of the Legislature? The answer is clearly no. All that is avoided by this million dollars over four years is a little bit of flak. And of course since we have politicized the boundaries commission, there's no question that the political flak is going to be directed totally at the Conservative Party. It wouldn't have been before because of the old composition. People would have said, it was an independent commission. So when we got into difficulties in '76 over the elimination of one riding, it wasn't a matter of the party in power taking the flak; the commission took the flak because it was an independent commission and was seen to be independent.

This commission that the hon. minister of propaganda is bringing in is not going to be seen as independent. It's going to be seen as an outreach department of the Conservative Party. Any problems that arise are going to be blamed 100 per cent on the Conservative Party. The members of the government caucus have made that decision with section 3.

Mr. Chairman, we have dealt with my amendment, and it appears that government members are blind. They're going to support an unfair method of assigning composition of the commission, notwithstanding all the logic to the contrary. The fact now is: are we going to let the government off the hook by simply increasing the size of the Legislature? Is saving a little bit of political embarrassment for this newly politicized commission worth \$1 million over four years? That's a lot of money. I would say to members of the committee, no it isn't.

I don't see any reason at all why there has to be an increase in the size of the House, especially when you look at other jurisdictions and they have smaller Houses than we do. The minister shakes his head. Well let's just take a look. Of the larger provinces, B.C. has 57 members, 2.5 million people. [interjection] Saskatchewan has a larger one, yes, because it's a very much smaller province and that's ... But if you look at Ontario with 125 members and 8 million people, Mr. Minister—Quebec has almost 8 million people and 112 members, if my memory serves me right. So you look at the other larger provinces, and if the Ontario Legislature were to have the same ratio of seats that we have in the Alberta Legislature, by my reckoning they would have about 300 members if they were to follow the formula of the Alberta Tories.

Mr. Chairman, what arguments can the minister present at a time of restraint, at a time when we are telling everybody,

whether they want to listen or not, that we have no money, the bank is dry, we're almost flat broke — the way government ministers tell it, it won't be long before government cheques start to bounce because we're in such a desperately bad position. Yet we can get ourselves into a situation where we spend a million dollars more than is necessary.

As I understand the amendment, basically all the Member for Little Bow is saying is: let's work with the same numbers we have at the moment — 79 seats — and we will then ask the commission ... If hon. members have read the original legislation, there is a formula for determining the urban and rural seats. All we're saying is that instead of the numbers being prescribed in this Bill, the numbers will be determined by the commission according to the rules we have set out in the legislation. I think that's the most reasonable thing to do.

I think it's also fair to say that if we don't go this route there's going to be a fair amount of controversy, because there's no doubt that some ridings will have to be eliminated. And because this government has politicized the commission 100 per cent, 100 per cent of the flak is going to be directed toward the Conservative government. I think a lot of it will be directed toward the hon. minister's office. He will probably be getting bushels of mail, because whenever anything goes wrong and people are mad at a riding being eliminated, we know who it will be directed to. We know who sponsored the Bill; fair enough. Now he is going to have a very weighty position. At least he is going to be spending a lot of time answering letters. He will probably have to bring in three or four more secretaries to answer all the letters from people who are mad at the Conservative Party. Maybe we'll have to hire another two or three former administrative officers of the Tory Party just to help out the minister in his office answering people who are mad at the government, because the government is going to be blamed totally for everything that goes wrong with the redistribution process.

Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, the fact that the minister may be a little uneasy is small price to pay to save \$1 million over an entire Legislature. Therefore I say to you, why should members of this committee at least not debate the merits of keeping the present size when there's a million dollars at stake? Or have we gotten to the C. D. Howe position. He said, what's a million? Every opportunity it gets, this big government squanders public money on frills, extravagance. What's a million? There are a lot of people who say that a million is an awful lot.

When we have a process in the amendment here by which the commission can redraw the boundaries fairly, if the minister and his colleagues in the House really believe this is a fair approach — I don't think they do; I think the hon. Member for Barrhead let the cat out of the bag a moment ago on just how partisan this whole exercise is, as he did last time we debated it — then for heaven's sake stay with the 79 and let the commission determine the number of urban and rural ridings, with all the weight of objectivity and fairness and everything else that the Member for Edmonton Glengarry and the minister tried to imply. Or will the tight, iron discipline of the caucus even allow the commission that much latitude? For a million dollars, I say let's try to use a little restraint once in a while and save the taxpayers a few dollars.

I would guess at this stage that if you were to ask the majority of Albertans, the four or five thousand people who were in front of the Legislature at noon, whether we could save a million dollars and have four fewer members, or 79 instead of 83, they would all agree overwhelmingly. We could have a Conservative cabinet minister come before a group of assembled Albertans and get cheered for once. Maybe we could even have the

minister go out and make that announcement. It would be very nice. He'd get lots of applause, instead of the greetings that more and more cabinet ministers are getting these days from Albertans as they have to deal with the double standards of this government.

The fact is that here is a reasonable proposal by the Member for Little Bow that is going to save a million dollars. Representing Spirit River-Fairview as I do, I for one think that we're concerned about making taxpayers' money go as far as possible and we should at least entertain it. Frankly, I endorse the principle, and if this government has any confidence in the objectivity of this commission as it's now established, they should be prepared to agree to it as well.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question on the amendment by the Member for Little Bow?

[Mr. Deputy Chairman declared the amendment lost. Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Buck	Notley	Speaker, R.
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Against the motion:

Alexander	Isley	Paproski
Anderson	Johnston	Payne
Batiuk	Jonson	Reid
Bogle	Koper	Russell
Bradley	Kowalski	Shaben
Campbell	Koziak	Shrake
Clark	Lee	Sparrow
Cook	Lysons	Stevens
Cripps	McPherson	Stiles
Diachuk	Moore, M.	Stromberg
Embury	Moore, R.	Szwender
Gogo	Musgreave	Thompson
Harle	Musgrove	Webber
Hiebert	Nelson	Woo
Horsman	Oman	Young
Hyland	Osterman	Zip
Hyndman	Pahl	

Totals:	Ayes — 3	Noes — 50
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DR. BUCK: When we're looking at the Bill in committee, Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring up one or two points that I'm sure the government members, especially the backbenchers, have either inadvertently missed or intentionally want to overlook. Hon. minister, quit waving your arms around like that. You'll get the signals crossed. The boss isn't here, so there's no use asking for help.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I have great difficulty understanding the government's philosophy on why they want to change the constituency and the membership on the commission. If there's ever a time when you want to appear impartial, the redistribution of boundaries is basically that time. I would really like someone — there must be somebody on the government side — to indicate to us why they are changing the composition of the members on the commission. There are learned gentlemen over there: the Provincial Treasurer, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Member for Stettler, and all the fraternity in the profession of law. How could they possibly allow the minister to bring in a Bill where you don't have equal numbers on the commission from the opposition

and the government? Even the hon. Member for Lethbridge East knows that the debits and the credits have to balance.

Mr. Chairman, there are two things that really bother me: why they are doing it; and why the defenders of fairness and justice in 1979, the learned members from the academic fraternity over at the university, the political scientists, are not up in arms? What has happened? What has changed from 1969 to 1983, so this is not an issue with those people at the university? Why is it not an issue with the press? Has this government lulled the people of this province to sleep, or are the people of this province saying, there's just no use fighting city hall?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Chairman, could I interrupt the hon. member? In view of the time, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration some Bills and reports progress on Bill 98.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is proposed this evening that the members assemble in Committee of the Whole for consideration of certain Bills on the ...

AN HON. MEMBER: That's the wrong Bill.

MR. PURDY: I've had some coaching from members of the front bench. The number that was written on the list the Clerk gave me was 98. It should be 81.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree to reverse the previous acceptance and to substitute the acceptance of the amended report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is proposed this evening that the members assemble in Committee of the Whole for consideration of the Bill recently dealt with in committee, and in addition — perhaps not necessarily in this order — Bills 98, 71, 114, and 115 if that is possible during the course of the evening. I move that when members assemble this evening they do so in Committee of the Whole. I would also move that we call it 5:30.

MR. SPEAKER: On the two motions moved by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it also agreed that the Assembly is adjourned until the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole reports?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The House recessed at 5:29 p.m.]

[The Committee of the Whole met at 8 p.m.]

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

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Committee of the Whole Assembly will please come to order.

Bill 81
Electoral Boundaries Commission
Amendment Act, 1983
(continued)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any further comments on this Bill?

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I certainly wouldn't want hon. members to rush through this piece of legislation. I thought I would take just a moment or two to respond to the hon. Member for Barrhead. In my view, the hon. Member for Barrhead has demonstrated quite an incredible degree of public spiritedness by letting the Conservative cat out of the bag. He was the one who told us during second reading that he discussed this matter with his constituency executive. That strikes me as being a pretty partisan thing. Any time that I discuss a matter with my constituency executive, I am not discussing it with all the members of my riding, but I am discussing it with a select group of people on the constituency executive of the New Democratic Party of Spirit River-Fairview. So the hon. Member for Barrhead had been doing the same; he had been discussing this matter with members of his constituency executive. They indicated to him that he had better get right back to this Legislature and change the rules of the game, because they didn't like the idea that there was parity between the government and the opposition.

When the hon. Member for Barrhead indicated to us that he had been discussing it with his constituency executive, Mr. Chairman, we knew of course that he probably wasn't alone but that in fact there might be political overtones to this change that maybe some of us in our naivete — you know, we still have wistful views about this government from time to time. Perhaps at first it wouldn't have occurred to us that there might be political overtones. But fortunately the Member for Barrhead rescued us from that kind of naivete, and we now know what the facts of life are. I appreciate his candid discussion in second reading.

Today in committee stage, he raised another very important question. He was troubled by how the opposition member would be appointed to this committee. I must confess to the hon. Member for Barrhead that I am troubled too. The way in which the legislation was drafted, there was no problem at all, because there were two representatives. What the legislation said before was that the appointment should come at the behest of the Leader of the Opposition, but the Leader of the Opposition would appoint one person from the Official Opposition and one from the other recognized opposition group. So in 1976 there was no difficulty for Mr. Clark, and in 1967 or '68 there was no difficulty for Mr. Loughheed, because the legislation was clear. The legislation said it would be appointment by the Leader of the Opposition, but it set out the ground rules. The ground rules were fair and eminently reasonable, so my colleague and I could discuss who would be the representative

from the Official Opposition and Mr. Speaker and Dr. Buck could discuss who would be the representative from the Independents.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, that would have been eminently reasonable in another sense too. If you take the results of the last provincial election, of the 38 per cent of the people who voted against this government, 19 per cent voted for the NDP and 19 per cent voted for all the other groups that could properly be represented by the two Independent members in the Legislative Assembly. So we would have had eminent fairness. But it wasn't the opposition that changed the rules of the game. One of the reasons we are standing in our places to challenge what this government is doing is that the government has decided to change the rules of the game. It is the government that is saying there will be three government members and one opposition.

Mr. Chairman, if the hon. Member for Barrhead had been genuinely concerned about who in fact would be appointed from the opposition, I would have thought that he might have suggested an amendment. Even if we have three government members now — and I think that's one too many. But even if the government is going to insist on that kind of principle, which is wrong, what he might have done, at least as far as the opposition representation on the commission is concerned, is gone back to the drafting in the original legislation. So it would have been very easy for the Leader of the Official Opposition to appoint two people: one chosen by one group, one chosen by another.

Mr. Chairman, that would have been an acceptable compromise. It still would have got away from the important principle that we think is vital; that is, that there's parity between government and opposition. But if it were a matter of some concern — I noticed that the Member for Barrhead was presenting it to the House with some degree of mental anguish. I could see the troubled look on his face, and I appreciate that. I know that he must have been going through mental anguish as to how the Official Opposition Leader would make this choice. The fact of the matter is that there's a very simple answer. If government members wish to help us in the opposition, all they need to do is bring in a simple amendment to reinstate the language of the original Act. That would present no overwhelming difficulties for this government, great big majority government that it is, and it would bring back a central principle of fairness.

Mr. Chairman, I for one am yet to be convinced, as I wasn't convinced this afternoon, as I wasn't convinced during second reading, that there's anything behind this move to change the rules, other than blatant partisanship and blind loyalty to making it easier for the Tory party to win the next election. As I said, I think much of it is really beyond rigging the boundaries, because this government is doing such a dreadful job that they are doing the work of the opposition for us. There's no question about that.

I just want to say to hon. members of the government that those people who are genuinely concerned about saving the odd seat here or there, or defeating somebody through gerrymandering, might look at what has happened in other provinces where this sort of tactic has been tried. We're not dealing in the 1890s; people have a better understanding of their rights in this day and age. All we have to do is look outside today and we see the understanding the construction workers have about their rights. They're not afraid to express their views about their rights to this government.

I think it's worth noting that from 1967 to 1971, there were major changes in the boundaries in the province of Saskatchewan by the Liberal Premier, Mr. Thatcher. I remember talking

to some of my colleagues in the NDP who were bewailing the fact that the boundaries had been so gerrymandered that there wasn't a hope of winning the election. The Liberals could actually lose the election and still form the government, because they had used good old-fashioned gerrymandering practices. The fact of the matter was that by the time 1971 came around, there was enough anti-government feeling that it didn't make any difference, and the government was turfed out anyway. All the gerrymandering in the world couldn't have saved the Thatcher government in 1971. All the gerrymandering in the world couldn't have saved the NDP government in 1982 either. When people are of a mind to change governments, they're going to change governments.

So the sort of manoeuvres that we get by some of these high-powered political tacticians, the professionals this Tory party can hire before they get on the government payroll of course — that's the next step. First they're hired by the Tory party, and then they're on the government payroll a year or two down the road. But in the intervening time before they get on the government payroll, Mr. Chairman, they come up with all kinds of ideas. Obviously one of the ideas is that we can have the opposition: make a change or two here or there, fiddle around with Norwood, fiddle around with Spirit River-Fairview, put a little bit of Calgary into Little Bow — what could we do to Ray Speaker? — shift a bit here and there in Clover Bar. Maybe we could make an adjustment — all kinds of interesting little calculations from old style politicians.

MR. MARTIN: Bill's shaking his head over there.

MR. NOTLEY: They're shaking their heads. Well, if they are really saying that this isn't going to be done, Mr. Chairman, then let them get back to the central principle of parity. Those of us who have sat on the commission, who have gone through this process and know the pressures that exist when you're redrawing the boundaries — you have to have the checks and the balances that exist when you have equality between the government and the opposition.

So I simply say to members of the government caucus, it's still not too late to recant. Every once in a while backing off a bit and doing the right thing is not only good morality, it's good politics as well. Mr. Chairman, we still have time.

AN HON. MEMBER: Be a leader.

MR. NOTLEY: That's right, be a leader. It would be nice to have some of these backbenchers showing a little bit of healthy leadership, especially in defence of democracy, freedom, fairness, and equity. But when it comes to these sound principles, which apparently were good enough for the Tories when they were in opposition, they're suddenly thrown out the window.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to conclude. I'm sure other members will want to say a word or two. I always opposed the old Social Credit government, and of course everyone realizes that. They could have gone the same route when they set up the boundaries commission. But in fairness to that government, they chose not to do that when there was a puny little Conservative opposition of six members in the Legislature. They could have said: we don't need parity; that's ridiculous; why should we have parity when there are only six Conservative members in the House? The fact of the matter is that in '67 and '68, the old government was big enough to say, there's a principle here, and the principle is more important than the political advantage we get from playing cute games with the parliamentary redistribution process.

I think that with its 75 members in the Legislature, Mr. Chairman, this government should show a little moral leadership and a little fiscal leadership too, although they rejected the idea of the hon. Member for Little Bow of maintaining the size. Perhaps they should take a close look at even reducing the size in this time of tough economic decisions. Nevertheless, at least they should show some moral leadership by saying that a good principle of parity, with checks and balances, is as correct today as it was 13 or 14 years ago when it was originally enacted and that they're prepared to recognize that they've made a mistake. Maybe they didn't understand the implications as well as they should, got swept away with overenthusiasm in the caucus, maybe got a little too much pressure from constituency executives back home, but they're going to recognize that there's a principle you have to stand up for.

Perhaps the Member for Barrhead can go back to his constituency executive and say: I appreciate the pressure you guys were putting on me to have more Tories on this commission, but there's a more important principle; I stand for democracy. Mr. Chairman, I bet that those executive members in Barrhead would say: Ken, you're absolutely right; you made the right decision, and we'll stand behind you; if any of your colleagues in caucus give you a rough time, just send them out to Barrhead, and we'll straighten them out. I'm sure that's the kind of plain talk the hon. Member for Barrhead would get. If the hon. minister sponsoring this legislation were to go out, he'd get that same kind of plain talk as well, because people in rural Alberta are concerned about the democratic process and about fairness. When I've had an opportunity to explain the issue to them, nobody says: why is the government following this route? It's only when you dance all over the place and tell only part of the story, or leave the impression that it's a legislative committee as opposed to a commission, that people get confused. When they realize what the facts are, almost without exception they say: what was good enough for the Conservatives when they were in opposition in '67-'71 should be good enough in 1983.

MR. SZWENDER: Trust us.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, someone back there says "trust". We had the opportunity.

MR. MARTIN: The construction unions trusted them.

MR. NOTLEY: In the closing hours of this debate, we challenge the members of the government. There's still an opportunity to rescue their integrity, self-respect, and moral courage, and make the necessary amendments and take the initiative. While I may be a bit naive in continuing to hope — hope springs eternal, they say — I trust that the government members will give some attention to the points we've made.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I haven't had a chance today, and I know the hon. minister was waiting to hear from me. I think there are a couple of points. I won't belabor them, but I think it should be said here in the Legislature.

I listened to the hon. minister when this Bill was first brought in, Mr. Chairman. I believe the only logic I can hear is that because there are overwhelming numbers on the government side, some 75 to four elected to the House, we therefore had to shift to make it fair. We had to shift one opposition away and add another government member on the commission. I'm glad that I got it right: you see I was listening to the hon. minister. As my colleague points out, the logic of that on a commission escapes me, and I'll point out why.

Mr. Chairman, I say this to the minister, if we follow the logic and recognize that obviously this government had an overwhelming majority — I'm sure the hon. minister would agree that the seats are distorted somewhat in terms of the popular vote. But the point that has to be made is — I recognize that all four of us were elected by 1,500 votes. Without a shift in terms of the popular vote, that could have wiped out the opposition with some 38 per cent of the vote. If we follow that logic, even though there'd be opposition parties and opposition in this province — more and more opposition every day thanks to this government for a year — there shouldn't be any opposition members on the commission next time. That makes absolutely no sense at all.

A commission is setting out for future elections. It's two years before we do this again. This government may not be as big eight years from now. The solid principle in having to deal with electoral commissions that were set up in the past was recognizing that we've always had huge majorities in this province. It wasn't just the Conservatives that brought that in. It has been the tendency in Alberta, at least since the 1930s, to have huge governments with small oppositions. But the tradition had been very clear: because we are in a democratic society, there should be equal opposition and equal government.

We are told by the minister and some of the backbenchers that this is not a gerrymandering Bill. And one of my hon. colleagues in the back says "trust us". It is a little hard to trust.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame.

MR. MARTIN: Let me put it this way, if there is no intent at all by the government to use their advantage to gerrymander, why change it in the first process? Why change something that has worked in the past, Mr. Chairman? So the only logical conclusion one can come to is that there have to be ulterior motives. Why change it otherwise? I hope that I am wrong. But if you look at the facts as laid out, that's the only alternative you could come to. If they had no intent of doing it, they wouldn't have changed the number to begin with.

My colleague has said — and I say this to the minister and the government — whenever governments get too big for their britches and start to pull Bills like this, they inevitably suffer. I know that at some point tonight we're going to pass this Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 1983. But I'll say here and now as clearly as I can to the minister through you, Mr. Chairman: you're going to regret this Bill at some time, because there are more and more people out there that recognize what this government is doing. There's a point where you can't gerrymander the Bill. Even if they stick Calgary into Little Bow, he will still win because people are angry. We can jiggle a boundary here and there, but when you have people right across this province mad and they know what you're doing, as my colleague says, it usually backfires.

That's why I'm angry at this particular Bill, Mr. Chairman. I think it's a bad Bill. I'm not particularly worried about the political consequences, because I think that governments that have to resort to this type of Bill, especially when they have a mandate of some 75 to four, are in enough political trouble themselves. There isn't a boundary around that's going to be safe for them in the next election.

In saying that, I would still prefer that we come back, because I think we're creating problems. Eight years from now when the government, if they are still the opposition — by that time they may be a rump third party — will be demanding fairness in the next electoral boundaries Act. I suggest that if there were

four Conservatives sitting across here and one was the hon. minister, he would be making some of the same speeches we're making right now. I hope he gets a chance in the next electoral boundaries, if he's one of the few who escapes in his riding.

The point we make, and I'm not going to belabor this point, is that they will regret the day they brought this Bill in. Rather than cry about it, I'm optimistic that there's nothing they can do. As I said, and I repeat it as clearly as I can, the way the Conservatives are going, there isn't going to be a safe seat in the province for them in the next election, no matter how we jiggle around with the boundaries. The members for Little Bow, Clover Bar, Spirit River-Fairview, or Edmonton Norwood — even Edmonton Whitemud might not be safe. I don't know how they can gerrymander the boundaries up there, but I'm saying that it won't be safe.

The only other thing I would like to bring up — I said it before — I still do not understand why Fort McMurray is not a city seat. We hope to hold that particular riding after the next election. I'm just thinking of our hon. member after the next election. I would think that it is almost impossible to look after properly, and some work should have been done on that area.

Mr. Chairman, I know the results of the vote here. When the government is arrogant, they're going to push ahead and change an Act that worked perfectly well before. There's not a lot that we can do. We won't win the vote here but, as I said, I look forward to the next election, even with the jiggered-up boundaries. When the minister says that he didn't mean it that way, his colleagues in the back have made comments that say very clearly what they meant to do. So maybe he should have a discussion with the backbenchers once in a while so they don't give it away, let the cat out of the bag.

I hope we change it; I know we're not. We're in Committee of the Whole; I don't see the minister leaping up wanting to change it. Election night is going to be a long, long night, even with Bill 81, and I hope to enjoy that evening very much.

MR. SZWENDER: You can go back to teaching.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I just want to say one thing before we take the vote on this very important Bill. First of all, I regret very much that caucus didn't have a short discussion again and decide to come in with an amendment to this Bill. When the Bill was first taken into caucus, I understand that it got about 10 minutes, and the decision was made. Who cares about the opposition? Who cares about anybody else in the Legislature? Who cares about the people? We want to do it our way, and we're going to do it our way. So it's come into the House in this fashion. It looks like we'll have to live with it.

We gave the government another chance. We carried the Bill through this afternoon, and I think we placed some legitimate arguments before the House to convince the government to act just a little differently. I want to repeat the message to the government that they will have to live with the soup they're preparing; there's no question about that.

I was sitting here looking at the statistics as to what has happened in past elections. I look at 1971, when 71 per cent of the people voted. I'd like to compare 1971 to the next election, which will most likely be in the spring of 1985. You'll notice, if you compare the previous elections . . . [interjection] That's all right; it seems like a good time.

MR. MARTIN: We know something you don't.

MR. R. SPEAKER: It's a good time. Yes, that's right. Anyway, within two or three years — I just picked 1985 as a nice bench mark, a nice time for an election.

MR. NOTLEY: I think probably Getty wants 1985, Ray.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I can see a leadership convention and, following that, a quick election in the spring of 1985. I'll stick to that date for comparative figures at the moment.

If you look at the statistics, you'll see a growth in terms of the percentage of people voting. What this indicates is that the more people vote, the more they become concerned about the government, and eventually they get rid of the government. If there were good valid statistics prior to those years before the UFA government went out of power, I'm sure the very same kind of statistics would be very evident.

We look at 1959, and we see a percentage of vote at 63 per cent. We compare that to the year 1975 — that's after the 1971 election — 59 per cent. So we can say that either of those is around 60 per cent. In 1963, we had 56 per cent of the people voting; in 1967, 64 per cent; in 1971, 71 per cent. Then as I have already mentioned, the voter percentage dropped because they had a Conservative government. People were satisfied; things were going well. Let's not worry about things; it's going great. In the '75 election, just before the rapid inflation and all the big boom things in Alberta, we have, as I said, 59 per cent voting.

In the '79 election, things were really good. We had all these oil and gas dollars. Anybody that moved, got a grant. They didn't even need an organized club; they just sent in their name, and they got a grant by return mail. It was a great system. The minister that did it was praised by the Premier as being benevolent, and he still sits in the House and carries on his heavy responsibilities. That's all great stuff, and that's what happened. I can think of libraries across this province — great institutions. A number of them came to me and said: look, we just got a grant in the mail; we didn't ask for it; what are we supposed to spend it on?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. I wonder if the hon. member would get back to the question at hand.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I am, Mr. Chairman. What I'm describing is attitude and the kinds of things that happened in terms of voters. That was in 1979. All of this led up to the '79 election. The percentage is interesting. Fewer people voted because everything was fine, going along well. The voter percentage went down; 58 per cent of the people voted. Then we come to the 1982 election. We know there was discontent; people were unhappy. The Western Canada Concept was stirring the water out there. Unfortunately, the alternative to the Conservative government didn't allow the voter to change the number of seats that are presently held by Conservatives in this House, but 66 per cent of the people voted, which means there was discontent. The seed of discontent had set in.

If we follow the same pattern as 1971, that means that in the 1985 election there is going to be a higher percentage of voters; 70 to 75 per cent of the people will vote. There will be a lot of surprises in this Legislature. One thing that is going to add to that is the redistribution of various constituencies, changing of boundaries, and gerrymandering of boundaries in this province. With people discontented over the economy, a government that can't meet their needs — social discontent — we will have a high percentage of vote in this province, and we'll hopefully see a Conservative government down the drain.

That will put an end to the kind of government that's in this province. And it will happen; there is a trend. There is the repeat of a four-year pattern. If this government continues with legislation like we have before us, all they're doing is accelerating that process of discontent. Whether or not I'm a member

of the Legislature, the day that this government loses power, I hope to come and stand on the Legislature steps and laugh at the guys going out the door, not the guys going in. I'll say: sorry fellows, we tried to tell you; we in the opposition stood in our places and tried to give you some good sound advice; you thought it was funny then; today I think it's funny.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All those in favor of the Bill as amended, please say aye. Those opposed please say no.

[Mr. Deputy Chairman declared the motion carried. Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Adair	Hyland	Payne
Alexander	Hyndman	Reid
Anderson	Johnston	Russell
Batiuk	Jonson	Schmid
Bradley	Koper	Shaben
Campbell	Kowalski	Shrake
Chambers	Lee	Stiles
Clark	LeMessurier	Stromberg
Cook	Miller	Szwender
Crawford	Moore, R.	Thompson
Cripps	Musgreave	Webber
Embury	Musgrove	Woo
Fischer	Nelson	Young
Gogo	Oman	Zaozirny
Harle	Osterman	Zip
Hiebert	Paproski	

Against the motion:

Buck	Notley	Speaker, R.
Martin		

Totals: Ayes — 47 Noes — 4

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 81 be reported as amended.

[Motion carried]

Bill 71

Condominium Property Amendment Act, 1983

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is an amendment to this Bill. Are there any questions or comments to be offered to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions or further amendments to be offered with respect to any section of this Act?

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make a few remarks on this Bill. I apologize for not being here when the minister gave it second reading. But I have read her remarks in *Hansard*, and I still have a few questions.

First, I would like her to explain in simple language for us poor old farm boys what she means by the condominiumization of bare land. I would like to know whether she simply means

farmland, or is it land that's subdivided within the city? Many of our rural areas have some concerns over this Bill because of the loss of jurisdiction and application of the Planning Act. I would like to go to one remark she made on November 25 in *Hansard*.

I want to make it perfectly clear now that the Planning Act does apply, and no [application] will take place without the approval of the municipal authority.

I have a little problem with that, because I happen to know that under the Planning Act the municipal authority in the rural areas is overruled many times, sometimes by the regional planning commission and sometimes by the provincial Planning Board. I think there is some concern in the rural areas. I notice that further down she's talking about a chicken-and-egg situation:

Certainly some proposals will have to be brought forward so one can ascertain if the Planning Act is indeed suitable in its present form to support this . . . proposal.

In my estimation, in its present form the Planning Act is not suitable to give municipalities the protection they need from having condominiums in rural areas, unless that is what we desire in this Bill. I don't believe what they really want from this Bill is condominiums springing up in the rural areas.

Could you, Madam Minister — I'm really going to get in trouble with that remark. Could the minister explain if we're now going to have to change the Planning Act in order to protect people in the rural areas from this type of development, and if she realizes the difficulty you run into when you try to change the Planning Act in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. minister like to respond?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'd be pleased to respond. I haven't had the opportunity to discuss this fully with my hon. colleague. It is important. I know the number of constituents that have communicated to him, because those very same people have communicated to me their concern about their lack of jurisdiction. I can only assure the hon. member that to the best of the ability of our legal people, the way the Act is framed ensures that the Planning Act will apply. It is true that in respect of jurisdiction there is an appeal process. I do hope the hon. member isn't suggesting that in respect of a number of areas where we have rules and laws that affect us in our everyday lives, we don't have an appeal process from rules that are made even by those who are elected.

Mr. Chairman, I can only say that while I realize there may be some concerns with respect to how the Planning Board may look at an appeal that comes before it, surely if your municipal jurisdiction hasn't zoned for this kind of development — in other words, there would have to be a zone in place in order that this development would go forward. So if the municipal planners were not in favor of bare land condominiumization, it just wouldn't happen. That's really the only guarantee I can give because, after all, on occasion the appeal process may overturn decisions that municipal officials make, just as the courts from time to time overturn decisions that legislators make. I suppose that's just the course of natural justice.

As to the matter of the style of condominiumization, there has been a lot of suggestion as to how or what may happen. Probably the biggest number of proposals that have been brought to my desk really involve residential properties. I suppose some of those have been what you call vacation-type developments that have taken place. They're built a little on the model of some of the developments in British Columbia

where there has been land involved that really had no other use than as a vacation property.

So while there may not be very many rural municipalities, because I think most of the municipalities would very jealously guard their agricultural land, there may indeed be the odd municipality that has a small portion of land that would be suitable for this kind of development. Whether there'd ever be a proposal, I can't say, but at least the permission is there. When it comes to how the planning will actually work, as someone works their way through the process with respect to one of these proposals, I think only time will tell. We have one group, the manufactured housing people, who believe that it could be smoother but still think the planning process can work.

Mr. Chairman, I can only say that my hon. colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be charged with the responsibility of hearing any submissions from those people who may wish to see some planning provisions altered in a very small part, for the condominiumization process.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, just another remark on that part. I wonder if the minister knows that whether or not it's written in your land use by-law in a municipality, it can still be overturned by the provincial Planning Board. It has been done many times. If there is a development which they don't really wish to see in their rural municipality — say they didn't want to have condominiums within a recreation area and it wasn't in their land use by-law — it could still be overturned by the provincial Planning Board, and in that sense it could go ahead.

As far as I know, that has never been changed in the Planning Act. I believe that until there are some changes made in that area of the Planning Act to protect the rural areas, we could possibly see, especially close to Calgary, condominiums rising onto the farmland quite close to the city of Calgary.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 71, the Condominium Property Amendment Act, 1983, be reported as amended.

[Motion carried]

Bill 98

Hospitals and Medical Care Statutes Amendment Act, 1983

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any amendments, questions, or comments to be offered with respect to any section of this Act?

MR. NOTLEY: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to advise members of the committee that it will not be the intention of my colleague or myself to move any amendments during committee stage of Bill 98. The reason for that is quite simple. We consider that the major provisions within the Bill are so completely contrary to the spirit of modern health care in this country that patchwork amendments would really be quite out of order. But that doesn't mean that when we discuss the details of the Bill in committee, we don't have some observations to make. For a few minutes tonight it's my intention to make some observations on Bill 98.

I'd like to begin, Mr. Chairman, by saying to the minister and the members of the government caucus that the introduction of user fees is something which is not only opposed by the vast majority of Alberta residents, the people of this province in

general, but it is the sort of thing that represents foolish provocation with respect to the government of Canada. If I were a Liberal strategist attempting to plan the scenario for the next federal election, I would hope that provincial Conservative governments would act the way we are being called upon to act by passing Bill 98 legitimizing, through the legislative process, a system of user fees of up to \$20 a day in Alberta hospitals.

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt in the minds of most people — whether there is still doubt in the minds of this caucus is irrelevant — that the principle of user fees is in essence a tax on the sick and an inequitable way of financing the health care system. It is not going to bring costs under control. It's not going to do anything other than represent a form of deterrent fee for those Albertans who can least afford proper health care in the first place.

Mr. Chairman, one has to keep in perspective the fact that over the last couple of decades in particular we have moved from a position where we've had a patchwork health care system that varied a great deal from province to province, to a system in Canada today where there are some basic principles. Those principles provide not equal medical coverage or hospitalization coverage but, within the context of a country like Canada, as close to equal opportunities in the health care field as possible.

Members in this House would be foolish if they did not understand that no federal government, whether it be a Mulroney government, a Liberal government, a New Democratic government, or whoever is in office, is going to stand back and allow provincial governments to destroy the principles that have allowed us to develop a first-class health care system.

Mr. Chairman, there are some people who are saying that the reason we have difficulties and financial problems is runaway health costs. Of course, the people who make this observation don't really back it up by pointing out that as a percentage of our gross provincial product, our health care system is more expensive than it should be. As a matter of fact, if one looks at the figures since 1971, you'll find that other departments have grown more quickly than has the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care.

Mr. Chairman, I think the whole issue of the battle of the new right to blame health care for the runaway inflation we saw during the late '70s and early '80s is rather well-discussed in the *American Association for Clinical Chemistry News*. I won't quote the entire article, but it makes the point that what we've seen in both the United States and Canada has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of health care.

There are also some interesting observations. Twenty-five years ago, the American family spent 2 per cent of its income on health care and hospitalization. In 1981 it is 3.4 per cent, so it's gone from 2 per cent to 3.4 per cent. But what this article observes is that in the process, rather than a change in the packaging, the essence of the product has changed, because we have a much better medical system in place than we had 25 years ago.

The fact of the matter is that that is true in the United States but, in terms of cost effectiveness, our system in Canada is still more efficient than the United States' system. The most recent figures that I've seen show that in Canada, 7.9 per cent of our gross national product is spent on health care as opposed to 9.8 per cent in the United States. Mr. Chairman, what is happening is that in the United States they have a system that doesn't cover everybody. We have those people in the system who are attempting to make profits; nevertheless, we've made advances in both countries.

The question is: to what extent do we value our health care? In citing the publication that I quoted from, the *American Association for Clinical Chemistry News*, the observation is made: on what basis do we make choices? Where should we cut back?

"But why, one may ask, should we single out health care as a sacrificial lamb? Why not cut back on automobiles, on fashion, on junk food or on the video games now befogging our children's minds?" As for the argument that health care is a form of consumption, he points out that in many circumstances, such as care for children, it's clearly a form of investment.

Clearly a form of investment was the essence of the Hall commission report, a recognition that by providing a right to health care, by taking away the price tag from those people who need to use the system, by providing equality between the doctor on one hand and the patient on the other, what we can do is shift the balance from a health care system which is based on providing cures for those people who are sick, to a health care system where prevention becomes the major emphasis.

Mr. Chairman, with that in mind, what are we doing by bringing in this system of user fees? I say to members of the government caucus that we're going to invite federal retaliation. There is no doubt in my mind that Madam Bégin is going to introduce legislation which will penalize provincial governments. I also want to make it clear in this House — and members can quote me outside the House as well; I challenge them to — that if this government thinks that if it gets into a fight with Ottawa over health care, the people of Alberta are going to back them on the basis of provincial rights, they better think again. The people of Alberta are not going to back this government over provincial rights on the question of health care. Even challenging Madam Bégin and her Liberal cohorts in Ottawa, the government will lose the battle of public opinion in Alberta on this issue. Albertans are concerned about the preservation of their health system, and they don't want the balkanization of that health system, which is the inevitable consequence of the introduction of user fees.

I find it difficult to understand the arguments as to why we have to increase user fees. The suggestion has been made by the minister and others that somehow we have to show Albertans that there is a cost to the system. The point is that in any event, the cost of the system, in a large part, is covered by bringing in a deterrent system for the poor, which is going to be particularly onerous for low-income people. All we do is create a deterrent for them using the system. We don't, in fact, show people the enormous cost of running a modern health system, and that cost is going to exist. But, Mr. Chairman, I say to you and to members of the government, why shouldn't it exist? What is a more important priority in a modern society than the preservation of our good health as a nation? If we can spend all kinds of money on advertising, on different kinds of toothpaste and, as this article says, on video games for our children, to what extent should we not place the proper value on a health care system which is absolutely first class?

However, Mr. Chairman, when I look at the annual report of the commission, I find that between 1980 and 1981, there was a 2 per cent increase in services to patients; between 1981 and 1982, a .3 per cent increase in services to patients. It doesn't strike me that it is patients who are overusing the system, because in those two years, '80-81, we had a 20.6 per cent increase in payments to doctors, and the government seems quite prepared to allow that go unchallenged. Between '81-82, we had a 24 per cent increase in payments to doctors. The issue is to not saddle the doctors with responsibility for the system. Neither is it fair to zero in on the patient. What is important in this entire issue, Mr. Chairman, is not to find some kind of

person to blame, some kind of scapegoat. It would be as wrong for those of us in the New Democratic Party to try to single out the medical profession as scapegoats as it is for members of the Conservative government to say it's the patient. In actual fact, I see no evidence at all that in the operation of our system, outside of the decisions this government has made — and those decisions have to be addressed with the government taking responsibility — there is any serious fat in the system. That fat has long since been drained away.

Again, we have to ask ourselves: what is the priority of health? Last year we had something over \$270 million in liquor profits. It's interesting to note that in the same year, we spent only \$180 million on all community-based and preventive health programs — only two-thirds as much as the profits we make from the sale of booze in this province.

If there are any inefficiencies in the operation of the hospital system, the government might well look at some of the political decisions that were made with respect to hospital construction. I remember the minister making the announcement in this House in 1980. How many of those hospitals might otherwise have been more expeditiously chosen in terms of site, perhaps integrating their operations into a regional context? But, Mr. Chairman, that's not the fault of the patients. That's not the fault of the hospital administrators or the hospital boards. The fact that we have political hospitals in Alberta is a fault of this government and no one else.

Mr. Chairman, before this government comes to the House and begins to cry that we have to have user fees, we still have no definitive response from this government as to the hospital utilization report. For a number of years before this utilization report was completed, it was the easy answer for all ministers on hospital cost problems. Whenever somebody in the opposition asked a question about hospital costs, the minister would stand up and say: we've got this blue-ribbon committee studying hospital utilization; we can't do anything until we get the report of the Hospital Utilization Committee. We have the committee report and virtually nothing has been done to deal with its major recommendations, because many of them are political hot potatoes which the government doesn't want to tackle. Notwithstanding the inaction on this major report, we're prepared to push ahead with user fees. I find that rather hard to swallow.

I note one of the points my colleague raised in question period. The study by the joint committee on infection control, has said that up to \$4 million a year could be saved. Yet at this stage, it doesn't appear as if this government has done anything about it. There's no action at all on the surgery report by the College of Physicians and Surgeons which pointed out a correlation between fee for service and large, unnecessary surgery rates.

Mr. Chairman, the point I want to make is that before we jump on the bandwagon of blaming the patient for the system, of creating inequity in the system and making it more difficult for low-income people, we have to ask ourselves: have we taken whatever reasonable steps can be taken to keep costs within some degree of reason. But having said all that and recognizing the impact of the utilization report which the government hasn't acted upon, recognizing the infection control report, the possibility of too much surgery, the fact still remains that health care in this country is good value for the dollar spent. The last thing we should be doing in any way, shape, or form, is disrupting the system.

Mr. Chairman, there are of course some who will point out that we have other examples in North America of hospitals that are better, and of course the United States, being a much bigger country, has perhaps advanced certain specialities. But the difference between the American system and our system is that

we all have equal access to that system, regardless of our income, regardless of whether or not we have private insurance. We all have equal access, because in Canada the health system is a right. The problem in the United States is that a limited number of people may be able to have access to a first-class system. But for some 50 million Americans who have no coverage at all, all they get is what's left over, and it's a totally inadequate approach to modern health care.

I've noted with some interest, Mr. Chairman, that members of the government and even the minister have suggested on occasion that it might be worth looking at the privatization of the hospital system. I certainly hope that they are quickly disabused of that weird notion. Again, citing the *American Association for Clinical Chemistry News*, the figures cited here on community hospitals versus private, profit-making hospitals constitute a damning indictment of the private hospital system. We don't want to get into that blind alley. What we need is a government which not only is prepared to support its hospital system but is prepared to support the basic principles of modern hospitalization, which involve equal access for everyone regardless of their ability to pay.

Mr. Chairman, I want to conclude my observations on Bill 98 by saying to this government that not only are we likely to embark at this stage on a rather frightening exercise in political brinkmanship between this government and the federal government but the game will be played over the future of our health care. It's something that I think this government will ultimately lose. I stand in my place and say it. As I've already mentioned, whether it's the Mulroney Tories or the Liberals, no federal government is going to allow provincial governments to play these kinds of games.

Before we get into it, Mr. Chairman, before we embark on this kind of reckless course, surely it makes sense to ask ourselves: are the goals we have in mind so refined, so principled, so well-established — do we know what it is we are talking about so clearly that we are prepared to get into a situation where the federal government comes in with legislation and for every dollar of user fee or extra billing, we lose federal funds? I don't think that exists at all. I don't think this government has the foggiest idea of the real implications of this kind of policy. So, Mr. Chairman, a system which, while not perfect, is still quite good, a system having some deficiencies — many of which are the result of political moves by this government, not the people who work in the system — a system which has nevertheless developed as a result of a lot of hard work by many people is now being threatened by the introduction of user fees.

My colleague and I just want to say now in this debate in committee stage that we have no doubt that the government will be in for a rough ride. There should be no mistaking where we stand on the issue. There are times when we have to stand together on issues but not when the government is so totally wrong, not when the government has staked out ground on which it cannot at all use provincial rights as a plausible defence, not when the ground they staked out is ground that Albertans, as much as anybody else, have pioneered. No, Mr. Chairman, Bill 98 is bad legislation. We intend to vote "no" in committee stage, as we voted "no" on second reading.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Chairman, I've listened to a lot of nonsense while this Bill has gone through second reading and committee, and I think I've been very patient. All I ask is about five minutes to try to respond to some of the utter nonsense that has been delivered with respect to this Bill.

I was waiting patiently all that time for somebody to talk about the principle of the amendment to the Alberta Hospitals

Act, but they never did. The principle is not user fees. They use the Bill as an excuse to talk about user fees, but they never did get around to talking about it. I'm going to end my comments with a few remarks about hospital user fees. But I would like to talk about one or two of the other principles of the Bill, because I think it's important.

Just in passing, one of the members spoke about the utter power the minister was taking unto himself by having certain routine administrative things done by ministerial order rather than through Executive Council and order in council. Yet at times we're castigated for building up bureaucracies or taking away local autonomy. I really don't know what it is that the member wants us to do, but that particular amendment does appear in several places in several of the Acts. Quite frankly, I think it's a forward move that's going to streamline a lot of paperwork. I don't know how the hon. member believes we operate, but certainly none of our ministers sign ministerial orders unless they've been vetted in principle or, if they're appointments, by full cabinet. So I'm not concerned about that. It's a forward move that's going to delete a lot of unnecessary bureaucratic paperwork.

The second thing I'd like to make some mention of is the concept of hospital foundations. There's quite a bit in the Bill that deals with that, and because it's what I think is a really forward move today, I would have thought somebody would have had some good word to say about it. Again, it was interpreted as being some kind of nefarious scheme. But hospital foundations are not new in Alberta. The children's hospital in Calgary, which serves southern Alberta, had as one of its prime sources of funding for both capital and operating, money raised through a hospital foundation. The University of Alberta has had a foundation established for several years. I've had hospital board chairmen come to me and say, would you please establish hospital foundation legislation because we believe there's a lot of money out there in our communities that people want to give to their local hospitals. So this simply establishes ground rules for establishing those foundations. I have no doubt whatsoever that the foundations are going to raise several million dollars worth of extra discretionary funds for the use of our hospitals, particularly in the capital field.

For example, last week I was pleased to see two items in the same daily paper on one day whereby just because of a news article that appeared a couple of weeks earlier, some \$96,000 was voluntarily raised from four donors to buy a laser scalpel that was on its way to Vancouver. The same day I got a letter in my office from a person very interested in kidney disease saying that he had a cheque for \$10,000 and asking the best way to donate it to his hospital. I have had senior citizens write me, especially in response to the letter that we sent out excusing them from user fees, saying: we really would like to contribute something; the province has been awfully good to us, looking after all our health care needs; it's not fair that the total burden should fall just on the young people; we would like to give something. Properly organized hospital foundations will allow this, and I am excited about that. But all the opposition had to say was something very negative, and that's quite interesting. I am sure that the people who have worked so hard for those foundations will be very interested in their remarks.

Now I want to get to the question of user fees, because that's the item that seemed to provoke all the hysteria over there during these four or five days, whatever it was, of debate on this Bill. First of all, the hon. Leader of the Opposition issued dire threats and warnings about what a terrible thing this is going to be for the government if we go through with it, and we can never win this battle. I will tell you something very interesting, Mr. Chairman. What Madam Bégin didn't tell us

was that of five issues presented to the people who were interviewed in her famous Gallup poll on user fees, health care costs placed fifth. There were two questions on the matter of health and hospital costs. Electricity rates rated higher than that on Madam Bégin's poll. She also didn't tell us that she had a supplementary question which said: provided low income groups are sheltered against paying user fees, would you object? The answers change quite dramatically when you ask the question that way, giving a majority view in favor of the concept of user fees. But polls are minor details.

The important thing that the Leader of the Opposition brought up is: why is this government, or in fact any government — including the U.S. Congress, our federal government, and all the provinces — worried so much about health care? The minute we try to do anything to control costs, we are castigated that we are trying to dismantle medicare. I don't know how many times all the provincial ministers of health have to stand in their places — and that includes me, speaking for Alberta — saying we support Canada's national health care program and we are making it our number one priority. In fact, in the case of Alberta, I am proud to say that we have the best of any provincial health care program.

AN HON. MEMBER: And they know it.

MR. RUSSELL: Sure they know it. We have a broader array of medical services . . . [interjections] They don't like to hear this, but they are going to have to sit there and listen to it, because I've listened to their claptrap for five days. Albertans have the broadest array of medical services, counting basic health care services plus all the add-ons, of any Canadians in our country, bar none. We have the most complete hospital system serving all geographic regions and all population centres in our province where it is at all practical. And I want to talk about that, because Madam Bégin visited Alberta a couple of months ago and said: the reason Alberta is worried about health care costs is that they are building too many hospitals in rural Alberta.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame.

MR. RUSSELL: I guess she would like us to close all those rural hospitals. I know what the figures are for goodness' sake. Our 20 largest hospitals in the province account for 80 per cent of the budget. Would she like us to keep the 20 largest hospitals open and close 106 smaller ones? Let's close the hospitals in Fairview, Vulcan, and Fort Saskatchewan, and meet Madam Bégin's objectives and see how Canadians living in Alberta like that.

Then I heard these pious bleatings when the question of user fees first came up: a tax on the sick, how unfair; we have to take this out of general taxation; that's the only fair way to do it. So when my colleague the Provincial Treasurer says let us raise provincial taxes, the first thing these whiz-kid economists do is move an amendment to reduce taxes. In the face of increasing health care costs, which they want supported by taxes, they move to decrease them. Presumably with a decrease in taxes goes a decrease in health care spending. It has to be.

MR. MARTIN: They're getting both, Dave.

MR. RUSSELL: Health care is the big ticket in government spending today across Canada. Unless our governments take some kind of realistic moves to bring the increases under control, the whole country is going to be in trouble. That's the message we're trying to get across, and that's the message we

are getting across. I am not too worried about our battle with Ottawa and Madam B'egin, because that government has a short life I am sure.

The hon. leader . . . [interjection] Oh, these school teachers know everything. It's bloody marvellous.

MR. MARTIN: What were you?

MR. RUSSELL: I was out there in the free-enterprise system producing things, kiddo, and paying taxes. I wasn't lined up at the public trough with all the answers for everything, but that's beside the point.

MR. MARTIN: That was about a hundred years ago.

MR. RUSSELL: I think I'm getting to him, he can't keep quiet.

MR. MARTIN: I just love talking to you, Dave.

MR. RUSSELL: The hon. leader wonders why the government is worried about increasing health care costs. In 1976 health care took 20 per cent of the provincial budget; in 1983 it takes 25 per cent of the provincial budget. That is a growth of a quarter over those few years, and it is the biggest chunk of our provincial budget. Now in these days of declining revenues, particularly in a province like Alberta where our revenues come from the sale of resources and our resource wealth, that's a very serious situation for an elected government to face.

This talk about this being a tax on the sick, as if the sick are some special group we have singled out and said, we are going to tax you — for goodness' sake, anybody in this room can get sick. We know who the biggest users of health care and hospital services are — the elderly, little kids under the age of seven, and any low-income people — and they have all been exempted for heaven's sake. So who is left? This is what they're yabbering about?

Mr. Chairman, the point and the principle of the Bill is that we should not ignore the fact that user fees for hospital services in Canada are nothing new. Newfoundland and B.C. have had them for years. B.C. increased theirs this year, and there is no cap on theirs. You pay \$8.50 a day every day that you are in the hospital. There is no maximum cap. At least we have put a cap on ours.

AN HON. MEMBER: A sales tax.

MR. RUSSELL: Oh, yes, my colleague here mentioned the sales tax. Let's not forget that. In the good old days when provinces like Saskatchewan and B.C. had socialist governments, they put on sales taxes, because they didn't believe in user fees. So let's not forget those kinds of little items.

Mr. Chairman, what I want to get to is the principle of the Bill, bearing in mind that user fees have been legal ever since there was medicare in Canada. Ever since the updated Hospitals Act in 1968, user fees have been a fact of life in Alberta. They are legal. Our auxiliary hospitals charge them. Our nursing homes have always charged them under hospital legislation. The amendment simply deals with how they shall be administered, and nobody has spoken about that in the years I have sat. All this amendment does is give the final authority and administrative details to the hospital itself, if they want to do it. Under existing legislation, each hospital would have to come to the government and say, we want to have user fees in our hospital. We'd have to take an order in council through cabinet, delegating that authority to that particular hospital. This amends

the regulation-making section of the Act, which will allow that blanket authority to be given to all hospitals in the system.

All these years — 12 years, I think it is — I've had to sit opposite the hon. member and listen to his sermons on local autonomy. When we try to give the hospitals local autonomy in this matter, you'd think the world was coming to an end. I can't believe what I'm hearing. He wants to abolish user fees and pay for health care costs out of general taxation but, at the same time, he moves a decrease in the income tax. He can't understand why we're concerned about health care, making it the whipping boy, in face of the statistics and data facing not only Alberta but all governments in North America. He doesn't like local autonomy, except when it suits his own particular issue.

Frankly, I was disappointed in the debate that we had on this; they used it as a platform for talking about the issue of user fees. To my disappointment, they neglected what I think are some other good things in the Bill, and I'm glad I was patient enough to sit here and at least get a plug in for those. I have no hesitation at all in recommending every single bit of this Bill to hon. members.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it finally happened. One minister on that side of the House finally had the guts to stand up and tell the committee what he proposes to do. I compliment the minister, because the minister hasn't forgotten what parliament's all about, and that is the minister to be responsible in this Assembly and in this committee to this Assembly and the people of Alberta. We sat with bated breath waiting for the minister to talk about why they're bringing in the amendment to the Election Act and the electoral boundaries Act. We've listened. We've waited for ministers to stand in their places and defend their positions. So I want to compliment the minister: you stood in your place, and you said it like you thought it was.

Mr. Chairman, I opposed the principle of medicare when it came to this province in 1968, because at that time, Alberta had the best system that Canada has ever had and the best system that Canada will ever have. Eighty-five per cent of the people in this province were covered under private insurance, and we as taxpayers chipped in and helped the other 15 per cent, the ones who couldn't pay the premiums. There is no better system than that. But of course our friends in Ottawa sat down at coffee one day; two Liberal cabinet ministers decided someone needed universal medicare. They couldn't look at the British experiment to find out what a disaster that was and how much worse it is now. They decided they needed the universal plan. I opposed that. But we're into the mess, and we can't turn back the clock.

I am opposing user fees for two reasons. Number one, this government is going to make local hospital boards the scapegoats for medicare. That's what we propose to do under this Bill. We'll say to the local hospital boards: if you haven't enough money because we haven't been looking after our book-keeping well enough under the dome, you can't have any more funds; you go to local people. So they will be the bad guys, Mr. Minister, not us under the dome. We're the good guys. Secondly, patients do not ask to be put into hospitals. Doctors put patients into hospitals. The consumer, the customer, or whatever you want to call him does not have a choice. On those two principles, Mr. Minister, I oppose user fees.

With those few words, I am glad to see that the parliamentary system does function the odd time. Mr. Minister, on that you can be complimented, but I will be voting against the amendment because of those two points I made.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I too will compliment the minister for taking the time in the Legislature to try to make an indefensible position coherent. I appreciate this attempt. It's always good to hear from the hon. minister. But I think there are a few things that need saying.

Whether the minister likes it or not, some things are just not correct. First of all, he talks about local autonomy. Sure, we all agree about local autonomy. The Member for Clover Bar has pointed out exactly what that means, Mr. Chairman. It's all right to talk about local autonomy, but if you do not have the money to run anything, your local autonomy is out the door. When it comes down to the point, the provincial government controls the purse strings, and that's the absolute truth of it.

When they're given alternatives, what will happen? While the minister says this Bill has nothing to do with user fees, it does; it legitimizes them. Sure we could have brought them in before. But the point is, they weren't here. Now it's legitimized, as he well knows, and each board can choose to come in now without even applying to the minister. It's a very important part of this Bill. What inevitably happens if you're undercut, just like what's happening in the schools now with user fees there . . . Next year the restraint policy will probably be even more severe, because we'll have more Conservative mismanagement. All these great money managers are preaching to us about what great private enterprisers they are. With a \$3 billion deficit last year, I would say that's rather a joke. A lot of hospital boards do not want to go into user fees. I think they've made that clear. But they're going to have some very tough decisions, Mr. Chairman. They're going to have a choice between either cutting back in beds or services, or user fees. They may try to hold off as long as they can, but inevitably they will have to go for user fees. They will have absolutely no choice about that down the line.

As the hon. Member for Clover Bar points out, this government is hoping they will carry the can for it. So when we talk about local autonomy, what local autonomy means to this government is that they take the can for this government's mismanagement. It's clear that that's what is happening.

When the hon. minister talks about taxes, there are a number of other places he knows — now is not the time for an income tax that affects the middle and lower incomes. They could take out that glorious trust fund and begin to use it in a more imaginative way. That could be switched over; we've talked about that. We have the lowest corporation taxes in the country; we could be looking at that as a source. We could be looking at many other taxes, as the minister well knows. When he talks about sales tax, I remind him that there are only three of the richest provinces around that have medicare premiums to begin with. Mr. Chairman, that is a regressive tax. I've pointed that out a number of times. So when the minister gets up and gives his eloquent speech, he should include all the facts.

The only reason I can see, and I've said this before — I'm still not convinced. When somebody tells me they are going to dig into my pocket to save medicare, that with user fees and higher medicare premiums they are trying to save medicare — that just doesn't wash. We've pointed out besides, and my colleague has talked about it, that if we're really serious about medicare costs — and nobody's suggesting for one moment that we shouldn't get the best bang for the buck. I see the minister bringing in user fees when we've done nothing in this government about seat belts, we've done nothing about unnecessary surgery, we've done nothing about this hospital utilization report, and we've done nothing about infection control. The minister may try to make a political speech and say everybody's saying there shouldn't be hospitals in smaller rural areas,

but he knows that's a red herring. They are building hospitals in places they shouldn't, and we know of places where there's a 10 per cent vacancy rate. Until we're serious, really try to get into it, and look at alternatives, Mr. Chairman, I say this is nonsense.

We haven't looked at community clinics. We say it's okay. The minister admits that maybe one physician will bill \$1 million next year out of medicare, but that's not an expense. We're not looking at that. Until we look at what it costs right across medicare and try to control the costs but still have a good system, until we've done all those things, he can get as mad as he wants about what we're saying over here.

The other point that we've talked to of course — when this government starts preaching restraint, that is really amusing.

MR. NOTLEY: What a laugh.

MR. MARTIN: We've talked about the waste that's come out of this government right down the line. I would suggest that the millions of dollars we've wasted would help in your department, Mr. Minister. Until we start looking at that seriously, there are certain programs that are inviolate.

The minister talks about foundations. Obviously if you're not going to fund hospitals properly, people are going to have to look for other money. No wonder hospital boards are asking for something. They've got to get some money and, if they're necessary, even foundations will do it. But I come back to my original point, Mr. Chairman. This has to be a philosophical reason, because the minister himself admits that user fees are not going to bring in a lot of money. When we raised medicare premiums and we now have user fees, the minister musing about private management, and now the foundations, I believe that fundamentally — and the minister in his eloquent way has not convinced me that he doesn't mean it — somehow down the way we're moving to privatization.

If that's what he believes, fair enough. That's a fair belief. But let's be honest about it, because that's a trend I see us going. If we're going towards the American trend, and he thinks that's a great system, he's going to have to show us why it's better and why it saves money. I haven't seen that. The minister would say: no, I'm just trying to help out medicare by taking more money out of your pocket; I'm saving medicare. This is absolute nonsense.

The minister may react to the federal Liberals. I don't necessarily blame him for not trusting the federal Liberals. But the point is that they have lawyers just as good as this government has. We may be playing with millions and millions of dollars there as a restraint. I don't think we can lighten over it and have the minister say, I'm not scared of Madam Bégin. Good, I'm glad he's not scared of Madam Bégin. But that's beside the point. The point is that if we lose that battle, we could lose millions of dollars out of our medicare and taxation system, and that would hurt us all. It's not a matter of being John Wayne riding across and fighting Madam Bégin. We're talking very seriously here about a lot of money, Mr. Chairman, and we'd better know what we're doing. I'm not yet convinced that we do.

The point we're trying to make — and we said very clearly that there are other parts of the Bill. If the minister were looking for a compliment, if that's what he's worried about, I could probably find something we could really compliment him on in that big Bill. I'm so very sorry we disappointed the minister because we picked user fees. Next time I'll try to be more gentle with the minister and give him a compliment. I promise that in the spring I'll look hard to find a compliment so I can

give it to him. I didn't really want to hurt the minister's feelings, as it's obvious we did.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I am not convinced. He can talk about about being fifth in the polls. I was out in rural Alberta, and I can tell him the feedback we are getting. The question was asked: are user fees coming? I said, I don't know; it's up to your board, for a while. That was a very big issue to those people. This government can throw its head in the sand and say people don't care — it's fifth in the polls, or whatever — but it's part of an overall they see about this government. It's part of the arrogance they see in this government right now, because it's user fees and income tax. He can laugh. I've pointed out where we can get other taxes now. I hope he understands that. I know he's a great money manager. He was out in the private sector a hundred years ago, so he would understand it, but the whole point is that there were other sources. Until we cut back our expenses and look at that in the best possible way, we should not be doing something that fundamentally changes medicare.

The minister is quite correct that there is a limit on it. We'll give him this. But as this government mismanages more money in the future, when we need more money next year, who's to say that \$300 is going to be inviolate? The minister can't guarantee this, even if he wanted to. If cabinet comes to him and says we need more money, we're going to have to raise user fees more, he knows full well that that could be raised.

As the hon. Member for Clover Bar said — and I don't believe it's going to work; it's too shallow this time — it's not the local boards. I believe people know who's associated with user fees this time. It's not the local boards; it's this government. When they start preaching about management and we have a \$3 billion deficit and all the frivolous sorts of spending and we're attacking the very programs that were brought in, I don't care how mad the minister gets. I for one will stand here and keep getting him mad, although I promise to try to find something good to say about one of his Bills next time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

DR. REID: I'm going to get my shot in before the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview, Mr. Chairman, because I've just heard the most absolute bunch of tripe I have ever heard about this health care system we have in Alberta.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood was trying to do a complete disservice to the people of Alberta and their health care system. He was systematically attempting to destroy confidence in that system. As somebody who has lived in this province and been associated with it both before and since medicare and the hospitalization scheme, I can assure you that what we have had in this province has been a persistent attempt by everybody in that system — hospital administrators, boards, nurses, lab techs, and everybody else, including the doctors — to give Albertans the best of care at reasonable cost.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood spoke about unnecessary surgery. Where does he have the facts for that? We have the fact that there is more surgery per head in Alberta. That doesn't mean it's unnecessary. I came from a country where there was much less surgery than there is in Alberta for the simple reason that there weren't the beds and the people to provide the service. My grandfather waited 15 years to have a hernia fixed and died before he got it fixed. That's the British system. You can easily limit the surgery by not having the beds and not having the staff. My grandfather died with a hernia he'd had since he was 68.

He talked about infection control. Does he mean that in Alberta hospitals there's lots of infection? There isn't. There

is no more than there is in any other corresponding hospital elsewhere. And I work within the system.

MR. MARTIN: The minister's report.

DR. REID: The minister's report did not say there was unnecessary or unjustified infection, or infection that was different from anywhere else. [interjection] If you're going to put artificial hips into people, occasionally one will get infected. That's the nature of the beast. If you're going to operate on people with advanced cancer, some of them will get infected. If you operate on people from highway accidents, some will get infected. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, there will be an infection rate.

He spoke about occupancy rates. Sure the occupancy rates are lower in the rural hospitals of Alberta, because they don't have the waiting list to keep them filled. In the hospital I have worked in for the last 20-odd years, we admit people on a Wednesday, operate on Thursday, and they're home the first opportunity we can get rid of them. Would the member suggest that we should keep them in the hospital to keep the beds full?

AN HON. MEMBER: Probably.

DR. REID: It's no service, Mr. Chairman, to throw the system in Alberta in doubt to Albertans, and that's precisely what the member was doing.

He suggested we should do things like insist on the use of seat belts. Let's take that philosophy a little further. What else is associated with a high injury rate? Let's ban motorcycles. Let's stop people skiing. Let's prevent people from using all-terrain vehicles; no hang-gliding. That philosophy of regulation in stopping people from doing things will certainly save health care costs. Is that what he's proposing?

DR. BUCK: That's the new Solicitor General.

DR. REID: Let's get on to things that do cost a lot of money, laboratory and X-ray tests. I think every doctor in this province would say there are more laboratory and X-ray tests performed than need to be performed. That's true. Part of it of course is because of the legal system and the spillover of the attitude to lawsuits from the United States. The tendency is to say: well, let's just get one more test before we make our minds up. It's often not necessary. I really seriously suggest to this House that we consider some form of avoiding unnecessary lab tests by reinforcing to the medical profession of this province that we function under the British system of common law and not under the American system of law.

The minister himself addressed the breadth of service that's offered in this province. Is it really right that cosmetic surgery should be covered by health care? I'm talking about true cosmetic surgery. I'm not talking about breast reduction surgery for those women who have sore backs and necks because of the size of their breasts. I'm talking about breast augmentation surgery. I'm not talking about dermabrasion for getting rid of the scars from acne in young people; they're very sensitive about it. But maybe 45 year olds should pay for dermabrasion for wrinkles themselves. It's not necessary surgery.

He spoke about frivolous spending. I've mentioned some expenses. But are any of those done on a frivolous basis? I can assure the hon. Member for Edmonton Norwood, they are not. They haven't been, and they will not be.

Thank you.

DR. BUCK: We want Reid for Solicitor General.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to respond. I'd just like to make the odd observation. Of course I'm pleased at my colleague. With his usual diplomacy he made some pertinent points and congratulated the minister for at least standing up. I don't think that ministers should necessarily be congratulated for standing up. I don't blame the hon. Member for Clover Bar for doing it, because it is such a shock to us in the opposition when any minister bothers to stand up in this House that when it occasionally happens, we're almost at a loss for words. Almost but not quite, I can assure you of that.

Mr. Chairman, during the course of the minister's speech, he made the comment that we have to bring hospital costs under control, and I gather that user fees are going to do that. He didn't, of course, point out how they were going to do that. He's been quoted as saying that hospital user fees will bring in 3 per cent of the operating budget. As I look at the budget for this current year, that would be around \$35 million to \$36 million. Is the minister trying to tell this committee that \$35 million or \$36 million is going to mean the difference between the system operating and the system collapsing? Of course not. But there are areas if this minister is sincerely interested in bringing costs under control. When I see that the consulting budget of this government is \$257 million, the travel budget is \$57 million — these are some of these frivolous sorts of expenditures that are much more easily and prudently controlled, and much more controlled in the public interest than bringing in a system of hospital user fees which, at best, according to the minister himself, will bring in 3 per cent of the operating budget of the hospitals.

Mr. Chairman, what is the sense of risking our whole system to get into that kind of ridiculous situation? For \$35 million or \$36 million, we risk breaking an agreement with the federal government, having punitive legislation passed by the federal government, and losing not only the money we collect in user fees plus the administrative cost of collecting it but in addition we are going to have money cut off from Ottawa equalling, if not exceeding, the money that is being collected by user fees. What kind of common sense is that? I just don't see any possible rational argument, even from members of this government, for bringing in that kind of legislation.

The minister got very exercised about local autonomy. I think the Member for Clover Bar and the Member for Edmonton Norwood quite adequately dealt with that. It's not a question of local autonomy in any meaningful sense. What we're doing is just consigning to the hospital boards the ugly prospect of bringing in user fees, so they're the ones that get blamed. When somebody writes in from X, Y, or Z hospital and says that they don't want to have to pay \$20 a day, the minister will write back and say: that's not our department; we've passed Bill 98, you know; it's up to the local hospital board; they're the people that have brought in user fees. So it's going to be the local hospital board that will have to carry the can for this user-fee policy. But who in fact is forcing it down the throats of Albertans? It is this government.

The budgetary provisions of this government will determine whether or not local hospital boards will have to bring in user fees. Local autonomy is being used at this time, Mr. Chairman, as nothing more than a way of passing the buck to locally chosen people, but the responsibility clearly rests with the minister and with the government caucus.

The minister also stood up and said that the opposition should make up its mind. But last spring when the user-fee proposal was announced, we said: wouldn't it be better to look at income tax? Mr. Chairman, if the government had said last spring, we won't bring in user fees, but we will, consistent with the Hall commission, look at some kind of income tax surcharge, that might be one thing.

As I mentioned before, there are trade-offs. I think I made this point the other night when we talked about the income tax Bill during committee stage. But we haven't got those trade-offs. We got the full shot. We have increased medicare premiums, we have user fees which the local hospital boards are going to have to carry the can for, plus the increased income tax. And next year, because this stingy government is not going to make any funds available beyond the present grants to school boards and local governments, we're going to have a huge increase in local property taxes too. So Albertans are going to face all these taxes. This is not an either/or situation; it's the whole shot.

Mr. Chairman, it just isn't good enough for the minister to stand up, and even with all the backbenchers pounding — it's good once in a while to have a rallying speech by a cabinet minister, gets the backbenchers participating.

MR. MARTIN: It wakes them up.

MR. NOTLEY: It wakes them up. It's nice to see a little participation from members of this government because they obviously don't have influence in the decision-making process, but at least they can feel a sense of participation by banging their desks. But apart from that, Mr. Chairman, this kind of reasoning doesn't answer any of the points.

The minister can be very, very outraged at the observations my colleague and I have raised; too bad for him. The fact of the matter is that the points we raise in the House are coming to us from all over the province. People in this province are not in favor of user fees, and they wonder why we're bringing in this kind of system which is, whether or not the minister wants to admit it, nothing more nor less than a tax on the sick.

Mr. Chairman, if this government were serious about getting costs under control, I come back to the hospital utilization report. The future Solicitor General, so we hear by rumor, tells us that seat belt legislation is a terrible situation, a terrible thing. The fact of the matter is that it's one of those hot political potatoes; no question about it. I have people in my constituency who feel strongly on both sides of the issue. But the point remains that if you're going to be serious about reducing hospital costs, you have to at least evaluate, as a government caucus, the recommendations of your own committee which you appointed, which you commissioned to look at hospital costs. One of its major recommendations is that we could reduce hospital costs with seat belt legislation. The Member for Edson suggests if we do that, it's going to be setting a precedent; we're going to stop motorcyclists and people who have hang-gliders and all the rest of it. Mr. Chairman, that is overdrawing the argument to ridiculous levels. You could take any argument to its extreme, and no argument of any kind makes sense. But rational people don't do that.

The fact of the matter is that we have a proposal here — not coming from the Official Opposition, not coming from the Alberta Federation of Labour, not coming from some of those people this government may get a little agitated about — coming from its own blue-ribbon committee, people who have impeccable credentials. When I look over the list of people, Mr. Chairman, many of them have impeccable Tory credentials. They bring in a set of recommendations, and this government refuses to act on them. We have members of the House suggesting that if we act on the recommendations of the Tories on this provincial utilization committee, my God, we're almost on the road to communism, down the slippery path to a totalitarian society. What absolute nonsense.

If the government had looked at the options, brought in some kind of cost control, recognized the choices that could be made

in the system, then I would say that they don't need to bring in user fees. Mr. Chairman, instead of making those choices, we have a call to arms on behalf of the new right to try to turn back the clock.

The fact of the matter is that it's not only an issue of principle, but it's an issue that many people feel very deeply about. There are very few issues that can be raised in this House at any time that I feel more strongly about than the defence of our health care system. Whether or not members of the caucus realize it, any time you bring in a system of user fees, which in fact represents deterrent fees, you are eroding some of the principles — the most important of which are accessibility and universality — upon which the system is based.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to tell you and members of the committee that some of us, because we believe very strongly in those principles, are going to fight every inch of the road. It may mean that the minister gets very exercised. Sometimes he is eloquent when he is exercised and sometimes he isn't. But the fact of the matter is that I really couldn't care whether he has the eloquence of William Jennings Bryan or he is the reincarnation of the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry. It is irrelevant. The issue of preserving the health care system is important enough to some of us that no matter how much controversy is involved, no matter how many insults are hurled, we know that we are correct and that the people of Alberta support us on this issue. Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I have absolutely no hesitation in proudly telling the committee that because Bill 98 contains this odious system of user fees, it is a bad piece of legislation, and we intend to oppose it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question on the Bill as presented?

[Mr. Deputy Chairman declared the motion carried. Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Adair	Harle	Paproski
Alexander	Hiebert	Payne
Anderson	Hyland	Reid
Batiuk	Jonson	Russell
Bradley	Koper	Schmid
Carter	Kowalski	Shaben
Chambers	Lee	Shrake
Clark	LeMessurier	Stiles
Cook	Lysons	Szwender
Crawford	McPherson	Thompson
Cripps	Moore, R.	Webber
Embury	Musgreave	Zaozimy
Fischer	Nelson	Zip
Gogo	Oman	

Against the motion:

Buck	Martin	Notley
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Totals:	Ayes - 41	Noes - 3
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[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

[Motion carried]

Bill 114
Public Service Employee Relations
Amendment Act, 1983

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any amendments, comments, or questions to be asked with respect to any section of this Act?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 114, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 1983, be reported.

[Motion carried]

Bill 115
Natural Gas Pricing Agreement
Amendment Act, 1983

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any amendments, questions, or comments to be offered with respect to any section of this Act?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

[Motion carried]

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

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration Bills 98, 114, and 115, and reports Bills 81 and 71 with some amendments.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow afternoon the one hour for government business has been designated. Of the four Bills at committee stage, there are some amendments to be proposed with respect to the first three. Bill 111 is also available, but no amendments are proposed with respect to that. I think the order in which they will be taken will be Bills 107, 109, 111, and 110.

[At 10:15 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]

