

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Title: Thursday, May 30, 1985 2:30 p.m.

Bill 247
Children's Rights Act

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

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. HIEBERT: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly in transmitting a message of congratulations to the Edmonton Oilers as they go for number two.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the motion agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Anyone contra?

I'll see to it that the wishes of the House are duly conveyed.

MR. HIEBERT: If I could further add, Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, the Edmonton Oilers were started some years ago in the WHA days by a gentleman called Bill Hunter. There's a story going out in Saskatchewan as to why Saskatoon was not successful in getting an NHL franchise. The story is that the NHL would like to relocate another team in Alberta besides the Oilers. [interjections]

However, Mr. Speaker, the resolution I would like the Assembly to consider is

That the Assembly congratulates the Edmonton Oilers on their success thus far in the Stanley Cup playoffs and wishes them the very best of luck in their efforts tonight to keep the Stanley Cup in Canada and to send the Flyers home alone. Go 2 it, Oilers!

[applause]

MR. SPEAKER: May I take it that the message is approved?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to rise on a point of privilege on an unrelated matter but related, I guess, to the extent that it involves athletics.

It's my pleasure today to announce that the city of Red Deer has won the Great Canadian Participation Challenge for its class in yesterday's fitness day across Canada. Red Deer was classed in the 30,000 to 70,000 population group, and 67.44 percent of the citizens of Red Deer participated in some kind of physical activity yesterday, which amounts to individual participation of 34,442 people. Second place went to Fredericton, with 66.2 percent participation. There were a total of 32 cities across Canada in the same category as Red Deer. I would like to say that I'm very proud of the citizens of Red Deer and would like to publicly say: congratulations; well done, Red Deer!

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 247, the Children's Rights Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill establishes and declares the child's right to the basic necessities of life, education, parental support, and representation at legal proceedings. Under the Bill, anyone convicted of depriving a child of his or her rights without lawful authority would be liable to a fine or imprisonment.

[Leave granted; Bill 247 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1984, for the Alberta Securities Commission.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care for the fiscal year '83-84.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to table copies for all members of the Assembly of the 1984-85 annual report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton Centre, this afternoon I'd like to introduce to you and members of the Assembly eight Oblate missionary seniors from the constituency of Edmonton Centre. In so doing, I'd like to make special reference to Archbishop Henri Routhier, who has served 61 years as a priest, and also to Reverend Father Charles Gamache, who has served 60 years as a priest this month. They are accompanied by their superior, Reverend Father Michaud, and their nurse, Mrs. Sara Burry. I believe they are seated in the public gallery. I ask them to stand and be cordially welcomed by the Assembly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, today it's a privilege for me to introduce a group of 27 students in grades 7 to 9 from Viscount Torrington school in my constituency of Three Hills. Although I haven't had a chance to meet the class yet, I'm hoping to have a few minutes with them just after 3 o'clock. Their teacher is Mr. Brent Wesley. They're also accompanied by parents Mrs. Agnes Martin and Mrs. Sharon Hargreaves. They are seated in the members' gallery. I ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to hon. members of the Assembly 19 grade 6 students from the Parkland Village school, which is located within Parkland Village north of Spruce Grove in the Stony Plain constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Ogston. They're in the public gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the recognition of the Assembly.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you two school groups from the Lac La Biche-McMurray constituency. The first is 13 grades 8 and 9 students from Peter Pond school in the city of Fort McMurray. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Mary Payne, and parent Mrs. Judy Young. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

The second group of students, Mr. Speaker, is from Plamondon, located in the south end of the constituency. They are 56 grades 5 and 6 students. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Jerry Stefanyk, Mr. Pierre Daigneault, Mrs. Fern Plamondon, and Mrs. Bernice Plamondon and ably assisted by parents Mrs. Evelyn Mischuk, Mrs. Celine Gauthier, and Mrs. Audrey Menard, along with their bus driver, Mr. Harold Hrynyk. I ask that they rise and receive the cordial welcome of the House. They're seated in the public gallery.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I felt that the most important issue we would be facing today in this House was the ministerial announcement from the Minister of the Environment. In the absence of that minister, I have nothing further to say for question period. I find it a bit atrocious that after a major statement, we can't question that minister the next day. So I will pass at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: I don't know whether the hon. leader is intending to raise a question of privilege over this. The language is that of a point of privilege, but it seems to me that perhaps there might be some good reason for the minister's not being here. It seems to be a little previous to come out with a condemnation.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Perhaps from time to time we need to decide how we work with the House. When a major ministerial announcement is made — and obviously the government felt it was important enough — at the first opportunity we have to delve into it, the minister is not here. I realize there's nothing I can do, but I wanted to make the point to the House, and I've made the point.

Doctors' Fee Schedule

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I had a question for the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, but I will direct one to the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care with regard to the arrangement that will be established to negotiate doctors' fee schedules in the upcoming year. Could the minister indicate whether a reconsideration has been made with regard to the announcement made in our budget of this year as to how negotiations will proceed for the next fiscal year?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of options open to us. As a matter of fact, I discussed this briefly with the president-elect of the Alberta Medical Association yesterday. We can go back to the procedure that develops a recommendation from the liaison committee represented by the profession, the government, and citizens at large. There can be direct negotiations through my own office, which I would then transmit to the Treasury Board, or

there can be just a presentation made by the AMA and then a decision awaited from the Treasury Board at such time as they're finalizing the budget.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the minister indicate whether one of the alternatives being discussed in terms of negotiations was with regard to binding arbitration?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the Alberta Medical Association does not favour binding arbitration. That was the recommendation given by Justice Emmett Hall at the time he handed down his review of medicare. At that time I very quickly offered binding arbitration as a method of fee negotiations to the Alberta Medical Association. Of course, the other half of binding arbitration is the elimination of the right to extra bill.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary on this subject to the minister. In terms of a time line with regard to a decision on this matter, has the minister given to the medical profession an indication of when he's prepared to make a decision with them, and if not, has the minister any target of his own?

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, we're open-minded insofar as the method is concerned. The matter now is really before the executive of the Alberta Medical Association. My understanding is that they were considering it at their monthly board meeting of directors, which I believe occurred two days ago, and I expect to hear from them very shortly.

Journey for Lives

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. Less than 24 hours ago, Steve Fonyo completed his journey of 7,924 kilometres across the country, his Journey for Lives: a very significant historic achievement. My question to the minister is: is the offer from Alberta to match funds raised for the Journey for Lives still available to the public? In other words, can they still contribute and have the Alberta government match the funds?

MR. RUSSELL: Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker. The last time I checked with the Cancer Society officials, the advice we had is that the donations by Albertans were just past the \$1.6 million mark. That was more than two weeks ago. I noticed from a story in this morning's papers that Alberta is now credited with being at \$1.8 million.

The run has just finished, as our nation is aware. I'm hopeful that the fact that he has successfully finished this incredible feat will encourage Albertans who haven't yet given and intend to, to get their donations in. We are so close to the \$2 million mark that I'm hopeful groups throughout the province will make that last added effort to hit that magic \$2 million. The province would then match it, of course, making \$4 million from the province of Alberta, which would be just an incredible donation on a national basis. Naturally, we'll have to close it off shortly, so if people or groups have those intentions, I hope they'll act very quickly.

MR. LEE: A supplementary to the minister. Will the funds raised in Alberta and the matching funds go into the Steve Fonyo fund or the Canadian Cancer fund, or will the

application and use of the funds be determined here in Alberta?

MR. RUSSELL: No, Mr. Speaker. At the time we mentioned there would be matching funds, the funds subscribed by the public of course go into the Fonyo Journey for Lives. The matching funds are to be specifically directed to hospital boards which deal in a great way with victims suffering from cancer: the children's hospital board in Calgary and the cancer programs board here in Edmonton.

MR. LEE: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister consider sending a telegram, as the Prime Minister did, on behalf of all members of the House, congratulating Steve and his family on this historic achievement and extending our unanimous best wishes?

MR. RUSSELL: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a nice idea. We did have the hon. Member for Cypress meet Mr. Fonyo when he crossed the Alberta-Saskatchewan border and present to him a letter of welcome, together with our announcement. But perhaps a follow-up letter would be a nice idea, particularly if I could include in that message that we've hit the \$2 million mark.

MR. WEISS: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister. Did you say there would be a specific deadline for that balance of funds hopefully to be reached?

MR. RUSSELL: I didn't mention a deadline, Mr. Speaker, because of course we don't want to miss any funds. Obviously, probably within two weeks the books will be closed insofar as we're concerned. If that last push is being planned, that's sort of the time line we're looking at.

MR. HYLAND: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Mr. Minister, as you know, the Walsh community welcomed Steve in a true western and Alberta style. I wonder if there have been any other communities in Alberta that have been able to match the per capita donation given by that community, in excess of \$1,200 for a little over 100 people.

MR. RUSSELL: No, Mr. Speaker, I don't have those details. Certainly, if the rest of the province matched that kind of contribution, it would be just incredible support for the Canadian fight against cancer.

Federal Budget

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture, I'd like to direct a question to the Provincial Treasurer. Last Friday my colleague asked questions here about the federal proposal to reduce the transfer payments to the provinces by some \$2 billion by 1990. At that time the Treasurer said that he needed more time to assess the budget. Since several days have gone by since then, I wonder if the Treasurer would now be able to give us a report on what the expected reduction in the transfers is going to actually mean to this province.

MR. HYNDMAN: I haven't completed the review, Mr. Speaker, but as indicated in the federal budget, a reduction in the rate of increase of those transfers is contemplated. We will want to make a thorough and complete review of all the implications, based on information, some of which

we don't yet have, and then I'll be in a position to report to the House.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In his studies so far, out of the total amount proposed, can the Treasurer indicate specifically, as far as a number, what the change will mean for Alberta?

MR. HYNDMAN: It would be premature at this time, Mr. Speaker, and I would want to be completely accurate. So it will take some more time before I can give a definitive answer, which I will give at that time.

MR. MARTIN: How long, Lou?

MR. HYNDMAN: I don't know how long, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. While the process is going on, I wonder if the Treasurer could indicate what kind of representations he's made to his federal counterparts during these few days to make clear that it will at least be unacceptable if the transfer involves transferring the federal deficit to provincial taxpayers.

MR. HYNDMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I've already made representations to the effect that it would be inappropriate to simply have a transfer which would result in a movement of a deficit from taxpayers who pay federally to provincial taxpayers.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question then, Mr. Speaker. Could the Treasurer indicate what response his federal counterparts gave to his indicating that?

MR. HYNDMAN: I'll be sharing all that when the decisions come down, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: You're going to let the public know, Lou?

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. We ask these things because there have been lots of nervous people wondering for several days what the effect will be and hoping they will have answers. I just ask the Treasurer whether he could indicate if there's any joint program being developed with other provincial governments to approach and make clear a stand with the federal government on this matter.

MR. HYNDMAN: Mr. Speaker, that will become clearer over the course of the months ahead. As hon. members know, the established programs financing agreements will expire next year, and there are preliminary negotiations. Negotiations will be carried on by the 11 finance ministers and others involved in the health and postsecondary area and with respect to the Canada Assistance Plan over the course of the next 12 months. During that time a number of provinces will be making joint representations on a number of matters.

MR. GURNETT: A supplementary question. I wonder if the Treasurer could indicate specifically if he's had any discussions with the government of Manitoba regarding the tactics they used to successfully protect Manitoba against the \$50 million transfer cut that was proposed last November and discussed with them the feasibility of similar action.

MR. HYNDMAN: I'm sure my good friend, the Minister of Finance in Manitoba, will have representations to make in putting forth vigorously the views of the people of his province, which I will do in respect to the people of the province of Alberta.

Charter Bus Regulations

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could direct a question to the Minister of Transportation. In particular, I'd like to ask him about the regulation of extraprovincial bus carriers bringing charter tours into the province. Is the minister giving consideration to deregulating that area so that people can bring large tour groups into the province and with them tourist dollars?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, a little over a year ago we implemented major changes with respect to the busing industry in terms of some deregulation with regard to charter operations operating wholly within the province of Alberta. We did not move at that time to extend that form of deregulation to charter tours operating extraprovincially, but we do still have that under consideration.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I should advise that we have been making every effort to streamline the process of application before the Alberta Motor Transport Board so that charter operators in this province who wish to operate extraprovincially on charter tours and those from outside Alberta would have a greater opportunity to obtain operating authority at an early and timely date without the expense that they previously went through in terms of lengthy hearings and legal advice and so on.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Have there been any studies done on the beneficial economic effect of having more tour groups coming into the province and whether that would be possible with deregulation?

MR. M. MOORE: I'm not aware, Mr. Speaker, of any studies that have been done on the effect of regulatory control of charter bus operations on the tourist industry. It may well be that there are some studies that have been undertaken by the Minister of Tourism and Small Business or others, but not that I'm aware of.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, can I ask the minister a follow-up question? When might the minister be able to comment definitively, one way or another, as to whether or not extraprovincial carriers will be deregulated? Is there a decision date that the minister has in mind?

MR. M. MOORE: No, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, much of the deregulation involving the charter bus industry in Canada involves our negotiations with the other provinces and with U.S. authorities. Obviously, Alberta would not want to be in a position where we were completely free of regulation when it comes to charter operators coming into our province while other provinces or U.S. states were prohibiting Alberta charter operations from moving into their areas. We have to be careful to be fair to our operators, and that's a subject of negotiation with a lot of other governments. It's an ongoing situation. I have said on other occasions with regard to both the bus regulatory regime and that which exists for trucks in Canada that the deregulation job will probably never be completed, but it's an

ongoing process of making the industry freer and freer from regulatory control.

Science and Research Policy

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, if there's time, could I ask a second question that's unrelated to the first?

I wonder if I could ask the Minister of Advanced Education some questions on science policy as a follow-up to the government's white paper. Could the minister comment on where the science policy paper is in the system, and when might that be available to the Legislature?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I'm the proper person to respond to that question. My colleague the Minister of Economic Development and my colleague Mr. Musgreave are personally in charge of the responsibility of drafting that paper. It's my understanding that the paper is in its third or fourth draft. It has been a very difficult paper to deal with because it bridges the transfer of technology from universities to the private sector and develops the intellectual strength of universities. So from that side, it is a very important document for us. But I'd be somewhat uneasy to give any timing except to say it is proceeding. Perhaps my colleague from Calgary, the chairman of the Research Council, may wish to supplement my answer.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, could I follow up then? Could the member responsible for the Alberta Research Council inform the House as to whether or not we'll be receiving the science paper, perhaps for the fall Legislature, and where it is in the drafting stage, and secondly, if the memo of understanding with the federal government will have any impact on that paper?

MR. MUSGREAVE: To answer the first question of the hon. member, as the Minister of Advanced Education has said, we are now in the fifth draft of the policy statement. As far as the relationship with the federal government, I can't see it having very much effect other than we will, hopefully, get the federal government doing things in our province that they haven't done previously and that means committing money as well as just good words.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, a related question would be the future of the cold weather research lab. The new government in Ottawa put a hold on that. Could the member advise the House whether or not the Alberta government and the Research Council are working to develop some sort of funding mechanism to get that cold weather research lab here in Alberta?

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, we have asked the minister of science for the federal government, Mr. Siddon, to come to the west to do an in-depth review of our facilities and, hopefully, to assess what we may be doing in the future with them, and that's where the situation rests at the present time.

MR. COOK: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Would the memo of understanding for joint funding allow the Alberta government to partially fund that cold weather research lab if the federal government isn't willing to fund it all on its own?

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I think the intent of the memorandum of understanding is to try to involve the two

levels of government in financial commitments as well as just verbal commitments. I could see it being an opportunity for us to develop in that area, but I think it's a matter that would have to be determined by the government before we can advise how much money we would be putting in.

Postsecondary Enrollment Projections

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to ask a question of the Minister of Advanced Education. It relates to enrollments for the next academic year. As we near the end of the deadline for applications, I wonder if the minister has an idea as to what pressure the postsecondary institutions will be under for registrations for this coming fall.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I believe that's a very appropriate question, particularly if we cast our minds back to the apparent concern which was common across Alberta last year about high school students having the university system in the province available. As it turned out, our predictions were fairly accurate in that every student who wished to go to university did in fact find a spot. This year our information indicates that there will be a reduction in the rate of increase of the number of students going to universities, and therefore it's our view that there will be ample opportunity and ample space for all students to be accommodated within the university system in this province.

I should note as well, Mr. Speaker, on a similar issue, that the college system will experience an increase in students and, as a result, it may be appropriate for students wishing to enter a college system to have their applications in as soon as possible.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, last year I talked about an information system which was useful to us to show where duplication of registration had taken place in the province. To the Member for St. Albert, we have that information system in place again this year. It will be an updated system. I have not yet received the first run of the statistics, but we will be monitoring very carefully where the students are going. Students often make application to more than one institution, and therefore, when you eliminate the duplication of enrollments, we are fairly confident the overall system will be able to accommodate the students we expect. The bottom line here is that the bubble of students which we experienced from 1981-82 through to '83-84 is likely over and we should see a decreasing student population at the university and college level through the next three- to five-year period.

MRS. FYFE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the postsecondary institutions be guaranteed that their funding would not be reduced if there's a cutback in students?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta is very fortunate in that some time ago we opted for a base budget approach to the funding of universities and colleges. That means that each institution is considered as a unique institution. We funnel and provide substantial resources to these institutions, based on the kinds of services which they deliver and the capital infrastructure or capital costs of the buildings which are there. Therefore, the student population does not drive the funding formula. But because universities and colleges experienced a substantial increase in student numbers in the period I just mentioned, the province of Alberta did provide additional enrollment money on top of the base budget for the colleges and universities.

As I indicated in my budget defence just a few days ago, there's an amount of approximately \$15 million to \$16 million to reflect that student numbers increase, and as long as the students continue to be in the universities and colleges, then of course we will continue to provide that marginal or additional money. In September we will again review the populations in the universities and colleges and will then judge as to whether or not we'll increase the supplementary funding to the universities and colleges.

I think it's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, on a cross-Canada comparison and as a result of a meeting of the council of ministers this past week, for example, that most provinces look fondly to the financing arrangements the province of Alberta has established for its advanced educational institutions. Again, it's safe to say that they are probably the best in Canada, and therefore I think the institutions are well financed to accommodate these growing student numbers.

MR. HIEBERT: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that the University of Alberta has made a decision that no students would be accepted in the fall term if they were to write diploma supplemental exams in August. Has the minister made any assessment as to how that particular decision would impact the students and the enrollments?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, that's a new change I have not been made aware of. It's my understanding that the University of Alberta essentially looks at the average high school mark. Other institutions do have a preferential scale, but I don't think it applies to high school students. If the member is advising me to inquire into that policy, I'd certainly be glad to do that and advise the member.

MR. COOK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the supplemental or soft funding money for enrollment increases. The minister has given the House an assurance that the money will be there so long as the students are there. Could the minister, though, give a longer term assurance to the institutions for that funding, perhaps a three- or five-year commitment? The reason I ask that question is that a number of institutions have difficulty getting long-term commitments from instructors and are forced to rely on sessionals who may not have the same qualifications.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it's my view that the overall student population at universities in particular should not decrease too rapidly over the next three- to four-year period. I could well be wrong there, but my information is that there may be some reduction. There could well be zero increases, but as long as the population at the universities stays at the level it is now, then of course we'll maintain the marginal or additional funding. But I would be unwilling to give the comment that if student numbers started to decrease below, for example, the '82-83 level, that enrollment money would continue. That's why the base budget funding is so popular and so positive in the province of Alberta. It's not enrollment driven. It's based on the concept of the identity of the institution, the kinds of courses it is delivering, and the capital costs to that institution. Therefore, that makes it unique. When enrollments decrease in other provinces, then of course the base, the traditional or fundamental funding, of an institution reduces as well,

and that has caused some serious cutbacks in other parts of Canada. Certainly not in Alberta.

MR. COOK: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister consider converting part of that supplementary funding into a three-year commitment so that three-year commitments could be made to instructors and thereby perhaps free up some very bright young talents outside the province to come here on a three-year contract?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I recognize several points made by the Member for Edmonton Glengarry in that we are attempting, as an objective, to maintain the first-rate and highest quality academic staff at our universities. Part of the temptation of some of our better people, of course, is that they are tempted away from Alberta. For what reason I don't know, unless it's money. In that context, it may well be that we have to find some way to assure that first-rate or top-calibre people are maintained in Alberta through, for example, the provision of adequately funded special chairs in certain key areas which tend to meet the social and economic objectives of the province. To some extent that flows from discussions we've had on the white paper.

Nonetheless, the Member for Edmonton Glengarry, in his usual convincing way, has made the point that perhaps we should consider taking this marginal or additional money and blending it into the base. That's a good representation, and I will weigh that carefully in the next couple of weeks.

Secondary Education Review

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address a question to the Minister of Education. It deals with the review of secondary education programming in Alberta. I wonder if the minister could give the House a current status report with respect to this review.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the review of the secondary program of studies is complete, and I have prepared a policy statement on secondary education, which is presently being considered by the government as a whole. I am hopeful that we will be able to bring that consideration to a conclusion in the very near future, and my expectation at the moment is that the government's policy on secondary education would be released to the public during the week of June 10.

Teaching Standards Council

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Education with regard to the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards. Could the minister indicate the present status of that matter? Has any arrangement been made with the Alberta Teachers' Association, or is the minister proceeding to establish the council as announced earlier?

MR. KING: Some time ago, Mr. Speaker — I believe early last week — I wrote to the Alberta Teachers' Association to ask if they would nominate candidates to the council. I asked in that letter if they would reply to me by June 1. We might still wait for tomorrow's mail. I can report that as of now I have not received a reply from the Alberta Teachers' Association. In the same letter I made it clear that we would be pleased to discuss a new teaching profession Act with the Alberta Teachers' Association. In fact, since the matter is of some interest to the public, I will undertake

to table a copy of that letter in the Legislative Assembly. I don't know whether or not the Alberta Teachers' Association will reply, of course. That's for them to decide.

In the meantime a ministerial order is being drafted to establish the council along the lines that were set out in the ministerial statement of March 29. We have closed the receipt of nominations. We have received in the order of 200 nominations for membership on the council, so we of course are in the preliminary stages of going through those nominations and assessing them. I expect to interview everybody on the short list myself, and I'm hopeful I'll be able to make the appointments and sign the ministerial order during the week of June 17.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. This is with regard to the, I believe, 23,034 letters the minister sent to all teachers in the province of Alberta. Could the minister indicate what type of return, in terms of a reply to those letters, the minister received and the attitude that was indicated, in a general sense, by those letters?

MR. KING: It would be difficult for me to do that without checking with staff in the office as to the number of replies. I can say that we estimate we have received in the order of 13,000 signatures on petitions that have been sent to us. The hon. member has likely received copies of those petitions, so he knows that we are at some difficulty in dealing with them. On many of them the signatures are illegible, on virtually none of them is the signature accompanied by a printed name or an address, and on most of them the school in which they were signed is not identified. They arrived at our office in envelopes that were postmarked in Barnett House, so all of them have an Edmonton postmark. We can't even tell what community they came from. So it's difficult for us to attach much significance to the petitions. The letters are certainly in excess of 500, but to provide any more information about that I'd have to check with my staff I would undertake to do that and provide the hon. member with the information.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day. Might we revert to . . .

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, I thought you had recognized me for a question.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry; I missed that. There is still time available in the question period.

Telephone Solicitation

MRS. FYFE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask a question of the Minister of Utilities and Telecommunications. The minister is aware of my concern regarding telephone solicitations, and I wonder if the minister could advise the Assembly if he's considering restrictions on the use of the telephone for commercial solicitations.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, not only am I aware of the concerns expressed by the hon. member and contained within Motion 227 on the Order Paper, but I'm also very sympathetic with those concerns. It was my hope when the hon. member put the motion forward that we would have time in this sitting to debate that motion. If in fact that is not the case, then I propose, in consultation with my colleagues in government and caucus, to direct Alberta

Government Telephones to proceed on the matter so the question of uncontrolled solicitation can be addressed by the Public Utilities Board.

MRS. FYFE: One further question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise whether he's considering the restriction of automatic dialing systems in addition to solicitations handled simply by an individual?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, the information I have received to date would suggest that the jury is still out on the important question of the extent of the prohibition. In light of the fact that the motion will in all likelihood not come up this sitting, I welcome input from all members of the Assembly as to their views as expressed by their constituents, so that when direction is given to AGT, that can be with the fullest amount of information possible from the elected representatives of all Albertans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

(reversion)

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today — I can't see them from this vantage point, but I believe 11 students in grades 5 and 6 from the I. L. Peretz school are here. It's the first time I've had that school visit since my election in '79, so I'm particularly pleased to have them here. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Moira Nasim and Miss Haydee Levid. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I want to check if I have some students from Reed Ranch school here. Excellent. I have six students — who says small isn't beautiful? — from the Reed Ranch school. They're in grade 7. The Reed Ranch school, for your information, Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, is a rural school in the heart of the Three Hills constituency. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Thelma Wenc, and a parent, Mrs. Trudy Schroeder.

I'll be looking forward to having my picture taken with them immediately after the question period. Hopefully they don't suffer the same fate as my previous class, in that the camera broke down. I'm not sure whether that was the MLA or the students that were in front of the camera. We'll look forward to seeing them then. I ask them all now to rise and receive the warm welcome to the Assembly. They're in the members' gallery.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, if the introductions have been concluded, I would like to move, before going on with other business, that the motions for returns on the Order Paper stand.

[Motion carried]

head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

231. Moved by Mr. R. Speaker:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to reduce the size and cost of government in Alberta by:

- (1) eliminating the practice of political patronage,
- (2) expanding the mandate and powers of the Auditor General,
- (3) balancing departmental budgets,
- (4) increasing the accountability factor for top-level administrators, and
- (5) reducing the number of government departments.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it certainly gives me pleasure today to move Motion 231 standing in my name.

In opening my remarks with regard to the size and cost of government, I have placed on my desk some very visual documents that indicate what has actually happened with the government of Alberta, how it has gone astray over the years. In 1969 and 1970 the original six of the Progressive Conservative Party sat in this Legislature and talked about taking the fat out of government, reducing the size of government, putting in cost controls, eliminating waste, having better review systems. What we have to do at a point in time is visually review what actually happens to those kinds of words by a government, by a group of men that take on the responsibility of administering the affairs of the province.

I would like to indicate what these documents on my desk are, Mr. Speaker. They are from the public accounts of Alberta. They are the salaries, expenses, and miscellaneous payments to public servants. The first is for 1971-72, the second for the fiscal year 1976-77, and the bottom one for 1982-83. If we had the one for 1984, it would only be larger. Each is comparable. Each is a printout. The reason I put the '76-77 one in there is to indicate a midterm benchmark and to indicate that the computer printout is the same as the printout used for the 1981 document below. This is a list of the public servants in the province of Alberta. It is what has happened to the size of this government. Whereas in 1971-72 there were some 17,000 civil servants, we're at a point now where there are 60,000-plus listed in the 1983 document. That is the document of the public accounts, which are comparable from one period of time to another.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that Albertans asked, what about the size of government? What about the cost of government? What about the waste in government? Isn't it time something is done? I'm sure if Albertans right across this province could have those three documents sitting on their kitchen tables, they would ask what's going on in government.

As the Leader of the Representative Party, a party that stands for limited government and reducing the size of government, I must ask on behalf of my membership across this province — which is growing significantly — why the government continues to grow as it is and what the government is doing about it.

MRS. CRIPPS: Is that why you limit your time in estimates?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. members here, that are asking questions, are embarrassed by what they see on my desk.

MRS. CRIPPS: I'd be embarrassed, too, if I only spent seven hours in estimates.

MR. R. SPEAKER: If they are willing to stand up in this House following my remarks on this motion and say that they agree that since this government has taken over, the size of the civil service has gone from 17,000 to over 60,000, some 300 to 400 percent . . . As we look at the budget of this province, in 1972-73 it was just over a billion dollars. It's now over \$10 billion. The budget has increased by 10 times.

We look at the population of this province, and to me this is the indicator, the benchmark, or the matter upon which we can reflect these kinds of statistics and make them meaningful. The population in Alberta has only increased from 1.6 million at the time this document was placed before this Legislature to a point in 1984 — we could even take the current population of some 2.6 million people. In 1983-84 it was 2.3 million. We find that the population has only increased 1.4 times, maybe one and a half times. You ask yourself: how can a budget increase over 10 times at the same time? How can the number of public servants required to deliver the services of government increase by 4 or 5 times, by thousands of percent? I think it's right that we ask the question at this point in time: what about the cost and size of government?

I think there are some specific things this government could look at in the way they handle public money — a very careless way. The first one that I've listed.

MRS. CRIPPS: Careless way? You didn't even come to the estimates.

MR. R. SPEAKER: . . . in that document in terms of motions is that matter of political patronage. In this government once in a while it's nice to expose that to the air and ask why some of the backbenchers that are so noisy at the present time don't say something . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: I shall.

MR. R. SPEAKER: . . . about the Premier's buddies and colleagues getting appointed to various positions at very excessive rates of income. Nothing is said. I'm sure the backbenchers of this government represent Albertans that are concerned about expenditure as much as anyone else.

MRS. CRIPPS: You can be sure that they are. That's why I sit in estimates.

MR. R. SPEAKER: It's alarming why something isn't said in the House, but it never seems to come forward.

Let's just examine some of the areas that have increased significantly. I think you have to start at home when you do an assessment. Usually some people, when they assess their herd, start at home, and I suppose right in this Legislature we should assess the leader of the herd that's here in this Assembly. The Premier's office and the Executive Council . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: I beg your pardon. Leader of what?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I know the hon. Leader of the Representative Party knows what I'm going to say before I say it. It seems to me that it's unnecessary for one member to refer to another group of members as a herd. We are

all here by reason of the choices made by voters. I think the individual voters who elect us have a right to have their choices respected in keeping with the traditions of a good parliament.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with your ruling on that matter. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley was continually interrupting, and I felt she was calling her herd from the back yard. I thought maybe if she could take the hint, we'd get on with the issue at hand.

MR. SPEAKER: As a matter of fact I was going to suggest to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley — but I hadn't quite gotten to that point. As hon. members know, I have a lot of patience. I was going to get to asking whether there was some means by which the floor could be given to two members at the same time.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Continuing on with the first point of the motion before us in terms of political patronage, when we look at the Premier's office — I think we have to start with the leader of the government and examine what is happening there. What is the annual cost of those some 17 positions? They're just under \$1 million. If you calculate the midpoint of the salaries of those people, it's something like \$55,590 a year, not including expenses. I would assume that most of the positions in the Premier's office are political positions and most of them are likely political appointments. I question whether that many people are necessary to run the Premier's office. I notice a lot of people making a lot of motion. I'm not sure what the contribution is.

Not too long ago a deputy minister was hired at a very excessive salary. I don't hear very much from him at all as to what a deputy minister of cabinet would be. I can recall my days in cabinet. We didn't even have a secretary to cabinet. The Premier took and kept the notes. At that time the Premier knew that when something was decided in cabinet, the rest of the ministers and the Premier would remember what the decision was. Today I'm sure we need a secretary, a deputy minister of cabinet, I suppose, to write an agenda for every Tuesday. It's very difficult for me to understand. I think the salary is over \$80,000 a year. Unbelievable! We think of how many people are unemployed in this province that could work — four families could be supported by one salary.

Well, we see that kind of waste throughout government. I would recommend that there's room for economy in the Premier's office and there should be a reduction of the staff and a restructuring of the salary levels. They're excessive. In terms of expense accounts, I'm sure there's no limit to what expense accounts those people can use, because they're with the Premier: the license to spend public money without any kind of ground rules at all.

What else? We look at some 27 positions that have been appointed in the last few years, persons well known in Conservative political circles, costing the taxpayers of this province \$1.714 million per year. We look at the average salary of those people: some \$63,480. Who are some of those people that come to mind as we go over a list of these kinds of appointments which we regularly keep in our office? Merv Leitch, McMillan, Hohol, Hobbs, Shannon, Finnerty, Lindblad, Mack, Hutton, Skoreyko, Farran, Wentz, Dau, Harrison, Craig, Seymour, Harding, Wood, Dinning, and the list goes on: people this government favours by very favourable positions.

MRS. CRIPPS: Any women?

MR. R. SPEAKER: No. This government neglects women in other areas so they might as well neglect them when they give out political patronage as well, and they do.

Mr. Speaker, we see that kind of abuse at the senior level of government, so what can you expect throughout the departments? What can you expect across the government in terms of cost cutting and concern about the size? Well, I don't think you can expect any.

When I examine the positions of executive assistants in this province, as to what has happened there, I find — maybe all of them are not political patronage appointments; I wouldn't say that. I know that a few of the executive assistants, whether they were political appointees or not, are good quality people doing a good job for the ministers, and I have told some of them that. Let's look at the history of what has happened with this government. When the Conservative Party took over in 1971, there were four executive assistants. Today we have some 51 executive and special assistants contracted by ministers, deputy ministers, and associate deputy ministers. You ask the question: why all these extra people? Is it because when you become a minister or deputy minister you automatically get an executive assistant? Does anybody ask the question: are they really necessary? I look back at my period of time when we were ministers and have to say that I was one of those four who had an executive assistant, because some of us had more of a workload than other ministers. It wasn't a right; it was done on the basis of need and accountability.

But look at today. Everybody and anybody has an executive assistant. The minister for AADAC has an executive assistant. Maybe he needs that. He's doing a good job; no criticism of the job of the hon. Member for Lethbridge West. I like everything he's doing. But the question is: is an executive assistant right for that position? Why is it necessary? We have to look at this kind of question. Does the government ask about it?

As I say, when you ask about the cost and size of government, you start from the people who sit in this room and review what should be done. As a positive recommendation, I recommend to the government that that matter be taken into consideration. First of all, there should be a maximum limit set on the salaries for those individuals. Secondly, there should be some guidelines in government, by cabinet and by MLAs who act in special positions, as to who gets an executive assistant and who doesn't, and the established criteria by which they do.

What else with regard to this matter of patronage? One way of assuring there's no patronage of a blatant and partisan nature would be to open all public service positions to competition. Incumbents should be invited to compete for all positions and the best qualified individual should get any given position. I think that should happen in government. Does it happen in this one?

I ask some questions. For example, I have a great amount of difficulty determining the qualifications of the tailor in Calgary becoming the director of the Premier's office at a salary of some \$71,000. Why wasn't that advertised? I have difficulty determining the qualifications of the Premier's former press secretary, who is now deputy chairman of the Alberta Liquor Control Board at some \$71,000. I have equal difficulty relating the qualifications of a former Tory MP, the provincial Tory Party president, to the position of chairman of the ALCB at an annual salary of some \$77,000. Why weren't those positions advertised

to the general public so other people, outside the party that have performed well within the party, get the special inside track.

Patronage always leads to a lower quality of government. We've seen that happen in many provinces. I remember that was one of the first lessons I learned after becoming a member of the Legislature. I recall a conversation with the Premier at that time, Mr. Manning. We were riding back from Pincher Creek-Crowsnest together and I said: "As a new member of the Legislature, one of the questions that's raised with me again and again is why Socreds never receive consideration for those positions that become available in government. What do we do? What about that?" I raised that. [interjections] Sure, you get up and speak; get up and tell me about the other side of it. You can talk history if you want. [interjections] I'm glad to see everybody is awake.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of information. Would the member . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: I see the Member for Edmonton Glengarry is alive and standing, and I understand he's going to refute my remarks. It's nice to see that . . .

MR. COOK: Would the member comment on the fate of the former Socred . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. I have to have some sympathy for the people in *Hansard* who try to transcribe this sort of going on. If the hon. Member for Edmonton Glengarry wishes to ask the member who is speaking for permission to ask a question, that's in order. But apart from that, there is no justification that I know of for interruptions.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask the member for permission to ask a question about the former Social Credit Attorney General who was given a judgeship by the provincial government.

MR. R. SPEAKER: The hon. member asks the question. He should at least have the courtesy to see if I'm ready to receive the question. I never heard it anyway, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for that kind interruption and intermission for a commercial.

Mr. Speaker, that's the first item I want to make. In the other part of my time I want to cover the other four items. I would like to cover very quickly the matter of "expanding the mandate and powers of the Auditor General." The powers of the Auditor General in the Act, as it now stands, allow the Auditor to be just that, an auditor of the procedures that occur. Under section 19 of the Act, the Auditor acts in that mechanical way, in an audit function, in terms of reviewing the matter of disbursements of public money to make sure they are "in accordance with the authority of a supply vote," have "complied with regulations, directives or orders," have "been properly reflected in the accounts," and so on. It becomes a process to see that the funds have been either expended or collected in a regular way as to certain accounting procedures. That's proper; I accept that as a proper function of the Auditor. But as well, the Auditor has access to various areas throughout government where there can be waste, excesses, improper — not necessarily improper expenditures, but a matter of waste, where the Auditor could make a value judgment.

For example, the federal Auditor over the years. The incident brought to the fore is the matter of funding horses somewhere in the budget and somebody not realizing they were there. That's an extreme example. But I'm sure there are observations the Auditor makes with regard to waste and excessive spending. I think the Auditor should have the right to comment with regard to those matters. He is able to see things that we as members of the Legislature can't, because they go through all the details and they do that year-round. Certainly, that's a role for the politicians who stand up in the Legislature. Where we have a situation such as what exists in this Legislature — 74 members on one side of the House, four on the other — there is no way we are able to detect many of those kinds of details. Expanding the Auditor's function would certainly help in that area.

I'd like to touch very quickly on departmental budgets. First of all, I'd like to look back to a comment of the Premier of this province in 1969, when he was preparing himself and thinking about the budgets in this province. On March 3, 1969, he asked a question about Alberta, and I raise exactly the same question today:

Why does Alberta have to be the biggest spending province in Canada on a per-capita basis? What has been done to assess areas where expenditures . . .

I'd like to note this next phrase.

. . . particularly for general administration, can be reduced?

That's the present Premier asking that question on March 3, 1969, as Leader of the Official Opposition.

Let's examine that very statement for a few moments. First of all, the documents before us illustrate very well what has happened to the size of the civil service. The cost of government has increased significantly while our population has not increased. I raised a couple of other statistics about the general administration of the government one or two years ago in terms of a graph I brought into this Legislature. I find those to be alarming figures and in contradiction to the Premier's concern in this statement.

We look at education. The cost of administering education by the Department of Education has risen 4,000 percent since the Premier took over the leadership of this province. We look at the department of health. The administrative costs have risen 6,000 percent over that period of time. Here was a Premier concerned about top-heavy government, top-heavy administration, and we see what has happened in the province.

The Premier said something else in his reply to the Budget Address of March 3, 1969, that I thought was interesting:

The Provincial Auditor said he was trying to preach restraint even more than he did three years ago . . .

I believe that might be a misprint, meaning the Provincial Treasurer.

. . . but on the basis of the financial statements he wasn't being listened to. All Cabinet Ministers in Alberta seem to be conscious of the situation, but there seems to be a reluctance to cut down on programs in their immediate jurisdiction. It seems to be a case of 'cut down some other programs, but don't cut down mine' . . .

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if that same mentality is in government today. We look at what has happened over the last few years. There has been continual expansion in expenditure. The Department of Agriculture has been cut down significantly, and maybe one or two others, but in

a general sense, there has been a continual increase in the cost of each of those departments. I think it's time the government took some of the medicine it recommended at that time, that we set up priorities. We recall quite well how the Premier was able to place a great emphasis on the word "priorities" as he strutted about at that time telling us to change our attitudes in government.

What else in terms of departmental budgets? I think part of the plan is that the budget in this province weighs heavily on nonrenewable resource revenues, some 37.9 percent this year. Added to that in an indirect way, because of the nonrenewable resources in this province, is revenue from investment income of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Some 54.2 percent of the budget is paid for because we have that kind of revenue. The question is: what would we do if the people of this province had to pick up some of the deficit? If we had a reduction in that revenue, what kind of impact would we have on the people of this province? As I see it, there's no plan in place for the government to try to reduce the cost and size of government to adjust to any kind of financial change such as that. And it could happen. The Premier indicated in question period the other day that one of the variables that could significantly affect us is the revenue and future of the oil and gas industry and agricultural industry in this province. It could change, and I think this government should think in terms of its adjustment.

Mr. Speaker, in my last three minutes I'd like to cover the other items in that resolution. On the matter of "increasing the accountability factor for top-level administrators," I'd like to make these comments. This government prided itself on decentralization. The word is nice, but I can't agree with one component of that concept. All it does is expand the tentacles of government into other regions of the province. The octopus only grows, and the books sitting before me demonstrate that adequately. There is no way that this government ever cuts back on the ties to the central administration, the top-heavy control.

I'm recommending two things. First of all, this government should give more responsibility to the regional professional people who work in this province. For example, the social service offices across the province could have more autonomy, and we could cut out the middle bureaucracy. We could have less central administrative staff running around checking what they're doing all the time. That would cut back a lot. We shouldn't cut back on the regional people who are on the front line delivering the services. Regionalized budgets would help. Secondly, I recommend that we look at working to a greater extent with the communities and local government in terms of provision of services where necessary. That's decentralizing. I don't agree with the way the government is doing it, because all they do is expand the size of government and reach out further into the pockets of the taxpayers of Alberta.

The last point, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the number of government departments means a reduction in the number of ministers. This province has a greater number of ministers than any other province in Canada. If I recall correctly, when this Progressive Conservative Party took over the administration of this province, there were 12 ministers with full responsibility of government. It's now up to some 30. I highly recommend that the same efficiency in government could come about if that number were reduced to 20.

MR. SPEAKER: I respectfully draw to the hon. member's attention that the allotted time has been exceeded.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've made my point with regard to reduction of the number of government departments. I've also made preliminary remarks with regard to each of those items I feel could start the trend towards limited government, downsizing this government into a more meaningful government which could deliver adequate services in the province of Alberta. I hope each member in this Legislature remembers the size of each of these books, because that is the type of growth of government we have in Alberta. It is unacceptable, and it should be changed.

MRS. CRIPPS: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I've never before had the opportunity to speak on a motion where the proponent brought a soapbox. It's mighty interesting.

I guess the first point that I'd like to make — we're talking about accountability and credibility. I'd like to go back to *Hansard* of March 29 and the hon. Member for Little Bow's speech where he's talking about an equal opportunity fund which

would make available to Albertans money at interest rates comparable to those that have been given to other provinces in Canada. At the present time other provinces in Canada enjoy an interest rate from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund of about 9 percent on some \$2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, if what he is indicating today is as accurate as that statement, it has absolutely no credibility at all. In fact, the Heritage Savings Trust Fund has \$1,919,400,000 lent to other provinces. Of that \$1,919,400,000, \$267 million is lent at 9 and 10 percent and the rest of it is at 11-plus percent. In fact, \$241 million is lent at 15-plus percent, and there are three loans over 16 percent.

MR. R. SPEAKER: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. member would also include in her remarks other statements I made that the money given to the other provinces will not come back until after the year 2000. We can't even get it back. If that isn't an interest reduction . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, that's not actually in his remarks; I read them from *Hansard*, and he closed right after that. Besides that, all the loans made to other provinces are current; repayments are being made and are up to date. So there is a very misleading statement there. Some of them have a maturity date of 1988 or 1998; they're not all 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak to the size and cost of government in Alberta. When there's a terrible lack of attendance in the House, I get very interested, because what we are doing is very important to the people of Alberta. It seems to me that if we're concerned about the cost of government, we should be scrutinizing very carefully, in estimates, what those costs are to Albertans, especially if we are elected and consider ourselves an opposition. We spent 80 hours and 45 minutes in the estimates; I totalled it up this morning. Actually, I'm lying. I didn't; somebody else did. The hon. leader of the Representative Party spent seven hours and 38 minutes of that time in the House. [interjections]

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I think this was raised earlier this afternoon in the House. The reasons people are or are not in the House are their personal reasons, which they relate to the constituency. The

only other point I want to make is that I'd like to see the hon. member put the Premier's time in this House; it would be a lot less than seven out of 80 hours. If it was over five during study of the estimates, I'll retract my statement, but it was not. That's the leader of their party, who spends billions of dollars and couldn't care less about this Legislature.

MR. SPEAKER: I want to deal briefly with the point of order, and then I'll get out of the way. The reason I expressed concern earlier in the afternoon is that the implied complaint about a member being absent was made while the member wasn't here. I think it's probably quite permissible for members to refer to each other's attendance, but in fairness, I think that kind of complaint should be made when the member is in the House.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, he was partly here — in body anyway.

The hon. Member for Little Bow is talking about the Premier's time in estimates. I might say that when the estimates are being prepared, the Premier spends seven hours a day reviewing departmental estimates in Priorities Committee, not seven out of 80 hours in 25 days. Right, Lou? Not one day, Mr. Speaker; day after day after day.

I just thought that if the member was sincerely concerned about the cost of government, it seems to me that Public Accounts is the logical place to review past expenditures and assure accountability.

MR. SZWENDER: Where was Ray in Public Accounts? He's never been there.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. There's a serious motion before the House. May I suggest that it be dealt with with the customary businesslike attitude of this House.

MRS. CRIPPS: I apologize, Mr. Speaker; I shall.

MR. SZWENDER: He who lives in a glass house shouldn't cast stones.

MR. SPEAKER: It's not for me to say how many of us are living in glass houses.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

MRS. CRIPPS: I haven't stood up and sat down so many times in any motion yet.

I'd just like to speak briefly to the political patronage issue, because I don't think . . . [interjection] I'm going to come to that. I go back to what the Member for Edmonton Belmont said. I'll only make one case on political patronage. I understand that there's an executive assistant in the Independents' office who ran for the Independents in Edmonton Kingsway. Surely the pot doesn't call the kettle black.

The second item is "expanding the mandate and powers of the Auditor General." Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was appointed in 1977. When Social Credit was the government of the day, there wasn't an Auditor General. In Legislative Assembly estimates, I notice that there are 185 permanent, full-time positions in the Auditor General's office. I suggest that maybe that's the reason you have an expansion from this book to this book to this book. After all, those 185 people have to have something to do, so I can assure you that they would want accounting to be a

little more technical and close; "meticulous" is a good word. I believe that's probably one of the reasons you have a change in the size and the mechanism of the accounting practices of this province. Maybe that's good. Certainly, it is protecting the public interest and protecting . . .

MR. SZWENDER: Come on back, Ray. He's leaving.

MRS. CRIPPS: You won't like the rest of it any better than you liked the first part.

The public interest certainly is being served by the Auditor General's office, but if that public interest is going to be served by the soapbox we have in here today, I guess that's the way it has to be. I know we continually change accounting practices because the Auditor General believes it's in the best interest of the public. I think that adequately answers the difference in those documents, between 1971-72 and 1982-83.

Mr. Speaker, balancing the budget is the third item in this ridiculous motion. By balancing the budget, does the member mean balance the budget with estimates? Does the Member for Little Bow want us to spend the money whether it's required or not? I wish he were here. For instance, for the year 1983-84, which is the last year for which we have public accounts that can be compared with estimates — maybe if he'd been at Public Accounts, he would know. The actual expenditures for 1983-84 were \$9.312 billion. The estimates were \$9.8 billion. Is that what the member wants, that you spend it just because you've estimated it? Surely to heaven he doesn't mean that. [interjection] Actually I'm having fun.

If we go on to the 1984-85 estimates, for the first time in 41 years the budget estimates are lower than the previous year's budget estimates. Since we don't have the public accounts for that, we don't know, but I suppose the hon. member wants us to spend every cent, whether we need it or not. We didn't anticipate a drought or increased input costs in agriculture. Most of those were in agriculture. If it's necessary for the health of the province and the provincial economy to make expenditures where they weren't estimated, surely the member appreciates that. In fact, I remember his standing up in the House and asking the Minister of Agriculture what he was going to do to help Alberta farmers in the drought area and in the sugar beet area. I forget about the beekeepers; I think he was talking about them too. So it just depends on the mood, Mr. Speaker, whether we should be spending more or less or balancing our budget.

The next point in this motion is "increasing the accountability factor of top-level administrators." We could not possibly have brought in low estimates in 1984-85 unless we had the total co-operation of the top-level administrators and some very efficient and effective people in that capacity; we simply couldn't have done it. We've got some capable administrators, and I certainly think we should give them credit for that administrative capability.

The last one is "reducing the number of government departments." Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that that is totally negative to the whole thrust of the first part of his motion. If you want to increase accountability, if you want to increase scrutiny of departments, then I think it would be a regressive step to reduce the number of departments. We have to have the same services; whether they're supplied by one department or two is immaterial. If he had said that we must not duplicate services, there would have been some sense to it. But to reduce departments for reduction's

sake is absolutely ridiculous; it's not in keeping with the rest of the motion.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say that either the government is doing a credible job and doesn't warrant the scrutiny implied — and that's what I ascertain from the attendance in estimates and Public Accounts — or there is a serious problem and the member should have been here to review every departmental estimate and also should have been a very faithful and dutiful attender of Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is not introduced in order to assure Albertans of accountability. I think each and every one of us in this Assembly wants to ensure that the expenditures made by this government are in the best possible interest of the public, that we are accountable for those expenditures, and that they are frugal. I really believe that everyone is sincere in ensuring that Albertans get the most for every dollar spent. And that part of the motion is serious, but some of the points made by the member certainly don't lead to better accountability. I believe the motion should be defeated.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make some comments as well on Motion 231 in the time that remains for us. I think this is a very important motion to speak to, and the subject is one that should be of serious concern to all of us here. Hopefully, we can refocus on the heart of the motion which is, in fact, to deal with the subject of reducing the size and cost of government in Alberta. I think it's something that needs to be looked at very specifically.

I'd like to address it, Mr. Speaker, from the angle of suggesting that the real problem we're facing when we look at this motion is the issue of waste and mismanagement. There are certainly cases where numbers are going to be warranted or the expenditure of money is going to be warranted. Sometimes there are cases for increasing the size or for spending more money, but the heart of this motion, as I read it and as I listened to the member speak earlier, centres around the fact that a great deal of the expenditure in this province is wasteful or inefficient; there's mismanagement. Sometimes it's more than unnecessary. Sometimes the expenditures I see us looking at and being involved in are in fact damaging to this province and to its health. That's where I think we need to be looking at urging government to reduce this waste and mismanagement. We have to remember that when we're here spending money, we're spending money of the people of Alberta; we're not spending our own money. Any kind of extravagance in doing that has to be looked at with a great deal of seriousness. We shouldn't have that. Government needs to be active. We must demonstrate in our action as a government a sensibility, a responsibility, an efficiency, but at the same time a concern and a care for people. If we had this combined approach of trying to be responsible and sensible but also demonstrating some care, then I think there's no question the results would be less money spent unnecessarily in a lot of areas and perhaps more money spent in some other areas, and I don't deny that.

As we talked in estimates, a couple of times the Agriculture minister defended the cuts in the home design branch of his department by responding that if we take care of the pennies, the dollars will take care of themselves. As we look at the whole area referred to by this motion, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a principle that warrants the government's attention as well.

Just one little example, and I'm bringing this up only because I think it typifies that need to pay attention to every area of expenditure. I was comparing the stationery my letters are written on here in Alberta with a letter I received from the Saskatchewan government. It's written on a fairly ordinary bond paper, and the letterhead is offset printed and relatively inexpensive. I compare that with the very luxurious stationery used here. I think it's a good example of this whole concern that's being addressed by Motion 231. What we see happening in the government here in Alberta reflects an attitude. There's an attitude that I almost have to attach a word like "imperialistic" to, an attitude that acts like there's a monarchy in place here and nothing is too good for us. I'm sure we could write the same letters, for example, on paper such as the government of Saskatchewan uses compared to what we use here. I'm concerned about that attitude, and I don't see the attitude the Minister of Agriculture uses . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Perhaps it is important at this point to indicate to the Member for Spirit River-Fairview that it is certainly within his mandate as a Member of the Legislative Assembly to make whatever personal orders he wishes to make with respect to his personal stationery. That's covered by the Members' Services Committee, so he need not become too horrified about that. He can, tomorrow or yesterday, make whatever decision he would like to make with respect to that.

Could I also bring to the member's attention the representations made by his colleagues to the Members' Services Committee for significant increases for his own personal budget?

MR. GURNETT: Just to respond briefly to the point raised by the member, Mr. Speaker, the comments about stationery refer to the stationery that's being supplied throughout the building for members to use. As I said, I'm talking about a demonstration of an attitude rather than what I may personally choose to do or not do. That's what I think needs to be addressed.

In looking at government size and government expenditure, the principle should certainly be to look at the reasons for an expenditure. When a useful contribution is made to the people of Alberta by a particular expenditure, I think we should go ahead and spend the money, but if we cannot justify it as beneficial to the people of the province, then I think we have to look at it.

That's where I start to look at some of the things I've seen in my time here. I wonder whether \$30-a-plate banquets and the kind of budget we've seen for hospitality and entertainment are going to result in somebody locating in Alberta or buying an Alberta product. It shouldn't be the criteria. Those kinds of expenditures, I think, illustrate that same attitude. The excellence of what we have to offer in this province should determine whether or not people decide to locate an industry here or buy our products, and we shouldn't need these kinds of large expenditures in those areas. I wonder whether friends of the government need to be thanked with the kinds of banquets that are sometimes made available to them. I personally suggest that a banquet I attended in Wanham a few weeks back that involved the Northern Alberta Development Council, where we had no waiters, no wine, no imported crab on the menu, accomplished as much work and as many benefits for people of Alberta as any of these other kinds of expenditures.

I think we have to look at how we're reflecting an attitude of responsibility with the people's money in this province. Certainly, it's good to do helpful new things. I look at the Prince Rupert terminal as a benefit for farmers in this province, but I wonder if we can honestly justify flaunting our celebration of these things. We have a responsibility to take actions that help Albertans, but if we've taken those actions, I'm not sure it's necessary for a few people to party and celebrate simply because the government has followed through on its responsibility to take good care of the citizens in this province.

When I look at the cost of travel and hospitality and see it averaging almost \$100,000 a month and see the number of trips of \$1,000 to \$5,000 where individuals have simply travelled somewhere in Alberta, I think that's out of all reason. I remember being shocked a few years back, before my time here, to hear about a conference in Banff, where \$32,000 was spent in four days. There was something like four or five hours of meetings, and in between there were helicopter tours and dances and barbecues and golf tournaments and things like that. I think that same first-class approach is the concern and what's being addressed by the heart of this motion, that is saying that we have to urge the government to do something about the cost of government.

Size is obviously a concern too. The Member for Little Bow talked about the fact that Alberta has one government employee for 37 people, compared to Manitoba, for example, where there's one employee for 73 people. Far too many people are being employed in ways that may not be the most efficient. I'm concerned that our figures may be even higher if we take into consideration the fact that in Alberta more work is contracted out than in other provinces. I think the issue of merging some of the government departments is a very sensible one. It is not necessarily going to result in loss of real services to people; it's going to make the provision of services more efficient.

Another area of concern with costs that I think should be addressed, Mr. Speaker, is that it seems every time I fly someplace in this province, there are half a dozen or eight or 10 government employees coming to or going home from either Edmonton or Calgary for various meetings of government departments. In these cases people have apparently been brought together from all over the province, and their transportation and accommodation in Edmonton, say, are covered. I think there should be a serious look at what could be done more significantly through teleconferencing. That may require training people, but it's an area that needs to be addressed and would certainly save money.

I've talked before, Mr. Speaker, about reducing the cost of government in this province by eliminating the unnecessary bureaucracies of some Crown corporations like ADC, AOC, and the Alberta Housing Corporation. We could still provide the same services, for example, through the Treasury Branch system and not have significant amounts of expenditure for those administrative costs and, as the Member for Little Bow referred to, end patronage at every level, not just the dramatic examples that we've heard in this House over the years but at every level, from every little local board up, making sure people are serving because they're the best people available rather than because any element of patronage has entered in. All of those are reasonable and practical ways of approaching the concern addressed by this motion.

Mr. Speaker, this spring I received a brochure from the Minister of Recreation and Parks about the Kananaskis Country golf course. I imagine all members received it.

It's a very dramatic looking brochure — beautiful full colour. I was very interested in the statement on the front of that brochure:

We strive to maintain a level of quality, similar to that found at a private club, for every Albertan to enjoy.

That brochure crossing my desk reminded me of one of the items that I inherited with my office, and that's a little bottle of the beautiful white sand from Kananaskis that involved four times the expenditure for normal sand. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that something like this brochure is a good reminder to people in Alberta, because it talks about "every Albertan to enjoy."

MR. KOWALSKI: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let's hear the point of order.

MR. KOWALSKI: When hon. members participate in debates in the Legislature and are talking about motions of this type, I think it's extremely important that they are credible and honest. The hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview is suggesting that the brochure he identifies is published by an agency of the government. I ask him to take a look to see who is responsible for the publication of the document in question.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair does not recognize that as a point of order. The hon. Member for Barrhead has an opportunity to enter the debate.

MR. GURNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In any case I only indicated who I received the brochure from.

Because that brochure talks about every Albertan enjoying the facilities, I think we should look at some other pictures of Albertans and recognize that every Albertan may not have the possibility to enjoy the beautiful scenes that are shown in that picture. There should be a continuing reminder to all of us in that brochure, in the nature of this motion we're addressing now, that priorities are important in this government. When we think about families that are having to pay school fees because the funding from Alberta Education isn't adequate for schools to do the things they should be doing, when we look at people driving on narrow and dangerous roads in this province — and there are lots of them, at least in some areas of our province — when we see the statistics of farm foreclosures and bankruptcies and people losing their homes, when we look at photographs of people lining up at food banks and at the single men's hostels, then I think these pictures of Kananaskis or that bottle of sand sitting on my desk should be reminders that this motion addresses something very important.

We want government to be fair, sensible, and caring. I want government to be putting money into programs that will create permanent jobs, provide some good diversification in this province, allow Alberta businesses to prosper and get roots down, and provide services to people. Those are areas where I think we should be spending money. This motion addresses the fact that we shouldn't be wasting money; we shouldn't be mismanaging it.

Last Friday morning I listened to the Premier at the Alberta leadership prayer breakfast. He said something that I'm going to remember and that I think is important for all of us to remember. He said that we've got to give status to compassion above materialism. When we make

decisions, I think that we as members of this Legislature have to look at how to practically effect that statement. Materialism is not the priority; compassion is. If we tried to practise that, we'd have both a more efficient and a more caring government in Alberta. We'd have a government where the size and cost were not taking, in a wasteful and extravagant way, the money that should be spent to benefit the people of this province.

DR. CARTER: In rising to speak to the motion, Mr. Speaker, I would far rather that we had another hour to go at it. It's been a very feisty afternoon in terms of the debate, and there's been a lot of extraneous information floating in, not all of it entirely accurate. By the same token I'd also like to know what my colleague from Drayton Valley had for lunch, because it certainly added a spice and flavour to the afternoon.

There have been a number of comments made, and they're carrying great banners, such as waste in government, cost in government, and all the rest of it. It's been a great opportunity for both members of the opposition parties who are seated in the House to do some grandstanding and create a bit of a smoke screen in terms of what the real issues are. It's one thing for us to look across the Assembly and see the documents on the desk of the Member for Little Bow, but without the opportunity to examine them closely to see exactly the format that's listed, it's a little bit difficult to try to ascertain the true facts.

In addition, when the Member for Little Bow examines *Hansard*, I believe he will discover that at one stage of the game he said, in terms of civil service to the population, that there'd been no significant increase in population in the province over the period 1969 to 1984. In '69 the population was 1.5 million, and it's now something like 2.4 million or very close to it. Obviously, there needs to be some growth in size of the civil service to be able to be civil to the people in the province.

I hope those people who are in the civil service will not take undue offence with some of the remarks made here this afternoon. If you were a little bit careless in reading and listening, you could come off with the impression that, in effect, it's an attack upon the civil service, when in actual fact the vast majority of the people who are serving the people of this province are doing very credible yeoman's service and at less than market rates, for that matter. That's one of the areas that's in here.

One needs to ask our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly: do they want us to carry on with downsizing? We're already into downsizing, and we're doing it in a very responsible manner by normal attrition and early retirements. We don't need to get into this business of confrontational downsizing and radical measures, which have been put forth and carried out in other provinces. Is the hon. Leader of the Representative Party trying to get us all into a matter of confrontational politics? Fire people just for the sake of firing them? Let's hope that things are much more responsible than that.

I'm also taken aback that in his comments the Member for Spirit River-Fairview said something to the effect of lineups at single men's hostels. That's patently untrue. I'm on the committee, and we know there's plenty of space in the single men's hostels. It's not a matter of lineups to get in; it's a matter of even more job creation. You want us to cut back on the money and at the same time you talk out of the other side of your mouth and say spend more

money in terms of additional job creation. Let's try to keep everybody on the same track.

I'm a little amazed that we have in the motion, "expanding the mandate and powers of the Auditor General." That's something I would really like to have more time to expand on in terms of the position profile for the new Auditor General and my own personal conversations with our present Auditor General, who has been doing a very commendable job over the years. All the people in his department are also involved in doing that job of cost-efficiency and making sure that everything is above board and accurately reported with regard to spending funds. Does the sponsor of the motion want us to give additional spending in this whole area? The Auditor General has something like \$9.6 million for the '85-86 budget in terms of the operation of his own area. He's got a staff of 180. Does the leader want us to go ahead and hire even more people? He's talking about downsizing, but on the other side of it he wants to flip around and say "let's go for more".

In terms of his mandate, does he really want to talk about the areas of the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation? If that's what he's after in terms of expanding the role or mandate of the Auditor General, he is missing the point. In the Comprehensive Auditing Foundation approach to Auditor General issues, you have to go out and hire even more expertise, whether it be medical expertise or social workers and all the rest of it. What you're doing — this has really become an advocate position for having to expand the so-called bureaucracy even more. So what's this all about, Mr. Speaker?

The matter of other issues involved in all of this, of course, can go off in other directions. There are some good suggestions about printing. Yes, you could take that into consideration. I know the present Ombudsman has borne that in mind with respect to the publication of his present report, which is far less lavish than his predecessor's. So economy is there. The word is out. I'd also say that the Social Care Facilities Review Committee has consciously always made certain that it's a much more cost-economic style of publication. I'm quite certain that the message to be cost-effective has been throughout all departments for a number of months.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for this particular debate has concluded.

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

Bill 204
Elevator Symbols Act

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to move second reading of Bill 204, the Elevator Symbols Act.

This is the second opportunity I have had to move this or a similar Bill. The last occasion was on May 17, 1984. It's my hope that this will be the last time I have the opportunity to move this Bill in the House. I guess the question is: why am I persisting or pursuing this if it wasn't passed the last time?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you the story about the three great motivators, religious speakers, who, as the story goes, were returning from a religious broadcasters'

convention in Washington, D.C. The jet crashed and they died. They went to heaven, and St. Peter was just aghast. He hadn't expected Oral Roberts, the great healer, Billy Graham, the great converter, and Robert Schuller, the great inspirer. He said: "Fellows, I'm delighted to have you here, but we're full. I didn't expect you for quite some time. You're going to have to go down and wait in that other place. It's a little hot, but we'll call you when there's room." About three hours later the devil called God. He said, "Listen, you sent three fellows down here. I'd like you to take them back." [God] was a little shocked and said: "You've got to be kidding. I would have thought you'd have been pleased to have these three famous souls." The devil said, "Well, they've only been here three hours, and already Oral Roberts has healed everybody, Billy Graham has converted everybody, and Robert Schuller inspired enough people that they raised enough money to install an air conditioner."

Mr. Speaker, it's not my intention to heal and it's not my intention to inspire, but I would like to do a little converting. The objective of this Bill is to convert elevators in Alberta so that the disabled would be able to utilize them without any assistance. Secondly, I'd like to convert a few attitudes that may have some doubt about the merits of this Bill.

I have changed my attitude somewhat in that last time the Bill was entitled the Elevator Braille Act. Based on the information I had received, it occurred to me that if, in fact, we were going to make elevators accessible, there should be raised braille beside the numbers in an elevator. But since then we've received sufficient feedback, from both my colleagues and other quarters, that somewhere between 5 and 15 percent of the visually impaired can actually read braille and that it would be more logical to have some form of raised, tactile instructions that would be Arabic with perhaps braille underneath. So the Bill has changed and my attitude has changed.

I'd like to ask members a very practical question. What would you do if it were late at night and you were visiting a friend who lived on the 21st or 22nd floor of a building? You managed to gain entrance by pushing a buzzer, but there was no one around to assist. That's not unusual in a large building. Because you'd been to the building before and perhaps received instructions from your friend, you were able to find your way to the elevator door. You pushed the button and got inside. Now what? There's nobody about. Certainly counting the number of push buttons isn't going to help you, particularly if it's the type of elevator that responds to heat from your hand.

It may seem that this is not a major issue, Mr. Speaker. But by speaking to it, I'd like at least to improve awareness about this issue and to think that by approving it we could remove one small barrier. Progress in life does not relate to removing or changing major barriers in social and economic areas of activity and endeavour. It comes from a collection of small barriers. It's all those small barriers combined that make life more achievable and more successful for people.

I guess the question is: what should be the role of government in legislating? There are those who say we should baby-sit the public, not trust them, and make decisions for them. There are those on the other side who say it's totally up to the individual; there is no role for government. I would like to quote William Ellery Channing, an American minister that I believe kind of had a good handle on what the role should be:

The office of government is not to confer happiness, but to give people opportunity to work out happiness for themselves.

To work it out for themselves, to make it more possible for them to do things for themselves. It's true that we can't remove disability. Through medicine or other methods we may be able to fund individuals to improve or remove their disability, but we can't do that ourselves. But by legislative initiative we can reduce barriers that may not appear evident to us at all but are very much there.

So what would this Bill do? Mr. Speaker, the Bill as it provides would, subject to regulations, require elevators in a building to have

floor designations and operating instructions in raised symbols to enable the visually impaired to operate it.

This doesn't mean that operating instructions have to be lengthy. It simply means you have to be able to know how to close the door, open the door, and perhaps emergency stop. In addition, floor designations would be provided. It also says that the Minister of Labour may make regulations that would provide for the design and size of the raised, tactile identification. The minister could provide for establishing a date by which existing buildings would be retrofitted and set a deadline for new buildings to adhere to this. That's all the Bill does, Mr. Speaker. It's a very simple Bill, and it provides a substantial amount of flexibility to the minister.

At this time I'd like to table for the record an excerpt from a brochure from the Schindler Armor Elevator company that simply shows visually what I'm talking about. There are sufficient copies for every desk here, Mr. Speaker. Basically, we're talking about nothing more than a sophisticated form of Mactac that could be applied beside elevator buttons. It shows very simply that there would be numbers in Arabic, underneath which you would find braille. It's a very simple addition.

Why haven't we done this already? What is the history of the evolution of this particular proposal? Actually, Mr. Speaker, one of the very first documents in Canada to recommend that elevators be retrofitted was a document produced by Alberta Culture entitled *Buildings Without Barriers*. It was a guide to organizations involved in facility development. It recommended not only visual indicators but audio indicators as well — an interesting idea, I might add, but an expensive one. Since then we have seen considerable evolution.

In the private sector in Alberta, the elevator safety committee has been working with the elevator industry for many years. They have developed a standard of reference for architects, contractors, and inspection authorities. It is now included as Appendix E of the Alberta Building Code. So this really isn't an idea that has not already gained acceptance. It has gained acceptance in the private sector. I know that in the city of Calgary we already have significant voluntary compliance. Most major buildings that were constructed or completed in the last two to three years have some form of raised indicators. I think of the Trizec organization with their new building, Western Canadian Place, and the new Nova building, which have already provided these.

The issue was originally brought to my attention by a group in Calgary called the Bow Trail Council in 1980 when I was an alderman of the city of Calgary. They wrote a letter asking why we would not provide these indicators in city-owned buildings. I didn't have any answer for that, so I asked the administration. In April 1982 a commissioner's

report that was produced in consultation with various committees and groups recommended that city of Calgary buildings be retrofitted and that any new buildings include these indicators. I'm very proud to say the new Calgary civic building will have these visual indicators in their elevators.

A number of objections were brought forward during debate last year — objections that would be obvious to anyone who looked at this issue. I'd like to touch upon them very briefly. I guess first of all is the question of cost. Would this not be an undue hardship for the private sector, especially for builders and developers who are struggling through or coming out of the difficult economic times? What kind of hardship would this be? Mr. Speaker, the cost of retrofitting existing elevators is minimal. Depending upon which elevator company you get a quotation from, it would go anywhere from \$120 to \$200. It's not excessive when you consider that the minimum maintenance cost for the smallest elevator is about \$300 a month.

What about the private sector? Where do they stand on this? I have a letter on file here. I quoted it during my last debate. I want to refer to it again. It is from the Building Owners & Managers Association, or BOMA. I know the Minister of Labour has interfaced with them on matters related to building and maintenance. In the letter of April 19, 1984, they said:

We have reviewed Bill 205 [which it was last year] for which you are a sponsor. We have no quarrel with the intent of Bill 205.

They went on further in the letter to say that they would simply like to have an opportunity to participate in the method that this Bill would apply to existing buildings. Section 5(c) of the Bill says that the minister may establish a date or dates by which existing buildings must comply with the Act. It provides significant flexibility.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we do it in two phases. Number one, if this Bill were to pass, for any new buildings or any renovations of existing buildings in the next three years, it would be a requirement that this be phased in. In other words, it would be literally no hardship at all. In a second phase, for the following three years, in other words, up to six years from now, the private sector would be requested to phase in this legislation during that time. Secondly, one of the objections I've heard is: "Why bother? We're going to see the elevators and the technology evolve, and it won't be very long before we can just walk into an elevator, utter the floor number, and the elevator will take us to that floor." It may be that we're not very far off. I understand the technology is available today. But it's expensive, and the likelihood of its being introduced into most elevators in Alberta is not great for some time to come.

The third objection I've heard is: "Shouldn't we lead by example? What about the government of Alberta?" I raised the question with the minister of public works earlier this afternoon, and he indicated that it seemed to be a reasonable idea. Why shouldn't this Legislature and all Alberta buildings have indicators for the visually impaired introduced at an early time? There's no question that if we look at new Alberta government buildings throughout this province, they have been excellent examples of accessibility for the disabled and visually impaired.

The fourth objection that I've heard actually came from the hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont last year during debate. The hon. member suggested that while this Bill requires every elevator to be retrofitted — I say to my colleagues who are going to be debating this after I sit

down that this Bill does not require every elevator to be retrofitted. In fact, it says very clearly that the minister may exempt "buildings or classes of buildings to which the public has no access, by right or by licence." For example, I think it would apply to warehousing and so on. So there are many hundreds if not thousands of elevators which the public wouldn't normally use, and this wouldn't be required. It also suggests that the minister could exempt certain classes of buildings. I think there's sufficient flexibility there.

Mr. Speaker, there is good support for this proposal from private groups. We have on file now several letters from disabled groups and the Canadian Institute for the Blind. They said very clearly that they support this and think it's a good idea.

There were other questions that came up during debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton Belmont raised several questions. He said: "If you got off the elevator, how would you know which direction to turn? Would you then have some kind of raised indicators on the wall? Would you then have to put the names on the front of every apartment or office?" I don't think so. Mr. Speaker, this is common sense. Those who are visually impaired today take the time to find out in advance where they're going. They receive instructions on approximately where the building is. I think once they got off the elevator they'd know to turn right or turn left. They have common sense. The question is: what do you do when you're on the elevator?

MR. SZWENDER: How do you know what floor you're on?

MR. LEE: The next question was: how do you know what floor you're on? Well, that's a good question. First of all, if there's somebody in the elevator with you, they will tell you you've reached your floor. If you're in the elevator by yourself, you push the button, it takes you to the floor, the door opens, and you've arrived at that floor. Now there's a possibility that you could push the wrong button, or two, but not likely. We're talking about people who are able to get around. But I think it's a good question.

There's also the objection my colleague raised when he said: "How far do we take this? Do we apply this to retail stores? Do we apply this to money?" No, Mr. Speaker, of course not. There are ways of dealing with that particular situation today. But if I was visually impaired and there was nobody around, I don't know how I would get through an elevator one way or the other.

My colleague the hon. Member for Calgary McCall raised a few other questions during debate last year. He asked if the Building Owners & Managers Association truly represented every building owner and manager in Alberta. The answer to that is no. But I can recall from the time I spent on city council and the feedback I've had since then that it does seem to represent a broad consensus of building owners and managers. Over the past year I took the opportunity whenever I could to ask those who operate the buildings, "Would you have any major objection to this kind of initiative?" After assuring them that it wouldn't be compulsory, that it wouldn't be immediate, that there would be some flexibility, and informing them of the cost, I saw very little objection from building owners or managers.

The other question that the hon. Member for Calgary McCall had was: "That's fine; you've talked about the blind here, but what about those who are deaf? What would we do for them if there was a fire in a building and they couldn't hear the alarm?" Mr. Speaker, there isn't an answer

for everything, but the deaf do have the opportunity to wear hearing aids and generally do. Or they'll have a dog to assist them. But what does the blind person do on an elevator? There's no way they can turn up their sight with a touch of a button.

MR. WEISS: You shouldn't ride an elevator in a fire.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, it was pointed out here by my colleague, and I'm delighted to hear it, that you shouldn't ride an elevator in a fire anyway. Excellent point.

There are many organizations supporting this, Mr. Speaker, but I draw to the attention of the minister of social services that the minister's own Klufas report in 1983 recommended

That the Provincial Government legislate and ensure enforcement throughout Alberta of a Provincial Building Code that:

- i) provides for the safety, access, and egress needs of disabled persons in all public buildings including office . . .

I think this is an excellent point. We're really talking about safety here as well as reducing a barrier.

In addition, I'd like to quote from a report called Architectural Accessibility — Directions for Action. This report was produced by the Canadian Organizing Committee for the 1981 international year of the disabled. Let me quote a couple of interesting paragraphs:

A prerequisite for equal opportunity in all important aspects of life is an accessible environment which allows for the integration and participation of disabled persons. Accessible environments make possible equal opportunity for education, employment, leisure and mobility.

Freedom of movement is a key factor in allowing all individuals, including disabled persons, to become independent and self-supporting.

Here is an interesting point, Mr. Speaker:

Economic benefits accrue from tax revenue from employment earnings and reduction in social assistance costs. There is also a significant positive effect upon the psychological well-being of individuals when barriers which prevent their full participation in community living are removed.

Mr. Speaker, all this debate is meaningless unless we can somehow convey the true meaning of what it would be like to be blind. I understand that some of my colleagues have gone through interesting little exercises and participation experiments from time to time with visually impaired groups, where they've actually attempted to find out what it would be like to travel blind. I haven't been able to figure it out, except that I'd like to close by sharing with you a true story, which I think makes an interesting point. It involves an English actor by the name of Charles Laughton, famous for his role in many movies, but I refer particularly to *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

One year Mr. Laughton was asked to address a small Baptist church in southern Georgia in the United States. He was asked to attend and read from the Bible. He accepted, and this was a very exciting day for this small church. People came from literally hundreds of miles around. All the local media were there, looking forward to hearing this famous man read from the scriptures. Shortly after the service began, Charles Laughton walked up to the podium and began reading from the Bible. He had the attention of the congregation. But about halfway through his remarks, an elderly black member of the congregation, barely able to stand, got up and interrupted Mr. Laughton. He said:

"Excuse me, Mr. Laughton, but I would like to read the scripture with you. It would be a great honour." He found his way to the stage and got up on the platform. He began reading from the Bible, and Mr. Laughton stood there and listened. You could hear a pin drop. He was barely literate, but from the way he read the scriptures, it was as if he brought the true meaning of the Bible to life.

After the service was over, many of the newspapermen from far and wide came to interview Mr. Laughton. One brash young lad said: "Mr. Laughton, I want to ask you a question. How can you explain that when you were reading you got everybody's attention, but when this barely literate elderly gentleman got up, he totally captured the hearts and the imaginations of everyone in the congregation?" To which Mr. Laughton replied: "I knew the script, and I knew it well. But he knew the author."

Mr. Speaker, my point here is not to make a religious point. It's simply to say that until we experience what it's like, it's very difficult to understand that while this may seem like such a minor barrier, it can be such a major problem for those who actually are visually impaired and have to go through this every day. Approving this Bill today would be an honour. I ask my colleagues to support it. It is my hope that they never have to know the author, that they never have to go through the experience of being visually impaired. But short of that, I ask for my colleagues' support.

MR. COOK: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support Bill 204 in the debate. I would like to argue that the Bill makes some important contributions to a logical idea that we developed at the beginning of this administration's life; namely, the Individual's Rights Protection Act. The Individual's Rights Protection Act concept is that equality should be given to all, regardless of any physical, mental, or cultural handicaps. I think this Bill does that for a group of people who are physically handicapped and who find themselves barred from fully participating in society.

The lack of freedom of movement because of design constraints seems wholly artificial and unnecessary, Mr. Speaker. If a person who is not sighted is blocked from going into an apartment building or an office complex because they don't know which floor to get off on and perhaps they're arriving at a time of day when there aren't other people in the elevator — it becomes difficult for them to know which floor they're on or which floor they're exiting on. It's a barrier, but it's easily remedied in the design of buildings.

As the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo noted earlier, there are simple strategies to adapt elevator panels so that people who are not sighted can know simply with a touch which floor button they should push. When they find the doors have opened, they can tell which floor they're on, again with a small panel on the side of the door. Mr. Speaker, I think it makes immanent sense.

I understand the cost, as has been pointed out, is relatively minimal. It is a not significant barrier. Mr. Speaker, if the Bill were to focus on one small change and make it clear that it was designed to come into force for new buildings initially only, then I think a very significant concern on the part of some members of the House would be dealt with. The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo stated that it is possible for the minister to exempt certain buildings, but it's not clear in the Act that the Bill is forward-looking rather than imposing a cost to those buildings that are already serviced by elevators. I think that might be a small

point. Then when buildings are being renovated, they would have to conform to the building standards code, but there would not be a blanket requirement for all buildings, unless they're specifically exempted by the minister, to come into force immediately. I think it might be one small improvement in the sense that it would make it more acceptable, if you like, to get our foot in the door.

As I say, the Bill follows the spirit of the Individual's Rights Protection Act. I think that's important, because that was the first Bill presented by this government. It was a keystone to the approach or philosophy of the government. In a philosophical way, I think we ought to carry through. I don't think it would impose very many extra costs. It would impose some. And it would provide a measure of extra regulation; that's true too. But the question you have to ask is: is the general good of society accomplished through a small extra cost imposed on all of us? I don't think the burden is overly excessive.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the Department of Labour is doing a review of the Building Code. In the event that this Bill is not accepted by the House today, given the short amount of time available to debate it, I hope that somehow the objects of the Member for Calgary Buffalo will be accomplished in the departmental review.

I note that the British Columbia Building Code, which was adopted in 1979, has accomplished the same objectives. The section that deals with elevator car controls requires the controls to be marked immediately to the left of the control buttons with raised symbols so that blind people can determine what those controls are. Mr. Speaker, other provinces are making the effort. Saskatchewan has taken a similar approach. British Columbia has already done it. I think it's philosophically consistent with what we're already doing in other areas.

I urge all hon. members to support this Bill.

MR. ZIP: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 204, which I wish to congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo for introducing. It has some very interesting suggestions. I feel I could partially support it. I certainly can't support it entirely, especially the compulsory aspects of it. I just wish to make a few points in this respect.

It is certainly practical with smaller buildings and buildings with simple floor designs. There's no confusion as to where you're getting off and which way you're heading when you get off at a certain floor if the floor plans are identical and no significant alterations have been made to the plans. But when you get into buildings — I'll just give you an example in Calgary. The Bow Valley Square complex is very confusing. I certainly wouldn't recommend that the owners of a building of that complexity have the additional burden of being required to provide symbols or whatever for blind people, because that building is simply not suitable for people with visual handicaps.

In anything we propose to do in government, we should be practical, pragmatic, and conscious of other people's money. Every time we turn around, we ask people to spend somebody else's money. We're two-bitting our economy to death with these kinds of ideas. This is what I find objectionable, despite the fact that I have very strong sympathies for people with handicaps. I introduced Motion 201 to facilitate the movement of [disabled] drivers with handicap licence plates for that very reason.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member should not cross between the speaker and the Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: You'd think he'd know better.

MR. ZIP: There are other examples of those types of intrusions. As much as they're desirable from a social standpoint, somebody is being asked to pay. Our economy has reached the point where a lot of investors are just stretched to the limit as to their capability to comply with regulations and, at the same time, make an adequate return on their investment. They look at alternatives in other countries and other regions. They look at us here in Alberta and say, "Is it worth while to come here?" We talk about jobs right here in the Legislature. We talk about more and more regulation, more and more requirement for investors to spend money on which they get no return. To carry those zero returns, it has to be taken off some other portion of that investment. I wish to caution this Legislature on that particular point.

Otherwise, I feel that this is a very worthwhile Bill. The purposes behind it are very good. The only thing is: why don't we encourage and educate, rather than regulate, and leave it up to the private individual? If he has the smarts to get the money to invest in the first place, he should be smart enough when he's developing a building, especially a smaller building, to give thought to installing a complete system of raised symbols and audible aids and designing the building in such a way that he will facilitate use of that particular building by the visually handicapped. I certainly do not think we should be compelling people with very large, complex structures to do something just because somebody thinks it's socially worth while.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Speaker, in the past the Member for Calgary Buffalo has come up with some strange ideas, but in this one he's got a winner. I can think of some of his ideas presented to this Assembly in the past, such as funding for the LRT in Calgary, especially when the citizens of Camrose would have to pay for a share of it, and a few others. But the Member for Calgary Buffalo has brought to this Assembly something I think our members sometimes forget. We forget about our social conscience for the unprivileged people, especially the sightless — and at so little cost.

I'm not sure what the cost of a panel would be. I'd like to have heard some quotes from manufacturers. I would like to have heard what the cost of installing one in an elevator would be. But I can point out that I believe the cost to be peanuts, in a sense, compared to when our department of public works puts up a building, a school or any type of construction, and the fire marshals come in the next day and it's got to be completely revamped — this isn't right, that isn't right, and so forth and so on, at tremendous expense. Here, we're talking a few dollars.

Mr. Speaker, in the remarks made this afternoon, I thought there was one good idea. To start the ball rolling, let's show leadership and install this type of panel in all new government buildings. I would like to see the idea tossed out that the panel be installed in this building, and then members could try it out. I know that a few here could use it.

However, I have another question. Are they actually being used or in place in other provinces, other states, or other countries? Since the hour is moving fast, my last remark is that if the doubters of Bill 204 were to be blindfolded at 5:30 and asked to find their way to their

offices using the elevator, I can assure you it would be utter confusion.

Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 is one that caught my attention when going through the agenda of the spring legislative session. The Elevator Symbols Act was one Bill I read very carefully. I want to applaud my colleagues who brought this idea forward, not only today but in recent debates in the Legislative Assembly, and those colleagues of mine who participated this afternoon in the debate with respect to Bill 204. It is a meritorious Bill of significant social importance to the people of Alberta and one that I have no reservation at all in endorsing and supporting.

Having said that, however, that support comes by way of the principle of the Bill and the very important need to allow our blind citizens in the province of Alberta to have safe, easy access to elevators, and once on elevators to have safe, easy access to the destination point they want within the building. I think that is extremely important. I certainly applaud the suggestions made by the Member for Camrose that leadership and initiative in respect to this matter be taken by the public works department of the province of Alberta to have this type of elevator designation symbol sign made available on all the provincial buildings to show the citizens of Alberta what can be done by way of leadership. Of course, we certainly are a government that has used the slogan "private enterprise that cares", and this is definitely an example that one can follow through on.

However, I need some clarification for a couple of areas, and I'm going to raise these concerns by way of questions to the sponsor of the Bill. When the sponsor has an opportunity to summarize and close debate on Bill 204, I ask that he answer the questions so that I'll be in an excellent position to vote yea or nay with respect to the final resolution of the Bill.

The major concern I have essentially deals with section 4 of the Bill, which says:

The owner and the operator of any building that does not comply with this Act is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$5000.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that in a Bill of this type, in which the objective from a social point of view is so important to the blind citizens of this province, we would really not want to overkill with respect to a fine penalty aspect. In fact, we are in a position to provide leadership by way of example, endorsement, and suggestion to elevator operators and those who own buildings that have elevators to appeal to their social consciences to move on this matter without holding a threat of a sword of a maximum fine of up to \$5,000 over their heads.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

I raise that point particularly in the light of the debate that a lot of citizens of this province have gone through over the last year or year and a half, a matter unrelated to the contents of Bill 204 but certainly related by way of penalties that might be attached to violation of a law. That would deal with this whole question of Sunday shopping. Prior to the recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, entrepreneurs who were charged and found guilty of violating the then existing Lord's Day Act found themselves liable to a fine of up to \$50 if I'm not mistaken. We had major

firms in the province of Alberta conducting illegal businesses, going to court, and being found guilty and fined \$50. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of business may have been transacted.

On the other hand, we have Bill 204 asking for a very important development to assist our blind citizens to ensure their safety and their access of safety. Bill 204 suggests that if they do not comply, they could be charged, taken to court, found guilty, and be liable to a fine of up to \$5,000. It seems to me that there's a bit of overkill attached to Bill 204. That's a matter I would like the sponsor of the Bill to clarify for me when he summarizes. I would like to know specifically what prompted the sponsor to come up with clause 4, which talks about fines of up to \$5,000, and if he calculated the costs that might be involved in the legal entities of this.

I'm sure there isn't a building owner in the province of Alberta who would want to be charged under this kind of Bill, particularly when we've been told this afternoon that some of these adapter cover plates — or even Mactac, I think the sponsor indicated — to slap on an elevator panel might only cost dollars. I think you would get a reaction from the owners of buildings with elevators that would be very negative, and it would take away the important need to have the panels that would assist blind people to find access and safety within the building. That is really one point.

I would like the sponsor to basically identify to the Members of the Legislative Assembly his calculation of the cost involved in the legal system if Bill 204 were approved. As a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I certainly would have a difficult time telling my constituents that I would support a Bill that could see a fine up to \$5,000 because an entrepreneur who happened to own an elevator building didn't put up a symbol sign. On the other hand, I can't find myself able to make sure that we don't have Sunday shopping in Alberta but that if we do have illegal shopping in this province of Alberta, the maximum fine can only be \$50. I need some clarification on that point.

The second point deals with clause 5 in Bill 204, which basically calls on the Minister of Labour to make a whole series of regulations. Once again, I know the intent, basically, is to bring about a change for the benefit of blind people in our province. I accept and endorse that; I'll work very hard to make sure that happens. But I really wonder if the sponsor of the Bill has made a calculation to see what the cost implications might be to have the Minister of Labour now set up a new bureaucracy that would look at the five subclauses that are contained under section 5 of Bill 204. There is no doubt at all in my mind that the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, building owners and managers across the country, and people who work very hard as proponents for the handicapped and the disabled, not only in our province but in other provinces of the country, have already looked at design, sizes, and locations of symbols. Do we need bureaucrats in the province of Alberta doing this work again? I ask if this would not be redundant. I think it's important that all of us ensure that we are not so over-redundant in some of this legislation that, in effect, we make a mockery of some legislation.

I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker, of some initiatives by previous city councils in Calgary over a recent number of years which would certainly lead to some suggestion of overkill. It's my understanding that in the city of Calgary it's illegal to hitchhike, and that's fine. That's okay with me. I have no problem with that. But did the city council

then have to go one step further and tell a citizen that it's now illegal also to pick up a hitchhiker? It seems to me that we have overkill in all this. So that's a point of clarification with respect to the prescribing of the design, size, and location of symbols in elevators.

In terms of definitions, the sponsor of Bill 204 has indicated once again that the Minister of Labour would make regulations defining new buildings, existing buildings, owner, and operator. I really don't see any difficulty with that, except the one I have with a lot of these Bills that are coming forward and members of the Assembly are being asked to vote on. They always have clauses saying a whole series of rules and regulations will be prescribed later. Unfortunately, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I've always felt a little naked about voting on a Bill not knowing what would be included in a regulation on a later day. Without any doubt, it's come to pass as an unfortunate result of parliamentary democracy that a lot of legislation comes forth and basically makes provision for regulations to be approved and then we find out one, two, three, or four years later that the regulations, in fact, have more power than the statute itself. And the regulations printed in the *Alberta Gazette* are, for the most part, unknown to most of the citizens of the province of Alberta.

There's no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 204 would advance the cause of the blind people in our province. I support the principle of Bill 204, but I ask the sponsor of the Bill to at least provide me and other members of the Assembly with an explanation to the questions that I raised particularly with respect to clauses 4 and 5.

One last question deals with changes that are being made to the national code of building safety standards and even what might be the anticipated changes made to the safety code within the province of Alberta in either 1985 or 1986. I wonder if the Minister of Labour and his officials are not already moving in this area. In fact, Bill 204 might become redundant. If that is the case, I really wonder what would be the purpose of Bill 204.

As I close, I would like to congratulate the sponsor for providing, as previous Members of the Legislative Assembly have done in previous years, all members an opportunity to comment on important items that would advance the quality of life of handicapped citizens in our province.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker, in rising to participate in the debate on Bill 204, the Elevator Symbols Act, I'd like first to commend the Member for Calgary Buffalo for reintroduction of this Bill. I know the hon. member has put a great deal of time and effort into the development of this legislation, and I want to recognize that extensive work. There's no question that the Member for Calgary Buffalo has done a tremendous amount of work over the last year and a half in communicating with those who are involved with and working with visually impaired and blind people. He has talked to people in the construction industry. I'm sure all members respect the fact that he's dug down deep to present a Bill that I think is of super benefit to those who are visually impaired.

Just over a year ago, members of this House had the opportunity to debate the merits of this legislation under a different name, the Elevator Braille Act. In the course of that debate I was able to make a few remarks which outlined my support for that particular Bill. Unfortunately, time for the debate ran short and the debate was adjourned. It's my hope that today we might be able to put this Bill to a vote.

With this in mind, I hope my comments will facilitate that hope.

I wish to address two issues today. I'd like first of all to speak to the opportunities this Bill would provide for the disabled and, secondly, to address some of the concerns which have been mentioned respecting this Bill today and in the past. As I recall, last year I characterized this Bill as a Bill of opportunity. I am of the same opinion this year.

When I think of the word "opportunity" and all that that means, I cannot help but recall the conversation I had last fall with the hon. Attorney General, the hon. Solicitor General, and the hon. Minister of Education. I posed a question to each of them: how would you define the situation when a group of 100 people were locked in an abandoned theatre with you? The Attorney General replied, "A potential lawsuit." The hon. Solicitor General replied, "An emergency for the fire department or the police." And the hon. Minister of Education replied, "A great opportunity." Although I do not have the same captive audience today, I hope to convince each of you of the great opportunities that Bill 204 would open up for visually impaired and blind persons in this province.

I think the sponsor of the Bill has eloquently outlined the mobility problems faced day in and day out by visually impaired persons. This legislation would zero in on one barrier to their mobility, something that each of us uses every day. The hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care would argue this, but most people do use the elevator every day. The extreme sense of frustration that a visually impaired person must experience in attempting to locate a floor in a building serviced by an elevator can, however, be rectified.

I wish to reiterate an experience I had last year at the CNIB annual meeting. The guest speaker there was Mr. Robert Storey, director of international services of the CNIB office in Toronto. This gentleman is blind. He urged this member to pursue with vigour legislation that we are debating today — that indeed such legislation is required and needed nationally. At this meeting he discussed his personal concerns and frustrations from experiences he had at a national conference in Toronto. He was in a new hotel in Toronto and was late for meetings time and time again because he had to guess what floor the elevator was stopping at and, unfortunately, he made numerous errors in judgment.

Sure, this sounds humorous, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Storey alluded to the humour provided by it. But the story also shows the frustration, sadness, and unnecessary difficulties faced by the sightless. Surely all here can empathize with citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Surely we can put ourselves in the position of the blind or visually impaired the next time we enter an elevator. If Mr. Storey were here today and had the opportunity to speak before this Assembly, I think he would urge each member to do everything in their power to assist visually impaired Albertans — the passage of this Bill being one of them, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, whether it be a doctor's appointment, a job interview, or any other kind of meeting, the adaptation of elevators for the visually impaired through the use of raised symbols would go far in integrating them into the community. We live in a world where elevators are a mode of transportation most of us take for granted. For the visually impaired, each elevator trip can be but another reminder of their disability. I believe we can change that, and I believe that Bill 204 is the answer, another answer to freedom of movement and a psychological freedom. With

the passage of Bill 204 the visually impaired can say that they are not dependent on someone else.

I know some members do not believe that Bill 204 is the answer, and I hope to allay some of their fears or concerns with this legislation. Last spring there was some concern as to the most appropriate form of signage to be used for the elevators. The original Bill proposed the use of braille indicators in elevators. I'm pleased to see that the use of raised symbol indicators has been incorporated in the new Bill. I think it is more appropriate and will be of benefit to a larger number of people.

I made the point last year that we are not talking about a small number of people experiencing visual impairment, Mr. Speaker. The CNIB in Alberta estimates approximately 3,300 visually impaired. If you add to that the number of senior citizens who are experiencing visual impairment and blindness, the population is indeed growing.

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of other points to talk about today, but due to the time I'd like to close in this area. I know the hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo would like to close debate. I know we need Bill 204 for our citizens who are visually impaired or blind. I'd like to quote John F. Kennedy, who said: all of us do not have equal talents, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents. When it boils right down to it, I think that is what this Bill is attempting to do. On that basis I urge all members to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, in a very brief moment I'd like to ask a couple of questions, since some were raised by other members. I'm a bit troubled by some of the things I've heard about social conscience. Perhaps the member will have an opportunity to answer this question. Like other members, I have had difficulty with the mandatory aspect of this particular Bill and also with the very substantial fine, which was raised by the Member for Barrhead. I have some difficulty with the regulatory aspects, because I'm particularly interested in going the other way as much as I possibly can.

I've heard a number of members talk about endorsing the Bill for matters of social conscience. Mr. Speaker, I happen to have a son-in-law who is an educator in special education in Calgary, and his job is to teach blind children life skills. I've had many opportunities to chat with him and share with him some of the outstanding examples of the kinds of things he has been able to help blind children do in life, the kinds of things which enable those people to cope with the world as it is rather than expect the world to be remolded as it might be to better suit them. I have to say I've been very impressed with his efforts. But I've been more impressed with the results he has obtained with these people, who, when pressed to do so, can really learn things that most of us might consider far beyond the capacity of a visually impaired person — for example, mountain climbing, skiing, and that kind of thing. I've been most impressed with the level of skill attainment these people can actually be motivated to by people who can teach and instruct them.

I'd like to elaborate on that a little bit more, but I know I'm running out of time. To members who have spoken about this Bill as a way in which we express social conscience legislatively, by improving or altering or forcing other people to alter the conditions of life that surround us as well as blind people, I'd like to ask whether there's another side to social conscience, which has to do with...

MR. SPEAKER: I have to draw to the attention of the hon. member that this afternoon's session has ended.

MR. ALEXANDER: That being the case, Mr. Speaker, I request leave to adjourn debate and hope to carry on.

MR. SPEAKER: That's pretty well automatic. If there is business to deal with and the House wishes to agree unanimously to stop the clock, we can do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: If there is nothing further, then the Assembly will stand adjourned until this evening at 8 o'clock.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, it's not proposed . . .

MR. SPEAKER: May we agree unanimously to stop the clock?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I move that we stop the clock for a minute so we can describe the business of the House for the next day.

MR. SPEAKER: I think that's already been agreed to.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, it's not proposed that the House will sit this evening. The business of the House tomorrow will be the continuation of second readings of Bills as they appear on the Order Paper.

[At 5:31 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]